

The Future of the MIRA Incinerator

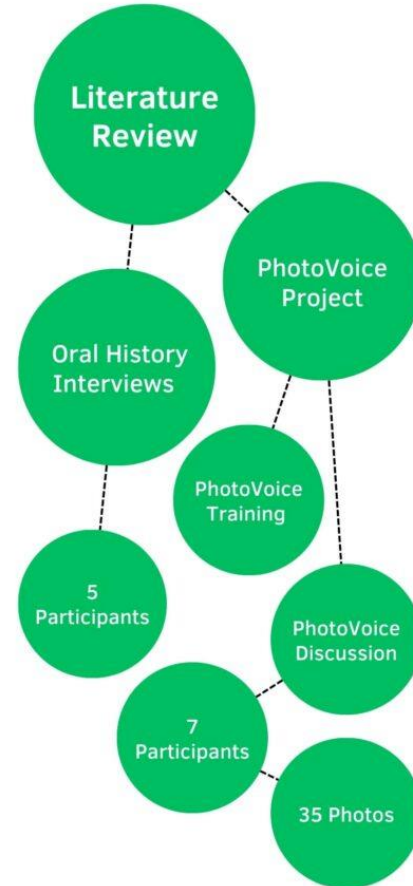
<https://action-lab.org/environmental-justice>



Introduction

- The **Center for Leadership and Justice (CLJ)** asked us to investigate *how Hartford residents are impacted by regional waste management and how they might influence remediation*
- For 30 years, **MIRA** has incinerated the waste of over 72 towns in CT in Hartford's South End
- Our community partners include the **CLJ** and the **Stowe Center for Literary Activism** who helped facilitate Oral History Interviews and PhotoVoice projects

PROJECT COMPONENTS



Literature Review

1. Understanding Environmental Justice
1. Environmental Justice and the History of Hartford's MIRA Waste Incinerator
1. Historical Land Use, Environmental Harms, and the MIRA Waste Incinerator
1. Health and Environmental Impacts of Incinerators

