

# City of Bridgeport

## Plan of Conservation and Development

### Economic Development Thematic Meeting

Beardsley School  
6PM, Wednesday, September 12, 2018

---



On September 12, 2018, the City of Bridgeport Master Plan of Conservation and Development project team held their fourth thematic meeting related to economic development in Bridgeport. The purpose of this meeting was to review the current conditions, identify relevant priorities, and discuss strengths, issues and new ideas for promoting economic development in Bridgeport. Fourteen (14) members of the public were in attendance.

The project team began the meeting by introducing the Master Plan and clarifying how economic development relates to the larger picture of the Plan. Following the presentation, the meeting attendees were given clickers to vote in real-time on interactive survey questions that helped to identify the group's priorities relevant to economic development in Bridgeport (results below). Attendees broke out into groups to identify the strengths, challenges, and new ideas for reforming and improving Bridgeport's economy (summarized below).

#### **Breakout Session Notes**

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

#### Strengths:

- Bridgeport's location positions it as a regional center between larger cities such as NYC and Boston
- Bridgeport's parks system is a great asset that could be utilized more to increase revenue
- Connecticut's largest city
- Bridgeport's waterfront is unique and is becoming more and more accessible
- Fiber-optic highway access
- Bridgeport has a rich social and economic history
- Bridgeport is diverse in people and culture
- Bridgeport has a strong food and hospitality sector

- Hospitals are big, well-managed, and serve the larger region
- Bridgeport houses three higher education campuses
- Bridgeport has regional attractions, such as the zoo, the arena, and new Amphitheatre
- The artist community is strong, and a creative economy already exists in Bridgeport
- Bridgeport is a utility and service provider to the region
- There is good access to healthcare
- Bridgeport has access to major airports
- Relatively affordable housing compared to the rest of the region
- Bridgeport has a healthy and able labor force
- Bridgeport has training opportunities
- Bridgeport has access to useful transportation systems

#### Issues and Challenges:

- Property taxes are too high in Bridgeport
- Lack of permanent capital
- Lots of brownfields, industrial contamination and blight
- Quality of housing stock is deteriorating each year
- Lack of vibrant downtown
- Lack of consistent governance; lack of leadership and vision
- Public safety and perception of danger in Bridgeport harms the economy
- There exists a lot of unlicensed trades in Bridgeport
- Lack of STEM education and lack of consistency in the general education system
- There is not enough assistance from the State
- State and local legislation is hindering to Bridgeport's goals
- The perception that Bridgeport is corrupt deters new business and hurts the economy
- There is noticeable income disparity and a lack of a significant middle class
- Cost of living is too high with no real benefits or amenities to justify the high costs
- There is a lack of developable land
- Infrastructure is antiquated
- Traffic congestion is constant due to the major regional highways in close proximity to the City
- Lack of skilled labor
- There is no big picture vision for economic growth
- Tax base is not growing to accommodate the growing population and its needs
- Aging labor force

#### Ideas for Improving Bridgeport's Equity and Quality of Life:

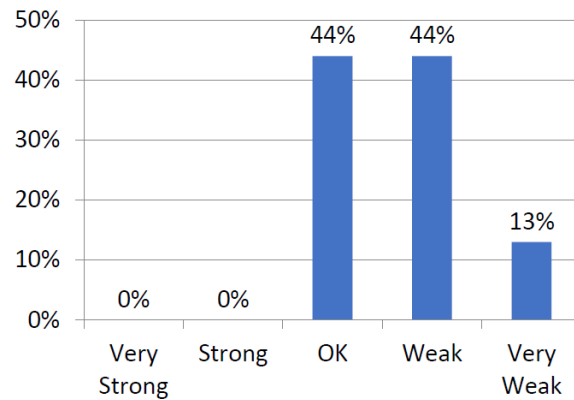
- City should pitch to big companies and anchor institutions and prime the labor force for their arrival
- Expand on programs to improve and enhance labor skills targeted to specific companies or industries

