

AN ADVISORY SERVICES PANEL REPORT

Bridgeport Connecticut



**Urban Land
Institute**

Bridgeport Connecticut

Citywide Economic Development Strategies

January 16-21, 2005
An Advisory Services Panel Report

ULI—the Urban Land Institute
1025 Thomas Jefferson Street, N.W.
Suite 500 West
Washington, D.C. 20007-5201

About ULI—the Urban Land Institute

ULI—the Urban Land Institute is a non-profit research and education organization that promotes responsible leadership in the use of land in order to enhance the total environment.

The Institute maintains a membership representing a broad spectrum of interests and sponsors a wide variety of educational programs and forums to encourage an open exchange of ideas and sharing of experience. ULI initiates research that anticipates emerging land use trends and issues and proposes creative solutions based on that research; provides advisory services; and publishes a wide variety of materials to disseminate information on land use and development.

Established in 1936, the Institute today has more than 25,000 members and associates from 80 countries, representing the entire spectrum of the land use and development disciplines. Profession-

als represented include developers, builders, property owners, investors, architects, public officials, planners, real estate brokers, appraisers, attorneys, engineers, financiers, academics, students, and librarians. ULI relies heavily on the experience of its members. It is through member involvement and information resources that ULI has been able to set standards of excellence in development practice. The Institute has long been recognized as one of America's most respected and widely quoted sources of objective information on urban planning, growth, and development.

This Advisory Services panel report is intended to further the objectives of the Institute and to make authoritative information generally available to those seeking knowledge in the field of urban land use.

Richard M. Rosan
President

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Suite 500 West
Washington, D.C. 20007-5201

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ULI Catalog Number: ASB086

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About ULI Advisory Services

The goal of ULI's Advisory Services Program is to bring the finest expertise in the real estate field to bear on complex land use planning and development projects, programs, and policies. Since 1947, this program has assembled well over 400 ULI-member teams to help sponsors find creative, practical solutions for issues such as downtown redevelopment, land management strategies, evaluation of development potential, growth management, community revitalization, brownfields redevelopment, military base reuse, provision of low-cost and affordable housing, and asset management strategies, among other matters. A wide variety of public, private, and nonprofit organizations have contracted for ULI's Advisory Services.

Each panel team is composed of highly qualified professionals who volunteer their time to ULI. They are chosen for their knowledge of the panel topic and screened to ensure their objectivity. ULI panel teams are interdisciplinary and typically include several developers, a landscape architect, a planner, a market analyst, a finance expert, and others with the niche expertise needed to address a given project. ULI teams provide a holistic look at development problems. Each panel is chaired by a respected ULI member with previous panel experience.

The agenda for a five-day panel assignment is intensive. It includes an in-depth briefing day composed of a tour of the site and meetings with sponsor representatives; a day of hour-long interviews of typically 50 to 75 key community representatives; and two days of formulating recommendations. Many long nights of discussion precede the panel's conclusions. On the final day on site, the panel makes an oral presentation of its findings and conclusions to the sponsor. A written report is prepared and published.

Because the sponsoring entities are responsible for significant preparation before the panel's visit, including sending extensive briefing materials to each member and arranging for the panel to meet with key local community members and stakeholders in the project under consideration, partic-

ipants in ULI's five-day panel assignments are able to make accurate assessments of a sponsor's issues and to provide recommendations in a compressed amount of time.

A major strength of the program is ULI's unique ability to draw on the knowledge and expertise of its members, including land developers and owners, public officials, academicians, representatives of financial institutions, and others. In fulfillment of the mission of the Urban Land Institute, this Advisory Services panel report is intended to provide objective advice that will promote the responsible use of land to enhance the environment.

ULI Program Staff

Rachelle L. Levitt
Executive Vice President, Policy and Practice

Mary Beth Corrigan
Vice President, Advisory Services and Policy Programs

Nancy Zivitz Sussman
Senior Associate, Advisory Services

Nicholas Gabel
Associate, Advisory Services

Jason Bell
Panel Coordinator, Advisory Services

Yvonne Stanton
Administrative Assistant

Nancy H. Stewart
Director, Book Program

Julie D. Stern/JDS Communications
Manuscript Editor

Betsy VanBuskirk
Art Director

Martha Loomis
Desktop Publishing Specialist/Graphics

Kim Rusch
Graphics

Diann Stanley-Austin
Director, Publishing Operations

Acknowledgments

The panelists and ULI—the Urban Land Institute appreciate having had the opportunity to convene an Advisory Services panel in the historic city of Bridgeport, Connecticut. The panel process is a massive undertaking, one that was made successful by the support and dedication of numerous people. Specifically, the panel would like to thank Mayor John Fabrizi and his staff, particularly Deborah Caviness, Ruben Felipe, Nancy Hadley, Caryn Kaufman, Ed Lavernoch, and Mike Nidoh, for their assistance both before and during the panel’s visit. The panel also would like to thank Paul Crisalli, chair of the ULI District Council for Westchester/Fairfield County, Connecticut.

Several corporate sponsors helped make this panel possible. Special thanks go to Peter Hurst, John Klein, and Peter Brestovan of People’s Bank; Ray Rizio and David Quatrella of Quatrella & Rizio; the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation; Neil Salonen, president of the University of Bridgeport; Mary Pat Healy of SBC; Paul Antinozzi and George Perham of Antinozzi Associates Architecture & Interior Design; Shelly Saczynski of United Illuminating; John Stafstrom of Pullman & Comley; Charles Firlotte of Aquarion Company; Ernest Trefz of the Trefz Corporation; August Serra of General Electric; William Carroll and Sean Carroll of Merit Insurance; Kathleen Gardner of Wheelabrator Bridgeport; Robert Parnell of PSEG Power; Ted Hofbauer of Bridgeport Energy; Katherine Saint of the Schwerdtle Stamp Company; George Wiles of Wiles Architects; and Michael LaBella of Wachovia Bank. Organizing the effort was the panel’s chief sponsor, the Bridgeport Regional Business Council (BRBC).

The ULI Advisory Services panel process requires hard work on the part of agency staff members as well as panelists. The panel would like to thank the following people for their hard work before, during, and after the panel’s week in Bridge-

port: Erica Bartelson, Tim Bartlett, Alisa Batten, Laura Hoydick, Stephanie Lindley, Janice Martin, and Kathy Valadares of the BRBC; Jeff Bishop and Marie Dallas of the Bridgeport Economic Resource Center (BERC); Louis Zuckerman from Leadership Greater Bridgeport; and Mark Anastasi, Rebecca Cabanas, Charles M. Carroll, Neida Cartagena, Bill Coleman, Greg Conte, George Estrada, Mike Feeney, Lynn Haig, Kathy Hunter, Lydia Johnson, Sabine Kuczo, Shurley Lazarus, Curt Leng, Mike Lupkas, Rich McHugh, Bill Minor, Jennifer Nacewicz, Bill O’Brien, Peter Paa-janen, Ron Pacacha, Max Perez, Elizabeth Pilgrim, Tony Polumbo, Marilyn Rodriguez, Sam Shaw, Thomas Sherwood, Lisa Trachtenburg, and Steve Tyliczszak from the city of Bridgeport.

The ULI Steering Committee, led by George Ochs and Paul Timpanelli, was instrumental in bringing the panel to Bridgeport. The committee’s input on the scope and expectations of the panel process was an important driving force for the week’s activities. Other members of the Steering Committee include U. S. Congressman Christopher Shays, Fourth District of Connecticut; State Senator Ernest Newton; Andres Ayala, president of the Bridgeport City Council; John Dye and Richard Paoletto, co-chairs of the Economic and Community Development and Environment Committee of the Bridgeport City Council; Trevor Babb of the Interdenominational Ministerial Alliance; Peter Brestovan, senior vice president of People’s Bank; former state representative Jackie Cocco; Rosa Correa, chair of the Bridgeport Housing Authority; Janis Hadley, president of Housatonic Community College; Nancy Hadley, director of the Bridgeport Office of Planning and Economic Development; Peter Hurst, CEO of the Community Bank; Cindy Kissin, president and CEO of the Greater Bridgeport Area Foundation; John Klein, president and CEO of People’s Bank and chair of the Bridgeport Economic Development Advisory Council; William Kosturko, executive vice presi-

dent and general counsel of People's Bank; Philip Kuchma, chairman of the Downtown Special Services District; Robert Laska, publisher of the *Connecticut Post*; Carmen Marcano, CEO of Helping Hands, Inc.; Deborah Sims of the Charles D. Smith Foundation; Jennifer Smith-Turner, deputy director of the Connecticut Department of Economic and Community Development; Robert Trefry, president of Bridgeport Hospital; Pedro Wasmer, president and CEO of Somerset Capital Group, Ltd; State Senator Bill Finch; Robert Keeley, director of the Downtown Special Services District; Kevin Nunn, president of the BERC; and James Wang, executive director of the Greater Bridgeport Regional Planning Agency.

Conducting a panel requires the use of several venues and services. The panel would like to thank the following institutions for providing

meeting space, food, or services: High on the Hog BBQ Bistro, Ralph n' Rich's, Joseph's Steakhouse, the Bridgeport Holiday Inn & Conference Center, the University of Bridgeport, the Playhouse on the Green, the Greater Bridgeport Transit Authority, and the Bridgeport Police Department.

Finally, the panel members also wish to thank the more than 225 individuals who participated in the interview process. This diverse cross section of private citizens, business leaders, interest groups, and government officials offered invaluable information and perspectives on the issues before the panel and the city of Bridgeport.

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ULI Panel and Project Staff

Panel Chair

William H. (Bill) Hudnut
Senior Resident Fellow, Public Policy, and
Joseph C. Canizaro Chair for Public Policy
ULI—the Urban Land Institute
Washington, D.C.

Panel Members

Jonathan Barnett
Professor
University of Pennsylvania
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Jeffrey T. Bond
Senior Planner for Real Estate and Housing
University of California at Berkeley
Berkeley, California

Ernest Freeman
Director of Community Development
Township of Plainsboro
Plainsboro, New Jersey

Jack Illes
Managing Partner
Urban Labs
San Diego, California

Jeffrey D. Jeep
Attorney
Diver, Jeep and Blazer, L.L.C.
Wheaton, Illinois

Cecilia A. Mowatt
President
Strategies In Site, Inc.
Chicago, Illinois

Kerri D. Rogers
President
Public Private Partners, Inc.
New York, New York

Adviser to the Panel

David S. Watson
Vice President/Regional Manager
CDG Real Estate Lending Group
JPMorgan Chase Bank, N.A.
New York, New York

ULI Project Directors

Mary Beth Corrigan
Vice President, Advisory Services and
Policy Programs

Alexander Bond
Associate, Policy and Practice

ULI On-Site Coordinator

Carmen McCormick
Coordinator, Meetings and Events

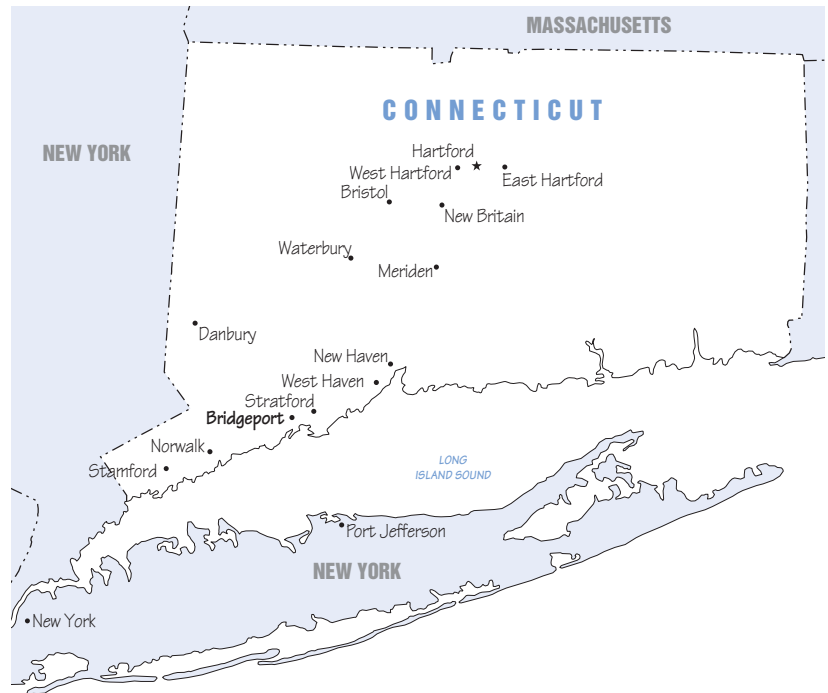
Foreword

Bridgeport is at a crossroads. A relatively new mayoral administration, new development interest, and other new opportunities all are helping the city to reinvent itself. Before Bridgeport can move into a new era of prosperity, however, it is important for elected officials, business owners, and residents to understand their place in today's marketplace. Bridgeport must choose between two paths: struggling to revive the city's fading manufacturing economy or seeking out new growth industries in the commercial, high-tech, residential, and service sectors.

Unlike many neighboring communities, Bridgeport has not been able to fully develop a stable and vibrant economy. In part, this is because Bridgeport has clung to its image as an industrial city, one that does not fit its current position in the regional and national marketplace. Historically, Bridgeport has been an independent city, supporting the surrounding region with shopping, transportation connections, and plentiful jobs in factories and water-dependent industries. In more recent decades, however, the economic base of the city has declined. Other Connecticut communities such as New Haven, Norwalk, Stamford, and Westport have cultivated new identities and economies more in tune with modern life in New England.

In the recent past, many of the towns south of Bridgeport have reinvented themselves as bedroom communities of New York City, taking advantage of transportation connections and the once-cheap supply of land in demand by workers seeking to escape urban life. Towns in other parts of Connecticut have developed vibrant job markets in the service, technology, and research sectors. The city of Bridgeport has not been able to adopt either of these identities.

The panel believes that rebuilding Bridgeport's declining manufacturing sector is the wrong path to take. While the manufacturing industries that



remain in Bridgeport play an important role in its economy, the city's prosperity can no longer be tied solely to industries like metalworking, shipbuilding, and the manufacturing of specialty equipment. While the panel believes that Bridgeport should continue to support and embrace its existing manufacturing firms, it also believes that the city must recognize that future growth in this sector is highly unlikely and not in the best interest of the community.

The decline of manufacturing is not the fault of Bridgeport's industry leaders or city government. Indeed, the city boasts a comparatively large number of industrial jobs. However, producers of consumer goods have been moving their operations overseas for decades. Communications improvements, cheap labor, and innovations in transportation have simply made it more economical for companies to locate new factories overseas. The reality is that if a company wants to establish

Bridgeport is located in southwestern Connecticut, about an hour from New York City.

The Port Jefferson Ferry enhances Bridgeport's transportation connections. Its terminal will be a part of the planned Intermodal Center.



new factories, it is far more likely to locate them in China or India than in Bridgeport or any other American city. The U.S. economy long ago shifted away from manufacturing toward the commercial, high-tech, and service sectors. The panel believes that Bridgeport is far better positioned for employment growth and diversification in these areas.

The challenge is to carve out Bridgeport's niche in the new marketplace. Shifting the economic base of a city is never easy. Bridgeport is not alone in facing this challenge. Dozens of other cities such as Pittsburgh, Indianapolis, Hoboken, and Cincinnati experienced similar economic doldrums before reinventing themselves in the postindustrial age.

Other factors have played a role in Bridgeport's inability to attract new development. The most pervasive is the enduring legacy of corrupt government. The city has had a reputation of quid pro quo governance for many years. Private investment in Bridgeport declined as developers were unable and ethically unwilling to deal with the city's bureaucracy. In 1991, Bridgeport be-

came the first major U.S. city to file for federal bankruptcy protection. This resulted in a very poor—and, for a time, nonexistent—credit rating, eliminating the city's ability to borrow money. Unable to issue bonds to finance long-term construction and improvement, city infrastructure became backlogged. This had the added effect of deterring developers, who had no assurance that their investment would continue to be supported by the necessary infrastructure.

