

City of Bridgeport
Plan of Conservation and Development
Stakeholder Interview
Business Organizations
July 24, 2018

Attendees:

- Diana Washington – Southern Connecticut Black Chamber of Commerce
- Robert Kennedy – East End NRZ
- Tom McMillian – Minority Business Association
- Clodomiro Falcone – Hispanic Chamber of Commerce
- Lauren Coakley-Vincent – Downtown Special Services District (DSSD)
- Jeff Bishop – Bridgeport Regional Business Council (BRBC)
- Kevin Williams – East End NRZ

The statements below are a summary of the opinions expressed by those interviewed. The statements do not necessarily reflect City policy or objective facts.

Bridgeport has a rich industrial and manufacturing history and an international reputation that has slowed in the past few decades. However, opportunities for development of different industries are present in the city and need to be capitalized. The city is centrally located on the northeast corridor which allows regional access for its unique amenities, such as the zoo, waterfront, and public parks. Guidance on developing and attracting business to shoulder the tax base is necessary for the city's growth and changing industries. The city is expanding microbusinesses, especially Hispanic businesses, and construction remains a stable industry in the city. Bridgeport should focus on developing pipelines for current and future success by investing in schools, youth-focused programs and the arts, and creating an attractive and buzzing downtown environment that drives foot traffic to local businesses.

Vision for Bridgeport:

- Lower rents to attract artists and develop city into a buzzing art hub
- Address negative perception of city
- Invest in schools and youth-focused programs
- Harvest high purchasing power of people in areas around Bridgeport to attract business and growth
- Bridgeport should attract artists and entertainment opportunities with tax abatements
- Master Plan should focus on pipelines to future success by developing schools and East End neighborhood
- Incentivize grocery stores to address food deserts
- Create foot traffic downtown with community events and parking incentives
 - Address problematic parking meters
 - Close off city center on weekends to create pedestrian plazas
- Keep Seaside Park open for 24 hours