- Collaborate with city and region's top employers to understand the needs and fill gaps in the labor force
- Focus on the start-up economy
- Actively pursue municipal grants for workforce development and livability
- Work on bigger picture goals with Yale New Haven Health and other anchor institutions, such as colleges and universities, to allow for coordinated growth
- Increase coordination between the universities and the city
- Implement a regional tuition program for unique majors for public universities
- Create an aggressive marketing campaign to change Bridgeport's negative perception
- Fill existing skills gap with companies that are already here, such as Sikorsky Airport
- Determine a specific vision for Bridgeport and adhere to it
- Increase livability to attract new residents
- Increase City staff
- Invest in permanent capital
- State needs to rework taxing structure; pilot education reimbursement
- Implement programs to help redevelop blighted and vacant properties and encourage home ownership
- Implement Waterfront Master Plan
- Invest in greenway and open space
- Ensure a universal basic income for all Bridgeport residents
- Create a 45-minute high-speed transit option to NYC
- Repurpose Sikorsky Airport for commuting
- State needs to better support remediation of brownfields
- Position Bridgeport as a major regional attractor in as many ways as possible
- Improve economic conditions by activating and engaging all communities in Bridgeport

## Interactive Survey Results

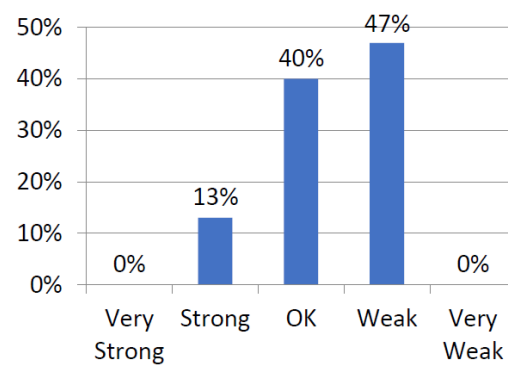
### How do you rate the strength of Bridgeport's Economy?

1. Very Strong
2. Strong
3. OK
4. Weak
5. Very Weak



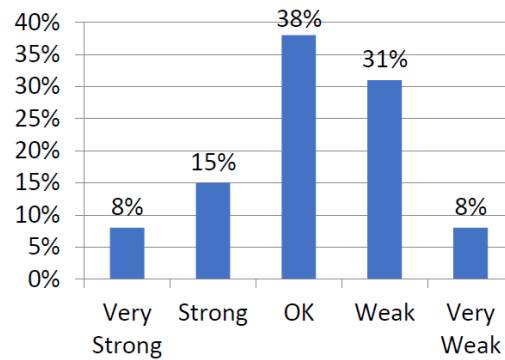
### How do you rate employment opportunities in Bridgeport?

1. Very Strong
2. Strong
3. OK
4. Weak
5. Very Weak



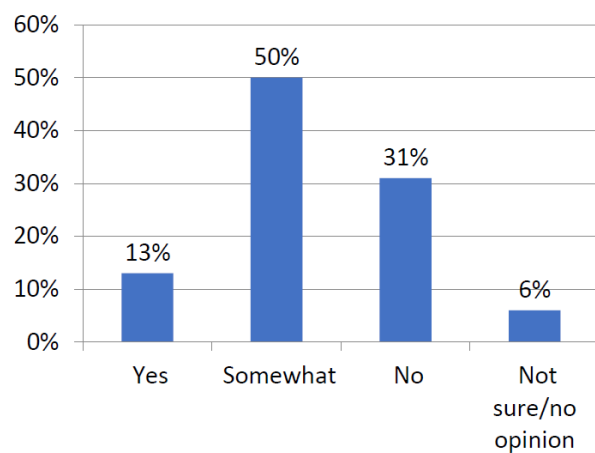
## How strongly is Bridgeport's government supporting Economic Development?

1. Very Strong
2. Strong
3. OK
4. Weak
5. Very Weak



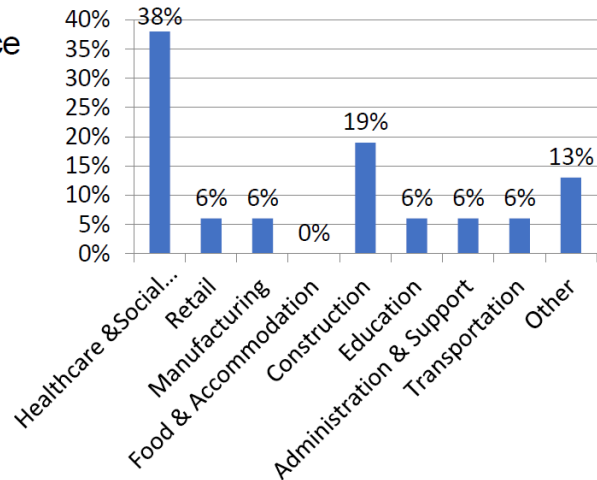
## Are the City's Universities adequately engaged in supporting economic development in Bridgeport?

