



## West End Neighborhood Study, Bristol CT

### Neighborhood Advisory Committee Meeting

Thursday, October 23, 2008  
Imagine Nation Children's Museum, 1 Pleasant Street, Bristol

#### Meeting Summary

On Thursday, October 23, 2008, the Neighborhood Advisory Committee for the West End Neighborhood Study met for the fourth time. The primary purpose of this meeting was to discuss the first set of study recommendations prepared by the consultants. 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 of The Capstan Group.

#### Recap of study process and progress

Ms. Grossman began by recapping the study process and timeline and summarizing the work undertaken thus far. She indicated that about three-quarters of the study has been completed and that, based upon an analysis of the various neighborhood issues that West End stakeholders have identified to date, the consultants and city staff have begun to draft a series of recommendations intended to address those issues. Tonight's discussion and upcoming Committee meetings will provide important opportunities for neighborhood stakeholders to help provide direction to those recommendations.

#### Update on specific properties impacting the West End Neighborhood

Ms. Grossman next apprised the Committee on the current status of three specific properties of interest to the West End Neighborhood:

- *Former Chic Miller auto dealership, east side of West Street:* Ms. Grossman noted that, at its last meeting, the Committee had voiced its concern about the unsightly condition of this property and the need for it to be better maintained. Ms. Grossman reported that she subsequently contacted the property owner, who immediately sent a crew to undertake a major clean up the property. Committee members acknowledged that the clean-up effort had improved the property's appearance significantly, although it was agreed that the neighborhood would be best served if the property were put to a productive re-use rather than remain vacant.
- *Former H.J. Mills box factory, east side of Church Street:* Robyn Bugbee, Grants Administrator for the City of Bristol, described the City's proposal to apply for a remediation grant from the federal Environmental Protection Agency to help pay the costs of cleaning up this brownfield site; once that work has been completed, the city intends to construct a municipal parking lot on the property to serve both downtown Bristol and part of the West End Neighborhood. Ms. Bugbee invited anyone interested in this project to attend and speak at a public hearing being held on October 27, 2008, and to review and comment upon the draft application, available at City Hall. The Committee briefly discussed the proposal, concluding that the remediation grant would be an important first step toward putting this property to a productive use that would be supportive of other uses in the area, including the West End.
- *Former UAW hall, 247 Park Street:* Mr. Weiner informed the Committee that an application has been filed with the Zoning Commission for a Special Permit to re-use this building as a Buddhist monastery and temple; the public hearing on this application is scheduled for Thursday, November 13<sup>th</sup> at 7:00 PM in Bristol City Hall, and anyone interested in speaking in support of or in opposition to the proposal is encouraged to attend. Mr. Weiner expressed some concern about the timing of this application, inasmuch as the West End Neighborhood Study has yet to be completed and the Committee has not yet talked about the future of the building from a neighborhood planning perspective.

#### Discussion of study recommendations

Ms. Grossman noted that, since the Committee's last meeting, the city's planning staff and consultants have developed a list of recommendations for five study components: (1) housing; (2) transportation; (3) parks, open space, the Pequabuck River, and recreation; (4) business support; and (5) safety and quality of life. Noting that the wording of these recommendations has not been finalized, Ms. Grossman indicated that the balance of this evening's meeting would be taken up discussing each of the recommendations with the Committee. Specifically, she asked the Committee to provide feedback as to whether the proposed wording of each recommendation accurately expresses the nature (or *sentiment*) of the action that should be taken to address a neighborhood issue and whether it accurately expresses the *strength* of that action.

Regarding the latter, the Committee agreed upon the following hierarchy of strength to be considered in discussing each recommendation:

*Explore*: to investigate, study, or analyze; to look into

*Encourage/foster*: to inspire with spirit or hope; to promote the growth or development of

*Support*: to help the interests or cause and contribute to the costs

*Promote*: to contribute to the progress or growth of

*Create/improve/reconstruct/install/allocate/designate/target*: to take direct action

With this terminology in mind, the Committee discussed the following recommendations, either agreeing upon the sentiment and strength of each as presented or modifying them as noted in the table below.

