NEW BRITAIN
HISTORIC
WALKING TRAIL
A walk through the Gold Loop takes you through the heart of downtown New Britain, and features century old architecture, restaurants, parks, and amazing history. This walk features one of the city’s most prominent monuments, the Soldier’s Monument (G1), and one of New Britain’s oldest public places, Central Park (G2). After exploring Central Park the trail heads south down Main Street past the CCSU’s ITBD building, home of the New Britain Industrial Museum, and toward the New Britain Police Department. There you’ll find a tribute to two of New Britain’s finest (G3) in the pocket park located next to the NBPD. The Gold Loop then heads to the intersection of Arch, Chestnut and Main Streets where two of New Britain’s oldest churches, South Church and Trinity Methodist Church are located. The sign here (G4) honors the city’s many historic houses of worship as well as the city’s many theaters of old. Be sure and see what’s coming up at the Trinity-on-Main performing arts center. The Gold Loop then continues down Main Street towards the Court House where you pass flourishing restaurants and retail shops. President Barack Obama made this walk during his 2014 visit to the city where he stopped in for lunch at Café Beauregard (corner of Main and Elm Street) and enjoyed their spicy Korean BBQ steak sandwich. At the end of Main Street you’ll find (G5) which pays tribute to the NB Fire Department and some of New Britain’s most colorful figures, its Mayors.

The Gold Loop then continues south to Franklin Square Park. Renovated in 2000, the park features the Sister City Memorial as well as the sculpture “Peace”, a tribute to New Britain’s native son Elihu Burritt (G6). Leaving Franklin Square the trail travels through the parking lot of the First Lutheran Church and down the stairs to Glen Street where it turns right and where you will see a large mural titled “Women in Focus” on the back wall of the YWCA building. This mural was painted in 2001 by CCSU art students. The Gold Loop then turns left and continues along Art Alley (G7) to Arch Street, one of the city’s oldest streets. On Arch Street enjoy the wonderfully detailed architecture and take notice of the many service organizations that line the street as described on the last sign of the Gold Loop (G8).

The Gold Loop ends by continuing down Arch Street back toward Main Street and Central Park. The monumental sculpture “HOME” stands proudly at the corner of Arch and Walnut Streets. Completed by New Britain native and resident Craig Frederick in 2000, the abstract artwork celebrates hometowns. From there, you pass the Hole in the Wall Theater which first opened its doors over 40 years ago, and if you look up you can see two of the city’s most ornate buildings, the Andrews Building, where Harry Houdini performed one of his great escapes while dangling high above Main Street, and Sovereigns Trading Company (Rao Building).

DOWNTOWN LOOP

The Gold Loop
A short walk further down Broad Street places you in the heart of ‘Little Poland’. There are over 100 businesses located on Broad Street—from banks to groceries, bakeries, and social clubs. Walking Broad Street is a sensory experience. You will certainly hear different languages and smell everything from dill planted outside a local fresh grocery to the sweet scent wafting from a local paczki (Polish donut) shop to pierogi and kielbasa. Polish immigrants have been coming to the city since the 1890s, but it wasn’t until 2008 that the City Council passed a resolution designating the area ‘Little Poland’ (R4).

Further down Broad Street you’ll find (R5) which tells the tale about one of the city’s most famous polish sons, General Casimir Pulaski. At the end of Broad Street an entire park, Pulaski Park, is dedicated in honor of General Casimir Pulaski who was a general under George Washington during the Revolutionary War.

The Red Loop then circles back around Broad Street towards the downtown. You’d be missing out if you just continued on the trail without stopping in several of the Broad Street businesses and eateries. When you do continue on and reach (R6) you will learn about some of New Britain’s most famous politicians that have left a legacy both here and abroad, and after you pass Capitol Lunch again for your second chance for a “Cappy Dog” you will reach (R7) to learn about the many presidential visits to the city.

By percentage, New Britain has one of the largest Polish populations in the United States, with about a fifth of the population of Polish ancestry. The ‘Little Poland’ Red Loop offers you a chance to experience this heritage first hand.

From the Gold Trail Head sign, head north on Main Street towards CTfastrak and Route 72, which was constructed during the country’s Urban Renewal programs of the 1970s. During Urban Renewal many city buildings were taken down, including the former train station and hundreds of residences and businesses were displaced. Visit (R1) to learn about this period, along with the city’s early industrial beginnings. The city is undoing some of the damage of Urban Renewal through projects like the “Beehive Bridge” which will better connect both sides of downtown across the Main Street overpass.

