



City of Bristol
Economic and Community Development Board
INFORMATION TO ACCESS THIS MEETING

<https://bristolct-gov.zoom.us/j/88677210794?pwd=M2xITXBOVIRsSDROR1VlSmtnbmdudz09>

Meeting ID: 886 7721 0794

Passcode: 379107

The regular ECD Board Meeting will be held on Thursday, April 3, 2025, at 5:00pm in Council Chambers, City Hall, 111 North Main Street, Bristol, CT.

- I. Call to Order
- II. Public Participation
- III. Approval of Minutes
 - A. Minutes of the March 6, 2025 Regular Meeting
- IV. Consent Agenda
 - A. Communications
 - B. Economic Development/Grants/Marketing Report
- V. New Business
 - A. 273 Riverside Ave. and Downtown Update
 - B. 894 Middle St. and Industrial Update
 - C. Forestville Update
 - D. Manufacturer Visits
 - E. CDBG Conflict of Interest Statement
- VI. New Business By Commissioners

VII. Old Business by Commissioners

VIII. Committee Reports

A. City Council Member Report

IX. Adjournment

PER ORDER OF THE CHAIRPERSON

Jeff Caggiano
Mayor

ECONOMIC & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Regular Meeting Minutes

Thursday, March 6, 2025 5:00pm

City Council Chambers, City Hall, 111 N. Main Street and on Zoom

ATTENDEES: Mayor Caggiano, Commissioner Schmelder (Zoom), Council Member Dickau, Commissioners Provenzano, Goldwasser, Hick, Cowdell, and Kearney- Gonzales

ABSENT: Commissioner Mills

STAFF PRESENT: Justin Malley - Executive Director, Dr. Dawn Leger - Grants Administrator, Dawn Nielsen - Marketing & Public Relations Specialist, and David Sgro – Housing & Project Director (Zoom)

GUESTS: Jimmy Driscoll - Jimmy's on the River
JR Rusgrove – Pure Foods
Patrick Carrier – Principal, Carrier Group
Brian Zadrozny – President, BFZ Electric
Brian Kelley, Nadia Baz, and Rachel Rosa – WORX Branding
Charlie Talmadge – Principal, Development Planning Solutions
Gino Carrier – President, Carrier Construction
Attorney Tim Furey – Furey, Donovan, Cooney & Dyer
Mike Goman – Principal, Goman + York
Attorneys Tom Conlin and Jeffrey Steeg – Corp Council, City of Bristol

I. Call to Order

Mayor Caggiano called the meeting to order at 5:00pm, and lead everyone in the Pledge of Allegiance. A quorum was present. Board Members and ECD Staff introduced themselves.

II. Public Participation

Jimmy Driscoll, 19 Knob Hill Lane, owner of Jimmy's on the River, thanked the Board for the grant provided to the business. The grant allowed for improvements to the property.

JR Rusgrove, Pure Foods, also thanked the Board for the funding approval for their new location at 10 Centre Square. He thanked the Board for their overall support of so many projects in the city. Mr. Rusgrove said additional new hires have already being brought on with growth at the new location already presenting itself.

Justin Malley spoke on Mr. Rusgrove's behalf regarding a modification request to the guidelines of the Revolving Loan Program funding awarded to Pure Foods. The program states that a downtown restaurant needs to remain open until 8:00pm. Mr. Rusgrove shared that economically, they're prepared to stay open until 8:00pm in the spring and summer, but they're requesting a modification for fall and winter.

Commissioner Goldwasser expressed his support for the request, and put forth the motion to approve the modified hours for Pure Foods as stated. Justin Malley clarified that the guideline in question only addresses hours of operation, not a certain number of days, or times of the year. Commissioner Provenzano seconded the motion. There was no further comment or discussion, all were in favor, and the motion to approve the modified hours was accepted into the record.

At this time, Mayor Caggiano called for a motion to move Agenda item **V. New Business, A. Industrial Update** up in the agenda. Commissioner Goldwasser made the motion which was seconded by Commissioner Provenzano. All were in favor, and the agenda item was moved up for immediate discussion.

V. New Business

A. Industrial Update

Patrick Carrier spoke to the proposed use of property that includes land at the park and neighboring land owned by Mr. Damaris. The proposed project will provide flex space for growing companies, such as electricians, plumbers, or painters. Each building will be 2,000 square feet and can be set up to meet the business' needs. There will be no outside storage, and each building will be managed by the Carrier Group as the sole owner.

Brian Zadrozny spoke to the Board regarding his planned move to one of the buildings proposed by the Carrier Group. His business, BFZ Electric, began in his home, with some moves that required larger spaces as the company grew. They plan to utilize the 15,000 square foot space at the front of this proposed project as they've outgrown their latest location.

Discussion of BFZ Electric followed, including the prefabrication of pieces in the shop which allows for greater efficiency when on the job site. The prefabrication shop also provides training for young people, including many Bristol residents who later become electricians.

This presentation was an introduction of the project and is not yet ready for a vote. In time, this will come before the ECD Industrial Committee and then the ECD Board for approvals.

Mayor Caggiano called for a motion to move Agenda item **V. New Business, B. Marketing Report** up in the meeting. Commissioner Provenzano made the motion which was seconded by Commissioner Hick. All were in favor and the agenda item was moved up for discussion.

V. New Business

B. Marketing Report

Representatives from WORX Branding spoke about the marketing survey they conducted as commissioned by ECD Staff. The survey contained 26 questions and yielded 238 participants over a two-and-a-half-month period. The age range included those 24- to 34-years-old, representing a variety of life stages. The goal of the survey was to identify deciding factors for those in this demographic, and use that information to more efficiently market Bristol as a desirable place to live, work, and set down roots.

WORX presented information including survey details and results, and the lifestyle personas, or characters, they created based on the data they gathered to best represent the various needs

that were identified. Some next steps for marketing were also provided, including the use of specific online sites that are highly used by this group.

Some key takeaways include that this demographic is savvy, driven by information and fact-based data. They do their research, and personal references hold value for them. An active, culturally interesting social life is desired, with a huge desire to have a meaningful social network. Safe schools with good school ratings are also key.

Note: Detailed presentation materials are included as the last pages of the in the IV. Consent Agenda, A. Communications portion of this meeting's agenda packet found in CivicClerk: <https://bristolct.portal.civicclerk.com>

At this time the mayor called for a motion to move into Executive Session. The motion was made by Commissioner Hick, and was seconded by Commissioner Provenzano. All were in favor, and the Board moved into Executive Session at 5:49PM. Commissioner Schmelder excused himself.

IX. Executive Session

A. 894 Middle Street Proposal

Mayor Caggiano called for a motion to come out of Executive Session. Commissioner Hick made the motion which was seconded by Commissioner Provenzano. All were in favor, and the Board came out of Executive Session and returned to the Regular Meeting at 6:32PM.

The mayor verified that no votes were taken during Executive Session. He also asked Commissioner Goldwasser to make a motion to waive the reading of the written motion due to the length of it, with confirmation that all the Board Members had previously read it. Commissioner Goldwasser put the motion forward, noting that the agreed upon purchase price of \$625,000.00 needed to be added to the motion for the record. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Kearney- Gonzales. All were in favor, and the reading of the motion was waived.

The motion read as follows:

Motion

Motion to authorize Mayor Jeffrey Caggiano, or Acting Mayor, to execute a Purchase and Sale Agreement and to complete the property transaction, subject to the approval of Corporation Counsel, with Carrier Construction Inc. or its assigns for the sale of 894 Middle Street Lot 17, 17-3, 17-4-1 as recorded on the A-2 Survey Map known as Property/Boundary Topographic Survey 894 Middle Street by Civil 1 for the purchase price of \$625,000.00 for purposes of the construction of an industrial development that includes approximately seven (7) buildings and approximately 25-46 tenant spaces to accommodate tenant companies including but not limited to manufacturers, contractors, and similar uses allowed by the Bristol Zoning Regulations.

*Further, pending the legal acquisition of 894 Middle Street Lot 17, 17-3, 17-4-1 by Carrier Construction, Inc. or its assigns for purposes of converting the subject properties to an industrial development that includes approximately seven (7) building and approximately 25-46 tenant spaces, to approve the following tax abatement schedule for **Phase I** the properties known as 894 Middle Street Lot 17, 17-3, 17-4-1:*

- *Construction Year #1 (period to begin following property closing): 100% real property abatement on the value of property improvements*
- *Construction Year #2: 100% real property abatement on the value of property improvements*
- *Year #1 (period to begin following issuance of a certificate of occupancy for Phase I): 100% real property abatement attributable to the value of improvements*
- *Year #2: 100% real property abatement*
- *Year #3: 50% real property abatement*
- *Year #4: 40% real property abatement*
- *Year #5: 30% real property abatement*
- *Year #6: 20% real property abatement*
- *Year #7: 10% real property abatement*

*Further, pending the legal acquisition of 894 Middle Street Lot 17, 17-3, 17-4-1 by Carrier Construction, Inc. or its assigns for purposes of converting the subject properties to an industrial development that includes approximately seven (7) building and approximately 25-46 tenant spaces, to approve the following tax abatement schedule for **Phase II** of the properties known as 894 Middle Street Lot 17, 17-3, 17-41:*

- *Construction Year #1 (period to begin following the issuance of a Certificate of Occupancy for Phase I of the project): 100% real property abatement on the value of property improvements*
- *Construction Year #2: 100% real property abatement on the value of property improvements*
- *Year #1 (period to begin following issuance of a certificate of occupancy for Phase II): 100% real property abatement attributable to the value of property improvements*
- *Year #2: 100% real property abatement*
- *Year #3: 50% real property abatement*
- *Year #4: 40% real property abatement*
- *Year #5: 30% real property abatement*
- *Year #6: 20% real property abatement*
- *Year #7: 10% real property abatement*

I further move that this matter be referred to the City Council, Planning Commission for completion of a C.G.S. 8-24 Report, and to the City Council Real Estate Committee for completion of a C.G.S. 7-163e Public Hearing for the sale of municipally owned property.

