

**Report of the Bridgeport
Urban Land Institute Steering Committee's
Subcommittee on Improving the Economic Development Delivery
System and Support**

January 6, 2006

Background

In January 2005, the City of Bridgeport, in partnership with the Bridgeport Regional Business Council, retained the consulting services of the Urban Land Institute (ULI), one of the most respected urban development “think tanks” in the country. A panel of experts visited Bridgeport for a week to conduct an in-depth study of the city, and offer its recommendations concerning future economic development. Their task was to:

- Evaluate the city’s economic development strategies
- Evaluate proposed development projects
- Evaluate development sites
- Identify opportunities for Bridgeport’s revitalization.

The ULI provided Bridgeport with a final detailed report of its analysis and findings in May of 2005. The City and its partners have created the following three subcommittees to examine the ULI’s recommendations:

1. City Administrative & Service Improvements
2. Improving Economic Development Delivery & Support
3. Real Estate Market Opportunities.

The three sub-committees were tasked with reviewing ULI’s recommendations and developing draft action plans that were the focus of a Community Summit held on October 15, 2005 at the Klein Memorial Auditorium. Over 700 city residents, business leaders and elected officials attended this session. The post summit action plans provide:

- A review of ULI ‘s recommendations
- The reasons for approval or disapproval of specific ULI recommendations
- A suggested vision, with goals and objectives
- A prioritization of actions into short term, mid-term and/or long term priorities
- A recommended implementation plan.
- Comments received at the Summit

The goal of the October Summit was to create consensus around a shared vision and action plan for the city. The Summit opened up communication and dialogue. Once the feedback is compiled and distributed, the three subcommittees and the original steering committee will hold a public meeting to finalize the action plans. The City’s vision will be developed out of a Master Planning process that will be initiated in 2006. This process will encompass the broad strategies, goals and objectives that need to be implemented to accelerate the city’s revitalization.

The following recommendations indicate the subcommittee recommendations incorporate public comment received at the October 15, 2005 Community Summit. Summary conclusions are included with each of the sections where applicable. An unabridged listing of comments from the two report-out groups is attached at the conclusion of this report.

Improving Bridgeport's Economic Development Delivery System and Support Subcommittee

The Urban Land Institute's panel of experts studied the city's economic development programs and processes, toured the city, interviewed more than 200 representatives of various communities and sectors in Bridgeport, reviewed key data and documents from various agencies and arrived at a variety of recommendations.

The panel found that the City of Bridgeport faces a complex and daunting set of obstacles regarding the way in which it delivers economic development programs, provides land use and related development approvals and supports economic growth.

To counter these obstacles, the panel's recommendations chart a path to effective and efficient economic processes, which will create confidence, credibility, transparency and trust in the City's economic centers of operation. Equally important, the proposed transformation will attract competent, innovative, professional and visionary developers who will help to create a renaissance that makes Bridgeport a City of choice for business engagement. In this context, this sub-committee of the ULI steering Committee met to take the recommendations from the ULI Report and refine them to begin to shape an economic development delivery and support system aiming to bring the City's administrative capacity into the 21st century.

The subcommittee formed to deal with these challenges includes twenty-one members who live in Bridgeport, represent businesses within Bridgeport, or provided the sub-committee with technical advice and support. The diversity of the composition of the subcommittee ensures that it encompasses a broad range of recommendations. Members of this subcommittee, led by Reverend Trevor Babb, met five times, over a three-month period and are identified at the end of this document. Post Summit deliberations were initially chaired by Reverend Babb, and transferred to Lori Baker upon Reverend Babb's relocation out of State.

Guiding Principles and Definitions

The subcommittee established a set of guiding principals and commonly understood definitions for evaluating ULI's recommendations to improve the economic development delivery system and support.

- ***What do we mean by Economic Delivery?***

Best practices for economic delivery provide an efficient and effective interface between municipal planning and development organizations and developers who expect a reasonable and manageable turn-around time on projects. To insure this outcome, cities institute policies, processes, procedures, regulations and agencies to facilitate accessibility, transparency, and consistency for proposed developments.

- ***What do we mean by Economic Support?***

Economic support includes modern technology, adequate staffing, committed financial resources, and trained personnel to support the demands of a city like Bridgeport on the cutting edge of re-development. To accomplish an efficient economic delivery system and structure and an effective and sophisticated economic support system, the ULI panel recommended that the City work on the following ten key components:

Eleven Key Components of the Economic Delivery and Support System¹

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| <i>10. Increase Women and Minority Business and Bridgeport resident participation in the economic development of the City.</i> | 22 |
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¹ The subcommittee listed these items in order of priority.

Subcommittee Recommendations

1. Update Master Plan and Stick to it (pages 24-25 of the ULI report)

Without a Master Plan and a vision for types of economic development that it incorporates, Bridgeport will not have a cohesive and relevant set of policies by which to pursue its desire for revitalization. State law requires that a municipality's Master Plan be updated every ten years. City Ordinance requires a five-year update. Bridgeport's Master Plan was last updated in 1996 and was due to be updated in 2001. Updating the plan will require the City to obtain professional expertise because of its current lack of staff to undertake this complex planning effort. The planning process should include the scheduled six stakeholder-driven neighborhood revitalization zone efforts that require Planning and Zoning Commission and City Council approval. These plans should then be refined and incorporated into the updated Master Plan.

The subcommittee, having researched the details of updating the Master Plan, recommended the following requirements and actions:

- **Expertise Required:** The City will require either assistance from a single consultant or a team from either a planning or a law firm with appropriate technical and practical experience to incorporate the neighborhood revitalization zone plans (NRZs), the Downtown Special Services District (DSSD) Plan, and the Transit Oriented Development Plan. Each of the plans requires the unique skills of professionals with experience in land use practices and statutory compliance issues.
- **Timing:** Development of the plan may take 10- 12 months that include required public hearings.
- **Cost:** City staff from the Office of Planning and Economic Development (OPED) estimates that depending on the level of expertise; the cost drafting the master plan and incorporating into all related planning documents could range from approximately \$400,000 to \$650,000. The budget includes the following costs: printing drafts documents for review; renting space for neighborhood-based public hearings, both before the drafting of these plans as well as for comments on draft documents; mapping costs; and printing of the final drafts of all plan documents and maps. The process would require upgrade of the City's website to accommodate the plans and their maps.