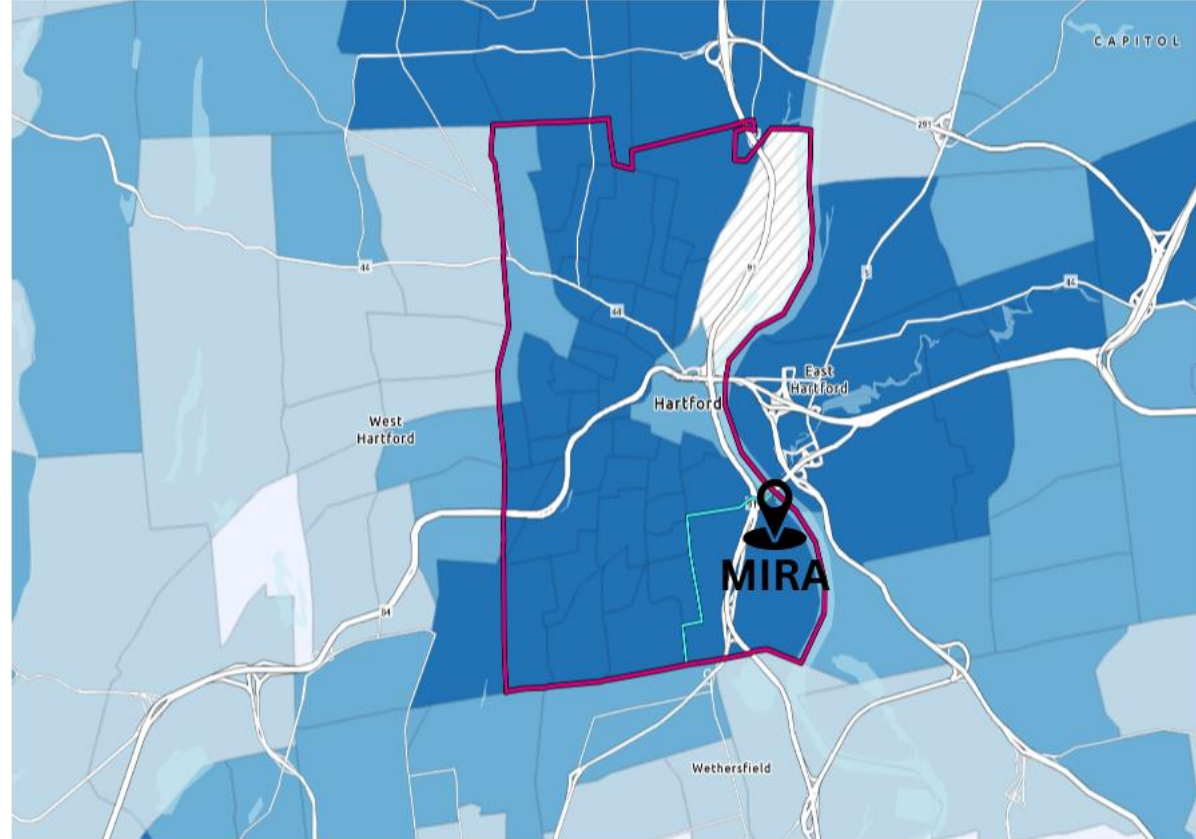


Literature Review

5. Environmental Justice Policy and Remediation
6. Community Voices and Organizing for Environmental Justice
7. Environmental Justice Funds as a Restorative Remediation Strategy