The turbulent times of past decades have passed. The city's credit rating has been restored, and responsible elected officials are now in place. However, the city's reputation still suffers from the mistakes of the past. In order for Bridgeport to regain economic prosperity, it must attain a sound reputation. Beyond ethical governance, reforms to city administrative procedures and quality-of-life enhancing services prove that the government is committed to the city's best interests. Perhaps the largest roadblock for Bridgeport is the lack of momentum for development in the city. The panel believes that development interest in Bridgeport

will quickly rise after a number of small, easily attainable projects are completed.

The Panel's Assignment

The ULI panel's assignment was a complex one. The panel was charged with advising the city on the potential of its developable land portfolio, along with a prioritization of proposed projects. Beyond the site-specific questions, the panel was asked to evaluate the city's economic development administration, permit approval process, and quality-of-life issues to uncover potential roadblocks to development interest in Bridgeport.

The panel believes strongly in Bridgeport and hopes the city can believe in itself once again. It needs to actively craft a new image, based on a community vision that claims its unique position in the region. Lying just over an hour from New York City and surrounded by prosperous Connecticut cities, Bridgeport is suited to be a community with a balance of housing and jobs. Whether appealing to daily, part-time, or telecommuting workers, Bridgeport's portfolio of available land, buildings for adaptive use, excellent transportation connections, and diverse community will ap-

peal to many workers with jobs located between New Haven and New York City. Bridgeport also can avail itself of its plentiful labor supply to cultivate service, retail, and specialty small businesses.

This report begins with a discussion of what the panel believes to be the city's strengths, of which there are many; its constraints, which all cities have; and its opportunities, which can be capitalized upon to propel Bridgeport into the future. The report then discusses the foundation of all of the panel's recommendations, the Bridgeport Partnership, in detail. This is followed by a discussion of the changes the panel feels need to be made to the city's economic development and land use administrative processes. The report continues with a description of initiatives and action items the panelists believe are achievable in the immediate, short, and long terms. It concludes with brief discussions of more than a dozen properties under consideration for redevelopment by the city of Bridgeport.

Overview and Summary of Recommendations

The city of Bridgeport presents a complex set of issues. The panel arrived at a variety of conclusions and recommendations for the city. It made these recommendations and conclusions after an intense, weeklong study of the city, including site tours, a comprehensive interview process involving many members of the community, and review of data and documents from various agencies. The panel's recommendations are summarized below and described in detail later in this report.

Community Leadership and Inclusion

The panel feels that Bridgeport needs to come together as a community to set goals for the city. This consensus-building process will be an important step in ending the period of mistrust between government and city residents. To help heal the wounds of the past and build consensus for the future, the panel proposes two initiatives to spur public and private sector involvement in economic development and quality-of-life issues.

The first initiative proposed is the Bridgeport Partnership, which is to be an ongoing commitment of public input events. The partnership's first activity should be the Bridgeport Summit, a daylong meeting to which the community at large should be invited, along with city staff. The Bridgeport Summit should present the ULI panel report to the public, hold preliminary public discussions, and decide on a format for inclusive public input in the future.

The second initiative suggested by the panel is a semipermanent roundtable of corporate leaders. This group, dubbed the Bridgeport Leadership Council, should meet regularly to advise the mayor and his staff on reforms that would lead to greater private investment in the city. This group also should pool its resources and clout to help repair the city's relationship with state agencies.

Administrative Process

The panel recommends several changes to the city's administrative processes. First and foremost is the ethical foundation of the city. Bridgeport has lost the public's trust as a result of past ethical improprieties. The city now must strive to provide transparent and inclusive government. An important step in ethical government is the creation of an ethics panel to undertake a top-to-bottom review of the city government, including its budget, hiring, and promotion procedures.

The panel also found that the city's master plan has not been satisfactorily implemented. The city should continue to update its master plan and should resolve any outstanding differences in the community during that process. Bridgeport's master plan must be strictly adhered to in the future. Further, the development review process should be streamlined to simplify the approval process and allow developers to be reasonably certain of their applications' outcomes. Finally, the panel recommends that city board members be required to attend training and that board seats should be reserved for members of the community with pertinent expertise.

Economic Development Administration

The panel feels that Bridgeport's economic development administration is not as sophisticated as those of comparable cities. The city's request for proposals (RFP) process is not sufficient to ensure that high-quality projects are built by experienced developers. The panel recommends 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 final selection process. The city also must follow up on subsidized projects to ensure that development is proceeding satisfactorily.



Panelists discuss issues with local stakeholders during the interview process.

Brownfields are a serious problem in Bridgeport, and the panel makes several recommendations to remediate them. First, the city needs an accurate inventory of contaminated parcels, along with a list of contaminants. The panel suggests that the city aggressively pursue responsible parties to pay for cleanup, and recommends that it also work cooperatively with the state to help pay for certain projects. In addition, Bridgeport should construct a state-of-the-art treatment facility to reduce cleanup costs. Finally, the city and state should make remediation guidelines more flexible to allow for other types of brownfield remediation, including engineered controls to contain polluted soil.

Initiatives and Action Items

The panel feels that the city could take several actions to improve the quality of life and foster economic development. These initiatives and action items fall into three categories: immediate, short term, and long term. Immediate initiatives include ceasing the sale of tax liens and foreclosed properties; a commitment to repair the Congress Street drawbridge; and the creation of an arts and entertainment commission. The short-term initiatives consist of upgrading the municipal Web site; reinstating bulk trash pickup service; and creating a citizen information line. Long-term initiatives include improving the city's education system; creating a city identity and brand; and investing in neighborhood revitalization.

Real Estate Market Opportunities

The city of Bridgeport has a vast array of developable properties, many of which will require retrofitting. The panel feels that the city places too much emphasis on bringing new heavy industry to Bridgeport, and also believes that the city has strong market potential for housing and retail space. Many of the city's old industrial buildings are suitable for adaptive use as housing or small business incubators. The panel reached conclusions about several properties and, in some cases, departed substantially from the city's current vision for these sites. Short summaries of the panel's conclusions appear below, and are elaborated on later in the report.

- The city should pursue funding for the restoration of the Palace and Majestic theaters, perhaps in conjunction with the construction of a performing arts magnet school.
- The Lafayette Center office site would be a good location for the development of a signature office building.
- The Remington site on Main Street would be suitable for luxury residential development, provided that an adjacent parcel will not be used in the future for power generation. If that parcel will be used by the power plant, the site is not suitable for anything other than industrial space.
- The Pequonnock site deserves a low priority because of its function as a parking lot for the city's ballpark and arena. It is doubtful that any

ULI panel chair Bill Hudnut (right) discusses background information with Bridgeport Mayor John Fabrizi.



development would be financially feasible if the site plan must include 800 parking spaces.

- The Father Panik Village site is suitable for more than 100 affordable for-sale homes. However, these homes should be located away from the railroad tracks, where a school is presently planned. The school should be placed near the railroad, and homes developed on the current school site.
- The city should explore the possibility of acquiring excess land from the University of Bridgeport in order to construct luxury waterfront housing.
- The Intermodal Center is a desirable addition to the city.
- The panel developed a conceptual site plan for Steel Point to replace the existing one. The panel's plan does not incorporate the United Illuminating parcel or the adjacent marinas because these properties are not controlled by the city. The panel encourages the city to issue a new RFQ/RFP for the parcels it owns, and suggests high-end, destination retail accompanied by a waterfront boardwalk on this site.
- The city should explore the possibility of developing the Sikorsky Airport as an office park or sell the property altogether.
- The Lake Success Business Park deserves a low priority for city funding and staff. The long time horizon for this project and its location reduce its importance in the city's economic development plan. Lake Success can be a long-term goal for the city's Seaview Avenue corridor, but priority must be given to infill and redevelopment sites in the center city. Further, the city must focus more on residential, office, and retail land uses than on industrial ones.
- The city should issue an RFP for a seasonal entertainment and recreational venue on Pleasure Beach.

Strengths, Constraints, and Opportunities

The panel spent considerable time reading documents, being briefed by city and agency staff, and talking with people in the community. Through these activities, the panel observed the following strengths, which make Bridgeport a unique and exciting place; constraints, which prevent Bridgeport from achieving its full potential; and opportunities, of which the city can take advantage to realize its full potential. These strengths, constraints, and opportunities are summarized below and addressed in further detail throughout the remainder of this report.

Strengths

The panel believes that Bridgeport has numerous strengths, some of which it recognizes and is exploiting, and others that have not yet been recognized. These include the following:

- *Civic Commitment.* The panel repeatedly heard that people in the community believe that Bridgeport can be much more than it is today, and that they want it to be the best that it can be. Given the right opportunities, the community is committed to achieving these goals. People are willing to serve on committees, invest time and energy into their neighborhoods, and work hard to keep their businesses in Bridgeport.
- *Committed Corporate Partners.* The panel heard from several businesses that believe in Bridgeport and are willing to continue to invest in the community. These companies will do what is needed to remain in Bridgeport, as long as the city shows an interest in working with them.
- *Private Sector Interest.* Several private developers have begun investing in Bridgeport in the last few years. The Lofts on Lafayette, Bridgeport Landing/Steel Point, and the CityTrust building renovation are just a few examples of private interest in Bridgeport.
- *Integrated Transportation System.* Bridgeport is fortunate to have several modes of transportation available. The city has excellent access to Interstate 95 (I-95), the major corridor for cars and trucks along the eastern seaboard. Access to rail transportation is superb: more than 60 trains stop at Bridgeport's station each day, connecting the city to New York, Boston, and numerous points in between and beyond. Bridgeport also has a good public transit system, and a successful ferry connects the city to Long Island.
- *Reduced Crime.* The panel heard that the city's crime rate has dropped over the past five years. This is a major accomplishment that should be advertised and exploited. The trend also needs to continue.
- *Opportunities to Expand the Labor Force.* One of Bridgeport's untapped resources is its potential labor force. People want to stay in Bridgeport, and will do so if there are jobs. Job training already exists at Housatonic Community College (HCC) and other institutions. In addition, there is an educated workforce coming out of the University of Bridgeport, Sacred Heart University, and HCC. If Bridgeport offers attractive jobs and a high quality of life, many of these institutions' graduates can be enticed to stay in the city.
- *Entrepreneurial Spirit.* The panel spoke with several small and upstart business owners who hope they can stay in Bridgeport, given the availability of workspace and labor.
- *Consumer Buying Power.* While Bridgeport is not the wealthiest community in Connecticut, neither is it the poorest. The city's residents earn more money and have more wealth than those in many American cities. There is buying power in the city, and even more in the region. Both city residents and commuters to Bridgeport have substantial purchasing power.

A Metro North commuter train bound for New York City leaves the Bridgeport station.



- *Waterfront Development Opportunities.* The panel believes that the waterfront is one of the city's greatest assets. It needs to be a major focus of Bridgeport's physical and economic redevelopment. Cities around the country would be envious of the amount of valuable waterfront land available in Bridgeport.
- *Ballpark and Arena.* The city already has made public investments in the ballpark and arena. While these facilities may have some issues, they are an asset for the community and help keep it competitive with other communities in the region.
- *Blossoming Arts Community.* As art space in New York becomes more expensive, artists are looking for alternative live/work spaces. Bridgeport is becoming home to a small but growing arts community. Artists tend to be pioneers for urban renewal, since they are willing to use space that may otherwise be unmarketable, leading to neighborhood improvements through their mere presence. Maturing artists' communities often attract young professionals and empty nesters.
- *Cultural Diversity.* More than 60 languages are spoken in Bridgeport. This cultural diversity needs to be celebrated and enhanced, because it helps to differentiate Bridgeport from the surrounding communities.
- *Adaptable Historic Structures.* Bridgeport is fortunate to have a significant inventory of historically significant buildings that can be preserved or renovated for future use.
- *Good Health Care System.* Bridgeport has two major hospitals that provide the community and the surrounding area with outstanding health care, as well as two community health centers. These health care facilities take pride in the community and are good corporate citizens.
- *Parcels Available for Development.* Several prime properties are available for development. These properties already have been assembled and are ready for a developer.

- *Excellent Park System.* Bridgeport is, after all, known as the Park City.

Constraints

All major cities have physical and institutional constraints. The following are some of the barriers that the panel believes Bridgeport must address in order to realize its full potential:

- *Tarnished Image.* Bridgeport suffers from a poor image, both internally and externally. While this image may have been earned in the past, times have changed. It is now time for the city's reputation to change as well.
- *Lack of Vision and Master Plan.* While the city has undertaken several plans of various scales and complexity, the panel believes there is no cohesive vision or functional master plan for the city. This is a major roadblock for developers or corporate entities that want to do business in Bridgeport, because it makes it hard for them to understand the city's goals, how a proposed project fits within city's vision, and if the project has a serious chance of being approved.
- *Perception of Closed Decision-Making Process.* The panel heard during its community interviews that citizen input and concerns are not heard or otherwise taken seriously. This perception, truthful or not, erodes public trust in government. The city must do all it can to include the community in decision-making processes.
- *Capacity at City Hall.* Bridgeport's citizens are frustrated with city agencies' lack of resources to get their jobs done. Many departments are understaffed, overworked, or otherwise improperly staffed. This leads to delays in getting information and approvals from city hall. A lack of technology may be exacerbating this problem. Implementation of modern technologies such as geographic information systems (GIS)—one program already underway—are a step forward for the city.
- *Schools.* A recurring theme during the panel's interviews was the poor quality of the education system. Poor schools make it difficult to attract families to live in Bridgeport. Middle- and upper-class families are the mainstay of a healthy economy because of their purchasing power, and Bridgeport's schools must be improved to attract and retain these families.
- *Legacy of Unethical Practices.* Corruption within former administrations has saddled the city with a reputation for unethical politics. The perception of quid pro quo within city hall is changing, but Bridgeport must continue to practice the highest standards of ethical government to publicly prove that the city is no longer a place where one must "pay to play."
- *Lack of Housing Options.* Bridgeport suffers from a dearth of appropriate housing stock for all income levels. Housing for middle- and upper-class households is at a premium. The panel believes that Bridgeport can have a strong housing construction market. The city has an array of attractive sites suitable for residential construction, but has not identified them for residential use. Instead, some superb locations for residential development are being targeted for industrial, commercial, or office development.
- *Underutilized Parks.* While Bridgeport is known as the Park City, its parks seem to be underutilized by residents of the city and the region.
- *High Property Taxes.* While not the highest in the state, Bridgeport's property taxes are substantial and can dissuade companies and individuals from buying and developing property in the city.

Bridgeport's extensive park system includes several hundred acres of waterfront green space.



Bridgeport's deepwater harbor is an important economic driver for the community.



- *Difficult Permitting Process.* The panel heard anecdotal stories about how difficult it is to secure a building permit in Bridgeport, and observed an excessive bureaucracy and approvals process in the documents presented to it. This difficult permitting process discourages potential developers from working in Bridgeport and encourages them to develop projects elsewhere.
 - *Poor City/State Relationship.* Interviewees reported a lack of cooperation and communication between the city and the state. Many city projects cannot be completed without state support, in large part because of Connecticut's fiscal system of state control of sales tax revenue. It is in Bridgeport's best interest to foster its relationship with the state and do what is necessary to secure state support for its projects.
 - *Redundant Economic Development Groups.* The panel feels that the 11 economic development groups functioning within the city are far too many. At times, these groups work counterproductively. Combining their resources into a more coordinated and aggressive economic development approach is a better strategy for attracting and retaining businesses.
- Opportunities**
- The panel believes that Bridgeport possesses several opportunities that can be harnessed to stimulate economic development. These opportunities are market advantages that only Bridgeport possesses. Some of the following opportunities already have been recognized by the city, which has acted upon them to varying degrees in the past:
- *Waterfront.* Bridgeport has an opportunity to transform much of its waterfront into a local and regional destination. Waterfront resources, both in the port area and the south end, offer boundless possibilities for residential and retail development.
 - *Private Initiatives.* The panel heard from several private investors who are interested in or already undertaking activities in Bridgeport. Supporting existing initiatives and promoting new ones are opportunities to expand the development potential of the city's diverse economic base.
 - *Desire for a Better Bridgeport.* Citizens and business owners indicated a strong desire to see Bridgeport become a better place. Ample opportunities exist to harness this desire for the betterment of the city.
 - *Blueprint for the Future.* There is a danger of the city becoming reactionary to development proposals instead of guiding growth and development. As interest in Bridgeport grows, more and more time will be spent responding to development interest. Now is the time to create a blueprint, or functional master plan, for the future of Bridgeport that will allow the city to control its own destiny.
 - *Regional Cooperation.* Surrounding communities are expressing a growing commitment to work together to enhance the region. Bridge-



Captain's Cove is a popular waterfront restaurant in Bridgeport. The city should promote its extensive waterfront as a location for more residential and retail uses.

port, as the region's true urban center, has the opportunity to lead this regional cooperation and collaboration effort.