The budget would also include newspaper publication of these items prior to regulatory boards and commissions' approvals. Additional costs of \$100,000-\$130,000 would cover reproduction of documents needed by the consultants and staff time to produce these items. The City would use a competitive bidding process to select a firm or team.

Estimated Budget

| | |
|------------------------------|------------------|
| Consulting Services | \$525,000 |
| Incidental Costs | <u>\$115,000</u> |
| Total Estimated Costs | \$640,000 |

Current Status of the Planning Process:

✓ **Neighborhood Revitalization Zone (NRZ) Planning:**

The City Council approved the Hollow's NRZ plan in May 2005. The East End's NRZ Plan is scheduled for presentation to the Planning and Zoning Commission and City Council in the fall of 2005. The East Side's plan commenced with stakeholder elections in the fall of 2005. OPED staff estimates that the plan will be at the approval stage in the spring of 2006. West Side/West End; South End; and Reservoir plans are scheduled to be completed in 2006.

The City's Federal Community Development Block Grant Program and technical support from the Connecticut Economic Development Fund provide the resources for the NRZ planning efforts. Representatives from the private sector are undertaking philanthropic fundraising to supplement this effort. The City is seeking funds to implement approved NRZ Plans from the State Bond Commission.

- The subcommittee recommends the completion of six NRZ plans by the end of 2006. Implementation of these plans by the end of 2006. Implementation of these plans needs to be initiated once State bond funding is made available.

✓ **The Downtown Special Services District (DSSD)**

The DSSD has received a \$250,000 state planning grant in 2004 for the Central Business District (CBD) Neighborhood Plan. (With the development of housing in the downtown, the downtown therefore it is to be considered a neighborhood). The DSSD, in partnership with the City, hopes to have a consultant retained by the winter of 2005. It is expected that this downtown master plan will be developed and available by **June 2006**. The subcommittee concurs with this tight timeframe.

✓ **Transit Oriented Development Study**

The City has secured Federal funds for the preparation of a transit-oriented development plan for the downtown extending southward to the former Remington Shaver property (the Broad/Main Corridor in the South End). This study will overlay the land use recommendations developed by the DSSD master planning effort. The subcommittee recommends that this study be completed in June 2006.

Community Summit Feedback:

- The 1996 City plan should have an update that coincides with the 10-year census update. That has not been done.
- The City plan should consist of a downtown plan, a harbor plan, and sixteen neighborhood plans closely coordinated with the NRZ efforts underway.
- The consistent theme was that the process needs to be clear, fair, and transparent.
- The information needs to be available on the web, and all library branches.
- The process for updating the Master Plan and Zoning Regulations needs to be inclusionary.
- The Updated Master Plan needs to respond to the new market forces.
- The City's planning function needs to be strengthened to focus on short and long-range implementation. The City's economic development functions need to focus on the implementation of the plans, and marketing the city. No marketing is being done at present. This needs to be addressed.

2. Reorganize and Streamline the Economic Development Entities and strengthen the Administrative Capacity of the Office of Planning and Economic Development (OPED) (pages 33-34)

a) Reorganize and streamline the Economic Development Entities.

The ULI panel recommends the city undertake a review of the mission, scope and resources of the eleven public and private economic development agencies identified in the 2002 report by BEDAC. The panel believes that Bridgeport's economic development efforts would be more effective if agencies were consolidated into three or four distinct groups, each with a clear mission, and delineated in the master plan. Currently, agencies are understaffed, infringe on each other's "turf", and lack the monetary resources needed to entice development. By consolidating some organizations, personnel and fiscal resources can be better channeled.

The ULI panel noted a lack of cohesion between the city and various economic development agencies on overall priorities, as well as differences of opinion for a particular site or use. Further, the panel observed that even when there was consensus among economic development officials, the community usually did not share the same priorities. Differences within the economic development community, as well as lack of community support, undermine the collective effort.

- The Subcommittee applauds the **merger of the Bridgeport Neighborhood Fund and Grow Bridgeport Fund into the Community Capital Fund, serving the Greater Bridgeport Area**. This merger will serve the residential and commercial developers and investors in a more efficient manner.

- The Subcommittee is also supportive of the **restructuring of BEDCO BEDAC, BEDCO and BERC** into a streamlined structure to lead the public/private development efforts. Currently BERC and BEDCO are reviewing the details of this restructuring.

- The subcommittee recommends the following actions to streamline and reorganize the Economic Development Entities:

1. Benchmark other cities best practices and coordinate with the Yale University Graduate School of Urban Design to develop an independent and highly effective structure, that is adequately funded and staffed with professional and specialized personnel, working in close collaboration with OPED to encourage and support downtown development and neighborhood revitalization projects that are cohesive, professionally packaged, and fit into the City’s Master Plan
2. **Consolidate the numerous economic development entities** currently responsible for economic development in Bridgeport into structures that are in keeping with the City’s vision and Master Plan for economic redevelopment. The merger of the Bridgeport Neighborhood Fund and the Grow Bridgeport Fund into the Community Capital Fund as well as the restructuring of BEDAC, BEDCO, and BERC into a public/private development corporation, are important and positive actions that will help to streamline and enhance our ability to deliver economic development services effectively. The new public/private entity should also reach out to the West End CDC to assist in their development efforts. Co-location in the City Hall Annex is recommended.

The remaining five entities, i.e. the DSSD, the Port Authority, the BRBC, and City structure (OPED/Redevelopment and Housing Site Development Agencies) need to work closely together to reflect the economic development strategy for the City in one voice. The additional expertise at the BHA rounds out the City’s professional implementation team.