Contextual Analysis: Racial/Ethnic Minority Status



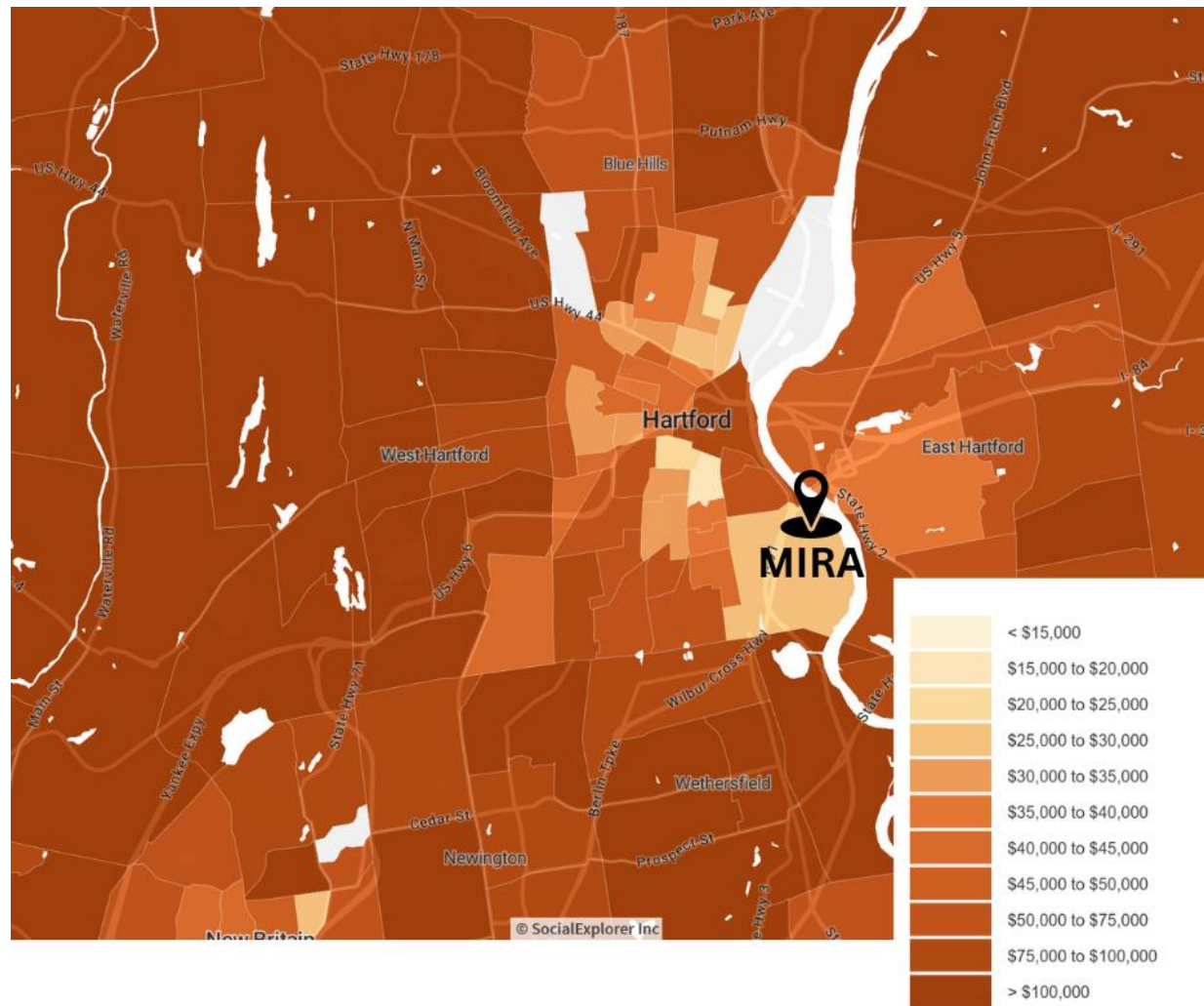
Racial/Ethnic Minority Status



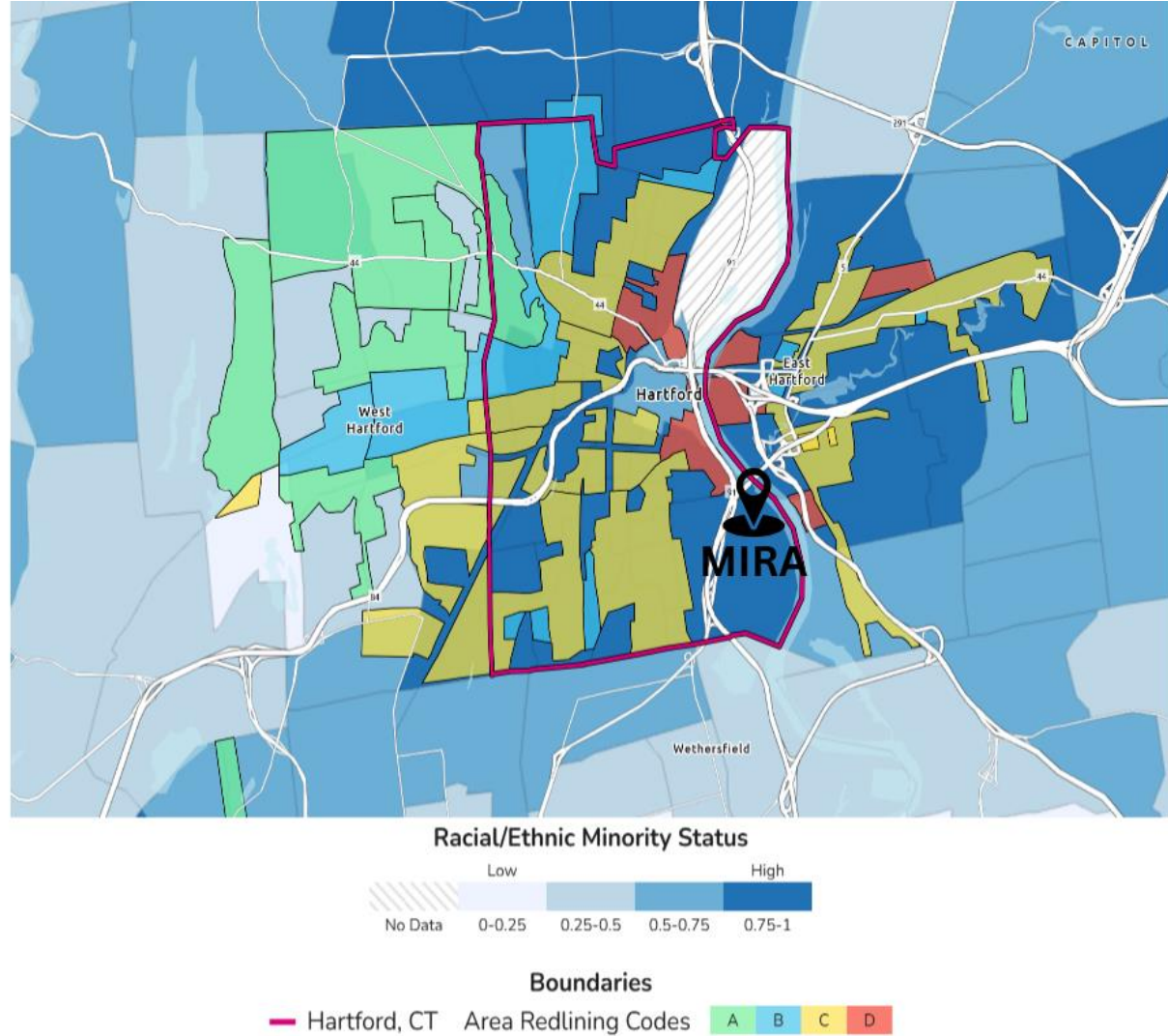
Boundaries