The mayor then called for a motion to move to contract. Commissioner Goldwasser made the motion, and it was seconded by Commissioner Cowdell. There were no further questions or comments. All were in favor and the motion was accepted into the record.

Charlie Talmadge thanked the Board for this approval and welcome the partnership to develop the 894 Middle Street property.

III. Approval of Minutes

A. Minutes of the February 6, 2025 Regular Meeting

Commissioner Provenzano put forth the motion to approve the Minutes of the February 6, 2025 meeting. This motion was seconded by Commissioner Hick. All were in favor, and the Minutes were accepted into the record.

IV. Consent Agenda

A. Communications

B. Economic Development/Grants/Marketing Report

Commissioner Goldwasser put forth the motion to approve the Consent Agenda. This was seconded by Commissioner Provenzano. All were in favor, and the Consent Agenda was accepted into the record.

V. New Business

C. BOF Transfer Request

Justin Malley advised the Board that the BOF Transfer item was not needed after all as the ECD staff had resolved the item internally.

D. Incentives Discussion

Justin Malley reported to the Board that a new business was seeking a grant for a space that had received a grant award under a previous business occupant. Discussion followed, including best practices with regards to grant payback time frames and the need to set project guidelines for any additional awarded funds. The Façade Grant remains an option in these cases as well.

VI. New Business by Commissioners

There was no New Business by Commissioners.

VII. Old Business by Commissioners

Commissioner Goldwasser asked about the Pine Street encampment area. Mayor Caggiano advised he had spoken with the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services which has a \$58.5 million dollar grant for the purpose of assisting the unhoused population. The state is arranging for contracts with programs like Journey Home, but it will take some time before the impact is visible. The mayor also advised the Board that the city completed city property clean up work in that area.

VIII. Committee Reports

A. CDBG Policy Committee

The Board was advised that the CDBG Policy Committee Meeting scheduled for Monday, March 10th will be rescheduled. This is part due to HUD not yet releasing the amount of the funds that Bristol will be rewarded. Mayor Caggiano reminded the Board that the announcement of last year's funds was delayed a couple months as well.

Commissioner Provenzano updated the Board on the Public Hearing at which CDBG Grant applicants spoke regarding their applications and their programs, and answered questions from the CDBG Policy Committee. Commissioner Hick expressed concern about the growing elderly homeless population that many applicants reported to the Committee.

B. City Council Member Report

There was no City Council Member Report.

As a closing item, Justin Malley shared that 18 Main Street has been purchased by Max Kathari, owner of Express Kitchens. The location will be primarily distribution with manufacturing. There will also be a high-tech retail outlet, mainly for subcontractors. This purchase allows for the business to move their New Jersey operations to Bristol. There will be job opportunities with this purchase. Justin advised that Mr. Kathari is very community oriented.

X. Adjournment

The mayor called for a motion to adjourn the meeting. Commissioner Goldwasser made the motion, which was seconded by Commissioner Hick. All were in favor and the meeting adjourned at 6:53pm

Respectfully Submitted,

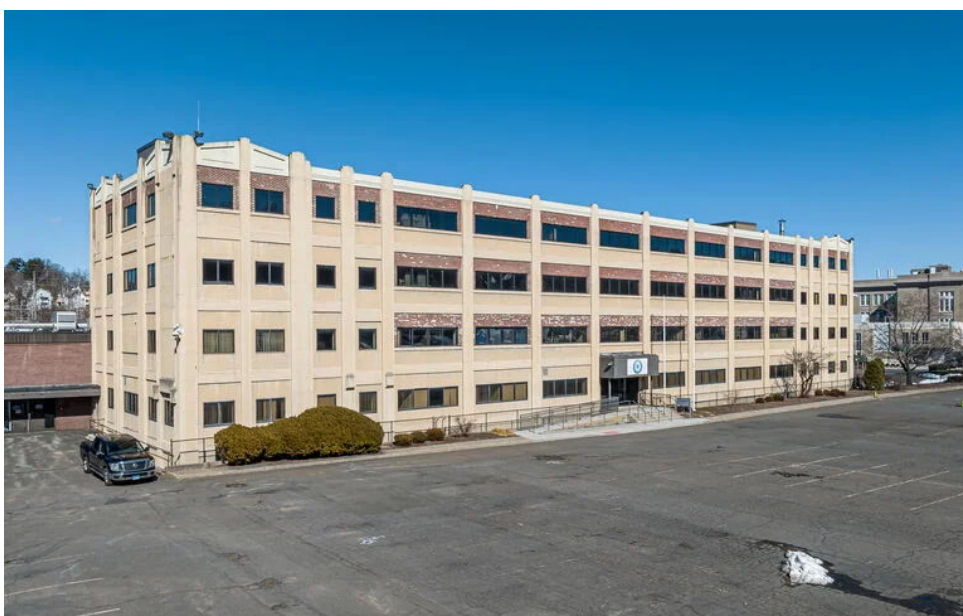
Sharon Arsego
Recording Secretary

Unapproved

Hartford Business Journal

Friday, March 7, 2025

Barnes Group sells sprawling Bristol manufacturing campus to Hartford-based kitchen furniture maker Max Kothari for \$6.2M



COSTAR

18 Main St., Bristol

By Michael Puffer

A massive industrial complex in downtown Bristol has been sold to a limited liability company headed by well-known Hartford businessman Max Kothari, who plans to use it for his kitchen furniture business.

Kothari, last week, paid \$6.2 million to Bristol-based advanced manufacturer Barnes Group for the 15-acre former Associated Spring property at 18 Main St. The site hosts a 58,804-square-foot, four-story office and warehouse building completed in 1928; and a 224,977-square-foot, one-story manufacturing building completed in 1970.

Kothari said he plans to use the campus as a distribution hub, with “high-tech” manufacturing and corporate offices for his Express Kitchens and New Direct Cabinets businesses. He said he also plans to open a roughly 10,000-square-foot retail outlet on the

site.

For now, Kothari is cleaning up the property and building out the space for his businesses, a process he expects to take about three months. After that, he plans to ramp up to an initial workforce of about 50 employees on-site, with additional hires likely in the future.

The Bristol site will include elements of Kothari's New Direct Cabinets and Express Kitchens businesses. It will also allow him to consolidate manufacturing and distribution out of a 165,000-square-foot New Direct Cabinets facility in New Jersey.

Kothari said he has no plans to exit any of his existing Connecticut properties.

"The facilities at 18 Main St. are ideal, and when we visited downtown Bristol, observed new development in the area and met community leadership, we knew that Bristol was the ideal home for New Direct Cabinets-Express Kitchens," Kothari said.

Bristol Mayor Jeffrey Caggiano said he is excited to see an iconic manufacturing property "reenergized" by a growing company. He said he was particularly happy the property will continue to be used for distribution and manufacturing.

Damon Bowers, managing director with Cushman & Wakefield in Hartford, represented the seller. Nicholas Morizio, president of Colliers in Hartford and New Haven, represented the buyer.

The property sale comes at a time of significant changes for both the buyer and seller.

Kothari – who also heads the Hartford Chamber of Commerce board of directors – recently listed a 183,000-square-foot industrial building in Hartford for sale. The former Veeder-Root property at 20-28 Sargeant St., in Hartford's Asylum Hill neighborhood, was listed with a \$4 million asking price. Kothari's Express Kitchens has a presence in part of the building, with nonprofits taking up the other occupied space.





HBJ FILE PHOTO

Max Kothari is the founder and CEO of Hartford-based Express Kitchens.

In early 2023, Kothari sold four Hartford properties for \$25.68 million, including two that hosted his Star Hardware and Express Kitchens businesses. At the time, Kothari said he leased back the properties.

A portion of the 2023 sales proceeds was used to fund Express Kitchen's purchase of New Jersey-based Direct Cabinet Sales, a deal that also included New Jersey-based Seifer Kitchens and Brooklyn-based Golden Reiss Kitchens.

The acquisition added five showrooms in New York and New Jersey to Express Kitchens' network of 12 showrooms in Connecticut and Massachusetts. It also added a 165,000-square-foot manufacturing plant in Dayton, New Jersey.

Today, Express Kitchens and New Direct Cabinet Sales have 17 retail locations in Connecticut, Massachusetts, New York and New Jersey.

In addition to its own retail locations, Express Kitchens supplies cabinets for sale at Home Depot, as well as directly to large developers including Toll Brothers and Winn Management. The Associated Spring property was vacant for some time prior to Kothari's purchase.

Last April, the Barnes Group, a 167-year-old advanced manufacturer rooted in the aerospace industry, announced a \$175 million sale of its Associated Spring and Hanggi businesses to

private equity firm One Equity Partners.

Earlier this year, Barnes Group announced it had been sold to private equity firm Apollo in an approximately \$3.6 billion deal, which transitioned the company into a privately held business.

“The Barnes family appreciates Max and his team’s efforts in preserving the history of what this building means to Bristol,” said Tom Barnes, chairman emeritus of the Barnes Group. Kothari said he has applied to take part in Gov. Ned Lamont’s “supply chain initiative” to onshore manufacturing into Connecticut.

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exhibit Page 3

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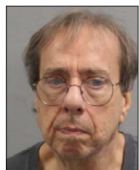
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Robert Darche

Bristol man arrested for attempted kidnapping

BRIAN M. JOHNSON
@BRIANJOHNSONBP

BRISTOL — Bristol police arrested a local man Friday for allegedly attempting to kidnap two young girls, ages 10 and 11, from a shopping plaza in January.