- The subcommittee also commends the restructuring of the Bridgeport Housing Authority and the appointment of a new Board composed of highly qualified leaders. The new professional staff will enable the BHA to be a strong partner in the development of housing resources in the City.

Community Summit Feedback

- The current process makes doing business too complicated, compounded by the fact that there is a perception that the public is not promptly informed about development status. (To help mitigate this public concern, the Economic Development Projects pipeline power point presentation has been posted on the BRBC, BERC and the City of Bridgeport’s websites.)

b) Strengthen the Administrative Capacity of the Office of Policy and Economic Development (OPED).

The Department of City Planning has traditionally served as the research staff of the Executive Office and supported the City's economic development effort. In 1992, the City Charter was changed from traditional City Planning functions to project planning functions. The regulatory responsibilities were vested with the Land Use and Construction Review division. The Planning staff was freed from the regulatory review responsibilities. However, OPED did retain the responsibility for maintaining the Master Plan and many traditional planning databases.

Essentially, the mission of the Department of City Planning was structured to plan and help implement projects. Whatever planning was done in the city was done at the highest levels of government with *some* input from the planners. Current leadership of OPED seeks to return the department to its more traditional role as visionaries and neighborhood planners. The Subcommittee supports this direction and urges its implementation. OPED is also considering undertaking some form of development design review, although not necessarily codified. The process would require staff to have some interaction with the neighborhood councils/NRZ's to insure good quality design that complements neighborhood characteristics. To date, design review is sporadic and ineffective. The Subcommittee supports this new direction.

Transition from project planning to city planning will be difficult, as staff will have to manage on-going projects to completion before a full transition could take effect. Additionally, the department has a lot of public contact with at least 50 percent of staff time devoted to contact with the public, other city, state, and federal agencies, consultants, and local political leaders.

Currently, OPED has two planners that have Masters Degrees with 3+ years of practical experience. The GIS Administrator has two Masters Degrees. The average length of a planner's employment has been in the five-year range. There is no salary range for the planner positions. Currently, there are no performance steps, no career ladder, no advancement opportunities for these planning positions. The Subcommittee recommends that the staffing, recruitment, and retention policies be examined in order to strengthen the City's planning capacity.

The development of **Bridgeport's Enterprise Geographic Information System (E GIS)** is well underway and will be operationalized in 2006. The program will map and link all sorts of city, state, and private sector data together to enhance the decision-making capacity of the City. It will eventually expand into the electronic media world and allow the public to more freely access their government via the Internet for everything from general information to their taxes to land use and regulatory actions in their neighborhoods to question and answers sessions with city departments. Individual departments will be able to share information readily and efficiencies will be realized from better decision making, data sharing, and project and permit tracking.

The City's current practice of having one Land Use and Construction Review Planner make recommendations to the Planning and Zoning Commission on the applicability of the Zoning regulations to a particular application without sound planning principles embodied in the recommendations will continue to make Bridgeport a second class development opportunity. The link between zoning and planning must be strengthened.

Trained planners need to interface between strong neighborhood organizations or Neighborhood Revitalization Zone committees, a strong set of planning principles in a Master Plan and Plan of Conservation of Development, the applicant developer and the Commissioners. Currently there is not sufficient staff in the Planning Department to conduct reviews of development proposals, with the character and overall development of the neighborhood in mind as well as overall city economic development strategies. The Planning Department needs a full compliment of neighborhood planners, with varying expertise to help shape the development future of the City. Then, and only then will we get a balance of planning, zoning, inland wetland, historic, and economics on the development of the City's most precious taxable commodity, its land.

Community Summit Feedback:

Bridgeport's real estate market is beginning to strengthen and catch up with its neighboring suburbs. Sufficient resources need to be provided to assure that the growth is managed properly and the City grows the tax base and taxes are reduced.

3. Streamline the Current Development Process and Create a One-Stop Development Review System (pages 27-28 of the ULI report)

The subcommittee recommends the following actions:

- Review the June 2004 Total Quality Management (TQM) Final Report prepared by the One-Stop Building Permit Process Team in OPED on creating a **One-Stop development review** system. Implement those areas critical to making it easier for developers to easily navigate the land use permitting process.
- **Co-locate all of the relevant departments on the second floor of 45 Lyon Terrace** by March 30, 2006. The first step in this process is moving the Housing and Community Development Department to the City Hall Annex by the first quarter 2006.

This process will provide the second floor of 45 Lyon Terrace with additional space for specific development plans and enable development teams to have concurrent reviews. In this space, staff can provide developers applying for approvals with comments on design drawings and assistance with land use approval applications. The process should allow staff from the Planning and Zoning, Building and other related departments to coordinate updates and proposed projects with the Planning and Economic Development team. To date this is done on a sporadic basis.

- In this space, developers can also request design review meetings with various city departments. This service is currently voluntary and many developers do not know that it is available to them. The City must institutionalize this design review process and the process clearly marketed as a development incentive.

Community Summit Feedback:

Overwhelming consensus was achieved on this point. The process, the culture, and the efficiencies need to be dramatically improved.

Implement the **Enterprise-wide Geographic Information System (EGIS)** for development and taxation. The aerial photography needed to implement the process was completed in the **Spring of 2005**. Approximately 30,000 property parcels are currently being digitized and expected to be operationalized by **2006**. This system will enable staff to test build-out scenarios as the City updates its master plan.

- **Re-engineer the permitting processes** to eliminate redundancy and steps that add no value to the process. The existing process cannot be automated in its present state. Automate streamlined process will be initiated in 2006 in all relevant offices.
- **Demystify the process** for getting regulatory approval for development proposals. Create a road map and user guide for the developer in working with regulatory review bodies with the City administrative structure.

