



# THE OBSERVER

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## Peering into West End

By ELIO GUGLIOTTI  
STAFF WRITER

Officials have turned to trends within the west end over the past two decades to spark the dialogue on the neighborhood's future.

The city is currently conducting a study of the west end neighborhood, which borders are roughly defined by the study as Rockwell Park and Jacobs Street to the north, Divinity Street to the southwest, Gridley Street to the southeast and West Street to the east. The intent of the study, which began earlier this year, is to seek out and identify the means for revitalizing the neighborhood.

Before officials look to the future of the neighborhood, they took a glance at the past.

The Casptan Group, a New Haven-based consulting firm, is leading the study in conjunction with the Planning Commission and the west end neighborhood advisory committee. The Casptan Group collected demographic data about the neighborhood on race, income, home ownership,

crime and educational attainment trends.

"They're basic indicators of what's happening in a neighborhood," said Lisa Grossman, CEO of The Casptan Group.

Data was taken from the 1990 and 2000 censuses, and a variety of information sources were used to estimate statistics for 2007, because the census is only done every ten years.

The majority of the west end's population is white, estimated at 88 percent last year followed by Hispanic at 9 percent and black at 5 percent. Although whites make up the majority of the population, that number has decreased since 1990, while the Hispanic population saw the greatest growth.

"That's a trend in cities much larger and in Bristol," said City Planner Alan Weiner about the growing population of Hispanics.

The growth, Weiner said, is not unlike the waves of Italian and French immigrants that came to the neighborhood decades ago.

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## Magic beans and more



MIKE CHAIKEN

Ally Brown, in front, rehearses a scene from 'Into The Woods.' The Bristol Eastern Troupe of Actors will stage the musical this week. See story on page 25.

## A day to challenge perceptions

By MIKE CHAIKEN  
EDITIONS EDITOR

It all began when a student at Bristol Eastern High School handed Erin Winger, a guidance counselor at the school, a video tape.

That tape contained an episode of the talk show "Oprah." And that episode focused on a national movement called, "Challenge Day."

Challenge Day is intended to "tear down the walls of separation and

inspires participants to live, study, and work in an encouraging environment of acceptance, love, and respect," explain documents from the non-profit organization that mounts the program in schools across the country.

Winger explained Challenge Day is an anti-violence, anti-bullying program.

"It's intended to challenge perceptions," said Larry Hochman, Winger's colleague in the school guidance department. "It

promotes inclusion by the elimination of isolation and making sure everyone has a place in the school."

Upon handing the guidance counselor the tape about Challenge Day, the student said, "We need to do this in our school." Winger said the student wouldn't explain why she felt this needed to be done, just that it should be done.

So, Winger took the tape home and watched "Oprah." The guidance counselor said the proceed-

ings on the show were an emotional experience that left her in tears.

After Winger watched the tape, she met with the student again. The student, an Hispanic freshman female, spoke this time about how she felt isolated at Bristol Eastern. She felt she faced racism and sexism within the school.

From this beginning, Challenge Day was scheduled for Bristol Eastern from

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