According to Bristol Police Lt. Eric Hanson, officers arrested Robert Darche, 66, on Friday morning after an arrest warrant was issued for him attempting to take two young girls at a local shopping plaza in January. Darche has been charged with Attempted Kidnapping in the second degree.

"Officers responded to Dollar Tree on Farmington Avenue on Jan. 11 after two girls, age ten and age eleven, told their parents a man showed them money and asked them to follow him to his vehicle in the

See POLICE ON PAGE 4

Express Kitchens plans move to Bristol

BRIAN M. JOHNSON
@BRIANJOHNSONBP

BRISTOL — Express Kitchens has purchased the former Associated Spring building at 18 Main St. and plans to relocate to Bristol.

The City of Bristol and New Direct Cabinets/Express Kitchens announced that the sale of the 275,000 square foot property had been completed Friday. They plan to transform the

space into a "distribution hub" that includes high-tech manufacturing and corporate offices.

Max Kothari, founder and CEO of Express Kitchens, said the company is the Northeast's "premier kitchen cabinet and accessories provider." Express Kitchens, along with its sister company New Direct Cabinet Sales, is a well-known supplier of kitchen cabinets, countertops, and

similar components for kitchen remodeling/new construction projects for residential and commercial customers. The company has more than 17 retail locations throughout Connecticut, Massachusetts, New York and New Jersey. New Direct Cabinets will relocate distribution and manufacturing operations from New Jersey and elsewhere in Connecticut to Bristol. The

See FORMER ON PAGE 4



Tom Barnes, chairman emeritus of The Barnes Group (right) and Max Kothari (left), founder and CEO of Express Kitchens.

Bright Spot



Owners of TCG Candles And Gifts cut the ribbon with Plainville town leaders and members of the Central Connecticut Chambers of Commerce

Brian Johnson

Mother-daughter team opens new shop in Plainville

BRIAN M. JOHNSON
@BRIANJOHNSONBP

PLAINVILLE — Town and Chamber leaders welcomed TCG Candles And Gifts, a new store which offers handmade candles, jewelry and more, Tuesday.

TCG Candles And

Gifts, located at 98 Whiting St., is owned by Heather Gelinas and her daughter Taylor, both of whom are town residents. They renovated the space, which was formerly home to a dog grooming business, and filled it with numerous handmade craft items.

"We had a soft opening last November," Heather Gelinas said. "We've had a good response. We're already starting to get a lot of awesome regular customers. People stop in from Plainville as well as surrounding towns like Bristol and Southington."

Taylor Gelinas said customers have told them the prices were very good and "better than the mall."

"They like that we are a friendly, family-oriented business," Heather Gelinas said. "People come in every week to chat with us and see if

there's anything new. A lot of people have told us that there is 'always something different' to see."

Taylor Gelinas, who is 23, started making handmade candles in 2023 and found it therapeutic. Visitors to the shop

See SHOP ON PAGE 2

INSIDE

Abby	6
Classified	15-16
Comics	6
Editorial	5
Features	6
Horoscopes	6
Local News	2-4
Obituaries	7
Public Notices	13
Puzzles	16
Sports	9-12
Auto	8
Weather	2

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Bristol Mayor Jeff Caggiano joins other mayors and the Connecticut Conference of Municipalities to push for more state aid to towns and cities.

CCM

Bristol pushes for state aid as towns say Lamont budget amounts to tax increase

BRENDAN CROWLEY
@THEBRISTOLPRESS

BRISTOL — Mayor Jeff Caggiano said municipal aid from the state government "has not come close to keeping up with inflation," pushing the burden on homeowners in Bristol and other towns who see their property

taxes rise as a result.

Caggiano joined a bipartisan group of mayors from towns and cities across the state on Thursday to criticize Gov. Ned Lamont's proposed state budget, and what they said has been years of inadequate municipal aid from the state.

The Connecticut

Conference of Municipalities, which lobbies for the state's cities and towns, said the budget proposal increases formula grants to municipalities by 2.5% in total, which is below the rate of inflation and at a time when state changes to how motor

See TOWNS ON PAGE 4



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Police say footage showed Darche following girls

Continued from Page 1

Hanson said.

Hanson said Darche left the store after the girls ran from him. Officers then obtained footage of his vehicle, which only allowed them to determine the color and make of his car. The following week, an officer spotted a vehicle being driven in another town which had a unique decal, similar to the one believed to be on the suspect's vehicle.

"This information

was shared with detectives who were able to identify Darche as the owner of the vehicle," Hanson said. "Detectives were able to connect Darche to the incident as he was captured on surveillance footage following and then approaching the girls inside the store after they left their parents to look at toys."

Darche is being held on a \$150,000 bond.

Brian M. Johnson can be reached at 860-269-0822 or bjohnson@bristolpress.com.

SOUTHINGTON POLICE BLOTTER

Michael James Molnar, 52, of 140 Monroe St., New Britain, was charged Feb. 22 with second degree breach of peace

and third degree assault. Treacy McCullough, 41, of 223 Berlin St., was charged Feb. 23 with second degree breach of peace and third degree assault.

Seth R. Zajac, 34, of 814 Old Turnpike Road, was charged Feb. 23 with use of drug paraphernalia, possession of a controlled substance (first offense) and second degree breach of peace.

David Mongillo, 61,

of 98 October Lane, was charged Feb. 23 with failure to comply with fingerprint requirements, third degree criminal mischief, interfering with an officer/resisting arrest, second degree breach of peace, third degree assault and second degree physical threatening.

Damien Patrick Burns-Paradis, 20, of 141 Mines Road, Bristol, was charged Feb. 24 with second degree breach of peace.

Luis Daniel Ramos, 29, of 97 Cherry St., Waterbury, was charged Feb. 25 with sixth degree larceny.

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Former Associated Spring site will host distribution, manufacturing

Continued from Page 1

14.63-acre downtown site will also host a factory outlet available for customers to visit as a "dynamic retail experience."

"To manage Express Kitchens' growth, it is necessary to consolidate operations while allowing for future expansion," Kothari said. "The facilities at 18 Main Street are ideal. When we visited downtown Bristol, observed new development in the area and met community leadership, we knew that Bristol was the ideal home for New Direct Cabinets/Express Kitchens."

Justin Malley, executive director of Economic and Community Development for the City of Bristol, said Kothari and New Direct Cabinets/Express Kitchens have "firmly established their positions as business leaders in Connecticut and the Northeast."

"The City of Bristol is excited to begin what will be a long-term and productive relationship of supporting the company's growth," he said.

According to information provided by Dawn Nielsen, marketing & public relations specialist for the City of Bristol, New Direct Cabinets anticipates employing approximately 50 individuals as operation begins in Bristol, with plans for future growth.

"Employees will work in distribution, manufacturing, retail, and corporate func-



The former Associated Spring complex located at the corner of Main Street and Memorial Boulevard in Bristol.

tions in Bristol," she said.

In addition to serving its own retail locations, Express Kitchens supplies cabinets for the country's largest residential property developers such as Toll Brothers and Winn Management, as well as national direct-to-consumer retailers, including Home Depot.

Mayor Jeff Caggiano said it is "exciting to watch one of Bristol's iconic manufacturing properties being re-energized by a 'growing, growing, growing' company that will make its new home in Bristol, Connecticut."

"The City is happy to see that this building will continue to be used for distribution, manufacturing, and knowing that it has a potential retail option bringing more people to work and shop in Downtown Bristol," he said.

Barnes Group, Inc. formed in 1857, originally as a small company that made springs for clocks and hoop skirts. The company grew into a global industrial technology

and aerospace manufacturer.

Associated Spring, founded in 1923 by Fuller F. and Harry C. Barnes, was a business of Barnes Group Inc. The 18 Main St. location closed in 2023. Barnes sold Associated Spring to One Equity Partners in Jan. 2024 for \$175 million.

"The Barnes family appreciates Max and his team's efforts in preserving the history of what this building means to Bristol," Tom Barnes, chairman emeritus of The Barnes Group, Inc. said.

Kothari said New Direct Cabinets/Express Kitchens is "grateful for the confidence that the Barnes Family has shown."

"We are proud to continue the Bristol community's long history of hard work and spirit of entrepreneurship," he said. "Express Kitchens is glad to be one of the first companies to answer Governor Lamont's supply chain initiative of onshoring manufacturing and job creation."

Towns say lack of state support leads to property tax increases for residents

Continued from Page 1

vehicle values are assessed have left towns scrambling to fill holes in their budget.

In Bristol, Caggiano directed city department leaders to cut their budgets by 2 to 5% as the motor vehicle change dropped \$77.54 million off the city's grand list. That meant about \$2.5 million less revenue to the city "without losing anything," Caggiano said. Another change to how motor vehicles are assessed will limit that loss to "maybe \$1 million" of revenue, which still has to be made up, he said.

"That comes right off the backs of homeowners," he said.

Caggiano said, while

Lamont has been touting a \$50 income tax credit, the state budget proposal will drive local property taxes up even more.

"In the City of Bristol, as we're going now, it's going to be about a \$500 tax increase per resident," Caggiano said. "All my colleagues here see the same thing: the math doesn't add up."

The Connecticut Conference of Municipalities said that Education Cost Share funding from the state has decreased by \$407 million in real dollars over the past decade, and the grant is underfunded by \$50 million this year, with no proposed increase for

next year.

Property tax exemptions on hospitals, state-owned properties and private college properties cost towns and cities over \$1 billion each year, CCM said. And the share of gaming revenues going to municipalities through the Pequot-Mohegan Fund has dropped from 23% in fiscal year 2016 to 18% this year, as gaming revenues have increased, CCM said.

"When you do the math on the governor's budget, it is the largest property tax increase proposal that I have seen in my 10 years here in Connecticut," Connecticut Conference of Municipalities Executive Director Joe DeLong said.

