

City of Meriden

142 East Main Street
Meriden, CT 06426

HUB Reuse Plan

Overview of City's Plans to Transform the HUB site in downtown Meriden, Connecticut



March 2008

**Meriden HUB Reuse Plan
Overview**

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Property Description

The Meriden “HUB” is a 14.40-acre brownfields site located in downtown Meriden, Connecticut. The City of Meriden holds title to the property. The property consists of two tax parcels: 77 State Street and 50 East Main Street. 77 State Street contains an operating, 5246-square foot commercial bank building that fronts East Main Street¹. The remainder of the site consists of a grassed area that comprises an interim site remediation area and paved parking areas with limited access.



Meriden HUB

The City has completed a *Site Reuse Concept Plan* that calls for the site to be transformed into a park that serves the dual purposes of providing public green space and flood storage downtown. The *Site Reuse Concept Plan* also calls for the development of over 150,000 square feet of developable office and retail space, an intermodal transportation center and a parking area adjacent to site.

Zoning Regulations

The site is covered by City of Meriden Zoning Regulations. The zoning for the property is Central Commercial (C-1) District. The purpose of this district is to provide for and encourage a variety of businesses, including retail, professional offices, service, entertainment and cultural establishments and limited light industry and related activities, such as parking and pedestrian spaces. The zoning classification is designed to encourage the concentration of retail and service uses that will strengthen and complement one another. Further, it is a purpose of this district to protect the major public investment made and to be made toward revitalization of the central business area, a vital part of the city's tax base, by conserving the value of land and buildings.

The redevelopment of the HUB site has been identified in the City's Plan of Conservation and Development as a site with significant redevelopment potential². The site has the potential to be redeveloped with a mix of uses, such as housing, retail and office space. Such an approach is consistent with both

¹Postal address for bank building is 30 East Main Street.

² Draft as approved by the POCD Steering Committee, March 2008.

“Transit Oriented Development (TOD)” and “Smart Growth” principles due to the fact that the site is located in close proximity to existing transit facilities and within the Central Business District (CBD). TOD includes the development of new commercial and residential activities that are built within walking distance of fixed transportation systems. Smart Growth developments typically have high densities that maximize the use of existing infrastructure.

Site History

The HUB site once served as a center of industrial and commercial activity in Meriden’s downtown. Historical uses included residential homes, drug stores, grocery stores, manufacturing, retail, and auto sales and service. More recently, the site housed the Meriden Mall, one of the region’s first indoor retail shopping malls. Significant flooding in the 1990’s, however, caused an estimated \$14 million in property damage. The property sits atop Harbor Brook and two tributaries, Clark and Jordan Brooks, which lie in culverts beneath the property. During significant rain events, Harbor Brook floods. Impact to the HUB site and the surrounding area is exacerbated by the site’s low elevation and the lack of upstream and downstream storm water detention areas.

In 2000, the City’s Flood Control Implementation Agency proposed the implementation of a storm water management plan at the HUB site. The plan calls for the construction of several control measures, including a storm water detention area, which would reduce flooding at the HUB site and throughout the CBD. In 2005, the City acquired title to the property after determining it would be in the City’s best interest to acquire the property and implement the recommended flood control plan there.



