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Groups Combine for Disruptive Strategic Planning

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EDITOR

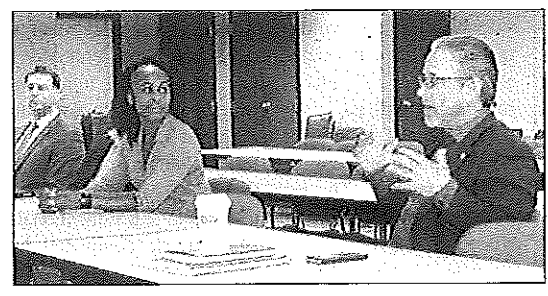
A group of local leaders are working on bettering the City by gaining funds for a new innovative plan for the City.

Marlo Greppone, director of planning and programs at HRA New Britain, is leading the Working Cities Challenge by the Federal Bank Reserve

and Tim Stewart (Greater New Britain Chamber of Commerce director), is leading the Innovation Place Grant along with Robin Sharp (executive director of the YWCA) and Rick Mullins (CCSU Institute of Technology and Business Development).

"We applied for a design grant and were successful for a \$40,000 grant to put the strategic plan together

and now we were selected as a finalist for that," said Stewart. "There is \$30 million up



for grabs and they will pick four or five. Even if we are not selected there will be another

round."

On May 15, a site visit will occur with the Connecticut Next board of directors to go over the City's submittal and a walking tour. The Innovation Place grant includes Berlin and Farmington. The grant can be up to \$1 million a year for 5 years.

"The working cities is bringing people to innovation places," said Greppone.

"We are different tracks that are intersecting, because in the end we are all benefiting the same community."

The Working Cities Challenge recently received a \$15,000 grant to focus on job opportunities for Hispanics in New Britain. It is now looking at grants in the range of \$500,000 to assist in economic development programs. It engages the low income and people of color to be a part of opportunities.

"With both of these strategies we are looking for disruption."

In This Issue

- Spring Brings Activity2
- New Britain Chorale.....3
- Commentary.....5
- The Sports Journal.....7
- Town Journal.....8

page 10

Disruptive Strategic Planning

continued from page 1

five strategies that would change the norm of the way we traditionally prepare workforce development and community economic development," said Mullins.

On May 11, the group will bring Larry Quick, a strategist with experience in both corporate and civic sectors related to disruption, to speak at a conference available for everyone in

the state.

He will discuss decoding disruption, disruption readiness and leveraging disruption with strategy in action.

"It will help our communities, collectively in Connecticut, build greater capacities on this strategy planning model," said Mullins. "We will look at present conditions and future conditions to develop our plan to help connect the current conditions with the fu-

ture conditions."

"The Working Cities grant is more of a traditional economic development approach and the Innovation Grant is to do something that has never been done. Those two have to go with each other. How can you have innovation without a place?" said Professor Drew Harris of Central Connecticut State University. "Those two together can be a catalyst for making something really special happen here."

Harris said the conference will put a different lens on the City. It will look at national trends and imagine the future.

"There are trends New Britain can be in front of or behind," said Harris. "New Britain could be an innovative leader as a new way of organizing and repurposing some dead space. It could shift the economy of the City."

Greppone said it is easy to rally around a common cause.

"We hope to be successful because the collective impact of all of these will

make a huge difference in the communities," said Greppone.

"This is an opportunity to bring in some significant dollars in innovation into our area that will help make a change overnight," said Stewart.

Local businesses are also helping financially and serve on these boards to add input.

"We are really happy to partner with these organizations and bring the communities we have the privilege to serving stronger, John O'Toole, community relations and economic development lead of Eversource Energy.

Michael Inabine of TD Bank said the bank is happy to support the conference.

"Anything to increase building capacity in the area. There are a lot of ideas for innovative ideas," said Inabine. "We are very pleased to be sponsoring the event."

CCSU is also an anchor institution in both these initiatives.