Continue north and past Myrtle Street to learn more about why New Britain is nicknamed the “Hardware City” (R2). While here stop by one of New Britain’s iconic eateries, Capitol Lunch for a famous “Cappy Dog” featuring New Britain’s own Martin Rosol (Grove Street) hotdogs.

The Red Loop continues to follow Main Street north where you’ll be greeted to ‘Little Poland’ just past North Street. Continue from Main Street onto Broad Street. There you’ll learn more about some of the Hardware City’s Stanley family and the Stanley Works (R3).

The Red Loop
The Green Loop trail then follows the paved path that cuts through the center of the park and passes by the cricket field, one of the many sports that residents partake in on the park grounds. After reading about the sports heroes at (GR5), continue walking up the paved path, going past the Darius Miller Band Shell and over the park road.

Next, proceed up to the Rose Garden (GR6), which was the former site of a two million gallon capacity reservoir, a part of the city’s water supply system that was created in 1858. This area also offers some of the most beautiful views of the city, and is a great place to have a picnic lunch.

Head toward the 90 foot tall World War Monument (GR7) that was erected to honor the more than 4,000 city residents who served their country between 1917 & 1918, and then down 94 steps to a landing where you’ll see a replica model of Walnut Hill Park as Olmsted envisioned it (GR8).

As you head back down West Main Street to complete the loop, stop by the former U.S. Post Office (GR9), which was built in 1910 and is done in the neoclassical design to be a symbol of federal power and was in use until the mid-1970s.

---

The Green Loop takes you through the city’s most prominent green space, the 98 acre Walnut Hill Park. Walnut Hill Park was designed by the father of landscape architecture, Frederick Law Olmsted, in 1870. Please note this loop contains some brief uphill sections.

Start by walking up West Main Street where you’ll find (GR1) once you cross High Street adjacent to the New Britain Public Library. The ornate New Britain Public Library was dedicated in 1901 and originally contained a natural history museum.

Next, head further up West Main Street to the entrance road into Walnut Hill Park located across from Cedar Street. As you enter the park, look to your left up the hill, the highest point in the city. Stop at (GR2) to learn about the establishment of the city’s water department and other intriguing stories from New Britain’s past.

Proceed toward the center of the park and notice the stone marker near (GR3) that marks the “point of departure” that aviator Charles K. Hamilton flew from in 1910 before a crowd of more than 50,000 attendees. You’ll notice several sculptures in this area of the park. The formation of this “sculpture garden” involves a collaborative, ongoing effort between the New Britain Museum of American Art and the city. Walk around the loop road toward the museum and past “The Juggler” until you reach (GR4) where you’ll learn more about the museum and some of its famous collections. If you are hungry or thirsty, stop by the Café on the Park at the museum to grab a bite to eat.
ABOUT THE TRAIL

The New Britain Historic Walking Trail celebrates the City’s rich and interesting history and historic figures. Like so many cities in the northeast, New Britain’s story is one that closely follows the development of our great nation as a country of immigration and innovation. The informational signs that you’ll find on the trail were funded by a Preserve America Grant through the National Parks Service.

GUIDED TRAIL TOURS

Beginning in the spring of 2016, guided tours of the walking trails will be available for the public. For additional information, please visit historicNB.org.

WHERE IT STARTS

The walking trail involves 3 distinct loops consisting of 25 double-sided signs, all of which begin at the gold colored “Trail Head” sign which can be found by the Board of Education building located at the intersection of West Main Street and Main Street.

Enter the following address for GPS directions to the trail head, located by the Board of Education Building at the intersection of West Main Street and Main Street:

272 Main Street
New Britain, CT 06051

WHAT TO EXPECT

There is no shortage of content for the historical points of interest along the trail, covering a range of topics from the history of Central Park and City Hall to Polish immigration and the Frederick Law Olmsted designed Walnut Hill Park.

Expect to learn interesting facts about the City’s history from the Historic Signs, and be prepared to explore various points of interest along the way. Remember that the signs are just points along the trails... the real history lies in the places and sites along way. Take your time, walk slowly, and be sure to stop and look around!