HUB Conduit

Location/Neighborhood

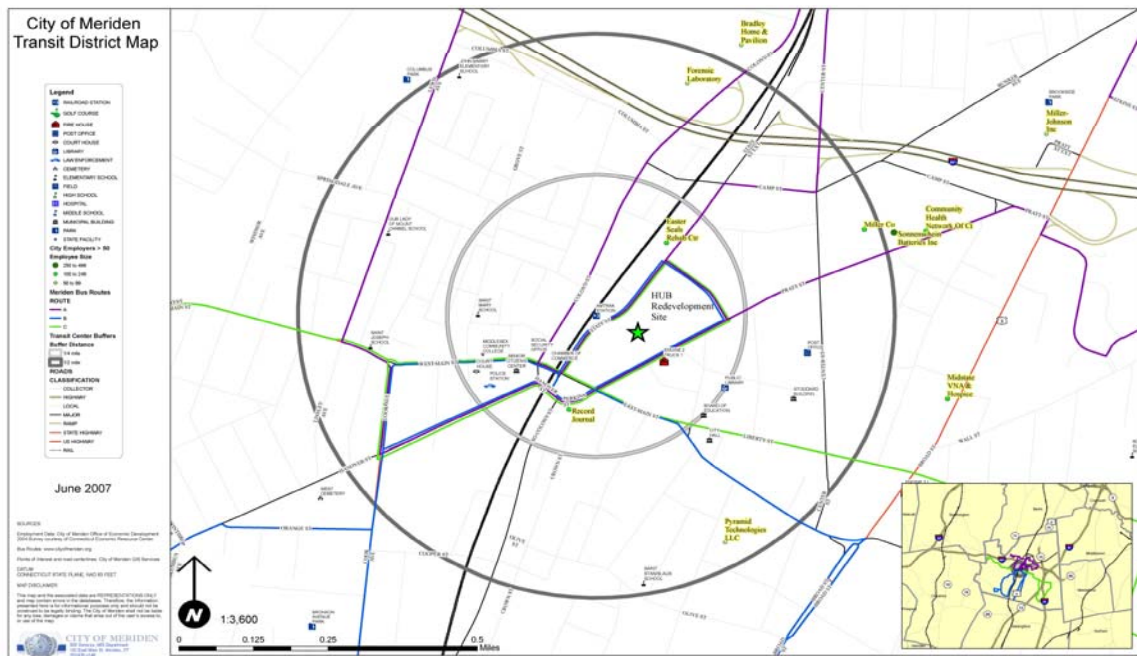
The HUB site is located in Meriden’s historic downtown center and within a quarter mile of residential neighborhoods, retail businesses, professional offices, entertainment venues, cultural establishments and City offices. It is surrounded by mixed-use commercial buildings, light industrial, and residential buildings to the north.

The site has good access to local and regional streets and highways. The property is bounded on the northwest side by State Street. State Street links the CBD to Interstate 691, which is located approximately one mile north of the site.

In 2007, the South Central Regional Council of Governments (SCRCOG) initiated a study to explore and develop alternatives to improve access between I-691 Interchanges 5, 6, and 7 and the surrounding local roadway system. Of specific interest is the possibility of providing a fully directional Interchange 5. Improvement to the I-691 interchanges is expected to improve access into downtown, including the HUB site.

The property is bounded on the southwest by East Main Street. East Main Street is a primary east-west commercial corridor that provides access to Interstate 91 and State Route 66. The property is bounded on the northeast by Mill Street and on the southeast by Pratt Street.

The site has good connections to existing and proposed public transit service. The site's western boundary is located approximately 300 feet from the Meriden Transit Center (MTC), located at 60 State Street. The MTC, which is owned by the City of Meriden, houses an Amtrak ticketing office and waiting area. Amtrak offers hourly rail service to Hartford and New Haven during peak periods. Use of the Amtrak rail corridor has been proposed for the New Haven to Springfield commuter rail service, which is expected to be operational by 2012. The MTC also provides shelter for riders connecting to the four CT Transit bus routes that serve the City.



Site Proximity to Existing Transit Service

Economic Development Opportunities and Future Reuse of the Site

Several factors suggest that commercial activity at the HUB site can thrive once the flooding risks are significantly reduced. Its location in the center of downtown, its proximity to the public transit, its proximity to I-691 and other commercial corridors, and its existence in the commercial zone all bode well for future commercial activities on site.

The City Center Initiative

In 2002, the Meriden Economic Resource Group, Inc. (MERG) initiated an effort to develop a comprehensive economic development plan for Meriden's downtown. MERG is a non-profit economic development corporation and former owner of the HUB site. In 2005, the Connecticut Department of Economic and Community Development invested in this process by providing a \$250,000 grant to conduct a market study and to complete a municipal development plan for the HUB site and the 43 acres immediately north of the site. MERG used the funds to complete a redevelopment plan known as the *Meriden City Center Initiative (MCCI) Comprehensive Master Plan*. The purpose of the *MCCI Plan* is to outline a road map for the redevelopment of Meriden's downtown with the purpose of long term, sustained growth in its central core. Copies of the MERG report are online at <http://www.citycenterinitiative.com>. Following the completion of the MCCI Master Plan, the City purchased the property from MERG for economic development and flood control purposes.