As a medium-term step, enable the information to be accessed by the development community and public through the City's Website by **June 30, 2007**. The City will have to develop various privacy and confidentiality releases prior to implementation of this recommendation.

- **Establish RFQ/RFP** criteria that are fair, transparent and consistent aimed at creating a "developer friendly" atmosphere.

A streamlined development review process enables developers to undergo a minimum of bureaucracy and be reasonably certain of their application's outcome. Cities undertake is by issuing Requests for Qualifications (RFQ) and Request for Proposals (RFP) for developers. However, the City's RFP current process does not ensure that the City can easily identify or select experienced developers to build quality developments. The ULI panel recommended that Bridgeport move to a Request for Qualifications (RFQ) process followed by an RFP process to ensure that only experienced developers are involved in the selection process. The city must also follow up on subsidized projects to ensure that the timing and sequencing of development process is proceeding satisfactorily.

The subcommittee strongly recommends that a policy be established either voluntarily or through the Council deliberations on the recommendations of the 2005 Disparity Study regarding efforts to ensure minority contractor representation in City development projects. - **Develop and implement a RFQ/RFP process for all major development proposals**, either through the City or through the restructured public/private economic development corporation mentioned above. This criteria and process should be tested and put into effect by **June 30, 2006**.

Additional or Alternative recommendations from sub-committee members and others:

- Consider enacting the right to implement “**preferred developer**” status. The City and its public/private economic development agency should consider instances when a “preferred developer” status would be applicable. In certain circumstances, an RFQ/RFP process can be time consuming and considered an obstacle to development by many qualified developers who are looking to take advantage of time sensitive development opportunities. If the right developer came into the City with a great project and financing in place and with a concept that fits the City of Bridgeport’s vision, the City should explore the right or ability to bypass the RFQ/RFP process to expedite a project that is within the best interest of the City. Such a process will be subject to complete ethical scrutiny. This alternative can take advantage of the myriad of large development opportunities that exist with many qualified developers with their own financing who are ready to begin development. Without this flexibility, these types of developers would rather develop their projects elsewhere than go through the RFQ/RFP process as it currently exists in Bridgeport.

- **Provide all RFQ/RFP documentation and procedures on the City’s website**
 - The City has implemented this recommendation.
- Ensure that **all development projects are consistent with the vision of the City**, conform to the City’s Master Plan and complete all regulatory testing before approval.

(See recommendations in the section regarding updating the Master Plan).

- Identify funding to **prepare and provide available land** for development opportunities on a continual basis **through a Land Bank**.

The subcommittee recognizes that the City currently owns a significant amount of property. In the short term, for projects that are strong and meet the criteria that the Real Estate subcommittee has established, the City should focus efforts to make those projects a reality and return the property to the tax rolls. For projects that do not meet the criteria, the City should issue new RFP’s to start the process anew. Once this backlog is cured, the City can explore a limited land bank system through the public/private partnership.

- Apply balanced scorecard criteria to the developer selection process (refer to Real Estate Subcommittee for details).
- After developer selection, execute Memoranda of Understanding (MOU), Preferred Developer Agreement (PDA) and Land Disposition Agreement (LDA) in a timely manner.
- The City should develop a policy that stipulates that no developer has any rights to additional parcels until they have demonstrated performance on their current development.

- Consider a process for some parcels that eliminates the RFP process. Instead use a RFQ process and then undertake negotiations with a developer. This shorter process could expedite the development process.

4. Update Zoning Map As-of-right Zoning and Limit reviews to Major Projects (pages 25-26 of the ULI report)

The ULI panel found that the city’s zoning requirement of restricting as-of-right development is overly protective and needs change. Further, the panel found that the regulatory process is perceived not to be developer-friendly.

In other jurisdictions, the approval process is more streamlined. If a petitioner submits an application to build, and the proposal meets the basic requirements of the zoned district as adopted in the master plan, the application goes through an administrative staff review for compliance. However in Bridgeport, the petitioner is required to go before the Planning and Zoning Commission for review, except for low-density residential proposals. The development community views this process as overly restrictive and time consuming. The development review process currently lacks predictability and there is widespread misunderstanding about the responsibilities of the Planning and Zoning Commission and the Zoning Board of Appeals. But, the panel stresses that the development review process should *not* be made easy for any and all development — indeed the process should be thorough and rigorous. What the current system lacks is clear rules, a reliable process, and a level playing field.

Additional or Alternative recommendations from sub-committee members and others:

- Of particular urgency is the amount of industrially zoned land. If the City doesn’t start to change this situation quickly, it will not have an opportunity to reposition some critical areas of the city- i.e. waterfront, Remgrit, Cherry/Howard block. (See additional comments under Brownfields section below).

Additional Information

- During the revision of the Zoning regulations in 1996, the Planning and Zoning Commission removed the Zoning Board of Appeals right to grant use variances in an effort to stop the proliferation of “back door zone changes”. The ZBA has been granting a series of “Use Variances” to petitioners who were refused zone changes by the P & Z to put high-density condominium developments in low-density residential zones. While concentrated in the North End of the City, these variances resulted in condo developments that were not compatible with the single-family characteristics of the area. The ZBA granted variances for some commercial uses that again intruded into the low-density residential neighborhoods. The ZBA reportedly believed they were expanding the tax base with their actions and the question of “hardship” was liberally employed. Ultimately the ZBA sued and won back its right to grant use variances.

Even today, the ZBA considers height and parking issues as a legitimate hardship and will grant variances on special permits issued by the Planning and Zoning Commission. There is significant case law in Connecticut that if these practices were challenged, the ZBA actions would not be sustained.

Community Summit Feedback:

The land use process seems overly reliant on the legal profession. It is too complicated, and too long. Ways to simplify this process needs to be explored. Close coordination with the Master Plan is critical.

