

Free Samples Grocery Coupons Baby Coupons Pet Coupons Beauty Coupons Free Stuff View All

CoolSavings.com

Search Go Courant.com Web enhanced by

HOME DELIVERY Login or register



Home > iTowns > Greater New Britain

Bristol Ponders Future Of The West End



Some residents of Bristol's West End are suggesting the city encourage development of ethnic and outdoor-seating restaurants where Park and Divinity streets merge near the eastern edge of the neighborhood. (DON STACOM / May 4, 2008)

By DON STACOM | Courant Staff Writer
May 4, 2008

BRISTOL — Set along the Pequabuck River, the city's West End is home to a historic 100-acre park, a new children's museum and Muzzy Field, among the most attractive baseball parks in the state.

But it also has a growing number of vacant commercial buildings, rundown apartment houses and derelict storefronts, along with a worsening reputation for poverty and low-level crime.

"It's a strong neighborhood," City Planner Alan Weiner said. "But it's fraying around the edges a bit."

In many ways, this densely populated 40-block section of Bristol has counterparts in the rest of Connecticut's mid-size cities: places that were close-knit communities of two or even three generations of factory employees and millworkers' families until industry moved out; places where the bonds of old-style neighborhoods began weakening in the '60s and '70s, and anxiety over an influx of strangers — usually transients, sometimes poor, often minorities — has grown in recent years.

What sets the West End apart from some other cities is that Bristol is busily trying to save it before severe decay sets in. On Saturday, about 50 residents, landlords and shopkeepers spent the morning charting ways to

build on the West End's strongest features while reducing its blight.

"This is unique — the neighborhood is not yet in trouble. But it's saying, 'We're seeing changes, some things are destabilizing. Let's stabilize our assets now and strengthen them,'" said Lisa Grossman, head of The Capstan Group, a consulting firm conducting an \$80,000 study of how to preserve the West End.

So far, Grossman's tentative research has surprised many residents: Crime over the past five years has mostly been stable, home ownership is up slightly and the average West End resident's income has kept pace with the rest of the city.

As they came up with suggestions for improving the neighborhood, people at Saturday's workshop debated how much of its trouble is image and how much is genuine.

- Classifieds**
- Jobs
 - Cars
 - Real Estate
 - Apartments
 - Items For Sale
 - Place An Ad

- News**
- Sports
 - Business

- iTowns**
- Eastern Connecticut
 - Middletown/Shoreline
 - Greater Enfield
 - Greater Hartford
 - Farmington Valley
 - Greater New Britain

Entertainment

Features

Travel

Video

Opinion

Obituaries

Weather

Traffic

Shopping

Topics (Beta)

eCourant

Resources

- Site Map
- Maps
- Lottery
- Mobile News
- Text Alerts
- RSS Feeds
- Mortgages
- Coupons

Advertise With Us

- Newspaper Classified
- Newspaper Retail
- Online
- Media Kit
- Contact Us

Newspaper Services

- Subscribe
- Subscriber Services
- Archives
- Reprints
- Browse Ads
- Courant Jobs
- About Us
- Media Kit
- View Page 1

Article tools

- E-mail
- Share
- Print
- Reprints
- Post comment
- Text size:

Related News from the Web

- [Construction](#)
- [Retail](#)

Powered by [Topix.net](#)

Your Web Host
Fulvio Cativo

email | blog | video | bio

Recent blog entries:

- What's Going on this weekend?
- Sen. Lieberman to Honor Bristol Student
- Road it and weep
- More...

Find an event:

List an event Find Advanced event search

Find an article:

Submit an article Find Advanced article search

Shop Victoriously Find Yours

AdChoice

INTRODUCING **GREEN**
a new section on **courant.com**
See how people like you are living greener every day
— INCLUDES —
ECO FOOTPRINT CALCULATOR AND ECO TIPS

Popular stories

- Most viewed
- Most e-mailed

- [Investigators Continue Searching For Clues In Teen's Slaying](#)
- [Police Respond To Home Invasion](#)
- [Two Burglaries Overnight In Hartford](#)
- [Baseball Set For Rebirth In Hartford's South End](#)
- [I Am...An Abolitionist](#)



"Kids in hip-hop clothes standing around in the park — are these kids scary or is there just a perception that they're scary?" Jesse Jablon said.

"As a woman going by people who are drinking and doing drugs on the doorsteps, I feel threatened," said Daria Cesario. "I haven't heard of anybody being mugged in a long time. But there is the perception that when you see five kids in hoodies, they'll do you harm. The fear is there. It has to be addressed."