City Site Reuse Concept Plan

After taking title to the HUB property in 2005, the City committed to developing a reuse and flood control plan for the 14.4-acre HUB site. In 2007, the City hired Milone and MacBroom, Inc., an engineering firm specializing in flood control and environmental issues, to complete a conceptual Site Reuse Plan. The planning process has been managed by the City Manager who has been assisted by the HUB Reuse Committee, an ad-hoc committee comprised of residents and city staff. The final *Site Reuse Concept Plan* calls for the HUB site to be transformed into a City park that serves the dual purposes of providing public green



Site Reuse Concept Plan-2008

environmental issues, to complete a conceptual Site Reuse Plan. The planning process has been managed by the City Manager who has been assisted by the HUB Reuse Committee, an ad-hoc committee comprised of residents and city staff. The final *Site Reuse Concept Plan* calls for the HUB site to be transformed into a City park that serves the dual purposes of providing public green

space and flood storage downtown. The Site Reuse Plan also calls for the development of over 150,000 square feet of developable office and retail space as well as an intermodal transportation center adjacent to site.

The Site Reuse Concept Plan is first and foremost a plan to address the flooding problems downtown. The Site Reuse Plan recommends the implementation of several key flood control components. First, the plan recommends daylighting and restoring Harbor Brook, which currently flows underneath the HUB site in an underground culvert. The plan calls for the construction of a trail along the daylighted Harbor Brook which, once completed will connect downtown to the Quinnipiac River Linear Trail, a regional trail system that follows the Quinnipiac River and its tributaries through Wallingford, Cheshire and Meriden. Second, the plan calls for the construction of a City green that can serve as a flood storage area. The implementation of these measures will significantly reduce the risk of damage to properties in the downtown following significant rain events.



Conceptual Harbor Brook Restoration

In addition to the flood control measures, the Site Reuse Plan also recommends the construction of an intermodal transportation center that takes advantage of its location along the existing Amtrak rail line and along the proposed New Haven to Springfield commuter rail line. The transportation center is also intended to offer linkages to local bus, taxi and corporate van services. The development of a new intermodal transportation center downtown along with improved rail service

along the New Haven to Springfield rail corridor can foster "Transit Oriented Development" on the HUB site and throughout downtown Meriden. The City expects that Colony Street, West Main Street, Pratt Street and the larger downtown will experience significant private reinvestment and commercialization with the advent of commuter rail service along with enhanced demand for new residential development.



Conceptual Transit Center (ConnDOT)

Preliminary cost estimates to implement the Site Reuse Concept Plan (excluding both contingencies and the transportation center component) include \$940,000 for engineering work, \$3.8 million for environmental remediation, \$1.6 million for flood control work and \$3.9 million for park construction. The State legislature recently approved the authorization of \$9 million in state bond funds for the implementation of flood control measures at the HUB site and up to \$1 million for improvements to the transportation center³. A full allocation of these funds by the State Bond Commission is critical to the continuation of the project. The City projects a potential private investment of over \$22 million in office and retail space will occur once the flood control measures at the HUB site are implemented.

Enterprise Zone Incentives

The development of mixed-use commercial and residential properties on or surrounding the HUB site can be a catalyst to the redevelopment of Meriden's central business district (CBD). Businesses that locate in Meriden's downtown can take advantage of several incentives that are intended to create sustained economic activity in the CBD and increase its tax base while preserving and restoring the City's historic downtown center.

State Incentives

The City offers tax abatements to manufacturers, warehousing and distribution companies and certain service businesses that locate to or expand in Meriden's Enterprise Zone. Eligible businesses are determined by the state and are identified by SIC/ NAICS's codes. Eligible business may receive:

- An 80% tax abatement for five years on the increased real property taxes resulting from new construction or expanded space. Companies that lease such properties must lease for five years with an option to purchase or renew the lease for five more years. The landlord must pass any tax abatement to the tenant as a part of the lease agreement. Renovations to a company's existing space in Meriden may qualify—but only under certain conditions.
- An 80% real property tax abatement for five years on the existing real estate taxes of a qualified vacant building.
- An 80% personal property tax abatement for five years on any personal property "new" to Meriden's Grand List.
- A 25% or a 50% credit on the State corporate business tax of the eligible business.

³ Senate Bill No. 1502, June Special Session, Public Act No. 07-7, November 2007

City Incentives⁴

Businesses that do not have SIC codes required by the State's EZ program may still be eligible for Enterprise Zone incentives under the City's incentive program. Businesses such as restaurants, retailers or other business that do not qualify for the State's EZ program, and that move into a newly constructed space or rehabilitated space may qualify for several incentives including:

- Seven-year real property tax break on any increase in real property taxes that comes as a result of the commercial space being newly constructed or from being in a rehabbed building.
- Three-year personal property tax abatement. A commercial business can receive this tax abatement after moving into rehabbed or newly built space in the EZ and the building qualifies for the incentive mentioned above.
- New or rehabilitated housing also qualifies for the City incentives. There is, however, a rent restriction requirement.