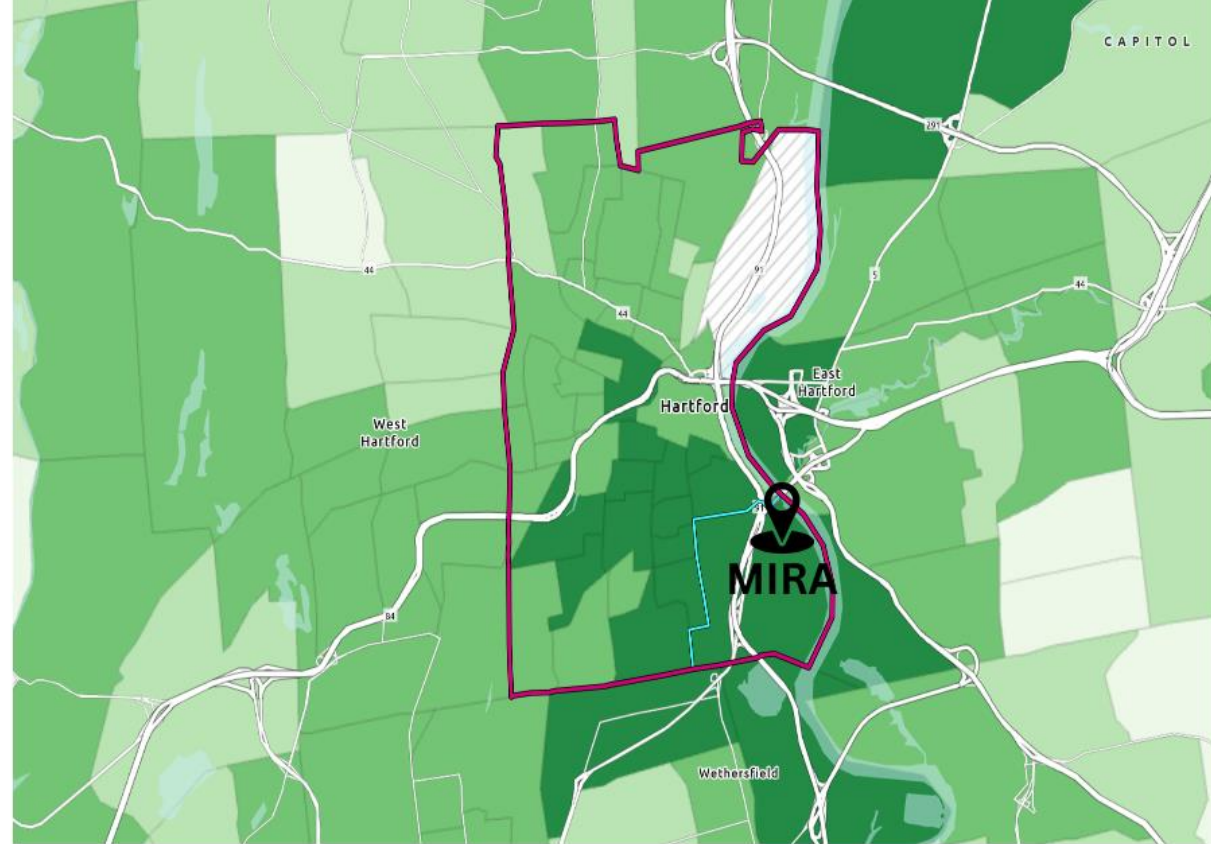
Contextual Analysis: Median Household Income



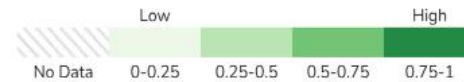
Contextual Analysis: History of Redlining in Hartford