5. Stop Tax Lien Sales (pages 35-36 of ULI report)

The ULI panel recommended that Bridgeport stop selling tax liens immediately to alleviate issues of title controls that arise from such sales. Further, Bridgeport should reassess its program of foreclosure and use of eminent domain powers. These exercises take properties off the tax rolls due to the tax-exempt status of municipal land. The city has a fiduciary duty to manage its assets, and properties should not be allowed to stand in limbo.

The panel recommended that the City:

- Identify existing lien holders and compile a contact database
- Identify areas where there may be potential for land assembly
- Compile a list of all information regarding city owned or controlled properties, and make the list available to the public.
- Earmark the above property types for inclusion in a “land bank”
- Develop a program of short-term option sales of parcels to the Bridgeport Housing Authority, community development corporations, non-profits, or private developers for housing purposes. If development does not proceed according to agreed-upon schedules, the property reverts back to the city.
- Support the new City initiative to conduct public auctions of tax lien properties that have been foreclosed by the City. The subcommittee recommends the following actions:

The subcommittee did not reach consensus on the recommendation to eliminate bulk tax lien sales. The members think that individual tax lien sales and the impetus for prompt economic development need further discussion at the Summit. Some members suggest targeted tax lien sales. In any case, the list should be free of all strategic properties that support various planning strategies, and the remaining liens would be sold with specific timeframes for performance. The overarching goal is to return the property to productive use.

Members recognize that city budget concerns have driven the current bulk tax lien sales. They also recognize bulk tax lien sales do not contain all properties in tax delinquency. The City has not included strategic properties and foreclosures are underway with other properties. Moreover, the bulk lien sale produces immediate cash that achieves a balanced City budget.

Additional or Alternative recommendations from sub-committee members and others:

- Consider stopping the lien sales entirely but conduct them more strategically. The City should delete good retail sites, in-fill housing sites, sites adjacent to the \$200 million new school construction sites, sites near major public investments, sites along or near the water and major assemblages from the lien sales. An operational EGIS system would be the pre-requisite to this, which at the City will be instituting in the very near future.
- Another approach would be to stop the foreclosure actions on certain key properties and sell the tax liens on those properties to a limited universe, i.e., developers with critical performance criteria. That strategy might ratchet up the tension to get the property into productive use and the City would gain cash revenue in a shorter period of time. This is the process used in Redding that enabled the Georgetown development to be accelerated. The Town sold the tax liens on the property through an RFP that encouraged developers with experience with developing similar sites to respond. The Town then negotiated the details of the financing incorporating the value of the liens in a discounted formula.
- Sale of City owned property should be widely publicized and information available via the City website. The process needs to be fair and easy to follow.

Community Summit Feedback

Let the individual property owners have a chance to purchase city owned properties.
Stop the bulk tax lien sales.

6. Address Obstacles Caused by Brownfields (Pages 29-32 of ULI Report)

The ULI panel recommended that the City develop a comprehensive strategy for redeveloping its brownfields in a manner consistent with the City's Master Plan. The City must bring the parties who are legally responsible for cleaning up the pollution at these sites to the negotiating table. Decisions regarding when or if the cleanup of polluted properties should be an integral part of the city's redevelopment strategy. These decisions are too important to leave entirely to the parties legally responsible for the pollution they caused. These decisions are also too important to leave entirely to the state or federal environmental agencies. Nor should outside government agencies dictate the level of cleanup, for they do not have a vested interest in the success of the city's redevelopment. The City's determination of the highest and best use—consistent with the master plan—should dictate the cleanup standards for polluted property. Ultimately, the City may have to adjust the master plan on a case-by-case basis. However, the judgment to settle for less than the highest and best use should be made by the City, not persons legally responsible for cleaning up the pollution. The City should explore the feasibility of partnering with other regional governments that are confronting waste disposal problems to site a centralized waste treatment or disposal facility. The concept of “net environmental gain” should guide the City's review of these opportunities.

- **Brownfields Coordinator:**

The ULI panel recommends that the City identify a person (or persons) to develop and coordinate the implementation of the city's Brownfield strategy. This does not necessarily require hiring a new staff member. A consultant or a team of consultants could perform the role of Brownfield coordinator.

The Subcommittee recommends the following actions:

- The subcommittee strongly supports having coordination of activities regarding Brownfields and the position should be a City-funded position in OPED. Once this expert is in place, the City can address all of the other Brownfields recommendations. Currently, there is no central focus and therefore no accountability.
- The subcommittee also recommends the new public private economic development entity look at assuming additional responsibilities in this regard, removing the chain of title liability issues from the City

Additional or Alternative recommendations from sub-committee members and others:

- The very first thing that the City must do with regard to Brownfields sites is to understand how the City wants to develop the cleaned sites and how do these sites fit in and support the City's new master plan of development. The basic vision should precede the strategy of identifying funds to achieve those objectives.
- The Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) recommended marketable Brownfields sites as a priority for remediation. These sites need to have a remediation solution with either monetary resources or legal enforcement to achieve buildable status. They also recommend consolidation of all of the Brownfields into a comprehensive inventory, identified by pollutants and prioritized as to marketability and remediation status. The subcommittee concurs with these recommendations.

If obstacles emerge which require the development objectives to be modified, the City can consider doing that. However, if the City only pursues remediation funds, it will be saddled with the funder's directions on their use, not what is in the best interests of Bridgeport.

Planning should drive the clean-up and reuse- especially for the major sites like Remgrit, Cherry/Howard and the Former Remington Shaver site.

- An alternative recommendation to hiring a Brownfields coordinator is that the City hire an environmental planner. This person may have an undergraduate planning degree and masters in environmental science or vice versa. The individual should be familiar with all aspects of environmental planning, including but not limited to: soil and groundwater issues, storm water and riparian issues, coastal management issues, best management and development practices in building, site design, environmental health issues, etc. This person should be able to take on the grant requirements for the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Brownfields programs but not be tied to work on Brownfields primarily.