Transit Oriented Development Opportunities

Transit Oriented Development (TOD) includes the development of new commercial and residential structures and amenities that are built within walking distance of fixed transportation systems, including rail and bus service. This type of development helps reduce the need for a car by improving pedestrian access to transit service. The HUB site is a prime location for TOD due to its proximity to a number of functioning transportation facilities, including an existing Amtrak station that serves the Washington DC/New York City/Springfield MA line, an existing transit stop served by the Meriden Transit District and Connecticut Transit bus routes, and recently upgraded sidewalks. Downtown Meriden has been identified as a station stop on a new commuter rail line envisioned for the New Haven/Hartford/Springfield MA corridor that is expected to be operational by 2012.



Conceptual Civic Plaza

Housing Opportunities

Immediately north of the HUB Site is the Mills Memorial public housing complex. Owned by the Meriden Housing Authority (MHA) since it was built in 1962, it provides 140 units of federally subsidized affordable housing units to low income residents. The complex includes two high-rise and three low rise buildings, a community center and a gas fired heating plant. MHA has agreed to investigate

⁴ Additional information on the incentive programs are available at www.meridenbiz.com

the feasibility of relocating the tenants at Mills Memorial as a part of its larger plan to renovate the Chamberlain Heights public housing complex. Over the long term, MHA could replace Mills Memorial with new affordable housing units using state and federal funds. The development of new housing units, along with new commuter rail service and an intermodal transportation center, could help transform downtown Meriden into a transit village with housing, transportation and commercial components for a wide range of residents.

Summary of Environmental Conditions

The following is a summary of the known environmental assessments, demolition and remediation activities that have been completed at the site⁵:

Phase I Environmental Site Assessment, HUB Property, 1 & 77 State Street, 30 & 50 East Main Street, Meriden, CT, prepared by Metcalf & Eddy, dated February 1995.

Three potential sources of on-site contamination were identified. Analysis was based on a review of historical uses on the property and potential hazards associated with those uses. No testing of soils or groundwater was performed.

- Asbestos and Lead Building Surveys, 77 State Street, Meriden, CT, prepared by Abacus Environmental, Inc. November 2003.

A study of the former Meriden Mall building located at 77 State Street was investigated for the presence of asbestos and lead.

- Floor tiles, mastic hot water gaskets and floor flashing were identified as containing asbestos. Lead based paint on building surfaces was also identified.

Phase I Environmental Site Assessment, Meriden HUB, Non-Superfund Targeted Brownfields Assessment, Meriden, CT, prepared by Metcalf & Eddy, dated March 2004.

In 2005, the City received an in-kind grant from the US Environmental protection Agency under its targeted site assessment program for a Phase I/II Environmental Site Assessment.

A number of Recognized Environmental Conditions (RECs), including Semivolatile Organic Compounds (SVOCs), Volatile Organic Compounds (VOCs), Extractable Total Petroleum Hydrocarbons (ETPH), and metals, were identified. No testing of soils or groundwater was performed.

Targeted Brownfields Assessment Report, Meriden HUB Site, 1 & 77 State Street and 30 & 50 East Main Street, prepared by Metcalf & Eddy, December 2004.

11 Constituents of Concern (COC) were identified based on knowledge of the previous activities and previous studies of the site.

Methodology for testing of the soil and groundwater was outlined.

Phase II Environmental Site Assessment and Ground Water Monitoring, 1 & 77 State Street, 30 & 50 East Main Street, Meriden, CT, prepared by Consulting Environmental Engineers, Inc., October 2005.

Testing of soil and groundwater beneath the former Meriden Mall building was performed.

Phase II Assessment performed. Study investigated eight (8) areas of concern from soil and groundwater samples taken at the site. Elevated levels of Constituents of Concern were detected.

Work was funded by a 2005 USEPA Targeted Site Assessment Grant and supplemental funds provided by the Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection.

HUB Demolition Project

City awarded \$2 million from CT DECD to demolish the former Meriden Mall building located at 77 State Street (2005). City hired JR Contracting and Environmental Services, Inc., to complete the demolition (2006).