- *Key Development Sites.* The city features several key sites that, if developed or redeveloped properly, will help spur the revitalization of greater Bridgeport. These key development sites will be discussed in detail later in this report.
- *Consensus for Political Reform.* Popular support exists for the political reform that has taken place in city hall over the past two years. Now is the time to capitalize on this newfound support and use it to forge stronger relationships with citizens and business owners. Many initiatives that have stalled in years past now can be moved forward.
- *Unremediated Brownfields.* The city does not appear to have a handle on the extent of its contaminated lands or a system in place to have known brownfields remediated by current or previous property owners. Until this information is compiled and available—and a strategy for remediation is developed—it will be difficult to attract developers for infill development. Although contaminated sites can present difficult problems, after they are cleaned they can leave the city with attractive infill parcels and historic buildings for reuse.

Community Inclusion and Leadership

Cities are a reflection of the people who live, work, and play within their boundaries. The community's perception of itself projects the city's culture to outsiders. Therefore, the city's culture is the foundation of its external reputation. The panel notes that Bridgeport suffers from a victim mentality, due in part to neglect by previous local and state leaders. Citizens, business owners, and officials feel that the city's reputation has been tarnished in the past. There is a critical need for all of these stakeholders to come together in partnership to ensure that the image Bridgeport projects accurately reflects the reality of the city in 2005. It is equally important that Bridgeport stop viewing itself as a victim of circumstance.

Economic development initiatives cannot succeed unless the city addresses its quality-of-life issues. Quality of life is comprised of factors that include health care, education, housing, welfare, and safety. There is a direct correlation between successful economic development and improvement in a city's quality of life. The panel believes that Bridgeport must address its quality-of-life issues to enhance the city's desirability and prospects for economic development.

Bridgeport has all the necessary ingredients for inclusiveness and partnering. The city is comprised of various long-tenured ethnic communities, and also has had a recent influx of immigrants. Committed civic groups comprised of community, business, and nonprofit leaders—organizations that include members of the city's diverse racial and ethnic groups—have demonstrated a desire to work with the city administration to maximize Bridgeport's possibilities.

Throughout the panel's weeklong visit, panel members heard the recurring theme that the rank-and-file public is excluded from the city's decision-making processes. Nearly every constituency expressed the belief that it has limited opportunity for providing meaningful input or receiving

attention in economic development activities. The gap in trust among government, business owners, and residents creates a roadblock to investment in the city. This section outlines two recommended initiatives intended to increase community participation and inclusion. The first, known as the Bridgeport Partnership, is to be an ongoing commitment from the city to broaden public participation and inclusiveness. The second initiative aims to bring the city's corporate and private sector leaders together in an ongoing forum known as the Bridgeport Leadership Council to advise the city, foster regional cooperation, and present a unified front to state agencies.

Bridgeport Partnership

The Bridgeport Partnership should seek to create a platform for genuine community outreach and involvement, with the end goals of economic development and enhanced quality of life. Its function should be to provide community participation in economic development and other city processes. The partnership will be a symbolic joining of the city with its citizens to ensure an inclusive city decision-making process.

The Bridgeport Partnership should be started by a day- or weekend-long summit convened by the mayor. This summit should take place within 60 days of this report's publication. The Bridgeport Summit should include a variety of constituents from across the city, similar in scope to the cross section of stakeholders interviewed by the ULI panel. Neighborhood action councils, community development councils, business leaders, religious leaders, arts and entertainment groups, and the general public should be invited. The panel feels that attendance should be mandatory for all political leaders, including elected city council members, appointed city board members, and state delegates. The goal of the summit will be to come together and begin the process of consensus build-

ing on what Bridgeport wants to become. Each participating organization would prepare organizational goals, activities, and concerns to be shared with others.

The Bridgeport Summit should have three principal goals. The first should be a discussion of the ULI panel's report with the citizens of Bridgeport. Second, the assembled group should outline the city's economic development goals and citizens' quality-of-life concerns. City staff should prepare and circulate a written report. The city also may wish to draft or revise agency mission statements that reflect the outcome of the summit. Third, the community should settle on a format for community input into master planning, visioning, and economic development goal setting. The community may decide to use workshops, public hearings, town halls, charettes, surveys, or other public-involvement tools. An important secondary goal is to raise the profile of the city's neighborhood- and community-based organizations, so these groups can play a substantial role in future public-involvement events.

The Bridgeport Partnership will not be a new agency or entity. It will have no employees or director. It will be a commitment among the corporate, public, nonprofit, and private sectors to come together on a regular basis to share ideas and concerns. The panel hopes that the summit will help clear up any grievances harbored by the citizens of Bridgeport. Further, the panel hopes that the public interest and involvement observed during the panel's visit will carry over into the ongoing series of public workshops held by the Bridgeport Partnership. By proactively soliciting the input of the entire community, city government will help to build community consensus and dispel the rumors of a closed decision-making process.

Bridgeport Leadership Council

To begin to address the city's needs, corporate leadership proposed initiating a dialogue between the mayor and state leaders through the creation of a corporate leadership roundtable, similar to an initiative successfully implemented in New Haven. This model envisions a strong regional council consisting of committed leaders from the private sec-

tor with clear authority to represent their individual organizations and constituencies. Working with the mayor and the administration of the region's urban core, the council seeks to achieve consensus on common regional economic development strategies and priorities. The council also may choose to commit its collective financial, time, and staff resources to achieving these priorities.

This regional leadership council should advise and inform the mayor on ongoing efforts to reorganize Bridgeport's 11 existing economic development organizations by clearly defining roles, eliminating competing priorities, and consolidating responsibilities. Based on the leadership council's consensus plan for moving Bridgeport forward, the reconstituted economic development structure can work seamlessly to achieve the prioritized objectives of the region's economic development plan and can maintain focus and momentum through election cycles. Simply put, the private sector already works daily with city agencies and is best suited to comment on the restructuring of the economic development process in Bridgeport.

Corporate leaders believe that the development of a consensus plan is essential to securing continued state investment in Bridgeport. Such a plan, when presented to state legislators and private sector decision makers, will demonstrate clearly the region's unity and its commitment to achieving eco-

The panel listens to presentations from Bridgeport's leaders about issues facing the city.



conomic development goals. The region's corporate leadership likely will be able to connect with state lawmakers and agencies in a different way than local government leaders can. Therefore, a major goal of the Bridgeport Leadership Council should be to work with state government to repair the state/city relationship and move forward into a new era of cooperation.

In addition to pinpointing issues, corporate leaders provided insights into their vision for Bridgeport. The city's central location in southern Connecticut, coupled with the state's need to provide more affordable housing for its workforce, prompted some corporate leaders to profile Bridgeport as a potential "residential city"—one that provides affordable housing for entry-level managers and office workers. Becoming a residential city would require revitalizing downtown and city neighbor-

hoods. The private sector must champion the goals of affordable housing provision and neighborhood revitalization. Going further, corporate leaders observed that in order for the city to redefine and reposition itself in the regional economy, Bridgeport must cater to the information and service economy, rather than revitalizing its ports and antiquated manufacturing facilities.

As a direct result of this process, the ULI panel recommends the establishment of a regional leadership council within 90 days of this report's publication. The Bridgeport Leadership Council should begin work immediately to provide a vision and direction for the development and implementation of a comprehensive regional economic development agenda.

Administrative Process

In this section of the report, the panel discusses broad changes to the administrative processes of city government. These processes include the monitoring of ethical standards, master planning, development review, the request for proposals (RFP) process, and brownfields remediation. At the time of the panel's visit, the city of Bridgeport's administrative processes fell short of those typically found in comparable U.S. cities.

Ethical Foundation

The panel came to Bridgeport 20 months after the conviction of the former mayor and six months after the conviction of the former governor on public corruption charges. These convictions have subjected Bridgeport to unfavorable national media coverage. The mayor's conviction exposed long-held suspicions that city hall was untrustworthy, a place where people had to "pay to play." The panel challenges the city, the community, and the state to embark on an ambitious plan for the economic development and renewal of Connecticut's largest city, beginning with ethical reforms.

The current mayor is committed to transparent and honest government. The panel believes the mayor and a cross section of the community have worked hard since his election to rebuild public confidence in city hall. However, the mayor has inherited a deep moral deficit. The single greatest challenge confronting the city is how to regain the public's trust. Without that trust, the city's redevelopment plan—no matter how well conceived—is destined to the fate of dozens of previous plans and false starts seen over the past 20 years. Much work needs to be done to heal the community's wounds and build consensus around a common vision for the future. Success in meeting the challenges outlined in this report demands a unity of purpose. That unity will be achieved only if the mayor and his administration succeed in transforming government from a closed system domi-

nated by insiders to a truly transparent one that engenders trust from the citizenry. Only the passage of time and positive experiences will restore faith in Bridgeport's government.

In addition to the various initiatives that the mayor already has instituted, the panel recommends the following specific actions to rebuild public confidence and build the unity of purpose necessary to achieve the economic and social renewal of the historic and proud city of Bridgeport.

Ethics Task Force

The city should convene a bipartisan Ethics Task Force to undertake a top-to-bottom review of the city's business and government ethics. The mayor should appoint representatives of the city, state and federal law enforcement officials, local attorneys, clergy, and the general public to this task force. The task force should conduct interviews, hold public hearings, and seek public comment. It should publish its findings and recommendations in a written report.

The panel learned that the city has a standing ethics commission, but did not hear reports of its actions in recent years. The city's ethics monitoring activities need to be broadly promoted and integrated into the Ethics Task Force as appropriate.

Merit Hiring and Promotion

The city must ensure that its staff meets the highest professional standards. The public must be assured that staff members are not hired or retained as a result of political cronyism or nepotism. Current employees should be evaluated to ensure that they have the necessary certifications and training. Examples of required credentials include, as appropriate for the position, certification as a professional engineer (PE), acceptance into the American Institute of Certified Planners (AICP), or a bachelor's degree in a relevant discipline. Guidelines for the future hiring of employees should be issued in writing, and only those applicants meet-

ing or exceeding minimum criteria should be hired. Merit, not political connections, should be the criteria for hiring and retention.

Budget

The city budget should be prepared in accordance with generally accepted accounting standards. Bridgeport's current budget is confusing, poorly organized, and not fully comprehensible to the average citizen. It should contain a summary showing the budget for each city department. The current year's budget should be measured against the budgets of the two preceding years and the projected budgets two years into the future. It should be well organized and easily understood. For example, the budget should contain, at a minimum, a written analysis, line items, summaries, graphs, analyses of trends, and a written budget statement from a responsible party. To increase community engagement with the budget process, the panel recommends that the city schedule public budget workshops. All members of the public should have access to the budget, either as a printed document or on the Internet.

Transparency and Access

The city must strive to put all decisions in the public eye. City council agendas, minutes, requests for proposals, plans, and budgets all should be made readily available to anyone who requests them. Many cities post all of this information on their Web sites. At the minimum, these items should be printed and available to be mailed to or picked up by any citizen who requests a copy.

Bridgeport's citizens—let alone those throughout the rest of the region and the state—will not take the city's redevelopment initiatives seriously unless the city adheres to the highest ethical standards. Before the city can inspire and lead, it first must be trusted. The following principles can serve as a foundation for moving forward:

- The governing process must be open and transparent. It must listen to all of the diverse voices within the city.
- Those who lose a vigorous and heated debate must accept the final decision and recognize that they participated in a fair process in which the outcome was not predetermined by insiders.

- Government must do its best to forge a community consensus—or at least a healthy majority—in support of redevelopment initiatives.

Master Planning

The city of Bridgeport has a lengthy history of preparing master plans for public and private land use decisions. Unfortunately, those plans have not been enforced or otherwise institutionalized. The first plan was adopted in 1952, with subsequent updates occurring in 1962, 1971, 1986, and 1996. These documents focused on economic development, housing, transportation, parks, coastal management, and future land use. Despite the best intentions, many recent decisions on land use and zoning have not been based on the master plan. In some cases, decisions appear to be made in reaction to short-term opportunities instead of long-term vision. Over time, these decisions undermine the integrity of the plan until it is essentially ignored. It appears to the panel that the 1996 Bridgeport plan is no longer utilized.

Without a guide, development becomes more difficult to propose and approve. Property owners have no certainty regarding neighboring land uses, resulting in "NIMBY-ism" (an acronym for "not in my backyard"). City staff is placed in a reactive mode. Investors feel a sense of unpredictability, because the existing zoning for a neighborhood cannot be relied on. These uncertainties may cause property values to decline or stagnate. A firm future land use policy will help remediate these problems. There is a strong relationship between master plans and zoning ordinances. Master plans serve as guiding documents for the development of the city, while zoning ordinances direct the implementation of development.

Panelists were made aware of a plan to locate a jail for juveniles on the site of the former public works department garage on the city's waterfront. The panel believes the jail proposal is a complicated issue that must be settled by the citizens and leaders of Bridgeport. Consequently, the panel declines to support or oppose the project. The aforementioned master planning and Bridgeport Partnership processes will provide an ample platform for community-based decision making.



A proposal to build a detention facility for juveniles on this site has stirred controversy in Bridgeport.

The city and its residents should carefully consider the future use of each piece of land within Bridgeport and craft a master plan that reflects that vision. By rigidly enforcing the adopted master plan, the city can provide its citizens and future elected officials with reasonable assurance of the location of future institutional land uses. Because the master plan will be crafted through a community visioning process, it will reflect as much of a community consensus as is realistically possible. Thus, many major controversies can be averted before they arise. The panel strongly recommends that the site for the jail for juveniles—among other future institutional facilities—should be determined during the comprehensive master planning process.

Development Review

The panel found that the city's zoning requirement restricting as-of-right development is overly protective and in need of change. Further, the panel found that the regulatory process is perceived not to be developer friendly. In most other U.S. cities, 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. In Bridgeport, however, the petitioner is required to go before the Planning and Zoning Commission for review of all proposals, except those for low-density residen-

tial projects. The development community views this process as overly restrictive and time consuming. The process currently lacks predictability, and there is widespread misunderstanding about the responsibilities of the Planning and Zoning Commission and the Zoning Board of Appeals. 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.

The city's master plan and its zoning currently are being updated. City staff already is briefing the Planning and Zoning Commission on the proposed zoning amendments. It is important for the city to update the plan with a sustainable, achievable vision. The plan should take into account as much public input as possible. Ultimately, the city needs to abide by the plan. The panel strongly encourages the work on the plan revision to proceed quickly. Further, the panel recommends changes to the zoning code that confer as-of-right zoning rights to most types of development. The Planning and Zoning Commission should review only complicated or particularly intricate applications. City staff should expeditiously review proposals for less complicated commercial, office, and residential development projects. Moving ahead with these revisions will be a critical step in helping the city and the private sector to realize Bridgeport's development potential.

Recently, the city has taken steps to address complaints from developers about the cumbersome permit approval process. Essentially, the city's goal is to move departments directly involved with development permitting to one location. The "one-stop" permitting process will place all offices with review, oversight, and approval of building permit responsibilities in one location. The new procedure also would include tracking software to identify project bottlenecks and a more extensive public relations program to make the broader development community aware of the new, easier-to-use process. Concurrent reviews by different departments would save time in the approval process and a comprehensive handbook would be developed for the public to explain the new process. The city also plans to implement a geographic information system (GIS) in the near future, enabling the quick access of spatial information by several departments.