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The Hartford Courant

Saturday, March 9, 2025

Kitchen remodeling company ‘growing, growing, growing’ plans for new CT distribution center



The former Associated Spring building at 18 Main St. in Bristol. Express Kitchens/New Direct Cabinets have purchased the 275,000-square-foot building with plans to transform it into a manufacturing, office and distribution hub with a retail component. (Courtesy of City of Bristol)

By [STEPHEN UNDERWOOD](#) | sunderwood@courant.com | Hartford Courant

UPDATED: March 9, 2025 at 6:01 AM EST

[New Direct Cabinets/Express Kitchens](#), a popular supplier of kitchen cabinets, countertops and components for kitchen remodeling, has announced plans for a 275,000-square-foot distribution hub with high-tech manufacturing and corporate offices in Bristol.

The company announced on Friday it has completed the purchase of 18 Main St., the former home of Associated Spring, with plans to transform the property into its main distribution hub and office building. The company's CEO cited Bristol's recent downtown growth for its decision to purchase the property.

Express Kitchens, along with its sister company New Direct Cabinets, has more than 17 retail locations throughout Connecticut, Massachusetts, New York and New Jersey. It is well-known for its popular advertising commercials with the slogan “growing, growing, growing.”

New Direct Cabinets said they have plans to relocate distribution and manufacturing operations from New Jersey and elsewhere in Connecticut, and the 14.63-acre downtown site will also host a factory outlet available for customers to visit as a retail experience, the company said in a press release.

“To manage Express Kitchens’ growth, it is necessary to consolidate operations while allowing for future expansion. The facilities at 18 Main St. are ideal, and when we visited downtown Bristol, observed new development in the area and met community leadership, we knew that Bristol was the ideal home for New Direct Cabinets/Express Kitchens,” said Max Kothari, founder and CEO of Express Kitchens.

New Direct Cabinets said they anticipate employing approximately 50 people as operations begin in Bristol. Employees will work in distribution, manufacturing, retail and corporate functions in Bristol, the company said. In addition to serving its retail locations, Express Kitchens supplies cabinets for the country’s largest residential property developers such Toll Brothers and Winn Management, as well as Home Depot.

“We are grateful for the confidence the Barnes Family has shown, and more importantly we are proud to continue the Bristol community’s long history of hard work and spirit of entrepreneurship,” Kothari said. “Express Kitchens is glad to be one of the first companies to answer Governor (Ned) Lamont’s supply chain initiative of onshoring manufacturing and job creation.”

Bristol’s downtown is also [quickly being transformed](#) with the newly built [Centre Square Village](#) luxury apartments bringing new businesses to fill in formerly vacant buildings. Bristol Mayor Jeff Caggiano is excited about the possibility of bringing more people to the city and spurring economic development.

“It is exciting to watch one of Bristol’s iconic manufacturing properties being re-energized by a ‘growing, growing, growing’ company that will make its new home in Bristol, Connecticut,” Caggiano said. “The city is happy to see that this building will continue to be used for distribution, manufacturing and knowing that it has a potential retail option bringing more people to work and shop in downtown Bristol.”

Stephen Underwood can be reached at sunderwood@courant.com.

Originally Published: March 9, 2025 at 6:00 AM EST

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Close and accept



The former Associated Spring complex located at the corner of Main Street and Memorial Boulevard in Bristol | Dawn Nielsen

POSTED BY: LAURA BAILEY MARCH 10, 2025

by Laura Bailey

New Direct Cabinets, the parent company of Express Kitchens, will relocate its distribution and manufacturing operations from New Jersey and other parts of Connecticut to the 14.63-acre downtown property. Additionally, the site will house a factory outlet, providing a unique retail experience for customers to explore the company's products.

The City of Bristol announced, on March 7, the purchase by New Direct Cabinets of the 275,000-square-foot one-story manufacturing building as well as a 58,805-square-foot, four-story office and warehouse building at the former Associated Spring facility located at 18 Main St.

“To manage Express Kitchens’ growth, it is necessary to consolidate operations while allowing for future expansion,” said Max Kothari, founder and CEO of Express Kitchens. “The facilities at 18 Main St. are ideal, and when we visited downtown Bristol, observed new development in the area and met community leadership, we knew that Bristol was the

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Max Kothari and Tom Barnes review and discuss potential historical items, which will be displayed in the lobby of the building, to pay tribute to the history of the Associated Spring building. | Dawn Nielsen

The move to Bristol is expected to create approximately 50 new jobs, with plans for further growth in the future. Employees will be involved in distribution, manufacturing, retail, and corporate functions. In addition to its own retail locations, Express Kitchens supplies cabinets to major residential property developers, including Toll Brothers and Winn Management, as well as national retailers like Home Depot.

The company plans to transform the expansive site into a distribution hub featuring high-tech manufacturing and corporate offices, marking a significant expansion for the northeast's leading kitchen cabinet and accessories provider. Express Kitchen's purchased the property for \$6.2 million.

"It is exciting to watch one of Bristol's iconic manufacturing properties being re-energized by a 'growing, growing,

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happy to see that this building will continue to be used for

distribution, manufacturing, and knowing that it has a potential retail option bringing more people to work and shop in Downtown Bristol.”

Tom Barnes, chairman emeritus of The Barnes Group, expressed support.

“The Barnes family appreciates Max and his team’s efforts in preserving the history of what this building means to Bristol,” he said.

Justin Malley, executive director of Economic and Community Development for the City of Bristol, praised the company’s expansion.

“Express Kitchens and Mr. Kothari have firmly established their positions as business leaders in Connecticut and the northeast,” Malley said, “The City of Bristol is excited to begin what will be a long-term and productive relationship of supporting the company’s growth.”

Express Kitchens, along with its sister company New Direct Cabinet Sales, is well-known for supplying kitchen cabinets, countertops, and related components for residential and commercial remodeling and new construction projects. The company operates more than 17 retail locations across Connecticut, Massachusetts, New York and New Jersey. As its advertising slogan suggests, Express Kitchens is indeed “growing, growing, growing.”

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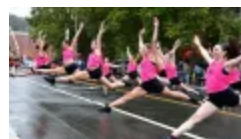
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Tuesday, March 11, 2025

Following private equity deal, Barnes Group to close its Bristol headquarters, cut 28 jobs



COSTAR

Barnes Group's Main Street headquarters in Bristol.

By Andrew Larson

A prominent name in Connecticut manufacturing, Barnes Group, will close its corporate headquarters in Bristol, cutting about 28 jobs, the company said in a filing with the state Department of Labor.

Barnes Group's office at 123 Main St. is set to close by the end 2025, according to the filing, dated March 7.

The layoffs are expected to occur on March 31, June 30 and Sept. 30, the filing states.

The news comes several months after private equity firm Apollo Global Management acquired Barnes Group in a \$3.6 billion sale, which took the company private.

Barnes Group makes precision components for aerospace and a range of other industries. Barnes Group and its predecessor, Associated Spring, have been located in Bristol since 1857. Under its new owner, Barnes Group has been shedding local ties.

Recently, Hartford-based kitchen furnishings maker Max Kothari purchased from Barnes a 15-acre property at 18 Main St., which contains a warehouse and manufacturing building once used by the company.

Barnes Group did not state a reason for the closing the Bristol headquarters, nor did it say where its new headquarters will be located.

According to its 2023 annual report, Barnes Group employed about 6,500 people worldwide. Roughly 25% were in the Asia-Pacific region; 45% in the Europe, Middle East and Africa region; and about 30% in the Americas region.

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Following private equity deal, Barnes Group to close its Bristol headquarters, cut 28 jobs



Proposed bill would stop businesses from paying for 'reviews'

New York investor pays \$5.65M for two Bristol industrial complexes



By Michael Puffer

A New York-based investor recently paid \$5.65 million for two large industrial complexes in proximity in Bristol.

In a sale recorded Feb. 24, Brooklyn-based 575 Broad LLC sold the industrial complexes at 550 and 575 Broad St. to Brooklyn-based Bristol NYCEB LLC, whose principal is Ben Tyberg. Tyberg lists a Spring Valley, New York business address.

The complex on 8.6 acres at 550 Broad St. includes three brick mill buildings totaling 87,426 square feet, completed between 1870 and 1891, according to city assessor records.

Across the street, at 575 Broad St., is a 14-acre property with four brick mill buildings dating to 1915 that tally to 235,687 square feet. Justin Malley, executive director of Bristol's economic and community development department, said the properties are currently leased out to various tenants, including manufacturers and others. He said his office has not yet been contacted by the new owner.

The existing tenants, primarily local manufacturers, are a key part of the new owners plans for the property, Rosenberg wrote. The new ownership is committed to the tenants' long term success, he wrote.

"We see great potential in 550 and 575 Broad Street and are investing heavily in upgrades to modernize the facilities," Rosenberg wrote.



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Here is SBA's Small Business Person of the Year in CT

Bristol automation specialist expands with acquisition in North Carolina



COSTAR

Arthur G. Russell Co.'s headquarters in Bristol, at 750 Clark Ave.

By Harriet Jones

Bristol-based maker of custom assembly machinery Arthur G. Russell Co. Inc. has acquired a North Carolina maker of automation systems.

AGR says the integration of ProMATIC Automation Inc. will allow it to serve a broader range of companies with customized automation.

“This acquisition allows AGR to better serve customers whose automation needs may not require large, highly sophisticated assembly systems,” said Jason Ensminger, president of AGR. “By integrating ProMATIC’s expertise, we can now offer a wider range of assembly machinery, making high-quality automation accessible to more small and mid-sized companies that we may have previously been unable to accommodate competitively.”

Terms of the deal were not disclosed.

AGR serves a wide range of client companies in life sciences, pharma, consumer goods, electronics, automotive and defense.