Secondly, the City needs a senior staff person who is comfortable working as a liaison to other departments and agencies that can take on issues surrounding City-led Brownfields and other high-profile sites. The staff person should be able to manage construction/demolition issues, contractual issues, eminent domain and other property transfer issues.

Thirdly, the environmental planner should provide training to economic development and planning personnel.

Finally, the other ULI recommendations were based on the ULI reviewers experience dealing with Waukegan, Illinois where the city sought to open up a two-mile stretch of waterfront littered with abandoned and active industrial facilities. This was a unique, somewhat monolithic situation that does not transfer well with the multitude of different types of Brownfields issues in Bridgeport. In this regard, the City should:

- a. Continue to support the Sustainable Brownfields Redevelopment Process, which includes those affected by Brownfields in the decision-making process, i.e. the East End Environmental Justice effort underway.
- b. Support the risk-based approach to remediation using the CT Remediation Standards for Residential and Commercial/Industrial uses (RSR) approach and developing a layer of the Enterprise Geographic Information System (E GIS) based system to monitor environmental land use restrictions. (Sites do not get cleanup; they get cleaned for the use). This should be tied to the planning and zoning and building permit processes.
- c. Work with responsible parties to remove impediments to cleanup.
- d. Develop sources of funding/loans for private parties. This is started and should be expended through a loan-matching program with the EPA Revolving Loan Fund program
- e. The City needs a fund of internal resources to handle long-term management of City-owned Brownfields sites for ongoing monitoring.
- f. The City and the Park City Partnership should hold a meeting to draw up a set of additional recommendations related to Brownfields and environmental improvements in Bridgeport.

- **Enforcement**

The ULI panel recommended that the City, in cooperation with the state or independently, explore the feasibility of accelerating the pace and level of cleanup by persons legally responsible for the pollution they have caused in Bridgeport. Bridgeport needs to develop a strategy for mobilizing the financial resources of the persons legally responsible for the contamination (or their insurers) to pay for the cleanup of the properties polluted. The ULI panel also recommended that the city adopt ordinances dealing with buildings lying vacant because of environmental hazards.

The subcommittee recommends positively that once the City establishes its vision and has prepared its inventory of Brownfield sites with the corresponding information on contaminants and costs of remediation, the City can work on enforcement strategies under the leadership of the Brownfields Coordinator with support from the Park City Environmental Team.

- **State Partnership**

The ULI panel recommended that Bridgeport continue to work closely with the State on reviewing whether changes might be made in environmental regulations that would advance Brownfield development in the city. The subcommittee concurs with this recommendation.

- The subcommittee panel recommends that owners should have the right to use engineered controls. The environmental assessment process and State Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) regulations should recognize the viability of engineered controls, particularly in areas where groundwater is not used. An engineered control (e.g., asphalt cap) can be the option of choice. An engineering control is usually the cheapest, most adaptable to change, and simple Brownfield remediation tool to implement. However, the DEP Commissioner will not approve an engineering control unless the property owner demonstrates it is an option of last resort. The state DEP and city should recognize that engineered controls are less expensive by comparison to other options. The DEP also requires that holders of utility easements and other “subordinate” interests in the property consent to the use the engineered control. The City should work with the State and try to change its policy to match the rest of the country, and acknowledge that engineering controls are an "equally" effective option for urban areas. The subcommittee supports this recommendation

- **DEP cleanup approval process**

Property owners probably do not want to incur the cost of creating a site plan unless DEP will approve the cleanup plan. The DEP, on the other hand, will not approve the cleanup plan without a complete site plan that depicts the location of engineered controls. The DEP should approve cleanup plans that provide the owner with various options for engineered controls—including geo-textile liners or soil cover over areas that will not be covered with concrete or asphalt. The property owner will then submit “as built” plans depicting the locations of the pre-approved engineered controls at a later stage in the development process, most likely after zoning approval for the development.

- **Revisit the Connecticut Transfer Act**

The primary purpose of the Connecticut Property Transfer Act was to protect unsuspecting buyers from unscrupulous sellers of contaminated property. Buyers of property in industrial cities are already alert to the likelihood of contamination. If they are not, their lenders are. State law already dictates the standard of appropriate inquiry necessary to qualify as an innocent owner or bona fide purchaser. The best thing the DEP can do to promote redevelopment in Bridgeport is to let the City pursue remedies and responsible parties as the City deems necessary. Developers and their financiers should be allowed to determine the type of covenant to seek from the DEP. There should also be more flexibility to have Licensed Environmental Professionals (LEP’s) enlisted to expedite the analysis and decision-making.

Community Summit Feedback

- Hire a Brownfields coordinator.

Utilize the Geographic Infosystem to geocode the Brownfields sites and update land use information on all of the sites that were targeted years ago during the Brownfields pilot program.

7. Train and Improve the Regulatory Boards and Commissions (page 26 of the ULI Report)

The ULI panel recommended that City board members be required to attend training. They also recommended that board seats be reserved for members of the community with pertinent expertise.

The subcommittee recommended the following actions:

- Make training **mandatory** for **all** Board Members and Commissioners before assuming their role as decision-makers.
- Provide training opportunities for all persons involved in the economic development delivery system.
 - The City has begun implementing this recommendation. On **July 15, 2005**, almost all Planning and Zoning Commissioners and Zoning Board of Appeals Commissioners attended an all-day training session with City staff.
 - In 2004-2005, the Mayor appointed an entirely new Board of Commissioners for the Bridgeport Housing Authority. This board has received extensive training over the past six months.
- Develop an orientation program for new appointments and ongoing training throughout the year by the second quarter of 2006.
 - Timing and quorum requirements may not permit the scheduling of training before being seated on a Board. At a minimum, City planning and zoning staff should provide Connecticut Bar Association training manual materials on the basic planning and zoning principles to give to new appointees before attending their first meeting. New appointees will attend training as soon as it can be arranged.
- Create a City Training Academy to ensure ongoing training opportunities. The city can make use of materials from professional organizations and publication to facilitate this process. Both the day city staff and night city voluntary board members will be able to participate.
 - The City does not have any in-house training capacity for either day or night participants. It is recommended that the City work with private sector and educational institutions of higher learning to assist in the implementation of this recommendation.