The panel believes these efforts are excellent ideas that should be implemented as soon as possible. The process can be made even more user friendly and transparent by posting development review procedures, documents, and applications on the city's Web site. The panel also recommends that the city seriously consider designating or hiring a staff member to serve as an ombudsman who would be available to the general public to determine the status of applications, explain the process, and resolve unnecessary delays.

Training and Staffing

The panel notes that members of the city's regulatory boards and commissions receive little training for their assigned responsibilities. In some cases, training has been offered but appointees

have expressed little interest in it. The panel acknowledges the hard work of the civic-minded volunteer commissioners, but feels strongly that mandatory training is needed for board and commission members. A wide variety of options exist for providing this training, ranging from on-site workshops to video conferencing. The American Planning Association (APA), the International City/County Management Association (ICMA), and other organizations can provide training opportunities and publications.

The panel also found that appointments to boards and commissions require no relevant experience or background. In most other cities, certain seats on boards are reserved for individuals whose professional expertise is closely in line with the scope of the board. For example, a nine-member historic preservation board typically will reserve two seats for registered architects, professional historians, or preservation specialists. The other seven seats leave ample room for citizen involvement in the board, and the two reserved positions ensure that professional expertise is always present when decisions are being made. The panel recommends that objective criteria be developed for board member selection, ensuring that relevant expertise is present among the body of appointees.

The panel heard from several sources that staffing shortages exist throughout the government of Bridgeport, not just in departments involved in planning and economic development. Acknowledging the limited resources available, the panel feels the effort that is underway by the city administrator to reengineer staff responsibilities is a good first step in building a more efficient government.

Economic Development Administration

Once a new master plan is adopted, the city will have to embark on a thoughtful implementation program to bring the plan to life. One of the most important functions of a master plan is to serve as the basis for an interface with the development community, articulating in a consistent manner the city's priorities, what the city expects to achieve in various neighborhoods and other areas, the tools available to stimulate development, and the criteria necessary to use those tools. Implementation nearly always involves a partnership with existing property owners, businesses, the real estate development community, and citizens. Most importantly, the master plan is a contract between the city and the private sector. This section details the changes that the panel feels will make the economic development process more successful.

Project Conceptualization to Developer Selection

The selection of a development team for a specific site is one of the most critical aspects of the development planning process. The panel observed that substantive issues have been raised about the comprehensiveness of the selection process in the past, most significantly with respect to Steel Point. The panel believes that the current Steel Point proposal, while visionary in its urban design and ambitious in its economic development objectives, is speculative because the city does not control all of the property included in the site request for proposals (RFP). Because the property represents a significant economic development opportunity for the city, every effort should be made to put the project back on a realistic track. Later in this report, the panel suggests a vision for Steel Point that can be implemented once the planning and approval process is upgraded.

Developers typically are selected through some form of a request for qualifications (RFQ) and

RFP process. For most complex projects, such a two-stage selection process is typical, although a single-step RFP can be effective for smaller, well-defined projects with very objective selection criteria. A traditional RFP articulates the city's vision and sets forth development specifications that must be met by the successful developer.

The RFQ process is an important first step for long-term projects in which the layout and composition of the future development is difficult for the city to conceptualize. This process asks developers to submit their firm's profile and body of prior work to the city. No designs or proposals are submitted at this time. The city then selects a short list of developers based on their related experience, staff capacity, and other factors. Subsequently, developers selected in the RFQ process are presented with a RFP that asks them to propose a design for the site. This process ensures that developers not only have good designs, but also have related experience and a proven track record. The panel believes that Bridgeport should use the RFQ process more frequently.

The developer selection process sets the tone for a relationship that will last for many years. It provides an opportunity to vet the developer's experience, set design guidelines and development standards, and establish project schedule expectations. More subtly, the RFP is the critical document that places the city in a position of strength during subsequent negotiations. The panel believes that the lack of clarity in the RFP document issued for Steel Point continues to haunt the planning and development process.

For the city of Bridgeport, it is particularly important that the developer selection process be clearly outlined and as specific as possible about submission requirements, selection criteria, and the decision-making process. In order to reverse negative perceptions of the planning and economic development process in Bridgeport, it is critical

that the process and the documentation be—at all times—state of the art and above reproach. Selection criteria should be based on the qualifications and capacity of the developers, the real estate market, the financial feasibility of the proposals, and how well the proposed project meets the city's vision as articulated in the master plan.

The quality of proposals will reflect the quality of information available to prospective developers. Thus, the city's time investment in proper due diligence is key to the RFQ/RFP process. While a wealth of information about the city was provided to the panel, the absence of comprehensive technical resources, plans, and handbooks can make it difficult for potential investors to locate needed information. The panel recommends that the city make all documents—including plans, RFQs/RFPs, studies, market analyses, and policy objectives—available from one repository of information in city hall. In addition, these documents can be posted on the city's Web site.

Further, the city should take all reasonable steps to lay the groundwork for a development project in order to improve its value to respondents. Land acquisition, project entitlement documentation, and environmental remediation plans all should be complete before a RFP is released. The city will find it valuable to retain an experienced consulting firm familiar with similar projects in other cities to review the RFP in advance. The consultant assignment not only provides the city with the benefit of other communities' experience, but also lends credibility to the project. While it is important that the RFP be distributed to all local interested parties, it is equally important that the city ensure that the RFP will attract qualified regional and national developers. National trade organizations often offer forums to post RFPs and RFQs.

The panel recommends that all significant public/private development projects—defined as all projects that receive public funding or infrastructure improvement—be undertaken only by developers with demonstrated qualifications in the product type and scale. The RFQ process ensures that these qualifications are clearly outlined and described in a transparent manner understandable by stakeholders and city residents. The ensuing

RFP process is an additional step that builds on potential uses identified for a site in the community master plan, and offers the developer the opportunity to propose creative approaches that may extend beyond the city's vision for the site.

Finally, preparation of the RFP is an excellent opportunity to involve the community, regional partners, and state officials in the early stages of a project. Not only does the city gain the benefit of a wide range of perspectives and technical input, but it also builds a constituency for the project—or reveals that the project lacks broad-based community support.

Developer Selection to Project Approval

Typically, upon selection of the development team, agencies enter into some form of exclusive negotiation agreement. The key business issue during this phase of the project is identification of the timeline for development and the responsibility for predevelopment costs in the event the project does not reach the approval milestone on the agreed-upon schedule. Generally, it is not necessary—or even desirable—to declare that the developer has rights to the site unless the developer is expending funds on predevelopment costs. The right to develop multiple parcels should be earned only by demonstrated progress. Stated in another way, a developer who is working on one parcel should not automatically gain the rights to adjacent parcels.

It is important that the negotiation process contain specific milestones for both the city and the development team. Moreover, termination provisions should be included that will come into play if the project is not moving forward as expected. The panel believes that the Steel Point project is an example of a project that should be fully reevaluated within the context of a new planning and RFP/RFQ process because it has remained stalled for so long. Appropriate accommodations should be made for the current developer in the event it is not the best qualified respondent to the RFP, or if it does not have the resources to implement an alternative project.

Deal Structure

The panel heard a number of comments during its interviews—and observed firsthand—varying degrees of sophistication among the players and agencies involved with economic development in Bridgeport. With some exceptions, economic development initiatives in Bridgeport are not at the level of sophistication that panel members have observed in other communities. While the initiatives themselves may have tremendous merit, weak documentation, failed deals, and overstated expectations often reinforce the wrong perception—a perception that perhaps was valid in years past—about decision making in the city of Bridgeport. Consistent application of a disciplined process of analysis and broad community participation in key decisions is critical to reversing this perception and moving the city’s critical initiatives forward.

The key issue in structuring a deal is understanding the regional marketplace: the potential supply, potential demand, and Bridgeport’s potential share of the market. Bridgeport is indeed in an advantageous position, as noted earlier. Land values are lower in Bridgeport than in neighboring cities, and a large inventory of potential infill sites is available.

The panel believes that it is not appropriate for Bridgeport to continue broad subsidies of economic development efforts. While situations certainly exist in which subsidies are appropriate, proposals for subsidies should be presented in the context of each particular site, with consideration given to the project’s ability to achieve the community’s economic development goals as stated in the master plan. All projects are not equal, and focusing available resources on projects that can generate cumulative benefits for the whole community is a better policy than subsidizing any and all economic development efforts. It may be even more effective for the city to streamline the development process, establish a reliable master plan, and then let the real estate market dictate the use of a particular site.

Many excellent references are available on economic development metrics and deal structures. The key factors are the allocation of project risk, project return, and net benefit to the community.

It is imperative that the city sustain its recent practice of setting criteria for prioritizing its economic development initiatives. It should take the further step of applying these criteria to the structure of the deal and the degree of public subsidy. Net increase in local tax revenues, business retention, job creation, increased business activity, public amenities, and return on city investment are typical objectives.

Real estate transactions as a tool of economic development must not only meet these criteria, but also must be financially feasible and rewarding. The city must estimate pro formas that show sources and uses of funds, operating revenues, operating expenses over time, and debt service levels that meet typical underwriting criteria. The quantifiable economic benefits also should be detailed. For example, jobs created should be tracked, with consideration given to net new jobs generated within the community and within the state. Data like these are particularly important if the state is a source of subsidies.

Brownfields

Like other historically industrial cities, Bridgeport suffers a legacy of pollution from its industrial past. Macroeconomic forces have caused manufacturers across the country to close, go bankrupt, or move abroad, leaving hundreds of contaminated, abandoned, and underutilized properties.

Brownfield Infrastructure

The city needs to 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 and how polluted properties will be cleaned up 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 also are too important to leave entirely to state or federal environmental agencies. Nor should outside government agencies dictate the level of cleanup, for they have no vested interest in the success of the city’s redevelopment. The city’s determination of the highest and best

use for a site—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. The judgment to settle for less than the highest and best use, however, should be made by the city, not those legally responsible for cleaning up the site.

Strategic opportunities will be missed if cleanup plans for each of the city's more than 200 brownfield sites are developed in isolation and without a view toward advancing the goals of the master plan. A comprehensive brownfield strategy should determine what type of "brownfield infrastructure" is needed to clean up all the sites to levels consistent with their future uses. Cost effectiveness also should be a concern for the city, since outside agencies and companies currently must accept all polluted waste. The panel feels the city should explore the option of building state-of-the-art treatment and disposal facilities within Bridgeport. These facilities would achieve an economy of scale, reduce the cost of cleaning individual sites, and thereby advance implementation of the master plan's brownfield remediation component.

The goal of the brownfield strategy should be to minimize the volume of waste requiring off-site treatment and disposal. The strategy should emphasize the use of engineered barriers and institutional controls that allow for redevelopment consistent with the master plan. The city also should make some general estimates of the volume of contaminated soil and debris within Bridgeport that may require off-site treatment or disposal. Such an assessment will help the city evaluate the need for, and feasibility of, centralized treatment and disposal facilities. The 1996 Bridgeport Brownfield Pilot Project report is a starting point for this analysis.

Net Environmental Gain

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. Waste facilities are controversial, particularly in a community that already carries an unfair burden of the state's unwanted infrastructure. However, the

panel believes that locating waste disposal facilities within Bridgeport will improve the environmental quality of the city and advance brownfield remediation.

The problem presented by the disposal of dredging materials and the city's sewage sludge may present an opportunity for a net environmental gain. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the state confront a dilemma: what to do with millions of tons of dredge materials from the harbor and shipping channel. A dredging project also could be of vital importance to the implementation of the city's master plan. The success of the dredging project depends upon finding a cost-effective solution for treatment and disposal of the dredge material. The city also is presently paying for the transportation and disposal of its sewage sludge.

The city should examine the economic and technical feasibility of building a state-of-the-art thermal treatment facility with the flexibility to handle dredge material, sewage sludge, and contaminated material from brownfield sites. Although it may be impractical to build a thermal treatment facility to treat *only* contaminants from the city's brownfield sites, constructing a facility to treat the city's brownfield wastes in conjunction with other waste streams might be quite practical. This is particularly true if the city is required to pay a portion of the nonfederal share of the dredging project, and because the city already is paying for the transportation and disposal of its sewage sludge.

Emissions of air pollutants from a state-of-the-art thermal treatment facility are minimal. These facilities produce a useable product, an aggregate material that can be used as backfill at construction projects on the waterfront and elsewhere. A thermal treatment facility also may provide energy—in steam or electric form—to local industry. For all of these reasons, the panel feels the city should seriously examine siting a thermal treatment facility in Bridgeport.

Enforcement

The panel recommends that the city explore—either in cooperation with the state or independently—the feasibility of accelerating the pace and level of cleanup by those legally responsible for the pollution they have caused in Bridgeport.



General Electric maintains a small operation in its early 20th-century industrial complex. Buildings like these have strong redevelopment potential after any needed environmental cleanup is complete.

Constraints on the federal and state budgets mean there will be limited public funds available to fund cleanup of brownfield sites in the city. 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 polluted properties. The panel also recommends that the city adopt ordinances dealing with buildings lying vacant because of environmental hazards.

State Partnership

The panel recommends 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. Other Connecticut cities such as Waterbury, Bristol, and New Britain likely have brownfield issues of their own, making this a truly statewide issue.

Bridgeport can work with the state and other cities to simplify and streamline the brownfield remediation process without compromising public health, safety, and the environment. By way of example, Connecticut's cities might explore the use of “presumptive remedies” for brownfield sites, a remedy that repeatedly has proved effective for sites characterized by common soil, hydrogeologic, and contaminant conditions. Experience may demonstrate that certain categories of brownfield

sites are always cleaned up in the same way. Once a demonstration is made that most brownfield sites fall within a given category of cleanup method and need, the time and costs associated with individual site studies could be diverted to the actual cleanup costs. Additional means of expediting cleanup and reducing costs no doubt would be identified through dialogue among the cities and the state.

Brownfield Coordinator

The panel recommends that the city identify one or more 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 brownfield coordinator should possess the following expertise and qualifications:

- A passion for urban renewal, brownfield development, and accomplishing the goals of the city's master plan;
- The ability to see the “big picture” and think strategically;
- Demonstrated success in recovering cleanup costs from legally responsible parties or compelling legally responsible parties—or insurers—to clean up contaminated properties;

- At least ten years of experience in remediating contaminated sites and siting pollution control facilities;
- Experience in, or knowledge of, the waste industry;
- Political acumen; and
- Strong communication, negotiation, and project management skills.

Other Recommendations

Brownfield remediation is a complex issue. The panel arrived at several other recommendations that will help the city with the process of cleaning up polluted sites. These recommendations are listed below.

Conduct Groundwater Studies. The environmental assessment process in Connecticut requires both soil and groundwater studies. Engineered controls commonly are used to address historical soil contamination and integrated with the owner's reuse plans. Engineered controls involve erecting physical barriers between polluted soil and future land uses on the site. They do not, however, address groundwater issues.

Sizable sums of money are spent studying groundwater that has never been, nor ever will be, used. In the urban/industrialized areas around New England, groundwater characterization can be challenging because of complicated glacial geology and the proximity of bedrock. Even in areas where groundwater is not utilized for potable use, contaminated groundwater plumes may have to be studied to assess the presence of pollutants, the impact on surface water bodies, and the potential for volatilization. The environmental assessment process and Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) regulations should recognize the viability of engineered controls, particularly in areas where groundwater is not used.

Focus the Search for Responsible Parties. The characterization process follows the traditional investigation for all responsible parties. A process for a focused investigation—an investigation of the constituents of concern that are likely to be present, based on known past uses of the property—is needed. Once the pollutants present are known,

the search for responsible parties becomes more focused.

Give Owners the Right to Use Engineered Controls. An engineered control such as an asphalt cap usually is the least expensive, most adaptable, and simplest brownfield remediation tool to implement. However, the DEP commissioner will not approve an engineered control unless the property owner demonstrates it is an option of last resort. The DEP and the city should recognize that engineered controls are less expensive than many other options, and thus may be the option of choice. The DEP also requires that holders of utility easements and other “subordinate” interests in the property consent to the use of 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 engineered controls are an equally effective option for environmental cleanup in urban areas.

