



West End Neighborhood Study, Bristol CT

Neighborhood Advisory Committee Meeting

Monday, September 8, 2008
Imagine Nation Children's Museum, 1 Pleasant Street, Bristol

Meeting Summary

On Monday, September 8, 2008, the Neighborhood Advisory Committee for the West End Neighborhood Study met for the third time. The primary purposes of this meeting were to discuss various design concepts prepared by the consultants for three areas in the neighborhood and to offer input to the Board of Police Commissioners regarding use of the municipal parking lot located at the intersection of School St. and West St. The following is a summary of the meeting. While not a verbatim report, it is intended to provide a record of what transpired and to provide a general sense of the discussion that took place.

Welcome and Introductions

Mr. Weiner welcomed the attendees and introduced Ms. Grossman and Mr. Plattus, both members of the consulting team. Ms. Grossman welcomed the members of the Committee and other attendees.

Recap of study process and progress

Ms. Grossman recapped the study process and timeline and the work undertaken thus far; she also summarized the tasks completed since the previous Committee meeting in June, including the following:

- Finished the neighborhood vision statement
- Determined extent of current parking shortage in the neighborhood (compared number of existing parking spaces to number of required spaces if all buildings were fully occupied)
- Conducted focus groups and interviews with 14 different neighborhood businesses
- Met with the President of the Greater Bristol Chamber of Commerce to discuss ideas for neighborhood business recruitment and retention
- Met with the Executive Director of the Bristol Development Authority to discuss current façade improvement and housing rehabilitation programs offered by the city
- Met with representatives of the property owner of the former Chic Miller auto dealership site on West St.
- Met with the property owner of the former IGA Supermarket site on Divinity St.
- Met with the Executive Director of the Bristol Boys & Girls Club to discuss future space requirements of the facility
- Prepared an array of conceptual drawings showing redevelopment possibilities for the former Chic Miller and IGA sites, as well as possible modifications to and streetscape improvements at the Route 72/Route 69 intersection
- Met with a representative of the CT Department of Transportation to discuss possible improvements to Route 72 and Route 69 in the neighborhood

Ms. Grossman explained that, at this point in the study, the consultants are focusing on developing specific recommendations and implementation strategies for the plan, portions of which are ready for discussion during this meeting.

Improvement concepts for the Route 72/Route 69 Intersection (West St./School St./Divinity St.)

Mr. Plattus presented several conceptual schemes to improve traffic flow at and near the intersection of Route 72 and Route 69, provide additional on- and off-street parking in the area, and improve the appearance of the area. During this presentation, the Committee discussed in detail the following:

- *Shared (private) parking behind buildings:* The Committee agreed that the lack of parking is a critical issue for the businesses and residences located near this intersection. The concept of creating shared private parking areas behind buildings was discussed at length. In response to several concerns expressed about the logistics associated with such an arrangement, it was noted that legal agreements and maintenance agreements among participating property owners would likely be required.
- *Re-alignment of traffic lanes:* Several Committee members agreed that re-aligning this intersection would improve traffic flow, while others expressed concern that doing so would reduce the number of lanes and, in turn, reduce the traffic volume that the intersection could handle. One Committee member noted that realignment would be most effective if it could include a realignment of the West St. bridge over the Pequabuck River.
- *Making Divinity St. a one-way street:* Committee members re-introduced the idea of making all or a portion of Divinity St. one-way eastbound or westbound, noting that this might help to ease traffic flow at key intersections.

- *Connecting Landry St. to Chestnut St.:* Committee members suggested that consideration be given to the idea of connecting Landry St. to Chestnut St. and perhaps concurrently eliminating its connection to Divinity St.. It was noted that doing so might improve traffic flow at the signalized intersection of Park St. and Divinity St.
- *Undergrounding of utilities:* The Committee agreed that placing overhead utility wires underground would dramatically improve the appearance of the neighborhood.

Redevelopment concepts for the former Chic Miller auto dealership property, east side of West St.

Mr. Plattus presented several conceptual redevelopment schemes for the former Chic Miller property on the east side of West St. It was noted that these had been shared with representatives of the current property owner at a recent meeting for their input and comments. During this presentation, the Committee members discussed in detail the following:

- *Site size and opportunities for mixed-use development:* Committee members agreed that the site appears to be large enough to accommodate a mix of uses.
- *Placement of uses:* Committee members agreed that, given the nature of the current land uses surrounding the property and the status of Upson St. as a one-way street, the Upson St. side of the site would likely be most appropriate for residential uses, while the South St. side of the site would likely be most appropriate for commercial uses.
- *Property maintenance:* Committee members expressed concern about the unsightly condition of the site and felt it would be a benefit to the neighborhood if the property were cleaned up and better maintained until it is redeveloped.
- *Taxability:* Committee members expressed that they support the Boys & Girls Club as a potential user of the site and believe that that use makes good sense given that the Family Center is located on the adjacent property. At the same time, Committee members noted that it would be beneficial if at least a portion of the re-used property could generate local property taxes or include a tax-neutral scenario.