- Immediately create and implement objective selection criteria for appointing ALL Board Members and Commissioners that will ensure relevant and professional expertise are part of the decision making process.
 - Political and community leaders should use the criteria to present to the Mayor as appointing official and City Council as confirming body.
- Make costs of training of Board Members and Commissioners a budget item and provide needed funding to ensure implementation.
- Political and community leaders should use the criteria to present to the Mayor as appointing official and City Council as confirming body.
 - The City has implemented this recommendation. Training funds are contained in the OPED budget. Once an annual training program is developed, a budget needs to be presented to support the implementation throughout each year.

Community Summit Feedback

Land Use is a complicated, litigious process. The appointees to the boards must be experienced, attend an orientation session before assuming a seat on the Board, and attend regular training sessions. On the job training is not appropriate. In order to achieve more diversity on the Boards, a community training effort should be instituted to encourage more residents and businesspersons to become interested and involved. This should also improve the Council conformation process. If an appointee does not want to be trained, they should not be appointed. All voluntary Boards should be cross trained.

8. Promote Regional Cooperation and Leadership (Page 34 of ULI Report)

The ULI panel believes that the City of Bridgeport has several competitive advantages compared to other communities in the region. These advantages will become clearer as Bridgeport begins to communicate better with its neighbors. Thus, it is critical that economic development be conducted in the context of Bridgeport's role in the region. This means that Bridgeport must foster more cooperation with its neighbors and develop a regional strategy. It also means that Bridgeport must shape its citywide plan based upon its place in the region, keeping in mind the impacts of new developments in other cities.

- The subcommittee expressed strong support for Bridgeport to take a leadership role in the Southwestern Fairfield County Region. Regional cooperation and reciprocity are critical to transportation, housing, and energy issues that link Southwestern Fairfield County. All of these systems critically affect this region's economic future.

- The City should strengthen the Bridgeport Regional Planning Agency first by the vision and leadership qualities of the appointments that the City makes to the Board, and then by strong collaboration with the Southwestern Regional Planning Agency (SWRPA) based in Stamford.
- The subcommittee recommends that Bridgeport evaluate having a Regional Council of Governments and one Metropolitan Planning Agency. Congressman Shay’s \$1,000,000 grant “One Coast, One Future” for the three regional Chambers (Business Council of Fairfield County, Norwalk Regional Chamber and Bridgeport Regional Business Council) is an excellent first step in this direction. Much more needs to be done.
- Recent legislation proposed in the General Assembly encourages regional collaboration. Members of the subcommittee believe that soon the State will provide incentives for funding for those regions that have formed strong bonds among elected officials. They will also encourage regional service areas for labor, social services, transportation, health and workforce development.

Examples of regional cooperation are the strong Council of Governments and Regional Planning bodies in the Hartford Metro Region and New Haven Metro Region. Bridgeport has to join with Norwalk, Stamford, and the Valley to create the opportunities for excellence in the issues regarding economic and social capital.

The Bridgeport Regional Business Council (BRBC) with The Business Council of Fairfield County (formerly known as SACIA) will be receiving a \$1,000,000 federal grant in October. The grant is called “One CoastOne Future”. One of those initiatives will be to create a wireless connection for the three central business districts of Bridgeport, Norwalk and Stamford and along the railroad artery.

- Each year the Mayor should host a joint meeting with the Region’s federal/state legislators and municipal CEO’s to exchange information on the regional issues of significance and the major project development and federal/state funding concerns.

Community Summit Feedback

No comments received

9. Improve the City’s Partnership with the State of Connecticut (page 34 of the ULI Report)

The ULI panel advised the City that it will not have the financial resources necessary to be successful without support from the State of Connecticut. The panel heard that the actions of Bridgeport’s government in years past have done little to engender the confidence of State elected officials and staff members. The panel also advised that members of the State legislature assert their considerable influence in Hartford and must play upon the strengths of the city.

The subcommittee supports this recommendation. The current OPED staff is working with State agencies to enhance relationships with State agencies. Ultimately, the voters of Bridgeport to whom members of the State legislature are accountable must demand that Bridgeport be appropriately supported by the State.

Community Summit Feedback

Strong support from the participants. Bridgeport needs a larger share of state resources

10. Increase Minority Business and Bridgeport Resident participation in the economic development growth of the City.

The original recommendation was to establish a policy regarding efforts to ensure minority contractor representation in City Development projects as well as implement an enforcement strategy

The Community Summit surfaced a strong reaction that efforts must be strengthened in this area. The overall theme was that new jobs and contracts for the new economic development efforts should benefit Bridgeport residents and businesses. Impediments to minority business participation should continue to be identified and solutions found. The current efforts of the City in this regard are to be commended but there is much more to do.

In the spring of 2005, the City concluded a two-year Disparity Study that provides the methodology and research into the possible disparities in employment and business opportunities for all of the Federally identified protected classes of individuals and businesses. Cities such as Hartford and New Haven completed such studies over a decade ago. Out of these studies, goals for hiring and business opportunities can be developed and sustain legal challenges. The City Council is urged to act promptly to create the necessary implementing ordinances based on the results of the Diversity Study.

The Community wants to make sure that minority hiring is real. That women and minority owned businesses are true to their label and not a sham to achieve participation. The Hire Bridgeport First efforts and Jobs Funnel need to be implemented aggressively in Bridgeport. An enforcement process must be developed to make sure that the goals are achieved and the progress is communicated.

Developers have been encouraged to set up pre-meetings for minority contractors. This trend should continue. Every effort should be made to eliminate any and all disparities that have occurred in the past.