Modify the DEP Cleanup Approval Process. Property owners generally do not want to incur the cost of creating a site plan unless the 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 geotextile liners or soil cover over areas that will not be covered with concrete or asphalt. The property owner then would submit “as built” plans depicting the locations of the preapproved engineered controls at a later stage in the development process, most likely after zoning approval. This process would remove a historically difficult roadblock to brownfield infill development.

Revisit the Property Transfer Act. The primary purpose of the federal Property Transfer Act was to protect unsuspecting buyers from unscrupulous sellers of contaminated property. Buyers of property in industrial cities already are alert to the likelihood of contamination; even if they are not, their lenders are. Federal 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



Many of Bridgeport's neighborhoods feature high-density single-family homes that once were occupied by factory workers.

necessary. Developers and their financiers should be allowed to determine the type of covenant to seek from the DEP.

Economic Development Agencies

The city of Bridgeport has not ignored economic development issues in the past. Economic development concerns have captured political and media attention for years, dating back to the early days of industrial job loss. Various administrations and private sector initiatives have attempted to remedy the situation by creating economic development agencies and organizations. Most of those agencies still exist, and the city currently has 11 of them. Unfortunately, economic development efforts have not taken hold. The panel spent considerable time investigating the city's economic development processes and agencies, and believes that these groups can be better organized and that they should, in some instances, be consolidated.

Local Organizations

The city of Bridgeport benefits from a large group of extremely committed citizens who participate in the economic development process through local agencies and organizations. While the types of agencies are typical for cities like Bridgeport, the panel found it difficult to differentiate among the roles of each organization. As noted above, Bridgeport has 11 different economic development

agencies. Some are private, some are public, and others are public/private partnerships. The panel recommends that the city review the mission, scope, and resources of each of these agencies. 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 mission that is clearly defined in the city's master plan. Agencies currently are understaffed, infringe on each other's "turf," and lack the monetary resources needed to entice development. Consolidating some organizations will better channel personnel and fiscal resources. The process of evaluating the roles of the various organizations could be a key task of the Bridgeport Leadership Council.

As part of this effort, various organizations' charters should be reviewed and compared, to ensure seamless coverage of economic development goals and clear assignment of responsibilities. Furthermore, while local leaders may be familiar with the history and role of each agency, the panel is unclear about the specific roles each organization plays. Prospective developers likely would have similar uncertainties. The confusion is compounded in some ways by easy-to-change items such as organization names with similar acronyms. This confusion—combined with the lengthy development review process described earlier in this report—could discourage developers from working in Bridgeport.

The panel noted a lack of cohesion between the city and various economic development agencies on overall priorities, as well as differences of opinion about particular sites or uses. Furthermore, 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 a lack of community support, undermine the collective effort.

The panel believes that the city must prepare and adopt a master plan based on community input, and follow the plan religiously. Disagreements should be addressed during the preparation of the plan or during regularly scheduled updates to the plan. Plan updates should occur at least every five years, and the plan should be amended only in cases of extreme need. Failure to work within the parameters of the plan will only reinforce negative perceptions of the city decision-making process, and will reduce the attractiveness of the city to outside businesses and investors.

Regionalism

The city's objectives should be focused on initiatives that will improve the quality of life for Bridgeport's residents and the prosperity of its institutions and businesses. On several occasions, however, the panel was struck by a lack of sensitivity within the city to regional issues. Bridgeport must acknowledge that it cannot target its economic development program solely toward people who both live and work in the city. It must pursue economic development initiatives that cater to people who live in the city but work elsewhere, and to people who live elsewhere and commute to work in Bridgeport. In fact, the city is well positioned to be a regional center of employment, a bedroom community, or both. The population outside Bridgeport influences the demand for office, retail, and housing space within the city. Market area calculations performed by private investors pay little heed to political boundaries.

Bridgeport must prepare for changes outside of its borders as well as inside them. In nearby cities, development is progressing that could threaten or enhance Bridgeport's success. The planned train station in Fairfield and the Trumbull Office Park are examples of projects in neighboring jurisdic-

tions that could affect the feasibility of economic development efforts in Bridgeport. The panel feels that local agencies have not planned ahead to react to the approval of nearby development.

The panel believes that the city of Bridgeport has several competitive advantages, compared with other communities in the region. These advantages will become clearer as Bridgeport begins to better communicate 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 in a way that is based upon its place in the region, keeping in mind the impacts of new development in other cities.

State Partners

It is clear that the city will not have the financial resources necessary to be successful without support from the state. However, 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 believes that success will not be achieved without the establishment of a master plan that clearly articulates a vision and a series of policy initiatives that are reasonable and consistent with state initiatives.

Once Bridgeport drafts a workable, feasible plan and begins to make progress toward fulfilling it, others in the state will take notice. The plan will articulate the amount of state money needed by Bridgeport, as well as placing priorities on important projects. Over time, open dialogue and interaction will restore the state's confidence in Bridgeport. The dialogue also will help build connections between Bridgeport and other cities in the state. One important element of the city's relationship with the state is a good state legislative delegation. The panel heard complaints about the ineffectiveness of the state delegation from Bridgeport, and challenges the members of the state legislature to assert their considerable influence in Hartford. The city and its representatives must move beyond their victim mentality and play upon the strengths of the city.

Initiatives and Action Items

Bridgeport must seize current opportunities to implement services and programs. Taking direct actions that improve some aspect of the city will foster confidence among residents, investors, the state government, and others. The items that follow serve as real indicators of Bridgeport's commitment to change its economic fortunes.

Real estate and economic development projects will transform the business climate over time. However, some aspects of the city currently do not foster a positive business climate. Many themes—several of which relate to quality-of-life issues—were echoed by members of the community throughout the panel process. Without an improved quality of life, broad economic changes are unlikely. The panel also recommends policy changes, service enhancements, and other key ingredients to create a more viable city and, consequently, a more viable business environment. Some action items can be put into effect immediately and will help prove that Bridgeport is serious about improving its fortunes. Others will take more time. The following list is divided into immediate actions and short- and long-term initiatives.

Immediate Actions

Bridgeport can help build momentum toward economic development by taking immediate action. The items discussed here can be completed during a single city council meeting. The panel believes that instituting these action items will prove the city is serious about stimulating development in Bridgeport.

Sale of Tax Liens and Handling of Foreclosed Properties

Bridgeport has a practice of selling tax liens from its delinquent/foreclosed property portfolio. While past fiscal crises may have prompted the city to sell tax liens as a means of generating revenue, the practice should cease immediately. When liens

are sold to third parties, the title to the property becomes unclear, and the city loses control over the property's redevelopment opportunities. Often the liens are sold and resold in bulk, resulting in confusion over who holds the lien when a property comes up for sale.

Site control and land acquisition are pivotal and fundamental steps in determining the feasibility of any development project. Although tax liens are a good investment for purchasers and a reliable source of income for the city, clouding the titles of potentially developable parcels will only deter and discourage developers from pursuing ownership of those parcels. If a property remains under city control, the foreclosed property remains a good prospective site for a development project.

The panel recommends that Bridgeport stop selling tax liens immediately to resolve the title control issues that can arise from such sales. Further, Bridgeport should reassess its program of foreclosure and eminent domain use. These exercises take properties off the tax rolls because municipal land is tax exempt. The city has a fiduciary duty to manage its assets, and properties should not be allowed to stand in limbo. The panel suggests that the city take the following measures to address this issue:

- Identify existing lienholders and compile a contact database;
- Identify areas where the potential for land assembly may exist;
- 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;" and

The Congress Street drawbridge connected downtown with Bridgeport's East Side until several years ago, when it became inoperable.



- Develop a program of short-term option sales of parcels to the Bridgeport Housing Authority, community development corporations, nonprofit groups, or private developers for housing purposes. If development does not proceed according to agreed-upon schedules, the property should revert back to the city.

The process described above presents a proactive way of putting properties back into service and tax revenue generation, and could help ease the current housing affordability crisis. If developers fail to get through the financing and permitting process during the option period, then the property would revert back to the city. Success with such a program could result not only in increased tax revenues, but also in the elimination of blight in neighborhoods across the city.

Congress Street Bridge Repair Commitment

Many interviewees raised the issue of the stigma associated with the need for repair of the Congress Street drawbridge, which once connected the downtown area with the East Side. While alternate routes do exist, East Side residents suffer from a sense of being disconnected from downtown. They also see the lack of repair as an impediment to businesses along Congress Street. Interviewees report high turnover and a loss of economic vibrancy along the corridor. East Side residents are more likely than other city resi-

dents to be pedestrians or bicyclists, and alternate routes are too distant or lack satisfactory bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure. If the bridge was usable—even if only by pedestrians—East Side residents could easily walk to downtown. Perhaps worst of all, neglect of the broken bridge gives East Side residents the sense that their city government views them as second-class citizens.

The panel recommends that the city make an immediate commitment to repair the Congress Street Bridge and develop a plan that presents a realistic timeframe for its rehabilitation. The city should thoroughly explore all alternatives, including the historical drawbridge format and a less costly fixed-span bridge. Choosing a fixed-span bridge likely will require the city to purchase maritime properties upriver from the bridge. The investment in the bridge—which will cost more than \$28 million to repair—will be well worth the public relations boost that will come from removing an embarrassing eyesore. In addition, economic vitality along Congress Street will improve and the East Side will become a better option for housing. This will increase property values and create jobs.

Arts and Entertainment Commission

The condition of the arts community is a strong barometer of the quality of life in any city. Artists often are the first group to move into an area ripe

for redevelopment. Bridgeport has very encouraging news in this regard. The city has seen an influx of artists in recent years, attracted by Bridgeport's proximity to New York City coupled with inexpensive prices. Thriving theaters and an arena with national performing artists help bring in patrons from around the region.

Approximately four years ago, Bridgeport established an arts committee to help foster diverse cultural activities. The panel feels that the idea was a good one, but heard that the initiative stagnated, in large part because the city's artistic environment had not yet matured. The panel believes that the artistic environment today is robust, and deserves a dedicated commission to foster its ongoing health and growth. Thus, the panel recommends that the mayor establish an Arts and Entertainment Commission charged with providing supportive policies for existing businesses and future growth. Appointments to the commission should include members from the pioneering artist community to ensure that the commission's policies meet artists' needs.

Short-Term Initiatives

The city can continue to build momentum toward a better economy by instituting a handful of short-term initiatives. These initiatives can be accomplished in a six- to 12-month time frame. However, the process of instituting these initiatives must begin quickly if they are to be completed within a year.

Municipal Web Site

The dissemination of information via the Internet has revolutionized business and spilled over into the public sector. Cities throughout the country have found that a comprehensive, informative Web site is a powerful tool for providing government services, enhancing transparency, publicizing information, and stimulating public involvement. Younger generations turn to the Internet as their first source of information. The current Bridgeport Web site falls short when compared with the content and usability of other cities' sites. The panel believes that an enhanced city Web site would lead to greater interest in Bridgeport.

The city should develop and implement a new Web site within the next year. The site should contain links to *all* city documents—from the master plan to RFPs to the city budget—in order to promote transparent government, a condition that Bridgeport sorely needs. Agendas for city council meetings and every commission meeting should be posted several days before the meetings, and minutes should be posted promptly after they take place. All city ordinances and administrative rules, including the zoning map, should be available for access. Application forms and requests for city services should be available online, even if the document must be presented in person or by fax. Information about current events in the city, job opportunities, and economic opportunities should be available. As the city implements its geographic information systems (GIS) program, interactive maps can be made available over the Internet. The city's Web site can become a one-stop information center for prospective developers, who can retrieve anything they need without requesting information from the already overburdened city staff. Finally, the city's Web site is an excellent venue to showcase the positive changes taking place in Bridgeport.

The Web site does not have to be expensive; effective online content does not require bells and whistles. Animated homepages, computer-generated graphics, and flashy content only get in the way of a user's attempts to access needed information. A single person—the city Webmaster—can maintain the site. Each city department should designate one person as its liaison to the Webmaster. Each week, this person should collect documents to be posted and forward them, along with text updates, to the Webmaster.

Bulk Trash Pickup and Public Trash Receptacles

Reinstituting bulk trash pickup as well as the distribution of trash receptacles will improve the city's image and quality of life. Clearly defined scheduled or arranged pickup rules will serve to standardize the process. Loose trash, especially large items, can be a serious eyesore, and reinforces old notions of Bridgeport as a neglected place.

311 Information Line

Many municipalities have a dedicated phone number—usually 311—that people can call for city information and nonemergency services. Bridgeport should consider instituting this service so that residents, business owners, tourists, students, and even investors can reach all government services with one phone call. The 311 phone number will become a single point of contact for all nonemergency services, including landlord/tenant issues, social services, public recreational facilities, transit information, and more.

Long-Term Initiatives

Several issues will require the city's ongoing and long-term efforts. Although there may be earlier milestone goals, these initiatives and action items will take more than a year to implement. In some cases, the initiatives will have no end, because the city must always strive to improve in those areas. The panel believes that these initiatives will greatly improve the quality of life in Bridgeport, a key component of economic development.

Education

Those who spoke to the panel repeatedly emphasized the importance of improving the quality of Bridgeport's public education system and facilities. Years of underfunding, overcrowding, and bureaucracy have victimized the school system and, more importantly, its students. It is discouraging to see neighboring school districts receive more funding or be shielded by legal loopholes that have secured higher state funding levels for them.

The panel heard that of the 35 schools in Bridgeport, 14 are more than 50 years old and have not been renovated. Many have no recreational facilities. The panel understands that four new schools are in various stages of planning. However, the process for bringing them online quickly is stymied by a building committee that is ineffective and bureaucratic. The difficulties are exposed by the disparity in local funding. Bridgeport funds 80 percent of its school budget, while other Connecticut cities fund less than 70 percent of theirs. Leadership at the state level is needed to secure more funding for Bridgeport's schools, and local authorities must make educational reform a top priority.

Schools are critically important for attracting a diverse and educated workforce. "School sprawl" is one of the most oft-cited factors in promoting suburban sprawl. Couples with children—typically parents in their prime working and spending years—will relocate to areas with good schools, and today the region's best schools lie outside of Bridgeport. The state exacerbates this problem by requiring that new schools be built on large parcels and designed with suburban-style features. These types of schools are difficult or impossible to build in Bridgeport, because of the lack of available land. The state should alter this rule so that cities such as Bridgeport are not at a disadvantage.

Fortunately, corporate leaders have stepped forward and agreed to lend their expertise and make a commitment to improving Bridgeport's schools. Recognizing that workforce development is tantamount to economic development, several national and statewide initiatives focus on vocational training and job preparedness, as well as matriculation at institutions of higher learning. Examples of new investments in education are the Connecticut Scholars Program and the Governor's Task Force on the Future of the Regional Vocational-Technical High School System. Bridgeport should build upon these commitments to demonstrate the city's support for education.

The goal of improving primary and secondary education is separate and distinct from the quality of post-secondary education. Beyond helping the children already enrolled make a better future, a major reason for improving schools is to make the city attractive to new middle- and upper-class families. The panel feels that the city should accommodate its institutions of higher learning however possible. These institutions, however, already are relatively healthy, while its K-through-12 institutions are not.