Many complained that absentee landlords make no effort to screen out tenants who create noise in the middle of the night and dump trash in their yards. "The issue is the quality of the renters who just don't care about the neighborhood," Jablon said.

"I'm an absentee landlord, but I'm here," replied Steve Devean, who agreed that many out-of-state landlords allow trouble-making tenants. "Eighty percent of my callers don't want to live on Park Street. I'll tell you, the cockroaches come out at night. My tenants are afraid to call police because of retaliation. Everybody wants to be safe. That's the basic that has to be addressed first."

Small discussion groups generated a series of proposals, ranging from bike and walking trails along the Pequabuck to small municipal incentives for owners who improve their properties, incentives to attract ethnic and outdoor-seating restaurants to the eastern end of Park Street, a police substation, nightly citizen patrols of Rockwell Park and regularly scheduled street-sweeping of the Park and Divinity street commercial corridors. Other proposals included tougher enforcement of anti-blight regulations and building codes, city-funded landscaping and cleanups at the western end of Park and Divinity streets, seasonal block parties, and greater use of Muzzy Field in the summer, perhaps with street vendors nearby.

"I grew up in the West End when everybody knew everybody, when it was the envy of Bristol. It bothers me to see it like it is now," said Joe Kelaita. "But I really believe we can bring it back. If we spruce up the streets around Muzzy Field, then the ones in the next ring out will want to clean up their properties, and it will keep working its way out."

Grossman plans to reconvene the group in the summer to explore specific suggestions, and will complete the planning report next winter. It's particularly timely because the highway section of Route 72 is being extended into Bristol, the nearby downtown mall site is up for redevelopment, the city is considering building a \$55 million school in the neighborhood, and two key West End parcels — a former car dealership and a defunct grocery store — are on the market.

"A lot of things are going on, some good and some not so good," Weiner said. "We want to know what the West End wants to look like in the future."

Contact Don Stacom at dstacom@courant.com.

[More articles](#)

Copyright © 2008, *The Hartford Courant*

Would you recommend this?

Rate it: ★★★★★

We encourage you to share your thoughts about our stories. However, comments that are obscene, overly personal, racist or otherwise inappropriate will be removed. Because the messages are posted instantly and anonymously, Courant.com cannot vouch for their accuracy or authenticity. Report abusive posts by clicking the link found at the upper right of each item. -- *Courant.com*

[Read all 5 comments »](#)

Type in your comments to post to the forum

Name (appears on your post)

[More most viewed](#)

iTowns Features

Sports

- [High School Sports](#)
- [Other Local Sports](#)

Special For Seniors

- [Read | Submit](#)

Business Buzz

- [Read | Submit](#)

More

- [Reader Articles](#)
- [Honor Roll Database](#)

Family Milestones



Births

- [Read | Submit](#)

Engagements

- [Read | Submit](#)

Civil Unions

- [Read | Submit](#)

Deaths & Memoriums

- [Read | Submit](#)

Weddings

- [Read | Submit](#)

Anniversaries

- [Read | Submit](#)



Upload Photos Here!

Click "upload your own photo" in the bottom corner to get started! Include the town name in your description and we'll find a home for your pictures in our galleries.

[Upload your own photo](#)

Upload Video Here!

Click on "upload your own video" to get started! Be sure to include the town name in your description.

[Upload your own video](#)

Comments

Type the numbers you see in the image on the right:

Post Comment



*Please note by clicking on "Post Comment" you acknowledge that you have read the [Terms of Service](#) and the comment you are posting is in compliance with such terms. **Be polite.** Inappropriate posts may be removed by the moderator. [Send us your feedback.](#)*

[amNY](#) | [Baltimore Sun](#) | [Chicago Tribune](#) | [Daily Press](#) | [LA Times](#) | [Newsday](#) | [Orlando Sentinel](#) | [Sun-Sentinel](#) | [The Morning Call](#) | [The Virginia Gazette](#)

[Terms Of Service](#) | [Privacy Policy](#) | [About Us](#) | [Contact Us](#) | [Advertise Online](#)

[CareerBuilder.com for Jobs](#) | [Apartments.com for Rentals](#) | [Cars.com for Autos](#) | [FSBO](#) | [Coupons](#) | [ShopLocal.com](#) | [Discount Shopping](#) | [Houses For Rent](#) | [Open Houses](#)