11. Eminent Domain (page 35 of the ULI report)

The ULI panel recommended that the City should reassess its use of eminent domain. After the publication of the ULI report, the United States Supreme Court issued its decision in the case of Kelo v. New London (2005). In the Kelo case, the U.S. Supreme Court upheld the use of eminent domain to take private property for economic development. The majority opinion of the Court recognized over a century of precedent affirming the proposition that “promoting economic development is a traditional and long accepted function of government.” “For more than a century,” the Court opined, “our public use jurisprudence has wisely eschewed rigid formulas and intrusive scrutiny in favor of affording legislatures broad latitude in determining what public needs justify the use of the takings power.” However, the Court emphasized that its

ruling in the Kelo case was informed by the fact that the private development in question was pursuant to a “carefully formulated ... economic development plan.” **Municipalities must not exercise eminent domain arbitrarily or without adequate forethought and planning, but instead must be deliberate and judicious in their taking of private property:**

Those who govern the City were not confronted with the need to remove blight in the Fort Trumbull area, but their determination that the area was sufficiently distressed to justify a program of economic rejuvenation is entitled to our deference. **The City has carefully formulated an economic development plan that it believes will provide appreciable benefits to the community, including -- but by no means limited to -- new jobs and increased tax revenue.** As with other exercises in urban planning and development, the City is endeavoring to coordinate a variety of commercial, residential, and recreational uses of land, with the hope that they will form a whole greater than the sum of its parts. To effectuate this plan, the City has invoked a state statute that specifically authorizes the use of eminent domain to promote economic development. **Given the comprehensive character of the plan, the thorough deliberation that preceded its adoption,** and the limited scope of our review, it is appropriate for us, as it was in *Berman [v. Parker]*, 348 U. S. 26 (1954), to resolve the challenges of the individual owners, not on a piecemeal basis, but rather in light of the entire plan. Because that plan unquestionably serves a public purpose, the takings challenged here satisfy the public use requirement of the Fifth Amendment.

The Kelo decision made clear that under federal constitutional law, a municipality may take private property for economic development. However, the subcommittee recommends that the City remain cognizant of its responsibility, affirmed by Kelo, to exercise this power carefully, pursuant to comprehensive and well thought out development plans. Moreover, the subcommittee stresses that such plans be community-based and community-driven, and refers to the important role of Neighborhood Revitalization Zones in ensuring that all stakeholders fully participate in the planning process.

The Supreme Court emphasized that nothing in its opinion in the Kelo case “precludes any State from placing further restrictions on its exercise of the takings power.” In the wake of the Kelo opinion, Connecticut’s legislature, like many others, is considering such restrictions. Given the fact that there is very little developable land in Bridgeport, and considering the manifest need in the City for continued economic development, the subcommittee is concerned that restricting the use of eminent domain would substantially interfere with the ability of municipalities like Bridgeport to move forward. **Instead, the subcommittee proposes that cities continue to police themselves, exercising the takings power only as a last resort, demonstrating sensitivity to resident, business and other property owners, and adhering to long-established principles of due process and just compensation.** Community Summit Feedback Do not take any more property until all the property previously taken is back on the tax rolls. Compensate the property owners for the value of the property plus the sentimental value, trauma of the move, dislocation, and hardship it causes.

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Glossary of Terms

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|------------------------|---|
| BEDAC | Bridgeport Economic Development Advisory Committee – former Governor Rowland appointed key private sector leaders to guide economic development in Bridgeport during City’s corruption trials |
| BERC | Bridgeport Economic Resource Center, 10 Middle Street. Affiliate of the Connecticut Economic Resource Center. Privately funded non-profit corporation charged with interface with developers interested in doing business in the city. |
| BHA | Bridgeport Housing Authority. Statutorily created entity to manage over 6000 public housing units and housing vouchers. Five member Board appointed by Mayor. |
| BNF | Bridgeport Neighborhood Fund, now known as the Community Capital Fund |
| BNT | Bridgeport Neighborhood Trust, non-profit residential developer, affiliated with Community Capital Fund. |
| BPA | Bridgeport Port Authority |
| BRBC | Bridgeport Regional Business Council, 10 Middle Street. Regional business membership organization. Umbrella for several chamber of commerce organizations |
| BRA/HSDA | Bridgeport Redevelopment Agency/Housing Sites Development Agency. Staffed by the City’s Office of Planning and Economic Development, these two agencies conduct redevelopment and housing development activities in accordance with state statutes. |
| Community Capital Fund | Merged loan funds of the Bridgeport Neighborhood Fund (residential) and the Grow Bridgeport Fund (commercial) |
| DSSD | Downtown Special Services District. Taxing district comprised of the central business district. Property owners assess themselves an additional 3-mil tax to provide additional services for the downtown. |

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| GBF | Grow Bridgeport Fund, now Community Capital Fund |
| GBTA | Local mass transit agency operating bus service within the City and surrounding towns. |
| Master Plan | Official Land Use Policy Plan and Map as required by state statute and City ordinance. Minor updates must be done every five years. Major update required every 10 years. |
| MOU | Memorandum of Understanding |
| NRZ | Neighborhood Revitalization Zone. State statute providing process for stakeholder driven neighborhood planning process. Plans must be endorsed by Planning and Zoning Commission and approved by City Council. |
| LDA | Land Disposition Agreement. Terms of disposition of city-owned land. |
| OPED | City's Office of Planning and Economic Development. Oversight over Planning, Economic Development, Housing, Community Development, Neighborhood Revitalization, Land Use and Construction Review, Zoning, and Building Departments. |
| PDA | Preferred Developer Agreement |
| Regulatory Boards: | Planning and Zoning Commission (PZC) Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA) Inland Wetlands Commission (IWC) Historic Commissions- City has two, Stratfield Historic Commission & Historic District No. 1 |
| TOD | Transit-Oriented Development |
| WE CDC | West End Community Development Corporation, developer of West End Industrial Park. |
| Zoning Map | Official Land Use zoning regulations and map. Governed under State statutes and City Ordinances. |