

# The Bristol Press

**The Bristol Press** ([bristolpress.com](http://bristolpress.com)), Serving Bristol, CT

Opinion

## OUR VIEW: Once vibrant cities show hope for future

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On Monday, the Bristol City Council is expected to approve a contract with developer Don Monti, a pact that, leaders say, will pave the way for a rejuvenated city center.

The Bristol Downtown Development Corp. slipped out from behind closed doors Monday to ink the agreement, which gives Monti two years to come up with a final concept to develop and purchase the 17-acre, city-owned former mall site. The parameters of that plan are explicitly laid out in the contract; minimum requirements are 200 residential units, 10,000 square feet of retail or restaurants and the amenities that support such development, including parking.

Long-suffering Bristol residents, writing on The Bristol Press Web site, were skeptical about the plan as a panacea for a resurgent downtown but we don't share their pessimism. Some good people have spent a long time — longer than we would have hoped — to thoroughly investigate next steps for a city stuck with a vacant lot at its center. They moved cautiously, carefully selected a developer and left room in this contract to opt out if they don't get all they were promised.

Now, finally, things are moving forward.

And we're pleased to say the same for New Britain's downtown plans. Last week, the Common Council named an architect, Kaestle Boos Associates, and a construction manager, Downes Construction Co., for a police headquarters that will be paired with retail space. The combination is slated to be the centerpiece of a revitalized Hardware City.

We were a bit chagrined by the fact that the lucrative awards were made without competitive bidding just as we have been concerned with the BDDC's slow pace and behind-closed-doors approach to the project. But BDDC head Frank Johnson is promising more openness, now that the contract is signed, and we are sympathetic to the fact that both firms serving New Britain are local.

These are two historic cities with a glorious past, a present beset with challenges, and leadership that is hoping for — and working toward— a brighter future. It would seem that better days are ahead for both.

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