ProMATIC has a 37,000-square-foot facility located near Asheville Regional Airport in North Carolina. AGR also says the acquisition will allow it to tap into a larger talent pool in the region, to help replace retiring workers.

The facility adds capacity to AGR's existing 100,000-square-foot headquarters in Bristol.

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Lake Compounce to be sold in major U.S. amusement park M&A deal



HBJ PHOTO | STEVE LASCHEVER

Lake Compounce in Bristol.

By Greg Bordonaro

Connecticut's largest theme park is set to have a new owner.

The parent company of Lake Compounce, Parques Reunidos, said Tuesday it will sell all of its Palace Entertainment U.S. properties to Herschend, a Georgia-based operator of theme parks, water parks and other entertainment venues, including Dollywood Theme Park in Tennessee.

Terms of the deal weren't disclosed.

Herschend said the acquisition fits with its strategic expansion in family entertainment and hospitality, while Parques Reunidos said the deal will allow it to focus on its core European market.

Palace Entertainment has over 20 entertainment venues across 10 U.S. states, including Bristol-based Lake Compounce, which holds the title of America's first amusement park. Lake Compounce recently announced it will be hiring more than 1,000 seasonal employees for its upcoming season, which begins May 3.

Palace Entertainment also owns Kennywood and Dutch Wonderland, both located in Pennsylvania.

Herschend's existing U.S. properties include the Kentucky Kingdom Theme Park, Wild Adventures Theme Park in Georgia and Silver Dollar City Theme Park in Missouri. It also owns the Harlem Globetrotters.

The deal is still subject to customary closing conditions. BDT & MSD Partners is acting as Herschend's exclusive financial and debt advisor, and Goldman Sachs was the exclusive financing provider for the acquisition. Akerman LLP is serving as legal advisor to Herschend on the acquisition, with Kilpatrick Townsend & Stockton LLP providing legal advice for the debt financing.

J.P. Morgan is acting as the exclusive financial advisor for Parques Reunidos Group. A&O Shearman is serving as legal advisor to Parques Reunidos Group on the deal.

COMPOUNCE SOLD

Amusement park bought by Dollywood owner

The Bristol Press · 20 Mar 2025 · BRIAN M. JOHNSON @BRIANJOHNSONBP

BRISTOL – “America’s First Amusement Park,” Lake Compounce, will soon have new owners, according to a statement from purchasers



Herschend.

The amusement park at 185 Enterprise Dr., on the Bristol and Southington town line, has been in operation for more than 180 years. Herschend announced Tuesday that they would become its new owners, purchasing the park from current owners Parques Reunidos.

Herschend’s portfolio of family entertainment brands include Dollywood Parks & Resorts, Silver Dollar City Parks &

Resorts, Adventure Aquarium, Callaway Resort & Gardens, Kentucky Kingdom Theme & Water Park, Newport Aquarium, The Vancouver Aquarium, and Wild Adventures Theme Park.

According to a news release from Herschend, the company and Parques Reunidos have signed a definitive agreement under which Herschend will acquire all of Palace Entertainment’s U.S.

Herschend also owns Dollywood, Silver Dollar City and more parks

The Bristol Press · 20 Mar 2025 · Brian M. Johnson can be reached at 860-269-0822 or bjohnson@bristolpress.com.

entertainment properties from Parques Reunidos. Palace Entertainment's portfolio includes 20 entertainment venues across 10 U.S. states, including Lake Compounce.

"This agreement represents a significant milestone for both organizations—supporting Herschend's strategic expansion in family entertainment and hospitality while allowing Parques Reunidos to reinforce its strategic focus on its core European market," Herschend said in its release.

"This year, we're celebrating 75 years of bringing families closer together—and looking ahead to the next 75," Herschend CEO Andrew Wexler said. "Today's announcement marks a natural expansion and continuation of that vision. By growing wisely and staying true to our purpose, we are building a future where we can continue creating memories worth repeating for generations to come."

With this acquisition, Herschend said it strengthens its position as "the world's largest family-held themed entertainment company."

"We look forward to building upon the strong foundation that Palace Entertainment has created and welcoming these properties and hosts into the Herschend family of brands," Wexler said.

"The teams at these parks have done an incredible job building beloved destinations in their communities, and we look forward to learning from them, growing together, and building on their success. This is an exciting opportunity for all of us to continue creating exceptional experiences for guests and meaningful opportunities for our teams."

Palace Entertainment CEO John Reilly said Herschend is "the ideal organization to lead Palace Entertainment's unique properties."

"Herschend is best in class in providing a high-quality guest experience within its parks," he said. "Palace Entertainment's team members and its parks are in great hands as we make this transition."

Herschend's Board Chair Chris Herschend said the "historic" and "beloved" properties acquired from Palace Entertainment have "been family traditions for generations." He said that Herschend is "honored to help carry that legacy forward."

"Being a family business for 75 years has given us a deep understanding of what makes properties like these special — not just the rides and attractions, but the people who pour their hearts into them every day," he said.

Herschend said they are "committed to ensuring a smooth transition for employees (hosts), guests, and communities."

"No immediate changes are planned for daily operations as the company thoughtfully integrates these properties into its portfolio," the company said.

Herschend said that, in the coming months, they will prioritize:

- Supporting its new employees with training, resources, and opportunities aligned with Herschend's people-first culture.
- Maintaining continuity in guest experiences while exploring enhancements that align with Herschend's commitment to high-quality entertainment.
- Proactively communicating with employees, guests, and local communities as the transition progresses.

Lynsey Winters, communications director at Lake Compounce, said the transaction is "subject to customary closing conditions and is expected to close thereafter."

She said she did not have additional information to share beyond what was shared by Herschend.

Iconic amusement park to get a new owner



Boulder Dash draws rollercoaster enthusiasts from around the country.
Courant File

BY KENNETH R. GOSSELIN HARTFORD COURANT

The co-owner of Dollywood Parks & Resorts — a major operator of theme parks, aquariums and resorts — is expanding its reach into Connecticut with an acquisition that includes one of the state’s most iconic amusement parks.

Georgia-based Herschend has announced the acquisition of more than 20 entertainment venues across 10 states, including Lake Compounce in Bristol. Lake Compounce is widely-recognized as the oldest amusement park in the country, founded in 1846, and is known for its “Boulder Dash” wooden rollercoaster.

Herschend, which bills itself as the largest, family-owned operator of themed attractions, did not disclose specific plans for Lake Compounce or the other locations it has purchased, but noted, “The teams at these parks have done an incredible job building beloved destinations in their communities, and we look forward to learning from them, growing together and building on their success.”

According to its web site, Lake Compounce opens for the season on May 3.

Herschend has agreed to purchase the properties from Palace Entertainment, the U.S. arm of Parques Reunidos, headquartered in Madrid, Spain. The Spanish operator of theme parks, water parks and zoos said the sale would allow it to focus on its primary European market.

Financial terms of the transaction weren’t disclosed. A specific timeline for the closing of the transaction wasn’t outlined in a release.

In addition to Lake Compounce, Herschend’s purchase also includes Kennywood and Dutch Wonderland, both in Pennsylvania.

Dollywood is co-owned by country singer and songwriter Dolly Parton. In addition to Dollywood, Herschend owns Silver Dollar City Parks & Resorts in Missouri and Newport Aquarium in Kentucky.

Kenneth R. Gosselin can be reached at kgosselin@courant.com.

Bauer named 'National Exporter of the Year'

The Bristol Press · 20 Mar 2025 · BRIAN M. JOHNSON @BRIANJOHNSONBP

BRISTOL – The U.S. Small Business Administration will honor Bauer, Inc. with their “National Exporter of the Year” award.



Bauer, Inc. will join other National Small Business Week winners from Connecticut at a Small Business Resource Expo and Award Ceremony on Thursday, May 8, at Woodwinds in Branford. The SBA is celebrating National Small Business Week May 4 to 10 in Washington, D.C.

The celebrations will include a two day virtual summit and community events across the country honoring small businesses, as well as online business resources and renowned speakers.

Bauer, Inc., located at 175 Century Dr., is a designer and manufacturer of advanced aerospace component test equipment. Bauer's customers include the U.S. Air Force, U.S. Army, U.S. Coast Guard, U.S. Marine Corps, U.S. Navy, Pratt & Whitney, Lockheed Martin, UTC Aerospace Systems, and numerous commercial airlines commercial maintenance, repair, and overhaul operations around the world. Currently they export to more than 80 countries.

Bauer, Inc. has been in business for 109 years in Connecticut, and has been in Bristol for the past 24 years. Led by President and CEO Lou Auletta, and Sr. Vice President of Sales & Marketing Michael Auletta, Bauer operates across 75,000 square feet of facilities.

The “National Exporter of the Year” award is a specialty award that is being presented as part of SBA's National Small Business Week.

“This national award acknowledges the significance of Connecticut's manufacturing industry, and the importance of exporting for our state and national economy,” Catherine Marx, SBA District Director, said. “Bauer is receiving this prestigious award in part to their exporting growth, community involvement, and successfully leveraging SBA programs and services. Bauer's success is a testament to the power of exporting and the critical role SBA plays in support small businesses in their growth and international expansion.”

Michael Auletta said Bauer, Inc. is honored to receive the recognition.

“This award is a testament to the dedication of our team and our commitment to delivering high-quality products to customers around the world,” he said. “We take great pride in representing American excellence on the international stage. We're grateful for the invaluable support we've received from the SBA as we continue to expand into global markets.”