RECOMMENDATIONS	SENTIMENT	STRENGTH	NOTES
<b>Housing</b>			
1. Target the use of Community Development Block Grant funds for housing rehabilitation activities in the neighborhood	✓	✓	
2. Encourage the establishment of a West End Neighborhood Association, which could create a resource guide with information about codes, services, financial resources and assistance available to property owners	✓	change to "Support"	
3. Educate property owners and residents about housing code requirements and nuisance ordinances	✓	✓	
4. Encourage the development of a guide to the different types of residential architecture in the neighborhood; use the guide to market the neighborhood's rich and diverse architectural character	✓	✓	this item may be given a lower priority in the plan
<b>Transportation</b>			
1. Support the construction of a new road through the former IGA Supermarket site to connect Park St. and Divinity St.	✓	✓	
2. Replace deteriorating sidewalks in the neighborhood	✓	✓	
3. Designate a neighborhood bike route and create a designated bike lane along Divinity Street	?	change to "Explore the possibility of"	broaden to consider entire neighborhood, not just Divinity St.
4. Provide traffic-calming measures along Park Street, including pedestrian connections along Park Street to create safe pedestrian access to Rockwell Park and Muzzy Field	✓	✓	
5. Explore the possibility of connecting Landry Street with Chestnut Street and then eliminating Landry Street's connection to Divinity Street	✓	✓	include consideration of one-way street options
6. Working with Connecticut Transit, encourage the extension of bus service into the neighborhood	✓	✓	coordinate with city's Transportation Comm.
<b>Parks, open space, the Pequabuck River &amp; recreation</b>			
1. Allocate the funding necessary to maintain the investment that the City has made in Rockwell Park	✓	✓	
2. Create new, well-lit and safe pedestrian pathways in the neighborhood that connect the parks and that provide pedestrian access to the Pequabuck River for passive recreation uses	✓	✓	
3. Support river clean-up/improvement efforts	✓	change to "Promote"	
4. Support efforts to better integrate the Pequabuck River into the neighborhood	✓	make stronger	place greater emphasis on river access
5. Take the opportunity to rebuild the West Street bridge over the Pequabuck River with realignment that helps to create riverfront access	✓	✓	



RECOMMENDATIONS	SENTIMENT	STRENGTH	NOTES
6. Ensure that any new development that occurs near the Pequabuck River be given sustainability considerations (runoff, plantings)	✓	✓	
7. Acquire select properties adjacent to Muzzy Field along Park Street to provide greater visibility of/access to Muzzy Field	✓	✓	identify specific properties
8. Encourage the further use of Muzzy Field and encourage neighborhood-based activities during events (e.g., closing off Muzzy Street for street vendors to create a neighborhood community atmosphere during games)	✓	✓	
9. NEW RECOMMENDATION: Encourage creation of a guide to what it means to be a river-front property owner	✓	✓	
<b>Business Supports</b>			
1. Target the use of Community Development Block Grant funds for commercial rehabilitation activities in the neighborhood to improve the look of the center and the commercial corridors	✓	✓	
2. Create new on-street parking spaces along Park Street	?	change to "Explore the creation of"	explore in wider area, not just along Park St.
3. Encourage property owners to establish partnerships to provide additional and shared parking near the Route 72/Route 69 intersection, making municipal contributions to increased and improved parking wherever possible	✓	✓	
4. Improve the streetscape to materially improve the overall look of the commercial corridors of the neighborhood, including lighting, signage, landscaping, and street furniture.	✓	✓	improvements should be along <u>all</u> commercial corridors, not just in the center; include trash receptacles
5. Support commercial improvements that create active uses of first-floor retail spaces and foster positive pedestrian activity, including zoning requests that foster appropriate outdoor uses (e.g., outdoor seating)	✓	✓	
6. Target economic development efforts to attract new businesses into the West End neighborhood that will draw people to the neighborhood and will establish it as a destination (e.g., bank, quality restaurants, bookstore)	✓	✓	
7. Support uses along Park Street that take advantage of their proximity to Muzzy Field and that complement activities and events there	✓	✓	
8. Work with commercial property owners on environmental assessment and remediation as needed	✓	✓	
9. Encourage the development of a West End Business Directory to promote the businesses in the neighborhood	✓	change to "Support"	
10. Foster new relationships between neighborhood businesses and other businesses (e.g., banks) that are committed to the neighborhood	✓	✓	



Due to the lateness of the hour, it was agreed that the set of recommendations associated with Public Safety and Quality of Life would be reviewed at the Committee's next meeting.

### **Conclusion and Announcements**

Mr. Weiner 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 next meeting is tentatively scheduled for Thursday, November 20, 2008 at 7:00pm at the Imagine Nation Museum.

The meeting adjourned at 9:10 PM.

### **List of Attendees**

#### Neighborhood Advisory Committee Members

Robyn Bugbee – City of Bristol Grants Administrator  
Andy Cannici - Bristol Planning Commission  
Kathy Castaneda – Business owner  
Hector Castaneda – Business owner  
Fortunata Castaneda – Business owner  
Ken Cockayne – City Council  
Charles Cyr – Bristol Planning Commission  
Steve Deveau – Property owner  
Brian Ewings – Bristol Planning Commission  
Dave Hamelin – Resident and business owner  
Leonard Lamothe – Property owner  
Jesse Jablon – Property owner  
Sarah Morocco– Neighborhood stakeholder  
Mary Mouton – Pequabuck River Watershed Association  
Thomas Ragaini– Property owner  
Karen Pio – Greater Bristol Property Owners Association  
Nick Piotrowski - Resident  
John Piotrowski - Resident  
Albert Roger – St. Ann Church  
Diana Silvestri – Greater Bristol Property Owners Association  
Michael Suchopar – Bristol Boys & Girls Club / Family Center  
Joan Vallee – Neighborhood stakeholder  
William Veits – Bristol Planning Commission

#### City Planning Staff and Consultants

Alan Weiner – City Planner  
Chris Beauchemin – Assistant City Planner  
Lisa Grossman – The Capstan Group