Seaview Avenue Corridor Enhancement

The enhancement of the Seaview Avenue corridor is an important long-term strategy for the city. Access to many of Bridgeport's redevelopment sites requires enhanced transportation connectivity to I-95 and U.S. Highway 1. Many trucks cannot access the East Side because of a low railroad overpass. Trucks ranging from FedEx and UPS delivery vehicles to tractor-trailers must be able

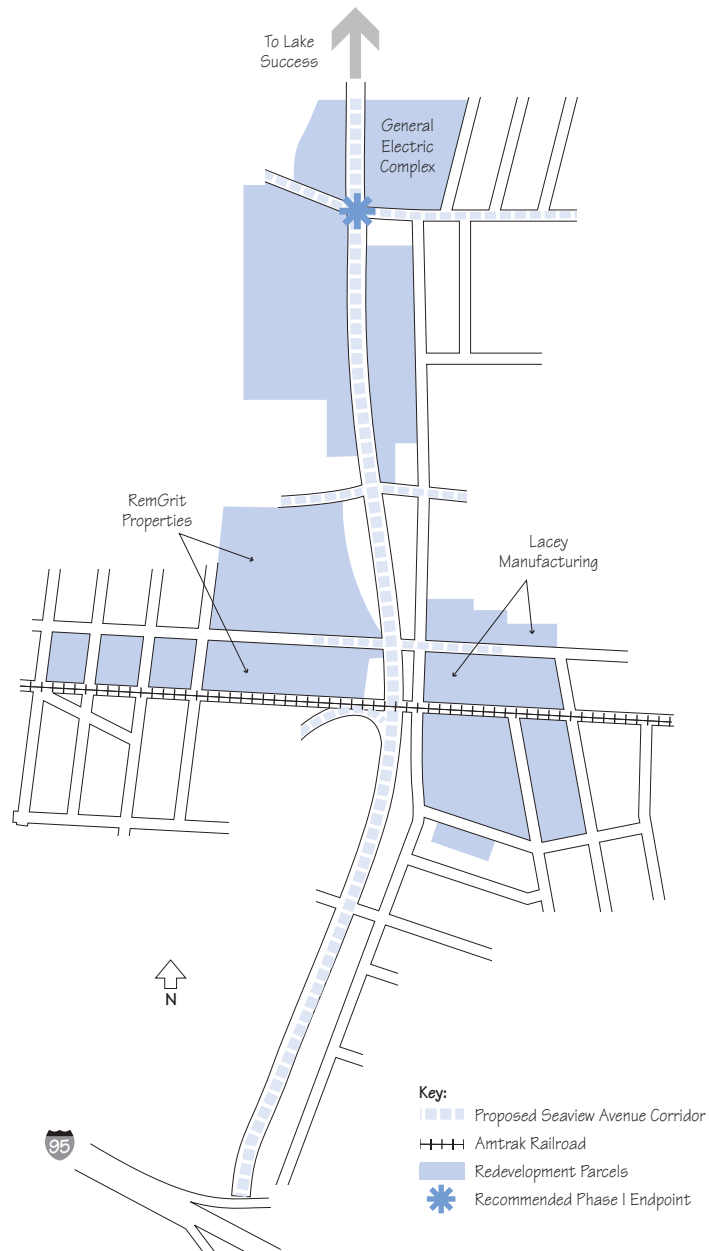
to reach infill development sites. Further, traffic congestion along the current Seaview Avenue—located just east of the planned new road—limits the viability of new businesses.

The panel reiterates its strong feeling that heavy industry is a mediocre growth sector at best. Bridgeport should consider this fact in the master planning process, and ensure that sufficient land is rezoned from industrial to other, more viable land uses. The motivation for the Seaview Avenue corridor’s construction must not be access for trucks supporting heavy industry. Instead, the motivation should be reduced traffic congestion and access for support vehicles for office, light industrial, retail, and other types of business space. Many properties along the Seaview Avenue corridor could have the potential for development as office, small business, retail, or even residential use. Although the Seaview Avenue corridor enhancement will have little effect on attracting new heavy industry to Bridgeport, it will have an extremely positive effect on the viability of existing businesses, and will remove a major roadblock to economic development on Bridgeport’s portfolio of infill parcels.

The panel feels that construction of a new truck-friendly underpass and an initial segment of the new Seaview Avenue is an important addition to the city’s economic development plan. Work on the railroad bridge and the first road segment should begin as soon as possible to stimulate infill development on parcels that will benefit from accessibility. The ultimate goal of connecting Lake Success Business Park, however, would be of no economic value until the cleanup of that site is finished in six to eight years. Road access to Lake Success should not be the city’s top funding priority. Instead, the city should construct the first portions of the road and focus on stimulating infill development in the East Side. Until the city’s infill parcels are absorbed and development pressure grows at Lake Success, the city should not shoulder the financial burden of connecting Seaview Avenue all the way to the Lake Success Business Park.

Market Identity/Branding and Neighborhood Identity

Citizens want to overcome the negative perceptions that surround Bridgeport. These perceptions



are based on historical truths that are no longer accurate. The panel urges the city to adopt a new identity that closely reflects the city’s current reality, which includes a lower crime rate, diversity, waterfront resources, culture, and heritage. The panel recommends that Bridgeport hire a public relations firm to coordinate this effort. While the panel recognizes that the city has expended large amounts of money on public relations in the past, it believes that a new campaign—combined with other reforms—will be more effective than past efforts. Bringing in a consultant instead of a new employee will enable the skills and funding levels required by this effort to change over time. The goals of the identity/branding program include the following:

The proposed Seaview Avenue corridor.

Washington Square in Bridgeport's East Side is home to several historic churches and Victorian homes.



- Assist in the comprehensive planning that will take place with the Bridgeport Summit and the creation or reactivation of neighborhood associations;
- Facilitate the efforts of local chambers of commerce and arts and entertainment groups in promoting Bridgeport events and offerings;
- Begin proactive efforts to develop a mutually beneficial positive relationship with the media; and
- Help attract a network television affiliate to Bridgeport.

Beyond redefining the city's identity, Bridgeport should move forward with additional identity programs for individual neighborhoods. Given the city's great cultural diversity, neighborhood branding can bring a source of pride to parts of Bridgeport currently identified only by their compass directions.

Investment in Community and Neighborhood Revitalization

It was suggested to the panel that a comprehensive resource be created that describes all of Bridgeport's city attractions, services, and events. Quality of life often is measured by these offerings. It is critical that physical infrastructure remain in top condition. Streetscapes need to be inviting and

offer a sense of comfort and accessibility. City facilities should be well maintained and safe. Housing should be available and should meet safety and accessibility standards.

It is imperative that Bridgeport set standards and criteria for its economic development activities to guard against unacceptable transactions and proposals. Increasing revenues, business retention and attraction, and job creation are typical economic development objectives. Real estate transactions, including the use of eminent domain powers, must meet these criteria and also "pencil out" or make financial sense. Sources and uses of funds must be equally distributed, with particular attention paid to spreading funds evenly across the city. Revenues generated should cover costs, including debt service, operating expense, and return on equity. Projects that receive funding assistance—including bank mortgages and public loan guarantees—should insist that their tenants/users are creditworthy, to help ensure that rents are paid. Lastly, job creation should be measured in term of net new jobs. "Sector killers"—large stores that supplant small retailers—should be discouraged, since they produce minimal net job gain.

Numerous successful case studies exist of cities taking the lead role in revitalizing their downtowns. However, neighborhood associations and community development corporations also can



Bridgeport's diverse East Side offers a variety of housing options, which are quickly becoming unaffordable.

successfully rebuild neighborhoods. Rebuilding neighborhoods is important, since attracting families and middle-class people back to Bridgeport is such a crucial part of the revitalization process.

In the past, the city of Bridgeport has partnered with the Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC) to promote community redevelopment. LISC strengthens nonprofits by building the administrative capacity of neighborhood associations. The city should continue its partnership with LISC to continue to build the strength of existing neighborhood groups and foster new ones. It is not just the individual housing development or retail development project that builds a community, but also the capacity of the community developer to address a wide range of community issues and to play a multitude of roles that enable a comprehensive approach to the revitalization of a community.

The following are two examples of community-based organizations that have strong potential to rebuild Bridgeport's neighborhoods. The city should make focusing resources—including available land—to groups like these a top priority.

Center for Women and Families. The Center for Women and Families serves 3,300 clients annually, many of them victims of domestic violence. The organization's primary goal is providing transitional housing for broken families seeking to regain economic self-sufficiency. The city should con-

sider making city-owned or -controlled property available to the center and/or similar organizations as a means of providing needed social services. This process also puts delinquent properties to good use and, depending on the circumstances, can bring in limited tax revenues from currently unproductive properties.

The Charles D. Smith, Jr. Foundation. Founded by the former National Basketball Association player and Bridgeport native in 1989, this community-based 501(c)3 organization promotes youth development and support services for families. Located in a 13,000-square-foot historical landmark building in the East End, the foundation's programs include youth activities, a wellness center, and educational and job training skills. The programs cater to the East End's 9,800 residents, 97 percent of whom are African-American or Latino. The foundation also has begun partnering with private developers who specialize in urban projects. A shopping center and grocery store are under discussion, but developers likely will require city assistance to assemble the needed five-acre site.

Real Estate Market Opportunities

In terms of real estate, Bridgeport can be described rather simply by two words: location and transportation. Well within the sphere of influence of the one of the world's largest and greatest cities—New York—Bridgeport is a part of the megalopolis that extends from Washington, D.C., to Boston and beyond. Bridgeport's market region includes, at the very least, western Connecticut and New York City. Its favorable location is enhanced by superb transportation connections. Interstate 95, Amtrak and Metro North trains, and the Port Jefferson Ferry connect the city to the rest of Connecticut, Boston, New York, and points beyond. The panel believes that Bridgeport can seize upon its advantageous location to stimulate economic development. Bridgeport is a dream location for many types of development, with inexpensive land, developed infrastructure, transportation connections, and an extensive waterfront.

What may be more difficult to consider is Bridgeport's markedly shifting role in the regional and global marketplace. The history of Bridgeport heavy industry—including 12-hour workdays, labor disputes, environmental pollution, and the boom-and-bust cycle—should not be viewed with nostalgia. The industrial sector constructed in the early part of the last century has dwindled and will not return. Heavy industry is no longer an economic base in the United States, and evidence suggests that even light industrial parks frequently are being converted to back office and small business uses.

Bridgeport's future lies in capturing the plentiful opportunities available now, which follow a very different path from attracting heavy industry. The city will meet with substantial success if it reaches out to developers of retail, service, and residential properties. Bridgeport today is surrounded by some of the most affluent communities—both residential and corporate—in the world. The panel

feels that Bridgeport should seize the opportunity to participate in that affluence. This requires playing on the city's strengths to take advantage of the tremendous resources available to Bridgeport right now.

City Real Estate Policy

The panel heard that taxes in Bridgeport are much too high. The solutions to that problem are few. Although the city could try to get more money from the state and federal governments, such attempts are unlikely to succeed, given the record budget deficits of recent years. The city could cut services or staff, but that likely would compound other existing problems. Bridgeport could raise taxes or find new ways to tax. The lower tax rates available to companies in nearby towns make attracting established companies to Bridgeport an even more daunting task. However, surprisingly few companies will locate in a city simply because of its low taxes. Companies look for many other factors: a unique business advantage, a labor force with desirable attributes, the demographics of the customer base, or a high quality of life. The companies with the best staying power are those that begin in a city, remain there, and grow.

Bridgeport must cultivate these important attributes to overcome its high tax rates. The city already has a large, untapped labor pool. It also offers a variety of economic incentive programs. The region boasts some of the wealthiest consumers in the country, and a variety of business spaces—some of which need to be retrofitted—that can meet today's business needs. Bridgeport has a solid foundation upon which to build an outstanding quality of life, with some changes in governmental processes and outside investment.

Old theories regarding the development of this city must be discarded. The first theory that should be discarded is the historic notion that

Bridgeport needs to attract new heavy industry and large corporate headquarters. The solution is to bring in smaller companies and to grow small businesses from the ground up. Neighboring communities such as Stamford have an impressive collection of corporate headquarters, but have suffered recently as many of those companies have relocated to more suburban locations, left the country, or consolidated. Bridgeport should not position itself in this way. Instead, it should favor the stable enterprise of hosting small businesses.

The second theory to be discarded is the traditional bias against new residential development. New homes mean new residents and a larger tax base to draw upon. Parcels lying vacant and paying little or no property tax can experience meteoric rises in value through the construction of housing. The early beginnings of a new residential community have begun to take root in inner Bridgeport, courtesy of developers who see the appeal of the urban lifestyle to a new generation of residents. Bridgeport has the density, waterfront views, and appealing streetscapes valued by urban residential developers. Residential retrofitting of old industrial buildings is an intriguing way to preserve the city's beautiful historic struc-

tures and cultural heritage while making effective use of its land. The panel believes that this residential development trend should be encouraged and nurtured by both the public and private sectors. Concerns about affordable housing create added housing pressure for Bridgeport.

The city has exercised eminent domain to assemble vast tracts of land that it has planned to convert to office, retail, or other uses. Development in those sectors has not materialized, partly because of the complicated approval process, partly because of the city's focus on large projects, but in large part because of the lack of residents who would provide the market for such development. The obsolete housing stock near Bridgeport's downtown can easily be converted to interesting, valuable lofts, condominiums, and rental apartments. Examples of successful urban housing retrofits can be seen in the South End of Boston, South of Market in San Francisco, and Chelsea and the Meatpacking District of New York. Bridgeport's current housing shortage has driven up prices unnecessarily. The price spike and, consequently, the affordability concerns can probably be addressed simply by building more housing.



Artists seeking inexpensive rents and proximity to New York City now occupy the former RemGrit factory.

The panel believes that Bridgeport's economic development strategy does not incorporate enough retail space. The bias against large-scale retail development in the city likely is attributable to the failure of the former downtown mall and the fact that sales tax revenue goes to the state. Unfortunately, the results of this policy burden Bridgeport residents by forcing them to travel out of the city to make major purchases and get service-sector jobs. New retail space means more property tax revenue, more selection for residents, a better quality of life, more outside visitors coming to the city, and more entry-level jobs, many of which offer prospects for advancement.

Adaptive Use Projects

One of the most compelling real estate resources in Bridgeport is its exceptional collection of former industrial and commercial buildings. Loft spaces in such buildings adapted and reused for live/work environments have been made popular through both movies and television. Much of the new residential construction in urban areas mimics these building types. In Bridgeport, outside of downtown, these are typically brick and timber structures. Many are located in desirable areas, often in established residential or commercial neighborhoods. Today, some of these spaces are used for creative or start-up businesses in need of flexible, inexpensive space in a noncorporate environment. The flexible interior space of a former factory allows for easy conversion between tenants and can evolve as tenant needs change.

Outside of downtown, the opportunity for adaptive use is growing, as the beginning of a creative community has taken root and is starting to grow. On the East Side, the RemGrit complex serves as an incubator for the kind of small business that provides high-paying jobs with a future to people interested in the type of urban setting that Bridgeport offers. Surprisingly, Bridgeport officials have expressed an interest in evicting these current tenants, perhaps in favor of more heavy industrial uses. The panel believes this would be a step in the wrong direction. Economic development officials need to connect with the emerging creative and small business community, now found all over the city in locations such as the Bridgeport Innovation Center in the East End. New opportunities

for these kinds of development include locations in the West End such as the proposed Cherry Avenue site, the now derelict Hubbell complex and, potentially, 110 Mountain Grove.

In addition to the appropriate renovation and restoration of the RemGrit complex, the original Remington Arms facility, now owned by General Electric, should be viewed as a showcase project for the city and should be converted to live/work small business and creative space. This project, together with the current downtown activity at the CityTrust building, Arcade complex, and Golden Hill, could give Bridgeport an exciting story to tell about interesting and unique spaces for new business. These spaces are available now for the next generation of U.S. industry, one that is based on talent and innovation, and offers wages unmatched by heavy industry.

Development Sites of Interest

The panel is very excited about several development opportunities and less enthused about others. The panel disagrees with current city goals for several sites, and suggests a different approach for them. It is important to explore the short- and long-term opportunities available to Bridgeport. The following discussion is divided into two sections: existing development sites and potential development opportunities.

