



The Bridgeport Regional Business Council and the Bridgeport Mayoral Race: A Suggested Guide for Voters

A successful community is made up of a number of elements that foster and enrich its quality of life. At the core of any community's success is commerce – the interchange of goods and services and the creation of wealth. In Bridgeport, the Bridgeport Regional Business Council and its Bridgeport Chamber of Commerce affiliate represent about 1,000 businesses and non-profits that are responsible for the generation of commerce and the creation of wealth. We represent a divergence of business, both large and small, but mostly small, that employ more than 50,000 people, including many Bridgeport residents. These employees earn, spend and invest more than \$2 billion in the local economy. In addition, the businesses that we represent pay more than 30 percent of the taxes raised by the City of Bridgeport.

It is because of this standing and this impact that we have a significant stake in the future of Bridgeport and a real concern for its success. We hope to play a positive role in the coming mayoral election in Bridgeport to help educate voters about the issues that we consider to be important for Bridgeport as well as the qualities that we consider to be crucial in Bridgeport's next mayor.

Background

The City of Bridgeport is a large, complex organization that:

- has an annual budget of \$450 million
- employs 3,500 people
- supports 135,000 residents
- educates 21,000 children annually
- is home to 7,000 businesses
- is home to 750 non-profit organizations that support the social service needs of the community
- influences or affects the livelihoods of millions of people in Fairfield and New Haven Counties, Connecticut and beyond.

The size of the city is comparable to a medium-sized corporation. During the last several years, the city has experienced significant, positive growth as many economic development initiatives, such as the Intermodal Transportation Center, Artspace and the Urban Green Project, have been implemented. Significant progress, such as the Blueprint for Growth and state-level advocacy for increased education funding, has also been made to enhance the education system to ensure that children receive a solid, well-rounded education and that the city produces a skilled and talented work force for the future.

It will take a very talented and dedicated individual with diverse, broad management and leadership skills to keep Bridgeport on this path of positive growth. Our future mayor must be chosen carefully and thoughtfully. To support this, the Bridgeport Regional Business Council wants to encourage all Bridgeport residents to actively participate in the election process.

What can you do?

1. Register to vote.
2. Educate yourself about the key issues facing the city currently now and in the future.
3. Evaluate the personal and professional qualities necessary to be mayor of Bridgeport.
4. Consider very carefully each candidate's ability to lead Bridgeport to the next level based on the needs of the city and its key issues.
5. Attend a debate or forum.
6. Invite each candidate to any groups you may be involved with to discuss their vision.
7. Vote! Get involved!

In support of this effort, the Bridgeport Regional Business Council would like to propose for consideration the following list of major issues affecting Bridgeport and the key qualities needed for a leader and mayor.

Five Critical Issues for the City of Bridgeport

1. *Education* – Ensure that all of our children get the education they need to succeed and our businesses have access to a local, skilled workforce.
2. *Economic Development* – Create an environment for job growth and business expansion, with an emphasis on minority business opportunities, which lowers taxes for residents and businesses and enhances the vitality of the city.
3. *Housing* – Ensure that all residents have access to affordable and safe housing and encourage a housing mix that adds higher income residents.
4. *Transportation* – Ensure that all residents and employees of local companies have affordable, accessible and safe transportation.
5. *Quality of Life* – Ensure that all residents and local businesses have access to affordable, high quality healthcare, recreation facilities and green spaces.

Four Key Qualities for the Mayor of Bridgeport

1. *Visionary Leader and Achiever* – Sets direction, inspires, leads by example, provides encouragement.
2. *Collaborator* – Listens, considers all viewpoints, convenes the best of the best, forms partnerships, strives for win-win resolutions.

3. *Manager* – Hires a qualified team, uses best practices, delegates, prioritizes, implements workable solutions.
4. *Strong Character* – Demonstrates high ethical and moral standards.

Questions to Ask to Evaluate a Candidate on These Qualities

1. Can the candidate clearly communicate a positive, realistic vision for the city?
2. Can the candidate engage key leaders and residents to accomplish this vision?
3. Does the candidate have a defined set of priorities for the city and the ability to identify programs/initiatives that will help achieve those priorities?
4. Does the candidate have a track record of accomplishment?
5. Does the candidate listen to all appropriate viewpoints or interests before making decisions?
6. Does the candidate have the ability to develop compromises with others to do what's best for Bridgeport?
7. Does the candidate have the ability and the willingness to explain why a particular decision was made?
8. Does the candidate have the power to convene key leaders across the state and region to create partnerships that result in successful outcomes?
9. Does the candidate surround him or herself with capable people?
10. Does the candidate demonstrate behavior that you find moral and ethical?