Redevelopment concepts for the former IGA Supermarket property, north side of Divinity St.

Mr. Plattus presented several conceptual redevelopment schemes for the former IGA Supermarket property on the north side of Divinity St. It was noted that these had been shared with representatives of the current property owners at a recent meeting for their input and comments. During this presentation, the Committee members discussed in detail the following:

- *New street connection between Park St. and Divinity St.:* Committee members endorsed the concept of utilizing a portion of this site to create a new street to connect Park St. and Divinity St.. Doing so would establish a much-needed additional transportation connection between the north and south sides of the neighborhood.
- *Placement of uses:* Committee members felt that, given its relative distance from other commercial activity in the neighborhood and the nature of the surrounding land uses, the site would be best suited primarily for residential purposes, along with a small commercial component (e.g., a specialty market or a medical office). It was also suggested that consideration be given to developing uses at the north end of the site that would be complementary to Muzzy Field (e.g., batting cages or overflow parking).
- *Former machine shop site on Park St.:* Committee members agreed that the site of the former machine shop on Park St. adjacent to (west of) the former IGA property should perhaps be considered for inclusion in redevelopment plans for the IGA property.

Mr. Plattus and Ms. Grossman thanked the Committee for its suggestions and ideas and indicated that this feedback will be reflected in the study's recommendations. At the next meeting, a new set of proposals intended to address other previously identified neighborhood issues will be presented to the Committee for its input.

Referral from Board of Police Commissioners about municipal parking lot at corner of West St. /School St.

Ms. Grossman explained that the city's Board of Police Commissioners has asked the Committee to provide the Commission with input regarding an acceptable time limit for people to park in the municipal parking lot at the intersection of West St. and School St. The Committee discussed this topic and agreed upon the following:

- *Time Limits.* Parking in the lot should be limited to no more than two hours during the day, i.e., between 9am and 6pm (a couple of Committee members felt that parking should be limited to just one hour). The Committee agreed that two hours should be a sufficient amount of time during the day for people to conduct business in the neighborhood while at the same time providing enough turnover to ensure that these spaces are available to others who wish to do the same.
- *Enforcement.* Ongoing enforcement is necessary to make those who are now using the lot for long periods of time aware of any new time limits on parking. The Committee felt that parking meters would not be a viable option for this lot since there are no meters elsewhere in Bristol, paid parking would detract from efforts to cultivate a "customer-friendly" local business environment, and metered parking would be costly to service and enforce. It was suggested however, that consideration be given to installing a machine that dispenses a ticket with the arrival time on it; the ticket would then be placed in a vehicle's windshield, thus providing a verifiable way to determine how long a car has been parked in the lot. Though parking would still be free, such a system would make enforcing the time limits in the lot somewhat easier.



- *Signage.* The lot should contain one or more signs that clearly indicate the time limits for parking (e.g., two hours between 9am and 6pm) and the penalties for violating the limits (e.g., a \$100 fine).
- *First-time warning.* In order to allow time for public awareness about the new time limits and to promote a business-friendly environment in the neighborhood, first-time violators should be issued a warning rather than being ticketed, towed, or fined.
- *Commuters.* To free up parking spaces now being used by commuters in the lot, consideration should be given to establishing a designated commuter parking lot elsewhere in a nearby location.
- *Resident Parking.* Consideration should be given to establishing a residential parking sticker program which would give neighborhood residents with stickers permission to park in the lot overnight (until 9am the next day) on a first-come, first-served basis. Such a program would be very beneficial to the neighborhood's vitality, given the shortage of parking for residential tenants and the importance of maintaining a mix of residential and commercial uses in the neighborhood.

Ms. Grossman noted that she would forward these comments to Chief DiVenere, for communication to the Board of Police Commissioners.

Conclusion and Announcements

Mr. Weiner, Mr. Plattus, and Ms. Grossman thanked the Committee for its participation this evening and its continued commitment to the neighborhood. The meeting summary and next meeting date will be posted on the study website and announced via the distribution list.

The meeting adjourned at 8:45 PM.

List of Attendees

Neighborhood Advisory Committee Members

Ryan Bessette – Property owner
 Thomas Borden – Property owner
 Andy Cannici - Bristol Planning Commission
 Jackie Castaneda – Business owner
 Kathy Castaneda – Business owner
 Hector Castaneda – Business owner
 Fortunata Castaneda – Business owner
 Charles Cyr – Bristol Planning Commission
 Steve Deveau – Property owner
 Jan Deveau – Property owner
 Brian Ewings – Bristol Planning Commission
 Dave Hamelin – Resident and business owner
 Jesse Jablon – Property owner
 Joe Naples – Property owner
 Joseph Kelaita – Bristol Planning Commission
 Nick Piotrowski - Resident
 John Piotrowski - Resident
 Michael Suchopar – Bristol Boys & Girls Club / Family Center
 William Veits – Bristol Planning Commission

City Planning Staff and Consultants

Alan Weiner – City Planner
 Chris Beauchemin – Assistant City Planner
 Lisa Grossman – The Capstan Group
 Alan Plattus – Yale Urban Design Workshop