1. Yes
2. Somewhat
3. No
4. Not sure/no opinion



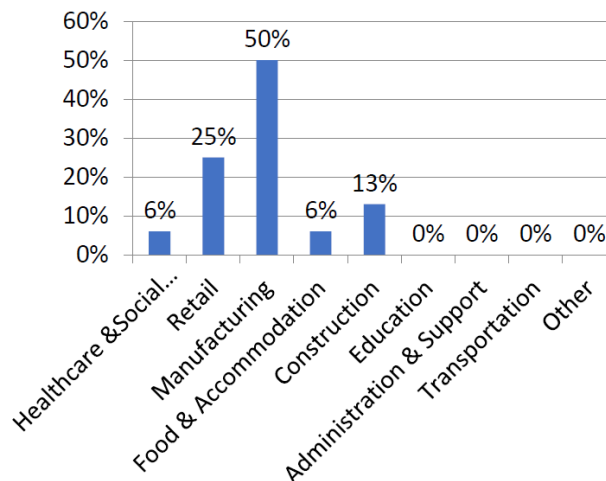
## Which industries do you think have the most potential for growth in Bridgeport?

1. Healthcare & Social Assistance
2. Retail
3. Manufacturing
4. Food & Accommodation
5. Construction
6. Education
7. Administration & Support
8. Transportation
9. Other



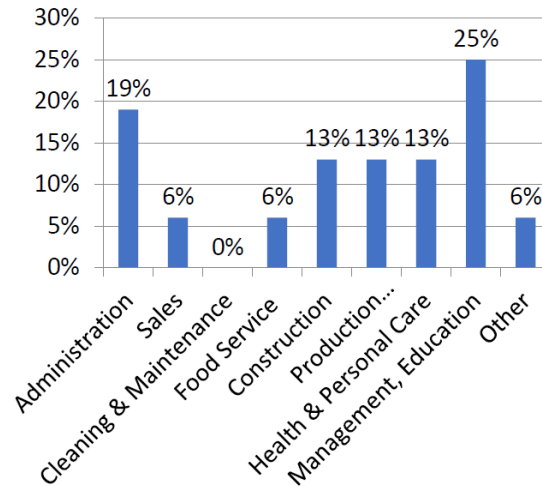
## Which industries do you think are the most vulnerable in Bridgeport?

1. Healthcare & Social Assistance
2. Retail
3. Manufacturing
4. Food & Accommodation
5. Construction
6. Education
7. Administration & Support
8. Transportation
9. Other



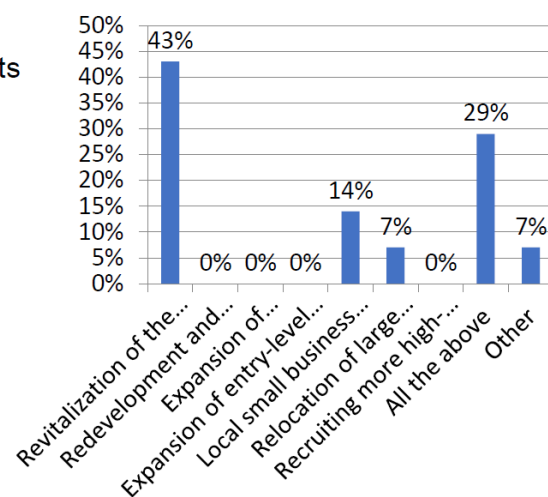
## What types of jobs does Bridgeport need more of?

1. Administration
2. Sales
3. Cleaning & Maintenance
4. Food Service
5. Construction
6. Production (Manufacturing)
7. Health & Personal Care
8. Management, Education
9. Other



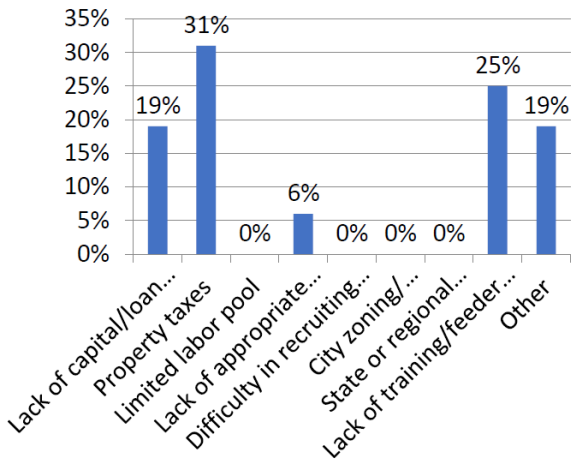
## Which of the following do you think should be the top economic development priority in Bridgeport?