Contextual Analysis: Environmental Burden



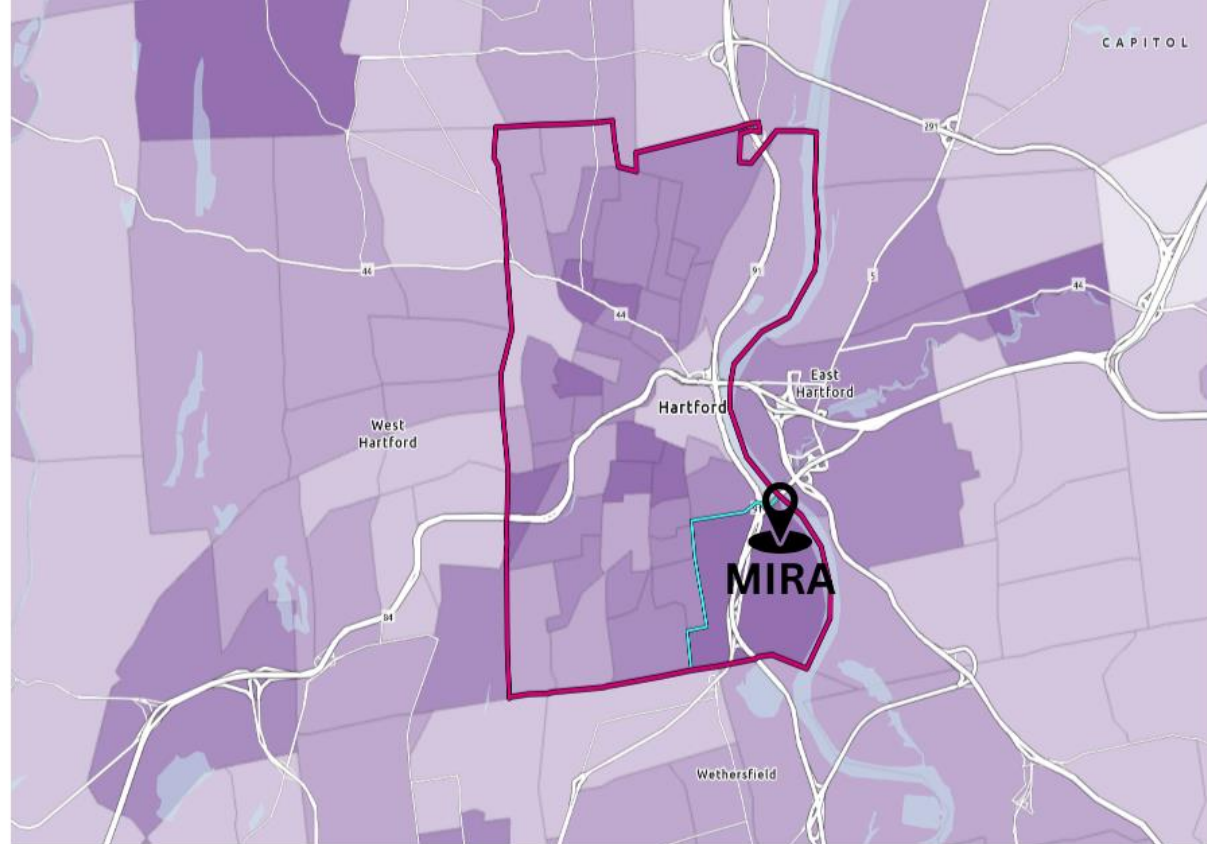
Environmental Burden



Boundaries



Contextual Analysis: Health Vulnerability



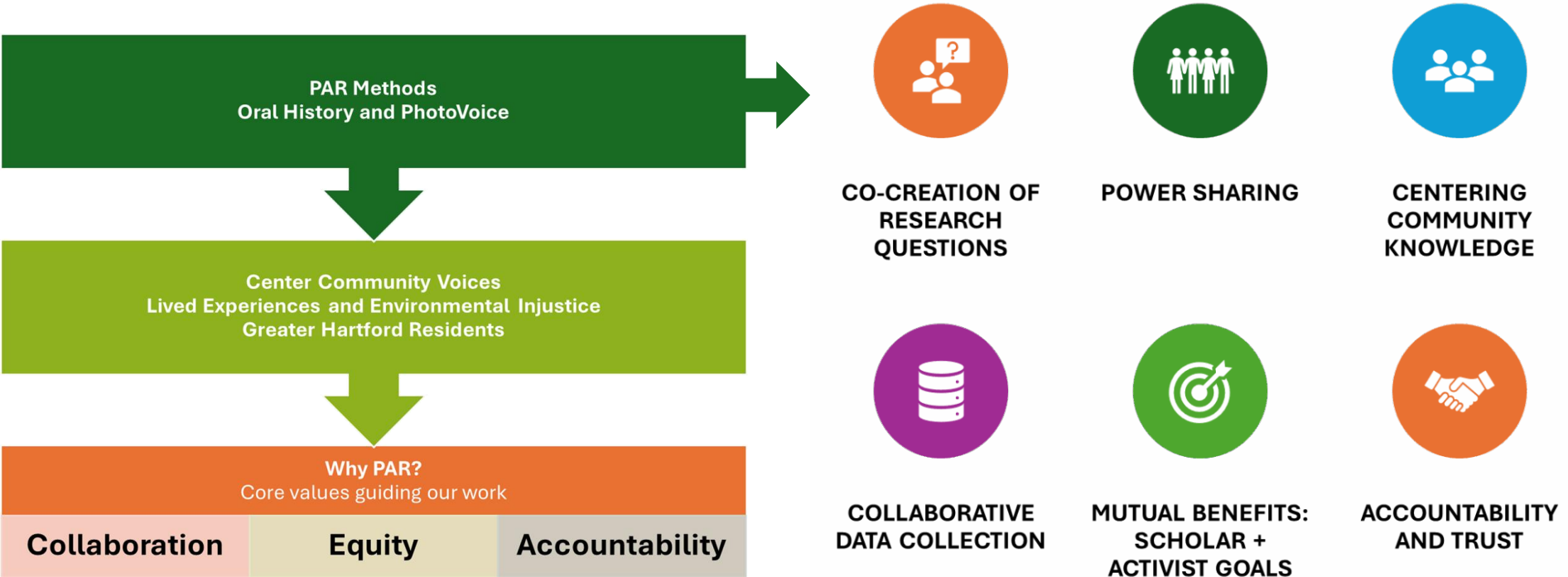
Health Vulnerability



Boundaries



Methodology



Oral History Findings

- Environmental Racism & Hartford Residents
- Impact of Mira on Hartford Residents
- Expectations for Environmental Policy & Government Action
- Future of the Land & Remediation
- Barriers to Advocacy
- Thoughts on the Environmental Justice Fund

Oral History Findings

**Hartford ranks in the 99th
percentile for environmental
burdens in the United States.**



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ENVIRONMENTAL RACISM

“Why do we have a trash plant in here? Why is this okay?”

Yahaira Escribano

Yahaira grew up in Hartford and graduated from Hartford Public High School. She currently works for the State’s Department of Economic Development.

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ENVIRONMENTAL RACISM

“[MIRA was] purposefully placed near people who can't fight back.”

Sister Patricia McKeon

Sister Pat is a longtime Hartford resident. She has been in the Southend for decades and has been directly impacted by the former trash incinerator. She has also seen its impact on her neighbors, especially the children.

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Oral History Findings

**Hartford's Southend suffers from
contaminated soil, air pollution,
and exacerbated respiratory
issues**

**Every single
interview mentioned
respiratory
issues.**

Oral History Findings

Participants called upon the government to ensure the dissolution fund remains within the city.

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ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY AND
ENVIRONMENTAL ACTION

“The Hartford City
Council must no longer
forget about all the
different neighborhoods
and all the different
people.”

Sister Patricia McKeon

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FUTURE OF THE LAND AND REMEDIATION