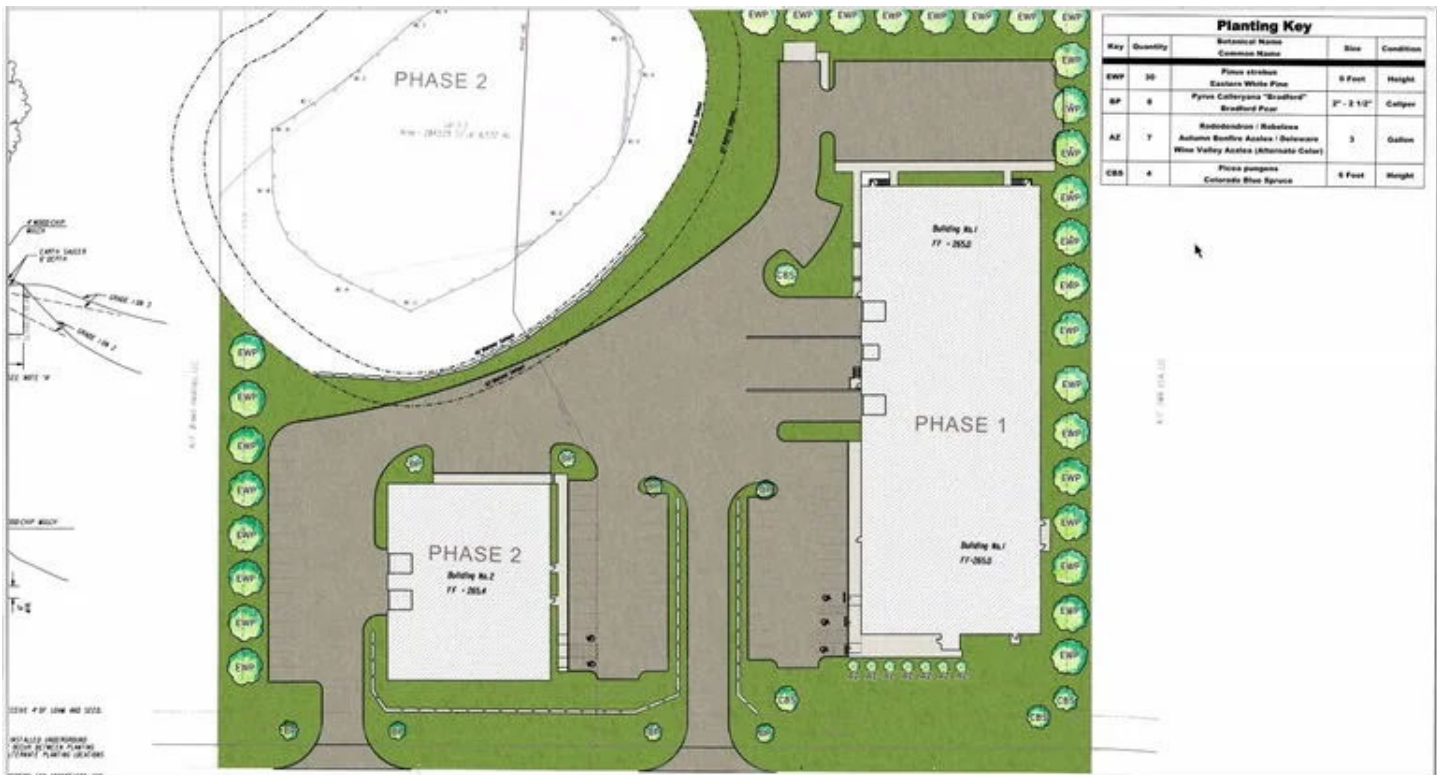
The SBA National Small Business Week event is co-sponsored by Connecticut Business and Industry Association, in a collaboration with the SBA.

To attend, register at sba.gov/event/65538.



2 hours ago

N. Britain robotics manufacturer gets OK to build new, larger facility in Bristol



CONTRIBUTED

An architect's drawing of the buildings to be constructed by Force Automation Inc. on Lot 3 on Business Park Drive in Bristol.

By David Krechevsky

An application to build a manufacturing facility for robotic products was unanimously approved Monday night by the Bristol Planning Commission.

The application by Force Automation Inc. sought approval for a site plan to construct two buildings in two phases on lot 3 on Business Park Drive in Bristol. The 6.53-acre lot is in an industrial park zone and is owned by the city, but the applicant has agreed to acquire it for \$288,000 contingent on approval of the site plan.

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Force Automation takes robotic arms that are manufactured as generic parts, programs them to do what the end-user requests and then builds specific machines around the arms.

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The company currently is located in New Britain, at 100 Production Court, but wants to build and own a larger space for manufacturing.

The commission Monday evening reconvened a public hearing on the proposal that began on Feb. 25, but was continued in order to allow the applicant to address issues raised by city staff, as well as to allow the Bristol Inland Wetlands and Watercourses Commission to review and rule on a permit for the property. That commission approved the permit on March 3.

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Under the site plan approved by the Planning Commission, the applicant will erect two buildings — a 30,000-square-foot industrial building and a 12,000-square-foot structure described as a “tenant building,” though a tenant has not yet been determined.

According to Timothy Furey — an attorney with the Bristol law firm Furey, Donovan, Cooney & Dyer PC, that is representing the applicant — the larger building will include 13,000 square feet of manufacturing space, 2,800 square feet of office space for front office and engineering staff, and a 3,000-square-foot training facility for “future workforce development.”

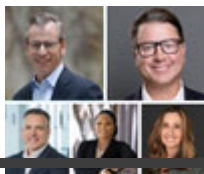
The remainder of the building will be offered as industrial tenant space, to be leased to a similar type of business.

According to the application, Force Automation expects to employ 15 people and to have up to 36 people in its training facility.



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Hibachi Buffet proves popular at opening

The Bristol Press · 25 Mar 2025 · BRIAN M. JOHNSON

BRISTOL – Hibachi Buffet was bustling with happy customers Friday during their grand opening ceremony with city and chamber leaders.

The 10,000 square foot buffet is located in the Bristol Commons Plaza at 99 Farmington Ave., near Planet Fitness and The Paper Store. Hibachi Buffet is open 7 days a week for lunch and dinner. They offer hibachi, Chinese, Japanese and American foods.

“We had our soft opening on March 12,” manager Josh Liang said. “The response has been overwhelmingly positive.” Audrey Chen, owner of Hibachi Buffet’s Bristol location, said customers love the sushi and hibachi, as well as the roast pork, mashed potatoes and macaroni and cheese.

They also have a wide variety of salad, fruits and seafood options.

“We make food that is healthy and low sodium but that will fill you up,” she said.

Hibachi Buffet currently employs 14 full time and 12 part time staff. Chen said she is still hiring and looking for more servers and hosts.

The buffet had a large crowd of customers on their grand opening day Friday. Wayne Babin was getting his third plate with shrimp and hibachi chicken on Friday when Chen came over to say hello to him. He had previously been to Hibachi Buffet on their first day open and this past Saturday.

“Everything is fantastic,” he said.

Chen also greeted Luciano Alejo, who was eating at the buffet for the first time. His plate was piled with sushi. “I love the sushi – it is very fresh and wonderful,” he said. “I will definitely be coming back and I want to bring the rest of my family.”

Morry Kalimian, owner of Bristol Commons, was at Hibachi Buffet’s ribbon cutting on Friday. He said they have been “rocking it” ever since opening.

“They are a fantastic business,” he said. “I’m so happy to see them here. They put a lot of money into bringing this place around. I don’t think there is anything like this in Bristol. Where else can you go for lunch to get amazing, homemade food, all you can eat for \$13.99?”

Kalimian said the building that Hibachi Buffet is in now was once K-B Toys. It had been more than 10 years since the space was occupied.

“They have now sparked a lot of interest from other restaurants,” he said.

Justin Malley, executive director of Economic and Community Development for the City of Bristol, praised what Hibachi Buffet has been able to achieve.

“Audrey and her team are true professionals,” he said. “They have a formula for success. Based on what we’ve seen here and at their other locations, it is easy to see why they are so successful.”

Malley said Chen had “tapped into a new niche” for Bristol.

Katie D’Agostino, president and CEO of the Central Connecticut Chambers of Commerce, said she is very excited to welcome Hibachi Buffet to Bristol.

Buffet features hibachi, Chinese, Japanese and American foods

The Bristol Press · 25 Mar 2025 · Brian M. Johnson can be reached at 860-269-0822 or bjohnson@bristolpress.com.

Mayor Jeff Caggiano said he'd heard a lot of good things about Hibachi Buffet since they opened. He previously visited the spot and shared a video on the Mayor's Office Bristol CT Facebook page. Dawn Nielsen, marketing and public relations specialist for the city of Bristol said it was the most popular video shared on that page, receiving more than 119,000 views.

"They did a really nice job," Caggiano said. "It is a very classy looking spot. It is good to see a new business come to Bristol. If people are looking for a great value, this is the place to go."

Hibachi Buffet is open Sunday through Thursday from 11 a.m. to 9 p.m. and Friday and Saturday from 11 a.m. to 9:30 p.m. For more information, call 860-973-8889 or visit [/hibachibuffetbristol.com](http://hibachibuffetbristol.com).



Customers peruse the buffet options inside Hibachi Buffet at 99 Farmington Ave.

Brian Johnson

Bristol holding city-wide 'Cleanup Day'

The Bristol Press · 26 Mar 2025 · BRIAN M. JOHNSON @BRIANJOHNSONBP

BRISTOL – The City of Bristol will host its fifth annual “Community Cleanup Day” Saturday, April 26.

Mayor Jeff Caggiano said the city will be celebrating Earth Day by inviting the community to join in the fifth annual Community Clean Up Day from 9 a.m. to noon on April 26, or “any time that works for you to clean up your corner of Bristol. City pride is important to all of our success, and a neat and clean appearance is a key element to a vibrant community,” Caggiano said. “Bristol is excited to once again host the annual Community Clean Up Day. We are grateful to the residents and community groups who come out each year to support this important event which helps keep our city beautiful.”