City awarded a \$200,000 USEPA- Brownfields Cleanup Grant to cover a portion of the costs of environmental clean up activities completed during the demolition (2006).

City awarded \$144,300 in USEPA Water Program funds to complete a Phase III Environmental Assessment and Interim Remedial Action Plan (RAP) for the HUB site (2006).

Asbestos abatement and removal of regulated materials such as PCB light ballast and mercury switches completed (2007). Lead paint testing completed. Low concentrations of lead were detected and therefore no further actions on lead paint were taken.

Demolition completed (2007). Removal of the construction debris and site clean up was completed in accordance with the Interim RAP.

⁵ Complete reports are available in the City of Meriden Office of Economic Development, 142 East Main Street, Meriden, CT 06450.

Interim Remedial Action Plan, Meriden HUB Site, prepared by Metcalf & Eddy, dated March 1, 2007 and revised April 23, 2007.

In 2007, the City agreed to implement a Voluntary Remediation Program in accordance with the EPA cleanup grant requirements. As a part of the voluntary program, the City completed an Interim RAP, which was submitted as part of the demolition of the Meriden HUB building. The plan called for the following activities to be completed in conjunction with the demolition of the commercial building located at 77 State Street:

- Offsite removal of all building debris except for clean building concrete
- Onsite crushing of clean building concrete
- Placement of crushed concrete on a geotextile fabric
- Covering of the crushed concrete with seeded topsoil.
- Removal and off-site disposal of "grossly contaminated" soil
- Recommends the development and implementation of a final remedial action plan as a part of permanent site redevelopment activities.

Phase III Environmental Site Assessment DRAFT Report, 1 & 77 State Street, 30& 50 East Main Street, Meriden, CT, prepared by Metcalf & Eddy, March 2007.

Phase III Report compiles all work completed to date. Report shows 11 areas of concern have been identified for the site. Levels of these contaminants exceed one or more of the Remediation Standard Regulation (RSR) criteria.

Phase III Report will be completed at the close-out of the Demolition project.

Final Remedial Actions will be completed in conjunction with final design, permitting and site redevelopment, as required by state and federal law.

Site Reuse Concept Plan



Site Reuse Concept Plan Design Summary

The final conceptual plan includes several key design elements that provides an important balance of **flood control improvements, site remediation, and economic redevelopment**.

The primary **flood control** design elements that are shown are to **remove Harbor Book from the existing underground conduit**, as well as to **construct a curve-linear, open-channel for Harbor Brook** that will run from Mill Street to the East Main Street side of the Hub parcel. Construction of this redevelopment plan would include the modification of the pavement width and direction of traffic flow on State Street, creation of additional flood storage, park like amenities, and a new intermodal transportation center.

The proposed **traffic flow modification** on State Street and the elimination of Brooks Street as a through road is part of a conceptual design of a new combination **intermodal transportation center and parking garage**. The proposed transportation center in this alternate would replace the existing train station and has been designed to conceptually provide a separate **12-bus loading/parking**

area, several taxi/vehicle loading spaces, and exit options to East Main Street and State Street. A proposed **elevated pedestrian bridge** connection over the railroad tracks will serve as an architectural feature, and connects the transportation center and additional parking with future redevelopment parcels.

This alternate also proposes three locations for potential **redevelopment building pads**, as well as two additional Colony Street and railroad side **redevelopment areas** (a vacant lot and the former post office building - shown in red).

Both on- and off-street **parking areas** have been proposed in association with the proposed redevelopment buildings. Downtown center park amenities would include an **architectural pedestrian bridge** over the park connecting the intermodal transit center to the new redevelopment parcels on Pratt Street, a **brook side walking trail system, sculpture park, arboretum, outdoor amphitheater** with lawn seating, and **street level civic plazas** overlooking the park along State Street, East Main Street and Mill Street.

SUMMARY:

- Total Parking Spaces: ±620 (including 300 parking garage spaces)
- Approximate Flood Control Storage Volume: ±15 Ac/Ft
- Approximate Transportation Center Building footprint: ±19,650 SF
- Approximate Parking Garage Footprint: ±39,500 SF
- Approximate Redevelopment Building Footprints:
 - Mill & State Street ± 32,500 SF
 - Pratt Street ± 41,200 SF
 - Colony Street ± 17,800 SF
 - Combined Total ± 91,500 SF*