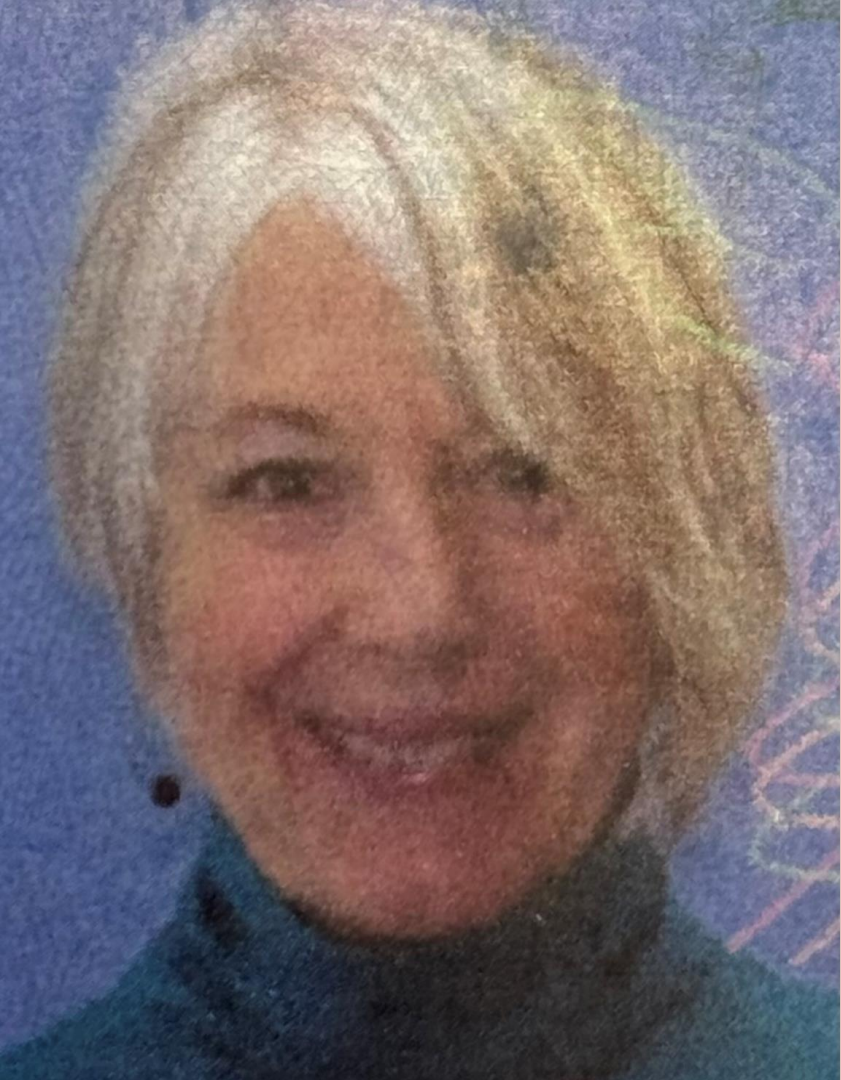
“The reality is there’s only two ways to get rid of your trash. You can burn it or you can bury it. There are not going to be any more landfills in Connecticut, so we’re going to have to find some way to treat our waste.”

Thomas Swarr

A former Hartford South End resident and Hartford representative on the MIRA Dissolution Authority board.

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BARRIERS TO ADVOCACY

“It's always been political since I was a little kid. I can name you all the mayors. All right, it was always political. It's always been that way. Um, the people I don't think have ever had a very powerful voice.”

Diana Heymann

An educator and activist from West Hartford, formerly of Hartford, and involved in GHIAA organizing across Greater Hartford.

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THOUGHTS ON THE ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE FUND

“Absolutely. I think 110%, and I think those funds need to be used in working with these health institutions, with the state legislators, the community, and right remediating for that. Right, but also education, education, education, education, I think is the biggest thing right now.”

Yahaira Escribano

A lifelong Hartford South End resident who has experienced health impacts from the MIRA trash plant.