Josh Medeiros, superintendent of Bristol Parks, Recreation, Youth and Community Services said the city is inviting groups and individuals to help clean up several areas throughout the city. These include: Riverside Avenue, Veterans Memorial Boulevard Park, The West End Neighborhood, along the railroad tracks on N. Main Street, Center Street, and Main Street, Forestville Village and along the Pequabuck River. People can also help by cleaning up the town neighborhood.

“This event is ideal for civic organizations, Scout Troops, or school groups who are interested in volunteering or who may need community service credit,” Medeiros said.

Clean Up Day supplies will be available for pick up, while supplies last, on the day of the event from 9 to 10:30 a.m. at the entrance to Rockwell Park where the lagoon is.

The Bristol Parks, Recreation, Youth and Community Services will also be hosting their annual Fishing Derby that day. Participants are encouraged to also pick up supplies to participate in the Community Clean Up Day. Available supplies will include garbage bags, gloves, the Beautify Bristol litter kit, event day t-shirts, instructions, locations of trash pickup areas, and safety guidelines. Participants are encouraged to provide their own gloves.

“While one day is being set aside for this community-wide cleanup, we invite the residents of Bristol to continue cleanup efforts in your own neighborhoods throughout the year,” Lindsey Rivers, Bristol public works analyst, said. “Beautify Bristol litter kits are available for pick up year-round at the Public Works office located on the second level of City Hall.” The community is also encouraged to take photos and post them to social media using the “#allheartcleanup-day2025” hashtag.

In addition, the New Cambridge Project will be hosting groups and organizations at the brewery, along with The Paki Taco, food truck beginning at noon. Residents are encouraged to visit the brewery to enjoy lunch and drinks after the Community Clean Up Day to celebrate Earth Day.



Participants in a past Community Cleanup. This year, the city will host its fifth annual clean up on Saturday, April 26.

HAND TO HAND

Charitable thrift store expands space

The Bristol Press · 29 Mar 2025 · BRIAN M. JOHNSON @BRIANJOHNSONBP

BRISTOL — Hand to Hand Thrift Store has purchased the space next to their North Main Street store to serve as an intake area, allowing them to accept larger donations like furniture.



The thrift store supports the efforts of Hand to Hand Direct Care Ministry, Inc., which provides donated items to those in need.

Hand to Hand Thrift Store is located at 465 N. Main St. and is owned by Tina Jones, director, and Freddy Jones, president. The thrift store stocks a wide variety of donated items including clothing, furniture, jewelry, dish-ware, books, movies and music.

They offer 25% sales for senior citizens every Wednesday. On Thursdays, they put out donated fresh fruits and vegetables for people.

Hand to Hand Direct Care Ministry, Inc. is Christian-based non-profit organization that provides clothing, furniture and other items to formerly homeless individuals who are trying to get back on their feet in new homes.

On Thursday, city leaders held a ribbon cutting and celebrated Hand to Hand acquiring an adjacent space at 461 N. Main St., which they are using to sort donations and as an intake area for clients. The space will also have information about other city nonprofits.

Tina Jones said that the idea behind Hand to Hand Direct Care Ministry, Inc. started in 2014 with a storage unit near the local Aldi, which they operated out of for two years while they worked to get the word out.

“We gave away household items to give a hand-up to people in the community in need,” she said.

They then opened the thrift store to support Hand to Hand Direct Care Ministry, Inc.'s charitable efforts. Freddy Jones said Hand to Hand has operated out of its current location for seven years. Previously, they were in a spot on Terryville Ave. that is now occupied by Café Real. The move allowed them to take in larger items, such as couches.

Susan Thayer, who volunteers at the Hand to Hand Thrift Store every Wednesday, said she is one of about seven volunteers who support its efforts.

"Our thrift store helps the middle class, working people," Freddy Jones said. "Our prices are very fair and we have a lot of items you wouldn't be able to find in most stores. We're a hidden gem."

Freddy Jones said the development downtown has started to bring more people into the thrift store.

"Downtown is really starting to come together," he said. "It's looking beautiful."

Tina Jones said furniture is the most needed item right now are furniture. She encouraged people who are looking to donate furniture in good shape to consider them.

Freddy Jones said that he is also willing to arrange pickups of larger items.

Bristol Mayor Jeff Caggiano thanked Tina and Freddy Jones for their support of Bristol citizens in need.

"You did a great job with the renovation," he said. "You give back quite a bit. You do a tremendous service for the community and I really appreciate it."

Hand to Hand Thrift Store is open Tuesday through Friday from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. and Saturday from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

For more information, call 860-973-3676 or visit handtohanddcm.org.



Dark Moon Gifts Ribbon Cutting: March 12, 2025



Hibachi Buffet Ribbon Cutting: March 21, 2025



Hand to Hand Direct Care Ministry, Inc. Thrift Store Expansion: March 27, 2025





**SATURDAY
APRIL 26, 2025**

9:00 AM-12:00 PM

**PICK UP SUPPLIES BETWEEN
9:00-10:30 AM
ROCKWELL PARK ENTRANCE**

Celebrate Earth Day and join the City of Bristol for a
Community Clean Up Day

Saturday, April 26, 2025 any time from 9:00 am until 12:00 pm
or any time that works for you to clean up your corner of Bristol!

Join your neighbors and friends to help clean up several areas throughout the City:

- Riverside Avenue
- Veterans Memorial Boulevard Park
- The West End Neighborhood
- Along the Railroad Tracks on North Main Street, Center Street, and Main Street
- Forestville Village and Along the Pequabuck River
- Your Neighborhood!

Clean Up Day supplies will be available for pick up on the day of the event anytime between 9:00 and 10:30 AM while supplies last at the entrance to Rockwell Park by the lagoon. Supplies will include garbage bags, gloves, t-shirt, Beautify Bristol litter kit, and safety guidelines.

Ideal for civic organizations, Scout Troops, or school groups interested in volunteering or who may need community service credit.

Share your photos on social media and tag [#allheartcleanupday2025](#)

**THANK YOU FOR HELPING TO CLEAN UP
YOUR CORNER OF BRISTOL!**

Economic Development/Marketing/Grants/CDBG Report

April 2025

Downtown/West End Updates

- Centre Square:
 - Construction of “Phase II” continues with sitework/foundation work. Future tenants for the first floor of Phase I include an anticipated counseling center/office use, a gym for use by building tenants, and an established local restaurant.
 - Hope Street Parking Garage construction is expected to be completed in April.
 - The final section of streetscape work for North Main Street (in front of the Police Station) should be complete by mid-April.
 - The final parcel available for development must temporarily be used for parking during the Hope Street Garage construction.
- Express Kitchens is working on a small buildout to prepare the former Associated Spring property for distribution use.
- Golden Years’ opening is pushed to early spring. The building at 118 Main Street will serve as headquarters for Golden Years’ home healthcare operation, adult daycare, and a small café that will provide food for the agency’s programs and for the public.
- The Michaels Organization will provide an update on the Sessions Building project at the April ECD Board meeting.
- Route 72 Streetscape Design work is nearing completion, with a public hearing for the Riverside Avenue portion of the project tentatively scheduled for April 29 at 7 pm.
- Ventanas Restaurant had a soft opening Monday, March 31 with plans for larger promotion in April.
- Guac and Roll, a fresh restaurant concept destined for the former Pure Foods location, is working toward opening in late spring/early summer.

Development Outside Downtown

- Industrial Update:
 - Johnny and Patrick Carrier, along with BFZ Electric, continue to work on their proposed site plan for the Southeast Bristol Business Park area that was introduced at the March ECD Board meeting.
 - The proposed project for 894 Middle Street will be heard at the April City Council meeting.
 - FORCE Automation has secured necessary land use approvals and is working toward a property closing for Lot #3 of the SEBBP.
 - A brief update on the AllState Driving School project will be presented at the April Board meeting.
 - Horizon Stone is expected to close on Lot #2 of the Southeast Bristol Business Park the week of 3/31.
 - A manufacturer that ECD staff had been working with for Lot #6 of the Southeast Bristol Business Park has pulled out of the project due to escalating development costs. ECD staff is working with other interested parties.

- We are happy to welcome General Machine to Bristol. General Machine is a manufacturer from outside Bristol that has been looking for an appropriate building for several years. The company has purchased a property on Birch Street and is preparing the space for the company's relocation.
- Route 6:
 - The Paper Store is moving to the former Pier One location.
 - A Halal-focused regional chain restaurant is preparing to open on Route 6 in April. More to come!
 - The Bristol Commons Plaza recently welcomed Hibachi Buffet, with national chain Tropical Smoothie preparing to open as well. Bristol Commons is also working on a plan to convert the former Boston Market location to a drive-thru.
 - SNIPES, a European based streetwear retailer, a 7,000 square foot store in Bristol Plaza is now open.
 - Construction on the ProHealth/Platinum Car Wash/fast casual restaurant project on Route 6 is well underway.
 - DESI Mandi, an established Connecticut chain of South Asian markets/eateries, is now open in the former Eblens space.
 - Both new gas station projects are under construction.
 - ECD staff continues to work with the property owner just west of KFC for options for their site.
- Forestville
 - A brief update on various Forestville projects will be provided at the April ECD Board meeting.

Business Incentives

Small Business Micro Grants

- Staff is working with popular local barber and business owner Andy Mendoza on a new venture at 277 West Street.

State of CT Urban Jobs Tax Abatement for Manufacturers

- Anticipated Applications for 2025/2026: Horizon Natural Stone, General Machine on Birch Street, Express Kitchens, SSI Manufacturing

Downtown/West End/Forestville Façade Program

- Working with House of BBQ and Bacon preparing to occupy 31B Church Ave. in Forestville
- Working with Smith Cycles on Riverside Ave.
- Working with the property owner of 13 Divinity Street in the West End.