Existing Development Sites

Several development opportunities have generated local interest, and the community brought these sites to the panel's attention. Panelists have formed the following basic opinions about these sites:

Congress Plaza Urban Renewal Sites. The city owns substantial amounts of property along Main Street north of Congress Street, which it acquired as part of an urban renewal area. These properties have become more usable since the demolition of the elevated railway spur that ran through the area. However, the city has landscaped these properties and deferred decisions about them because of uncertainty about the future of the Majestic and Palace theaters at the corner of Congress and Main. These buildings have deteriorated badly, but since the city took ownership the roof has been repaired and water damage is no longer taking place. Yet



The Congress Plaza urban renewal site contains two attractive historic theaters. The panel supports efforts to reuse one or both theaters as part of the redevelopment effort.

the theaters still have serious problems. Built as film theaters, they have stages that are not suitable for all theatrical productions. They also are very large: the Palace alone has 3,600 seats. Since a rule-of-thumb estimate for restoring comparable theaters is around \$12,000 a seat, the cost of restoring the Palace Theater could be roughly \$43 million.

The panel heard about the concept of creating a magnet high school for the arts in Bridgeport, which would include visual arts as well as performance arts. The panel also heard of potential interest by groups in Fairfield County that might be capable of raising the very large sum of money needed to preserve, restore, and reuse the theaters. The theaters also could be used for film or television production, as well as for the performing arts. This additional use could help finance restoration.

The city should explore these options thoroughly. If a magnet school is possible, its location, parking, and open space requirements easily will absorb all of the remaining land in the urban renewal district. It would have a very useful relationship with the restored theaters and could share some facilities with them. A magnet school should be considered for these sites even without the theaters, as this is an appropriate downtown use. Its presence will make the theaters' ultimate restoration more likely.

If there is no possibility of building a magnet school and restoring the theaters, the city should release the urban renewal sites for medium- to high-density residential development. Even if the theaters are demolished, this location remains a very suitable place for such residential development.

Lafayette Center Office Sites. These sites and the larger office site to the west are both highly appropriate locations for office development. The larger site is on an axis with Lafayette Boulevard and would be a highly visible location for a signature office building lined up with the boulevard. West of this location, within the circle, there is room for a parking deck to serve this building.

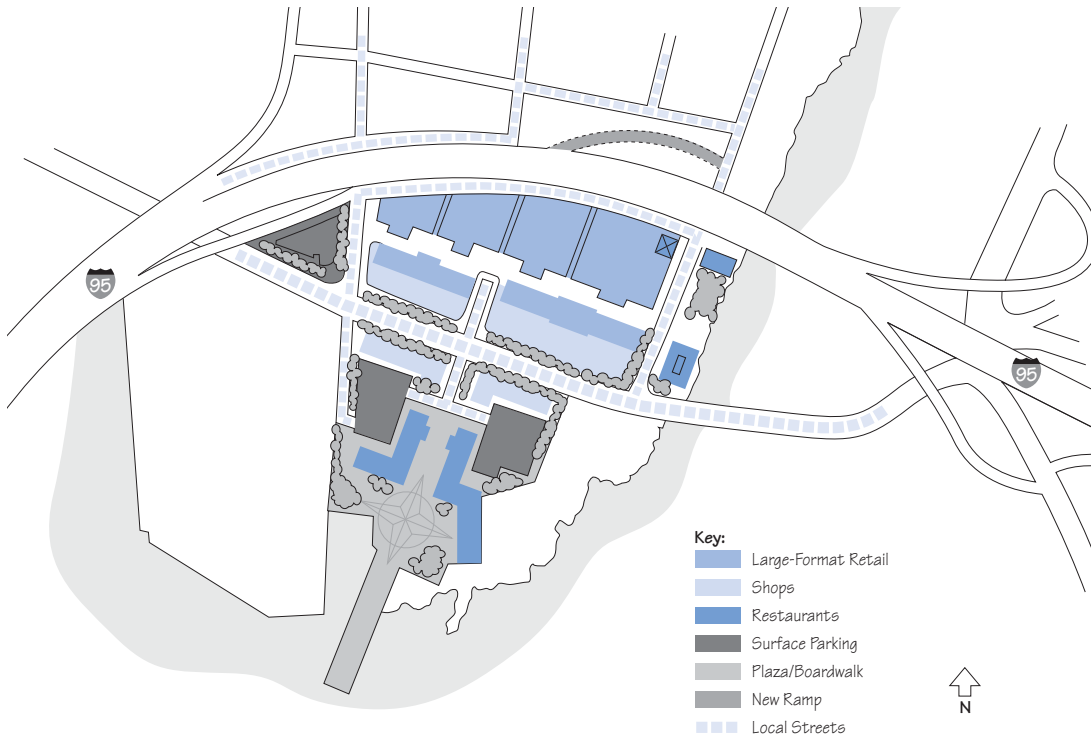
The Lafayette sites could be a catalyst for surrounding development. For example, if Lafayette Center succeeds in attracting office development,

the Firestone site and the parking lot just east of it also will become highly suitable for office development. The city should make stimulating office campuses a high priority and, if necessary, should use innovative financing to get the development process started.

60 Main Street (Remington) Site. The *Investors' Handbook* published by the Bridgeport Economic Resource Center (BERC) describes this site as offering, among other possibilities, an ideal location for a corporate headquarters or office building. If it is suitable for these uses, it also would be suitable for luxury residential buildings. The panel believes that housing is the highest and best use for this site, which commands excellent views of Seaside Park and Long Island Sound and is located close to an I-95 exit and the railway station. However, any proposed design must keep in mind the fact that the site also is next to four fuel oil tanks belonging to the adjacent power plant complex.

The panel also understands that the site immediately to the north, far from being additional available land, as described in the *Investors' Handbook*, is to be the site for additional power-generating facilities. If this is correct, the only likely use for this site is for industry, and the site will not be able to realize the potential of its waterfront and park location. The city should consider altering the land use plan for the adjacent site to open up possibilities for luxury residential use.

Pequonnock Site. This site currently contains 800 at-grade parking spaces, which are used for the arena and the ballpark. These parking spaces will have to be replaced if the site is developed. The panel has looked at various possibilities for the site, and only a high-density office building—which could share its garage parking with the arena and ballpark—is likely to be feasible because of this parking requirement. Residential and commercial uses would have to include a dedicated 800-space garage for the arena and ballpark, in addition to the spaces needed for the residential units and retail uses. Many downtown office sites exist that will be easier to develop than this one, and the panel expects that the city will not be successful in marketing this site as long as the 800-car parking requirement is in place. Therefore, the panel rec-



The panel's concept for Steel Point includes large-format retail along with shops and restaurants on a waterfront boardwalk.

ommends that the Pequonnock site be given a low priority for city investment in redevelopment.

Bridgeport Landing/Steel Point. Approximately 4 million square feet of development currently is proposed for this 50-acre site. The difficulty is that the United Illuminating (UI) parcel and other waterfront properties needed for this ambitious plan are not under city control or otherwise readily available. The city's right of first refusal for the UI property has expired. The panel sees strong indications that UI does not intend to make this site available to others or participate in the current planned development.

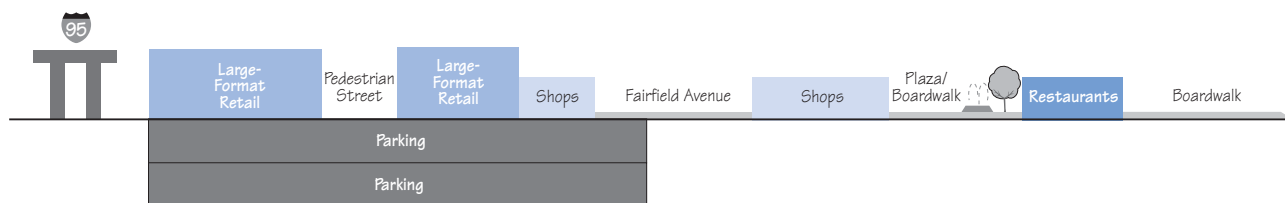
Consequently, the panel believes the city and its designated developer need to look seriously at a development program that can be carried out in the foreseeable future on land the city currently controls. Any development that is built can be integrated with development on the remaining waterfront sites if those properties become available in the future. The panel has examined several alternatives and recommends that the city and developer look carefully at the potential for a

high-intensity combination of large-format retail, garage parking, and destination—or “lifestyle”—retail space. The development industry is building this combination of uses in other U.S. locations with comparable highway access. The panel is *not* recommending conventional, suburban-style, individual big-box stores on separate sites, but rather an integrated, multilevel, high-amenity retail environment.

The panel has developed a conceptual sketch of this alternative and believes that the development industry should be able to build something of this kind in this location without additional subsidy beyond the investment that already has gone into site preparation and acquisition. The recommendation is only a concept, based on the panel's expertise. Any development proposal for Steel Point will need to be studied with care, but the panelists are optimistic that this or some similar design will help the city realize a more immediate payoff from its years of work on this site.

Father Panik Village. A portion of the remaining land on the site of the former Father Panik Village

Bridgeport Landing/Steel Point cross section.



Bridgeport's train station—which is the centerpiece of a planned Intermodal Center—provides excellent rail transportation to locations throughout the northeast corridor and offers commuters a 60-minute ride into New York City.



has been designated for a double prekindergarten to eighth-grade school for 1,250 children. Approximately ten acres remain at Father Panik Village that could be used to create more than 100 affordable, for-sale townhouses on the riverfront in a neighborhood that needs additional housing and is close to downtown. Unfortunately, the remaining unclaimed land is the site closest to the railroad. The panel feels the city should consider exchanging the two sites so that the school, if it is located here, could be set on the land closest to the railroad and the residential buildings could be set to the south of the school. This land swap would enhance the chances of a successful residential development.

Intermodal Center. The bus station portion of this project already is in the construction document phase, and the new ferry terminal has been completed. When complete, the Intermodal Center will be a valuable component for the city. Since federal mass transit funds are being used for this project, the center is not a drain on scarce city funds. The Intermodal Center will not directly

create jobs, nor will it produce any immediate tax revenue. The panel supports the city's forward-thinking efforts to develop the area around the Intermodal Center.

The city has purchased the former Farmer's and Mechanic's Bank building with the aim of making it a gateway to the Intermodal Center. Before construction on this project begins, the city should establish that a substantial number of railway passengers will wish to enter the facility from Main Street. Further, the city should examine whether the pedestrian bridge is actually needed. With the attractive new station and enhanced mobility options, commercial and residential development around the station likely will succeed without the pedestrian bridge or much government subsidy.

University Parcels for Luxury Housing. The University of Bridgeport has excess land that could be used for luxury housing facing Seaside Park and Long Island Sound. The university has not yet completed a master plan to determine which parcels it can spare, but creating high-value housing



Railroad tracks separate Bridgeport's ballpark from the city's South Side, home to the University of Bridgeport. The university is considering selling surplus land with outstanding water views to the city.

in this desirable location would be of great benefit to both the university and the city. Excess university property would have outstanding views of Long Island Sound, access to parks and higher education, and good connectivity with downtown. The panel believes that luxury housing on university land would be a great benefit to the city and that it deserves the highest priorities for city resources.

Possibilities for the Future

In addition to the development projects that already have been discussed, other possibilities for Bridgeport remain that are limited only by the city's collective imagination. The three following opportunities are broader and have a longer time horizon than those discussed above.

Sikorsky Airport. The panel understands that the prospects for restoring commercial air service are poor, but believes that the airport remains useful for general aviation that supports local corporations. The panel suggests that the city undertake an immediate study of the reuse of this airport as an office park, and then compare the benefits of this course of action to the benefits of keeping the airport in operation. Any plans to redevelop the airport would require consultation with the town of Stratford and the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA). Tax revenues from the new development would go to Stratford, unless negotiations

produced a different result, but the land value or lease proceeds would go to the city of Bridgeport, and this money could be used for other capital projects.

Another option is selling the airport outright, perhaps even to the town of Stratford, where a large portion of the businesspeople who use the airport are based. The sale of the airport also would produce income for the city, albeit a smaller amount. This would divest Bridgeport of the needed subsidy for airport operations. It also would free the city from undergoing the lengthy process of gaining FAA approval to convert the airport to other uses.

Lake Success Business Park. Ultimately, access to Lake Success Business Park will be accomplished through the construction of the new Seaview Avenue corridor. Allocation of scarce city resources to Lake Success and access by Seaview Avenue needs to be balanced against other priorities, since remediation of most of the Bridgeport portion of the property is some six to eight years from completion. There is a backlog of basic infrastructure projects, expenditure on planning efforts and, of course, subsidies of smaller projects that warrant higher priorities than Lake Success. Projects that can be accomplished in a short time frame should take funding and staff priority.

Lake Success Business Park's highest and best use is for light industrial, back office, and flex space. However, the city has substantial amounts of vacant or underutilized property across Bridgeport that could be available for these uses. Developing Lake Success should be the long-term goal of the Seaview Avenue corridor project, not the sole reason for the corridor's construction.

The panel feels that although Lake Success is a valuable project in the long term, infill or reuse projects should take precedence before development begins at Lake Success. Once economic interest in Bridgeport begins to gain momentum—and infill sites become occupied—Lake Success will begin to experience development pressure. In the meantime, Lake Success does have road access via Asylum Avenue, although that route is not suitable for substantial truck traffic. If development interest comes forward before Seaview Avenue is complete, the property still could be developed for back office and flex space using Asylum Avenue as the access road. The panel feels that the first phases of Seaview Avenue should proceed as quickly as possible. Constructing the roadway all the way to Lake Success, however, is not warranted in the short term because Bridgeport has such a large portfolio of developable property within the center city.

In short, the panel believes that investment in access roads and development subsidy for a project on the edge of town, with a long development horizon and a lengthy environmental cleanup process, should not be among the city's top priori-

ties. While Lake Success should be a long-term goal for the city, substantial numbers of properties in the center of Bridgeport have greater potential for office, high-tech, and research uses. Bridgeport should instead focus on issues related to close-in properties, in an effort to truly redevelop the center city. Bridgeport's development potential is highest along the coast, followed by infill parcels in the center city and, finally, in the interior at Lake Success.

Pleasure Beach. This magnificent site has an exceptional location at the mouth of the harbor. Unfortunately, the city lost access to the beach when the only bridge connection to the mainland was destroyed in a fire several years ago. In this case, an RFP process may be appropriate to identify creative uses for the site that will foster public access for recreation and leisure. Seasonal uses that have demonstrated viability in other locations—such as upscale campgrounds, alfresco dining, and entertainment venues—could help attract visitors to Bridgeport. The city also could offer special events and festivals there. Portions of the island could be placed in conservation holding, protecting the habitat of endangered species. In lieu of building a new bridge, seasonal or full-time water taxi service could be provided from Captain's Cove, Steel Point, or the existing ferry terminal, creating an adventurous, elite destination for residents and visitors alike. The panel feels that water taxi service to Pleasure Beach from a newly developed shopping destination at Steel Point could be a powerful regional attractor of visitors to Bridgeport.

Conclusion

The panel believes that Bridgeport is in control of its own destiny. The city's future can be a bright one! During the past few decades, Bridgeport has been maligned by corruption, fiscal crisis, disinvestment, and a poor public image. The panel, along with most community leaders, believes that these problems are behind the city. Bridgeport is ready to move forward and begin a new era of economic importance. By shedding old reputations, old practices, and old priorities, the city can realize its great potential. It has numerous strengths upon which to build. Today, the city has an opportunity to reinvent itself, and Bridgeport's future is limited only by the ambition of its leaders, business owners, and residents. The panel looks forward to seeing the transformation of Bridgeport.

This report has discussed a diverse set of topics. It also has presented numerous recommendations to the city of Bridgeport and, to a lesser extent, the state of Connecticut. Adopting some of these recommendations will require making difficult changes, while others will be fairly easy to implement. The panel's recommendations fall into three broad categories:

Master Planning and Community Visioning

A new master plan must be crafted to guide economic development, growth, services, and social programs in the city. The plan should not be just a blueprint; it must be a contract between Bridgeport's government and its citizens. By adhering to the plan, the city can create a new era of trust in government and lay the foundation for future development. The comprehensive planning process is the only effective way to mesh the future zoning map, economic development priorities, and other infrastructure needs. The process of creating and adopting the master plan will be almost as important as the plan itself. This process should involve

all stakeholders and lay out a consensus community vision.