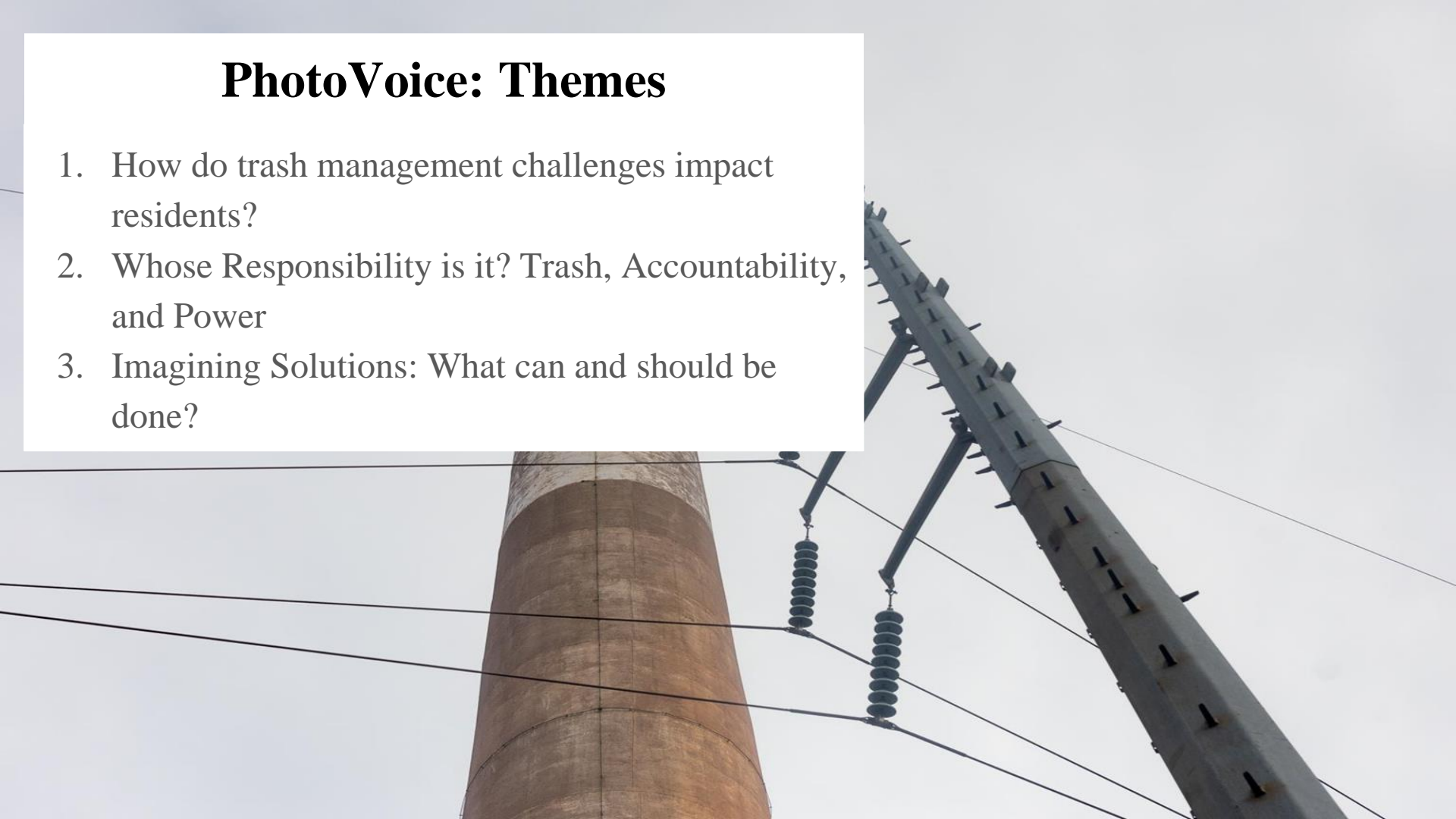
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Across all interviews,
participants demanded
change 74 times – loud and
urgent.

PhotoVoice: Themes

1. How do trash management challenges impact residents?
2. Whose Responsibility is it? Trash, Accountability, and Power
3. Imagining Solutions: What can and should be done?



PhotoVoice Theme 1: Trash Impacts on Residents

Emotional Impact & Intersection of Inequalities

“Over the few weeks it took to be cleaned up, I grew frustrated with the idea that people from my own neighborhood were contributing to the mess. However, I began to think, sometimes people do not care about their spaces when they do not feel cared for themselves...Maybe that’s the only way it will get a garbage bin.”

- Maylin Juarez

Bus ‘Shelter’ by Maylin Juarez





PhotoVoice Theme 2: Trash, Accountability, and Power

Unequal Resources

“But you go on Pratt Street at any time of the day and you’re going to see someone sweeping Pratt Street. But those are for the tourists that have the money, that can leave and go home to their clean, safe neighborhoods. You know? But then it’s like, they come in here and all I hear is “Hartford is so dirty, Hartford is so dangerous.” But it’s like, how, how can you say that about my city”

– Maylin Juarez

Urban mattress or suburban mattress? by Erica Crowley

PhotoVoice Theme 3: Imagining Solutions

“Truthfully, I don’t care because when I have before, like, nothing happens, nothing ever happens. You know, nothing ever happens for the community. So it’s so hard to just, like, have an idea or suggestion because, like, literally nothing ever happens. So I am just like, I, I don’t care, you know. Like why am I going to put my energy into this to be disappointed again?” – Tatiana Hilario

Leaving the Capitol by Maylin Juarez



Call To Action: Recommendations

Goals

- Launch an Environmental Justice Fund seeded with MIRA closure savings.
- Tackle illegal dumping & “trash tourism” from suburbs.
- Build pride & healing through quick-win green spaces.
- Make technical processes understandable & accessible.



Questions?

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