

'Voices for future' forum will empower us
Letter to the Editor, November 2, 2006

To the editor:

Last fall the Bristol Redevelopment Agency sponsored a workshop by the Urban Land Institute (ULI) of Boston for the purpose of evaluating our historic downtown business district and reporting to the agency, Bristol's town council and its residents their recommendations for future development. Included in that report, published in April 2006, were many very positive proposals, particularly regarding what could happen with the Robin Rug complex when, in the future, that property becomes available for development.

The ULI report also noted the following about Bristol: "Above all, there is a desire for growth but a resistance to change. Bristol is already a regional center, not becoming one. Change is already happening in Bristol and it is imperative that the town set an identity and clear vision for itself so that the dynamic which has already begun is continued in a way that promotes the long-term goals and objectives. There are currently several groups in town with similar missions, yet there is a lack of overall leadership in town to forward any of the agendas. Success lies in a town leader or champion, demonstrating consistent effort, aimed at an overall objective, over a long period of time, using multiple projects. This person or organization needs to have the strength and political willpower to succeed. Without this crucial component in place, effective forward movement cannot take place."

With the upcoming Voices for Bristol's Future community involvement forum scheduled for March 2 and 3 of next year, the residents of Bristol will have a real opportunity to participate in setting "an identity and clear vision for itself." Through this process Bristol's residents themselves will become the "leader or champion" so necessary to the achievement of the well-defined and agreed to "goals and objectives" that will be its outcome. In the very near future Voices for Bristol's Future will begin the solicitation steps needed to accomplish its mission, including fundraising and the selection of a diverse and broad reaching group of 150 residents whose input will create the "identity and clear vision" that is needed for Bristol to initiate "effective forward movement."

Bristol's town officials have already expressed their support for this forum and several community based organizations (Kickemuit River Council, Mosaico CDC and Preserve Bristol) are sponsoring its efforts; it is happening and we residents need to get involved to ensure its total success -- Bristol and all its residents have nothing to lose and everything to gain.

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