1. Revitalization of the Downtown
2. Redevelopment and construction projects
3. Expansion of manufacturing
4. Expansion of entry-level employment such as service and retail jobs
5. Local small business development
6. Relocation of large employers to Bridgeport
7. Recruiting more high-wage jobs and employers
8. All the above
9. Other



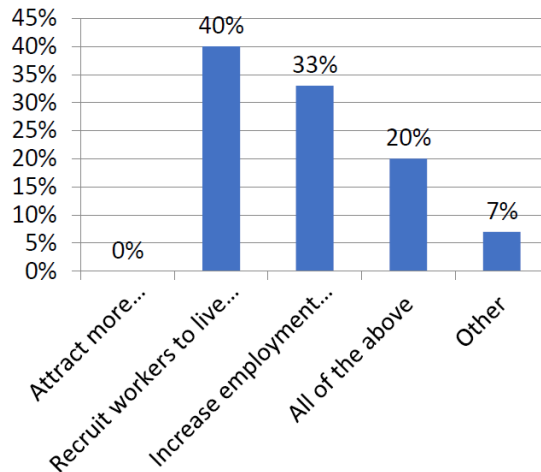
# What is the biggest barrier to economic development in Bridgeport?

1. Lack of capital/loan funding available
2. Property taxes
3. Limited labor pool
4. Lack of appropriate land and/or commercial space
5. Difficulty in recruiting and attracting
6. City zoning/ permitting/ ordinances
7. State or regional limitations
8. Lack of training/feeder programs
9. Other



# Which of the following is a top priority for Bridgeport?

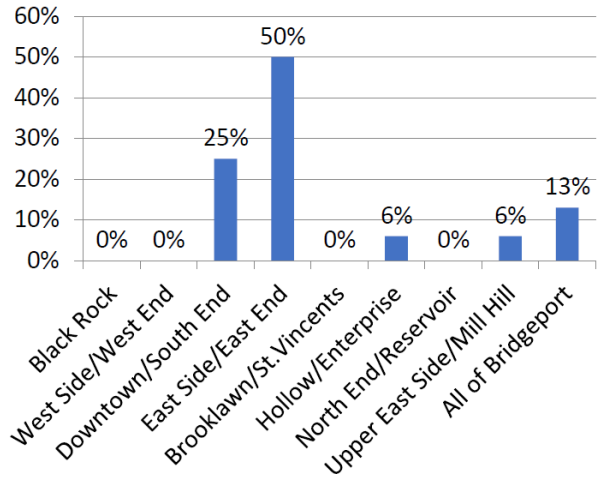
1. Attract more commuting workers from outside of Bridgeport
2. Recruit workers to live and work in Bridgeport
3. Increase employment and job skill levels of Bridgeport's residents
4. All of the above
5. Other





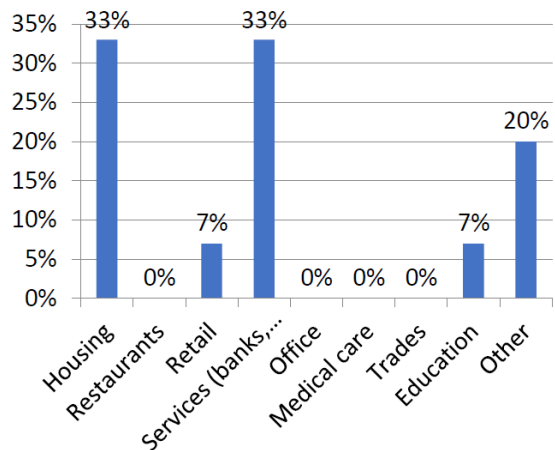
# Is there an area of the City that is in the most need of economic development?

1. Black Rock
2. West Side/West End
3. Downtown/South End
4. East Side/East End
5. Brooklawn/St.Vincents
6. Hollow/Enterprise
7. North End/Reservoir
8. Upper East Side/Mill Hill
9. All of Bridgeport



# What type of development is most needed in the City's neighborhoods?

1. Housing
2. Restaurants
3. Retail
4. Services (banks, laundry, etc.)
5. Office
6. Medical care
7. Trades
8. Education
9. Other



---

**Project Team**

- Tom Corso – AMS
- Rebecca Royston – AMS
- Lynn Haig – City of Bridgeport
- Dean Mack – City of Bridgeport
- Francisco Gomes – FHI
- Zainab Kazmi – FHI