



## *Summary Report*

# **Business Call to Action – Finding Solutions that Support and Grow the Local Economy**

Held on June 10, 2019

Old State House, Bristol



[See Group Consensus of Top Issues & Opportunities on page 4.](#)

The Business Call to Action was jointly sponsored by Friends of Historic Bristol and Grow Smart RI.

This Call to Action was answered by the participation of more than 30 Bristol business owners and managers, as well as representatives of Grow Smart RI, Discover Newport, and East Bay Chamber of Commerce. Tom Bergenholtz, an FHB advisory member, began the program by reviewing a couple of key points given by economist Donovan Rypkema at the previous FHB Brighter Future presentation in February on how to grow the local economy.

Here are Rypkema's key points:



## The big lie is:

“I’m an independent business.”  
There is no such thing.  
Businesses are interdependent.  
They need each other.

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*Donovan Rypkema*



Friends of Historic Bristol



## Economic Development

- Successful economic development is about lots of small things working together from a COMMUNITY plan for the future. Not lots of single silos.
- ALL must be part of the plan.





## Main Street Program

- Past 25 years
  - \$45 B invested in physical improvements
  - 83,000 net new businesses created
  - 370,000 net new jobs created
  - 199,000 building rehabilitations
- Last year for every \$1.00 invested in a community it returned \$32.00
- Two years ago that \$28.00



## Example

- Ruston, LA vs Bristol, RI

Population – 26,000 vs 24,000

Median household - \$26,000 vs \$65,000

Median Age - 24 vs 38

Accomplished: 80 net new businesses

606 net new jobs

\$13,500,000 total investment





## **Brainstorming session.**

Tom Bergenholtz led a group discussion, asking participants to identify challenges to their business operation and what is needed to overcome those challenges and improve the local economy. The lively participation yielded information about what types of promotional, marketing and branding efforts would help the businesses to be more profitable and improve the overall quality of life in Bristol. There were also many suggestions regarding how the Town government and businesses could work together to improve the economy.

## **Group Consensus of Top Issues & Opportunities**

- **Adopt Main Street America program**
- **Get Better Signage – in town, from Metacom to downtown, from I-95, from Rt. 24**
- **Incentivize to Fill Empty Stores – Tax Empty Storefronts**
- **Be Receptive/Responsive**
- **Include Business & Public in All Planning Initiatives**
- **Get an All-Inclusive Map/Fun Map**
- **Need Exemption from Tangible Tax**
- **Need Full-time, Non-Political Person to Implement Program**
- **Need a Strategic Tourism Plan**
- **Get RWU Involved**

## **Main Street America**

Tom Bergenholtz closed the program with a recap of PlaceEconomics principal Donovan Rypkema's key points on what Main Street America's program has done for other communities who participate. Rypkema's full presentation can be seen at [FHBRI.org](http://FHBRI.org)



## Results of Brainstorming Session

# Two High Priority Strategies to Improve the Economy

Promotion / Marketing / Branding	Town and Businesses Work More Closely
Social Media	Collaborative, Business-friendly
Visitor Center	Need participation/input from merchants & restaurants
App with East Bay Media/App Not Current	Trolley to get people from ferry/around town
Get townspeople to talk about their favorite day in Bristol	Collaborate/Liaison
Create Itineraries for Business & others to share with clients	Organization
Need Bristol Map of ALL downtown merchants/use cartographer	Work together WITH Town
Map must cover "Wood St. to Waterfront"	Steve Contente needs to visit each merchant
Use Google Register to get ALL businesses coming up on queries	Need comprehensive database of Bristol businesses, including HOME businesses
Get people to walk many blocks between shops/Empty storefronts HURT!	Need list of Tangible Tax Law
Create Experiences/Itineraries	Lack of Continuity in initiatives w/ change of administration
CONNECT!	Tourist Town – Local Towns
Frame Expectations regarding days/hours open – need later hours	Town needs to support restaurants
People ask: "What can we do in Bristol?"	Personal services
Get info to ferry	
Need Central Place/Website	
Print & Media	
70% of people look on-line for tourist info to attract them to a place	
Discounts DOT will print – distribute via ferry	
Need LOCAL signage	
Need I-95 and Route 24 signage	
Instagram	
Chamber website	
Support vibrant nightlife/restaurants	
"Square" Register - collaboration	



## Friends of Historic Bristol Business Call to Action – Attendees List and Survey

Name Signed In	Organization
Linda Arruda	Paper, Packaging & Panache
Marianne Bergenholtz	Harborside Holdings
Ellen Blomgreen	Hotpoint Emporium
Sandra Bonazoli	Beehive Handmade
Herb Browne	Bristol Bagel Works
Angela Cabral	Franklin Court
Joe Caron	Caron Jewelers, Ltd
Diane Caron	Caron Jewelers, Ltd
Jen Cavallero	The Beehive Cafe
Nancy Chace	Sea Rose Cottage
Jim Dowd	Beehive Handmade
John Edge	A.N. Nunes Insurance
Katherine Farrington	Discover Newport
Michael Gotman	Gorman Clocks
Beth Gresch	Grasmere
Michelle Hughes	East Bay Chamber of Commerce
Bill Lynn	Herreshoff Marine Museum
Pat McLaughlin	
Gwenda McQuilkin	Captain William Richmond Air BnB
John McQuilkin	Captain William Richmond Air BnB
Jesse Miranda	Jesse James Antiques
Denise Nehez	C&R Mercantile
Alan Oliver	Oliver Insurance
C.J. Opperthausen	Grow Smart RI
Berta Raposo	Federal Properties
Kendall Reiss	Kendall Reise Gallery & Studio
Zach Rivers	Judge Roy Bean Saloon

Carol Scalzo	Hit the Web Marketing
Brian Travers	Bradford Dimond Norris House BnB
Lynn Turnbull	195 Franklin
Tammy Vincent	Sand Dollar Gift Shop



## **Business Call to Action – Finding Solutions that Support and Grow Local Businesses**

### **“How are We Doing” Survey results**

90% of participants who completed the survey would like to continue working with FHB

90% found the program Very Informative to Informative

100% were interested in attending future programs

33% response rate