Forgivable Revolving Loan

- Several loan projects are in the works, including two restaurants preparing for new build-outs.

Marketing

1) ECD Ribbon Cuttings, Business Anniversaries and Business Site Visits:

Ribbon Cuttings – ECD Staff celebrated the following new business or business expansions in the month of March. 1) **Dark Moon Gifts**, located at Centre Square Village, 2) **Hibachi Buffet**, located in the Bristol Commons Plaza, 2) the expansion of **Hand to Hand Thrift Store**, located at 456 North Main Street – *see photos of all in Communications.*

Business Site Visits – Mayor Caggiano, Justin, and Dawn N. visited **AMKO** in the Southeast Bristol Business Park to learn about their current operations and their history of providing products to the aerospace industry.

2) Marketing and Public Relations Initiatives:

- The Marketing Research Project – Justin and Dawn N. met with the WORX group to discuss marketing initiatives based on the survey/research results, next steps will be shared with the Commissioners at the May meeting.
- The ARPA Video Project – the initial introduction video from the mayor was released on social media; projects are continuing to be scheduled and filmed; the first few project videos for social media are being finalized and will be released in the next few weeks.
- In the Community – the annual Bristol Community Clean Up Day has been scheduled for Saturday, April 26th from 9am to 12pm; New Cambridge Project is also planning events that afternoon to coincide with Clean Up/Earth Day – *see flyer in Communications.*

Grants Administration

Recent Grant News:

- Federal funds were temporarily frozen in late January but legal action continues and the status of current and future grant programs is uncertain.

Still pending:

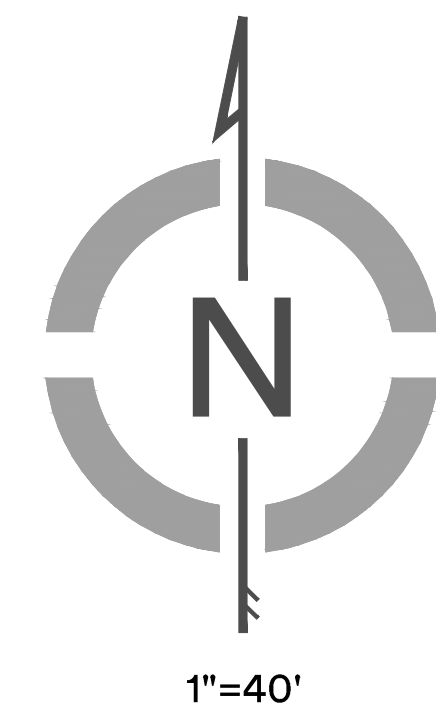
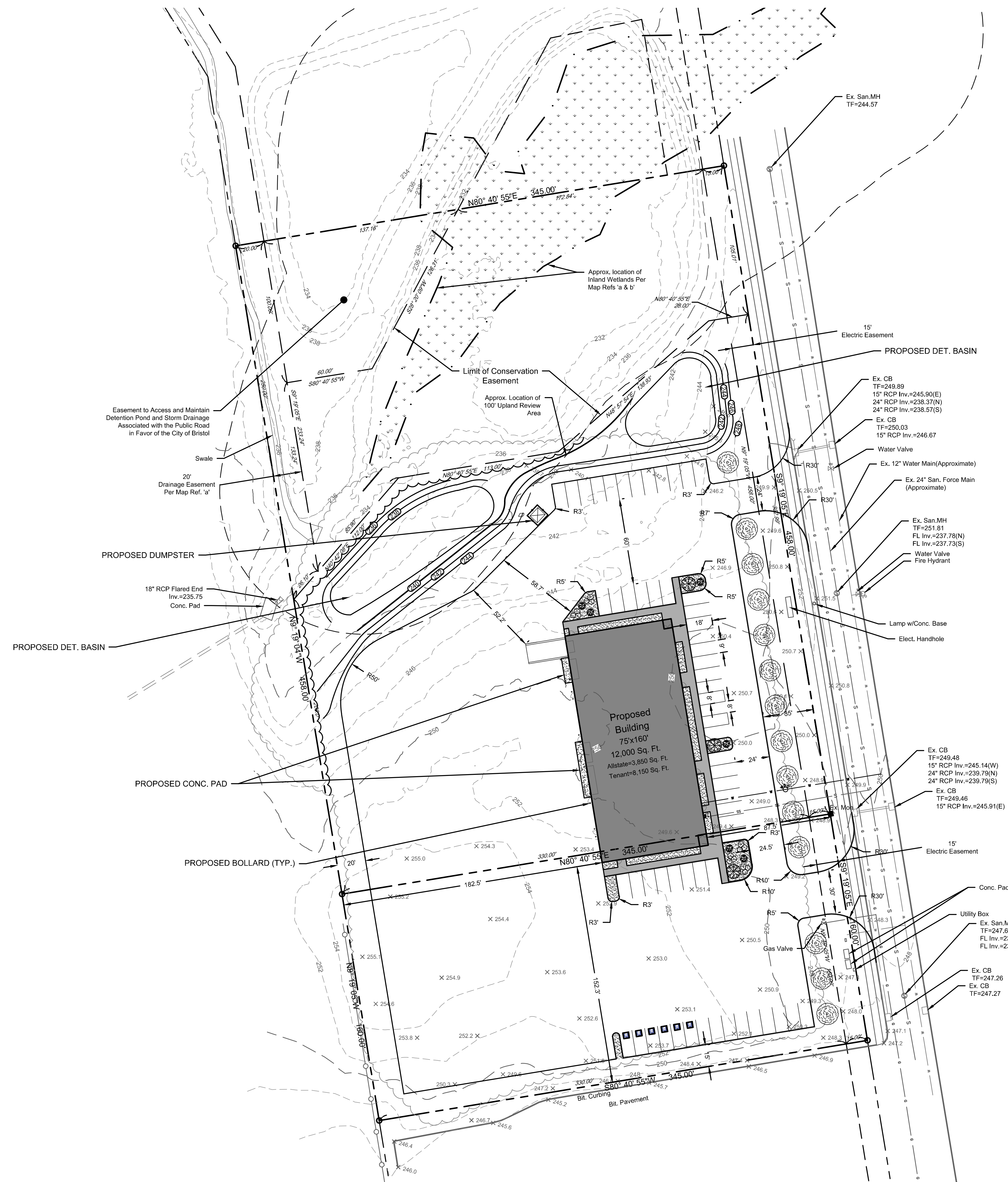
- An application was filed on November 27 for a DEEP Open Space Grant to purchase two parcels of land in the Hoppers-Birge Pond area to add to existing City open space. It is anticipated that awards will be announced in May or June.

CDBG Program Highlights

- CDBG Year 50 – Third quarter payment requisitions due on April 15.
- 5-Year Consolidated Plan – A 30-day public comment period just ended with no comments received on the draft plan, which is still available on the ECD website.
- Program Year 51 funding allocations are expected in early May.

CONCEPTUAL LAYOUT #1
3-10 & 3-11 BUSINESS PARK DRIVE
BRISTOL, CONNECTICUT
MARCH 2025

NOTE:
LAYOUT IS CONCEPTUAL ONLY AND IS BASED ON COMPILED INFORMATION AND A
CURSORY REVIEW OF REGULATIONS. A SITE SURVEY AND THOROUGH REVIEW OF THE
REGULATIONS MAY YIELD ADDITIONAL INFORMATION THAT MAY AFFECT THE LAYOUT.
HARRY E. COLE & SON DOES NOT GUARANTEE
THE DEPICTED LAYOUT.



PARCEL ZONED: IP-1
TOTAL AREA: 3.56 Acres



Company Interview

Company: _____

Address: _____

Date of Visit: _____ Interviewed by: _____

Other Attendees: _____

Primary Product(s): _____

Secondary Product: _____

Products

1. What is the company's primary product/service?

2. What have the last 2-3 years been like in your business/industry?

3. Has the company introduced any new products/services/capabilities in the last 2 - 3 years?

4. Are new products or services anticipated in the next 2 – 3 years?

Market

5. Is the Company's primary market: ☐ Local ☐ Regional ☐ National ☐ International

6. Are key customers at risk of moving overseas, merging or closing? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Comments:

Industry

7. Does the Company plan to expand in then next three years? ☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes, how can we help?

8. Are International Sales a % of Total Sales? ☐ Increasing ☐ Stable ☐ Decreasing ☐ No Int'l. Sale

What % is from international business? _____

What is the reach of your sales territory? _____

Do you use any international partners (outsourcing), and if so, what %?

9. Do influences from any other locations in the organization impact your production/sales?

10. Can you describe the nature of the industry? Trends that are impacting you?

11. Do you anticipate any federal, state or local legislation changes that will adversely affect your business in the next 3 years? ☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes, what changes? How will they affect the Company?

12. Do you have suggestions for Federal, state, and/or local legislation changes to help your business?

Management

13. Where is the Company's HQ located?

14. Has the Company ownership changed over the last 18 months? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Do you anticipate a change? ☐ Yes ☐ No

15. Has the Company top management changed, or is it expected to change over the next 18 months? ☐ Yes ☐ No

16. What are the strengths of having your company in Bristol?

17. Are there challenges/barriers to growth by being in Bristol? ☐ Yes ☐ No

18. Are there suppliers or customers who you think should be here in the region?

Workforce

19. Do you have any active job postings? ☐ Yes ☐ No

20. If yes, what types of roles are you looking to fill?

21. What skills are required for those open roles?

22. Will you have any future hiring needs?

23. Are there training classes or recertifications that are required by your workforce? Yearly?
Every few years? etc.

24. Are there training classes that BristolWORKS! can provide to help meet training needs of your
entry-level employees? Blueprint Reading? Lean Manufacturing? Manufacturing Math?
Workplace Skills? Employee Onboarding?
