



West End Neighborhood Study, Bristol CT
Neighborhood Advisory Committee Meeting
 Thursday, November 20, 2008
 Imagine Nation Children’s Museum, 1 Pleasant Street, Bristol

Meeting Summary

On Thursday, November 20, 2008, the Neighborhood Advisory Committee for the West End Neighborhood Study met for the fifth time. The primary purpose of this meeting was to discuss the second 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 Lisa Grossman of The Capstan Group and Alan Plattus of the Yale Urban Design Workshop.

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 drafted a series of recommendations intended to address those issues. Tonight’s discussion and at least one other future Committee meeting will provide important opportunities for neighborhood stakeholders to help provide direction to those recommendations.

Mr. Weiner advised the Committee that, at its November 13th meeting, the Zoning Commission approved a Special Permit to allow the former UAW union hall at 247 Park Street to be converted to a Buddhist monastery and temple. He also noted that the new skateboard park at Rockwell Park – constructed as part of the city’s park renovation project – recently had its official grand opening. Mr. Lamothe, who is also a Parks Department employee, commented about the level of interest and activity that the skateboard park has already generated and the positive impact it seems to be having on the immediate area.

Discussion of study recommendations

Ms. Grossman indicated that the balance of this evening’s meeting would be a continuation of the discussion begun last month relative to the remaining study recommendations that the city’s planning staff and consultants have developed thus far, specifically (1) safety and quality of life, and (2) the future of the O’Connell School site. Noting that, as before, the wording of these recommendations has not been finalized, Ms. Grossman 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
Safety and Quality of Life			
1. Encourage and support the formation of a West End Neighborhood Association, similar to the Forestville Village Association, comprised of business owners, property owners, homeowners, and residents, which can take a leadership role on behalf of the neighborhood in the implementation of this plan and neighborhood revitalization efforts	✓	✓	Include “other stakeholders” in the list of potential Association members; start Association prior to study’s completion

RECOMMENDATIONS	SENTIMENT	STRENGTH	NOTES
2. Actively participate in a collaborative effort to market the neighborhood and promote its assets and amenities	✓	✓	City's investment needed
3. Support the efforts of local businesses, institutions, and organizations that engage the neighborhood's youth in positive ways (e.g., mentorship programs, youth sports leagues, apprenticeships with local business owners)	✓	✓	Consider volunteer programs associated with O'Connell School and programs involving Pequabuck River
4. Support and encourage neighborhood block parties	Be less specific (e.g., encourage activities in the neighborhood that promote community-building)	Change to "Encourage and support"	
5. Support the efforts of the Bristol Boys & Girls Club to build a new facility in the neighborhood	✓	Change to "strongly support"	
6. Use the City's Code Enforcement Team to target code education and enforcement efforts in the neighborhood	✓	✓	
7. Support the creation of active block watches in the neighborhood	✓	✓	Recommendations 7-10 may be combined
8. Increase police patrols in the neighborhood to heighten police visibility	✓	✓	
9. Explore establishing a West End police beat to improve relationships and communications between the police and neighborhood residents, business owners, and youth	✓	✓	
10. Explore the possibility of establishing a police substation in the neighborhood, particularly near Rockwell Park	✓	✓	
11. As part of a coordinated "way-finding" program for the neighborhood, provide signs that clearly identify the location and purpose of local off-street parking lots, who may use them, and their hours of operation	✓	✓	
12. As part of a comprehensive streetscape program for the neighborhood, install pedestrian-scale street lighting that improves the safety and comfort of people in the area and reflects the distinctive character of the neighborhood	Focus on Park Street; refer to both street & pedestrian lighting; strive for uniformity in neighborhood	✓	
O'Connell School property			
1. Utilize a portion of the site to provide public access to the Pequabuck River	✓	✓	
2. Encourage the development of a bicycle/pedestrian trail and other passive recreation uses along the site's river frontage as part of a comprehensive riverfront greenway and access program	✓	✓	
3. Give preference to redevelopment projects that take the greatest advantage of the site's proximity to the Pequabuck River and best "re-introduces" the river into the neighborhood	✓	✓	
4. Give strong preference to redevelopment projects that include adaptive re-use – rather than demolition – of the main portion of the building	✓	Increase strength (e.g., "require")	
5. Support the adaptive re-use of the building for residential and/or community-based purposes	✓	✓	



In addition, the Committee suggested that the following items be considered for additional recommendations:

- Improvement of sidewalks in the neighborhood
- Application of workable building and fire codes to the renovation and adaptive re-use of existing buildings
- Provision of rehabilitation funds for non-owner-occupied residential properties
- Encouragement of activities that promote tolerance of the neighborhood's diverse cultures
- Inclusion of the O'Connell School on the State Register of Historic Places
- Recognition of West End component of city's 2001 greenway proposal ("Bristol Greenway: Phase I Pequabuck River Link")

Conclusion and Announcements

Mr. Weiner and Ms. Grossman thanked the Committee for its participation this evening and its continued commitment to the planning process. The meeting summary will be posted on the study website and announced via the distribution list. The planning consultants will be working on developing the draft report, and the next meeting will be scheduled after the holidays to review the draft report.

The meeting adjourned at 8:55 PM.

List of Attendees

Neighborhood Advisory Committee Members

Ken Cockayne – City Council
Jan Deveau – Property owner
Brian Ewings – Bristol Planning Commission
Leonard Lamothe – Property owner
Jesse Jablon – Property owner
Mary Mouton – Pequabuck River Watershed Association
Thomas Ragaini – Property owner
William Stortz – former mayor
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

