



# SOUTHSIDE INSTITUTIONS NEIGHBORHOOD ALLIANCE

Connecticut Children’s Medical Center,  
Hartford Hospital, and Trinity College |  
Hartford, CT



Area residents participated in a neighborhood cleanup.

## Overview

Southside Institutions Neighborhood Alliance (SINA), a multi-anchor partnership between Connecticut Children’s Medical Center, Hartford Hospital, and Trinity College, offers a wide range of programs in an effort to improve the neighborhoods of south central Hartford. While the three partnering organizations hold seats on the board, SINA is an autonomous organization that answers to the entire board.

Since its founding in 1978, SINA has worked with community organizations on job placement, affordable rental housing, literacy and education, public safety, homeownership, commercial development, and more. This includes a number of programs designed to help address the issues of crime, violence, and safety in the area.

“Our community engagement initiative is focused on neighborhood safety,” says Melvyn Colón, SINA’s executive director. “We’ve convened a community group that includes police, residents, and representatives from the institutions to create a safety plan.”

The residents on the team determined that many

of the quality of life and safety issues in their neighborhood could be traced to crime, particularly the drug trade. Therefore, they launched a number of efforts to make the place they live less attractive to drug dealers.

“In the past, we’ve partnered with police to patrol the neighborhoods, and we’ve worked with them to provide bicycles and other equipment that allows them to be visible and communicate with the residents to form relationships,” Colón says. “We’ve just begun operationalizing this latest plan over the last few months.”

## Impact

Because the safety program is only a few months old, it’s too soon to measure its impact in the long term. Meanwhile, there have been significant short-term successes: In late April, SINA held its first monthly neighborhood cleanup with Frog Hollow SAFE (Safety Alliance for Everyone), composed of the group of residents involved in SINA’s community engagement initiative.

As they walked with the group of 70 who initially signed up, they carried extra gloves and bags and asked onlookers to join them, resulting in more than 100 people involved. Participants were divided into teams, and points were given based on the number of trash bags collected, postings on social media, photos of vacant lots, and use of the 311 phone app to report problems such as downed power cables and clogged drains. Winners received prizes donated by local businesses and individuals.

Volunteers collected 155 bags of trash and recycling, made 45 requests to 311, and reported 18 vacant lots. They also made 87 social media posts that were shared 85 times, helping to increase SINA's and Frog Hollow SAFE's visibility.

## Lessons Learned

"Partnership has been extremely important," Colón says. "The police have been very willing partners, and so have businesspeople, property owners, and residents. Conversations among these groups have been very important. Law enforcement may not be something we can affect directly—that's an issue of citywide resources and strategy. But we can work together with officers to advocate for improving quality of life in our neighborhoods and learn how we can help each other."

Colón also notes that SINA discovered that members of the community tend to not report crimes, but through the organization's relationship with the police department, they are beginning to change common perceptions and help residents see that the police do care about their neighborhoods.

Partnerships with other local organizations with related missions have been valuable as well. For

example, additional partners in SAFE include Know Thy Neighbor, Vecinos Unidos, Templo Fe, the Faith Based Initiative, Mutual Housing Association of Greater Hartford, and the Frog Hollow NRZ.

## Future Goals

"One of our main goals with this program is growth," Colón says. "We started as a group of people who met in basically a clandestine way to talk about drugs in the neighborhood, by invitation only. So now let's build a coalition. We started with a group of residents who were living on blocks where we were doing housing development, but now we want to expand into areas where we're not building to get more engagement and leadership from within the community."


As the regular monthly cleanups continue, the hope is to bring more people into SINA's programs while also beautifying the neighborhood. A planned summer cleanup will focus on involving and engaging young people in the area in particular.

"Our goal is to include as many neighborhood residents as we can," Colón says. "We want to have a representative from every block."

## CONTACT

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