New Processes

Old methods of city government are not necessarily the best ones. In fact, the old way of conducting city business in Bridgeport led to many of the obstacles to development that exist today. By altering its RFP/RFQ, development review, and permitting processes, the city can build confidence in the impartiality and reliability of the system. The city also can target several quality-of-life issues, which limit Bridgeport's ability to be a great city and make investors wary.

Real Progress in the Near Future

The panel feels Bridgeport must shift its focus from large, expensive projects to small, easily completed ones. After analyzing the existing projects under consideration, it became clear to the panel that many city development goals are too lofty, intense, or otherwise unattainable. Small business, residential development, and retail stores are more likely to be built in the near term, and would add considerably to the city. Lack of momentum is a serious problem in Bridgeport, and starting small undoubtedly will have a snowball effect. It is important that the city set and prioritize goals, or Bridgeport risks becoming reactionary. By setting attainable goals and priorities, the city can determine its own fate.

Bridgeport must keep in mind that the city's current condition did not come about overnight. A better economic future will not happen overnight either. It will take time, effort, resources, perseverance, leverage, cooperation, and patience on the part of everyone in the community. The panel believes in Bridgeport. The city must learn to believe in itself once again.

About the Panel

William H. (Bill) Hudnut

Panel Chair
Washington, D.C.

Former four-term mayor of Indianapolis and congressman, author, public speaker, television commentator, think tank fellow, elected official, and clergyman, Hudnut currently occupies the Urban Land Institute/Joseph C. Canizaro Chair for Public Policy at ULI.

Hudnut is probably best known for his 16-year tenure as mayor of Indianapolis from 1976 through 1991, where his goal was to build a “cooperative, compassionate, and competitive” city. According to the *Washington Post*, he established “a national reputation for revitalizing his Midwestern city” and, according to the *Toledo Blade*, came to be regarded as “an entrepreneurial leader willing to take prudent risks.” Hudnut spearheaded the formation of a public/private partnership that led to Indianapolis’s emergence during the 1980s as a major American city. A past president of the National League of Cities and the Indiana Association of Cities and Towns, he helped Indianapolis record spectacular growth during his time in office.

As a congressman, Hudnut sponsored 17 bills that became public law. He currently serves as mayor of Chevy Chase, Maryland, and is a member of the board of the National League of Cities. He was a member of the Millennial Housing Commission appointed by Congress during 2001 and 2002. Prior to his entry into public life, as a clergyman he served churches in Buffalo, New York; Annapolis, Maryland; and Indianapolis. After stepping down as mayor of Indianapolis, Hudnut held posts at the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University, the Hudson Institute in Indianapolis, and the Civic Federation in Chicago, before assuming his current position with ULI in 1996.

A much sought-after speaker, Hudnut also is the author of *Minister Mayor* (1987), a book reflecting on his experience in politics and religion; *The Hudnut Years in Indianapolis, 1976–1991* (1995), a case study in urban management and leadership; *Cities on the Rebound* (1998), an analysis of clues to the successful city of the future; and *Halfway to Everywhere* (2003), a portrait of America’s first-tier suburbs.

Hudnut is the recipient of many awards, including Princeton University’s highest alumni honor, the Woodrow Wilson Award for public service (1986); *City and State* magazine’s “Nation’s Outstanding Mayor of 1988;” the Rosa Parks Award from the American Association for Affirmative Action (1992); and the Distinguished Public Service Award from the Indiana Association of Cities and Towns (1985). He graduated from Princeton University with high honors and is a member of Phi Beta Kappa. Hudnut also graduated *summa cum laude* from Union Theological Seminary in New York City and has received honorary degrees from 13 colleges and universities.

Jonathan Barnett

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Barnett, a professor of city and regional planning at the University of Pennsylvania, is an architect, planner, educator, and author of numerous books and articles on the theory and practice of urban design. He has been an urban design adviser to many U.S. cities, including Charleston, South Carolina; Cleveland, Ohio; Kansas City, Missouri; Miami, Florida; and Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, and also has advised several U.S. government agencies, including the General Services Administration, the National Park Service, the Department of Housing and Urban Development, the National Endowment for the Arts, and the National Capital Planning Commission.

Barnett's work on large-scale urban development and redevelopment projects includes the reuse plans for the Philadelphia Naval Shipyard; the Treasure Island Naval Station in San Francisco; the former U.S. Air Force base in Myrtle Beach, South Carolina; and former railway yards in Philadelphia and Sacramento. He also has been the urban designer for studies of the Ocean View Avenue corridor in Norfolk, Virginia; the Highway 111 corridor plan for Indian Wells, California; and the Euclid corridor in Cleveland. Barnett's suburban development work includes studies of development guidelines for four townships in western Pennsylvania; the urban design for Daniel Island, a 4,500-acre planned community near Charleston, South Carolina; and the master plans for the Village of Irvington, New York, and Brookfield, Wisconsin, a suburb of Milwaukee.

Formerly a professor of architecture and founder of the graduate program in urban design at the City College of New York, Barnett also has been the William Henry Bishop visiting professor at Yale; the Eschweiler Professor at the University of Wisconsin; the Kea Distinguished Visiting Professor at the University of Maryland; and the Sam Gibbons Eminent Scholar at the University of South Florida. His books about urban design include *Urban Design as Public Policy*, *Introduction to Urban Design*, and *The Fractured Metropolis: Improving the New City, Restoring the Old City, and Reshaping the Region*.

A *magna cum laude* graduate of Yale University, Barnett holds a master's of arts degree from the University of Cambridge and a master's of architecture from Yale. He is a fellow of the American Institute of Architects and the American Institute of Certified Planners, and a member of the Urban Land Institute.

Jeffrey T. Bond

Berkeley, California

Bond has more than 15 years of experience in land use economics and public policy, and has been involved in all aspects of public/private ventures. He currently serves as senior planner for real estate and housing at the University of California at Berkeley (UC Berkeley), where he is managing the redevelopment of 26 acres of university property for student and faculty housing, a retail center, and community facilities and open space.

Before joining the staff at UC Berkeley, Bond served as a development manager for the city of Alameda, California, where he successfully negotiated agreements with the U.S. Navy for the conveyance of more than 1,000 acres of property from the Navy to the city, including a 140-acre "early transfer" of contaminated property. In addition, he was the city's project manager for the first phase of implementation of base reuse through a 215-acre mixed-use development of former Navy property by Catellus Development Company. Bond also participated in the process to select a master developer for the remaining 770 acres of Navy property expected to be available for redevelopment soon. Other projects he completed in Alameda include a single-family housing development, a corporate office campus for a major software company, and a "main street" retail project. He also has been involved in efforts to restore a historic movie palace.

Bond also has served an economist with several economic consulting firms and has prepared waterfront enhancement strategies, public improvement financing plans, and urban redevelopment programs. His economic development experience includes service as staff to an advisory commission to the California State legislature, and as staff to a nonprofit economic development corporation. Bond has degrees in economics from the

University of California at San Diego and the University of California at Davis.

Ernest Freeman

Plainsboro, New Jersey

Freeman recently assumed the post of community development director for the township of Plainsboro, New Jersey. Immediately prior to accepting his current position, he was executive director of the Norfolk Redevelopment and Housing Authority (NRHA), a recognized leader in housing and urban development that manages more than 6,800 affordable housing units. NRHA's resident services programs are national models, and it was the first housing authority to receive an allocation of New Market Tax Credits. Under Freeman's leadership, NRHA embarked on some of the largest redevelopment projects in the city's history. The agency's lead role in the 240,000-square-foot development of the downtown campus of Tidewater Community College won the top economic development award for 2002 from the International Downtown Association. Broad Creek Renaissance, located on Norfolk's East Side, is a mixed-use, mixed-income traditional neighborhood development featuring about 800 residential units. East Beach is an upscale community on the Chesapeake Bay with about 700 residential units and 150,000 square feet of commercial space. Both projects represent public/private investment of almost \$500 million.

Freeman served as director of planning for the city of Norfolk from 1996 through 2001. He was responsible for urban design, zoning and code enforcement, construction services, transportation planning, neighborhood and downtown planning, and community outreach, as well as for administering the community development block grant (CDBG) program. Previously, Freeman served as director of planning for the cities of San Diego from 1992 to 1996, Baltimore (1989 to 1992), Cincinnati (1987 to 1989), and Portsmouth (1984 to 1987). He was a Norfolk senior planner from 1978 to 1984. In 1984, the Norfolk Lions Club of Ocean View honored him as Citizen of the Year.

Freeman holds a BA in sociology from Southern Illinois University and a master of city and re-

gional planning from the University of Illinois. He holds professional certification from the American Institute of Certified Planners and is a full member of the Urban Land Institute, American Planning Association, International City Management Association, and National Forum of Black Public Administrators. He has served on ULI's Inner-City Housing Council since 2002.

Jack Illes

San Diego, California

Illes is cofounder of Urban Labs, a boutique real estate strategy and design firm focused on both market and community interests. Urban Labs emphasizes the creation of community gathering places or "civic squares" that combine good design and a sense of place with commercial and civic uses. Through its urban infill, mixed-use projects, Urban Labs strives to demonstrate that new development can benefit all community stakeholders by providing newly energized urban environments.

As managing partner of Urban Labs, Illes's responsibilities include corporate strategy, design direction, public relations, and research. His current efforts include master planning an 18-acre urban site in Waikiki in Honolulu and its centerpiece, the International Market Place. For that project, considered the cornerstone of the renaissance of Waikiki's aging visitor plant, Urban Labs is serving as design architect. Illes's past urban mixed-use experience in California with the former Hahn Company includes Horton Plaza in San Diego, Paseo Colorado in Pasadena, and Hollywood & Highland in Los Angeles. Other North American projects include the Prudential Center redevelopment in Boston's Back Bay and mixed-use projects in cities as diverse as Denver, Baltimore, Las Vegas, and Toronto. Freeman also has been involved with major urban projects in Mexico City, Budapest, Frankfurt, and Tokyo.

Jeffrey D. Jeep

Wheaton, Illinois

Jeep is an attorney who returned to private practice in 1995. His law firm, Diver, Jeep and Blazer, L.L.C., represents the city of Waukegan and other

municipalities engaged in the redevelopment of polluted industrial properties. He worked closely with the ULI Advisory Services panel that visited Waukegan in 2001 and, since then, has continued to work with the mayor and city council to implement ULI's vision for redevelopment of the downtown and lakefront.

Jeep was successful in negotiating the acquisition of 93 acres of lakefront property from the bankrupt Outboard Marine Corporation (OMC). Over the objection of General Motors and North Shore Gas Company, the city of Waukegan acquired, by eminent domain, a 40-acre Superfund site on the shore of Lake Michigan for \$100,000. Before the city took title, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) approved a plan mandating that the property be cleaned to industrial standards. After the city took title, the EPA threatened to sue if the city did not go along with its cleanup plan. The city responded by rezoning the property residential, enacting the state's first environmental nuisance ordinance, and rejecting the EPA's industrial cleanup plan. Ultimately, Jeep negotiated a settlement with the firms and the EPA that mandates a level of cleanup that will accommodate a mixed-used residential and marina development. In 2005, the city plans to issue requests for proposals to build condominiums and a marina on the site. The development is expected to generate millions of dollars annually in new real estate taxes.

Jeep recently completed negotiations with the EPA and the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency for the city to acquire the remaining 53 acres of the OMC lakefront property for only \$130. The tax increment generated by the redeveloped former Coke Plant site will support the issuance of bonds to finance the redevelopment of the 53-acre parcel. ULI and the city's master planner, Skidmore Owings & Merrill, anticipated that environmental contamination at the former OMC property would delay redevelopment of the North Harbor area by ten to 15 years. The North Harbor area now is scheduled to be the first mixed-use residential, recreational, and marina development on the Waukegan lakefront.

Before returning to private practice, Jeep worked in the law department of Waste Management, Inc. He moved to Boston in 1989 to serve as regional

environmental counsel for the firm's northeast region, which included New England, Connecticut, New York state, and eastern Canada. While at Waste Management, Inc., Jeep was responsible for siting landfills, cleaning up leaking landfills, environmental compliance, and environmental litigation, including both civil and criminal lawsuits. He was a prosecutor in Lake County, Illinois, from 1982 through 1985 and received his law degree from Loyola University of Chicago.

Cecilia A. Mowatt

Chicago, Illinois

Mowatt is an attorney with extensive experience in corporate strategy, asset management, and real estate transactions. Formerly the first international president of GVA Worldwide, a real estate services firm, she launched her own real estate consulting firm, Strategies In Site, Inc., at the end of 2002.

Prior to joining GVA, Mowatt was an executive with Chicago-based McDonald's and Ameritech. During almost eight years at McDonald's, Mowatt acquired experience in real estate transactions from conception to completion. Throughout her real estate career, which includes six years at Ameritech, Mowatt was instrumental in developing process improvements and performance measurements, as well as handling outsourcing of real estate transactions to align real estate with overall company strategies. She started her career with the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission.

Mowatt currently serves on the boards of Family Focus, Inc., a Chicago-based family resource and support organization, and the Episcopal Church Council. Prior directorships include the Chicago chapter of the American Institute of Wine and Food, the Latin School Alumni Association and board of trustees, the Latin American Bar Association, the Black Women Lawyers Association, the Stanford Club of Illinois, and Chicago Work Ethic. Her volunteer activities, many of which focus on supporting and mentoring children, have included work with the Junior League of Chicago, St. James Episcopal Cathedral, the Constitutional Rights Foundation, Chicago Legal Assistance for

Incarcerated Mothers, and the Cook County Bar Association Community Law Project. Mowatt continues to be active in a number of professional and industry organizations related to law and real estate. She received a BA from Stanford University as well as a JD and an MBA from the University of California at Berkeley.

Kerri D. Rogers

New York, New York

Rogers currently has a consulting practice that capitalizes on her 20 years of commercial real estate experience. As president and founder of Public Private Partners, Inc., she represents and assists landlords, investors, government agencies, and nonprofits in urban and economic development projects.

Most recently, Rogers served as president and CEO of one of Harlem's oldest community development corporations, which owns a real estate portfolio valued at approximately \$20 million. She began her real estate career in New York as an owner's representative for Silverstein Properties in the mid 1980s, where she was responsible for marketing, leasing, and renovating office buildings on Fifth Avenue and Wall Street. During the real estate market downturn of the early 1990s, Rogers created the asset management department for the New York City Economic Development Corporation, where she served as vice president and recovered more than \$5 million in unreported revenue. Later, as vice president for the Retail Initiative, she marketed and managed a \$24 million institutional equity fund that leveraged \$100 million in additional investment and facilitated the development of neighborhood anchored shopping centers nationwide.

Rogers received her BS from Northwestern University and an MBA from the Zicklin School of Management at the City University of New York. She is a licensed real estate broker.

David S. Watson

*Adviser to the Panel
New York, New York*

Watson has more than 23 years of experience in real estate finance and currently is responsible for JPMorgan Chase Bank's Community Development Group real estate lending and finance activities in New England, the Mid-Atlantic region, and the Westchester/Mid-Hudson region of New York. Prior to joining JPMorgan Chase in 1991, he spent ten years in senior corporate and real estate lending positions with regional banks in New England. Watson currently is based in the firm's regional headquarters in Bridgeport, Connecticut.

Watson serves on the board of trustees of the National Housing Conference in Washington, D.C., and in various leadership capacities with the Local Initiatives Support Corporation and the Connecticut Children's Investment Partnership. He also serves as a director on the boards of several local community and civic organizations.

During his professional career, Watson has been involved in the financing of more than 15,000 units of rental and for-sale housing and more than 2 million square feet of retail/office/commercial space. These projects have included complex HUD HOPE VI and Section 236 decoupling transactions as well as various economic redevelopment and revitalization projects. Watson has contributed his real estate finance expertise in panel discussions and presentations before the National Housing Conference, the National Association of Affordable Housing Lenders, and the American Bankers Association.

Watson holds a BA degree in economics from Drew University and an MBA degree in finance from Syracuse University.