

City of Meriden

Harbor Brook Flood Control Project Overview

Updated August 2013

OVERVIEW

The center of Meriden, including the “HUB” site is the low point of the town which is ringed by basalt ridges. Running through the Hub site is Harbor Brook, approximately 3.5 miles in length, which drains into Hanover Pond and the Quinnipiac River. The Harbor Brook watershed covers 12.3 square miles, or approximately 50% of Meriden’s total land area. Over 300 properties/structures in Meriden (residential, commercial, sheds, garages, etc.) fall within the existing Harbor Brook FEMA-approved 100-year floodplain. This equates to roughly 225 acres.

At least eleven major flooding incidents since the late 1860’s have caused substantial economic damage in Meriden’s central city. Various efforts to resolve the flooding problems failed due to lack of funding or “NIMBY” issues. Major floods in 1992 and again in 1996 caused over \$26 million in property damage and led to the relocation of major employers out of the city center area. The City began the Harbor Brook Flood Control project in 1994 and has continued those efforts to date.

HARBOR BROOK FLOOD CONTROL PLAN

The Harbor Brook Flood Control Plan is a comprehensive design of various flood control measures along Harbor Brook. The implementation of the plan will address historic flooding problem once and for all and will provide economic opportunities for the central city. Several dam and bridge projects have been completed to date. The City’s Capital Improvement Program calls for the completion of \$22.15 million in project elements over the next five years (2014-2018). That is in addition to the HUB site project, which will provide 53 acre feet of detention and create a town green and provide economic development space next to the new transit center being constructed as part of the New Haven-Hartford-Springfield commuter and high speed rail project. State and Federal funds, where available, are needed to offset these costs. Key flood control projects include:

Floodwater Detention: Areas will be designed to detain floodwater following significant storm events

- HUB site-53 acre feet of floodwater storage to be constructed
- Falcon Field-21.8 acre feet of floodwater storage to be constructed

Bridge Replacement: Bridges that do not allow for the passage of the 100 year storm, do not meet current safety and design standards and have the potential to be adversely impacted by floodwaters associated with Harbor Brook.

- Cook Ave. Bridge: Cook Avenue bridge replacement project was completed by the State of Connecticut in 2013.
- Cooper Street Bridge
- Mill Street Bridge
- South Butler Street Bridge
- Center Street Bridge: partial design completed
- Broad Street Bridge

Bridge Relief Culverts: Relief culverts will be constructed where costs to replace the bridge are prohibitive.

- Columbus Ave. Bridge: The Columbus Avenue bridge relief culvert is fully funded and expected to be advertised for bids in and begin construction in 2013.
- Amtrak Railroad Bridge: in design with construction in 2014 dependent on funding.
- Hanover Towers Bridge

Property Acquisition and Demolition:

- Church & Morse Building and Liseo Building/South Colony Street Channel Realignment: properties acquired, demolition expected in 2013
- Factory H Demolition (completed)

Harbor Brook Channel Improvements

- Improvements include the widening, deepening, and minor realignments to the channel.

Flood Proofing:

- Following implementation of the Harbor Brook Flood Control Plan 24 structures (residential/commercial buildings, detached garages and sheds) will remain within the floodplain. Flood proofing of these structures will be required. Sixteen properties will be acquired and demolished as part of this project.

FLOOD CONTROL AT THE HUB SITE & DEVELOPMENT OF THE “MERIDEN GREEN”

The Harbor Brook Flood Control Plan recommends the use of the Hub site to store flood waters in certain storm conditions and to prevent flooding in the immediate downtown area. This recommendation has led to the opportunity to develop a town green that Meriden for historic reasons never had. Combining that central green space with the linear trail system designed alongside the Harbor Brook channel will provide a recreation link and green space diagonally across the city from the Cheshire border to Middletown. The first phase of the trail, the Quinnipiac River Gorge Trail was completed in 2011 and the second phase is in construction with completion in 2013. Federal funding for phases III and IV have been applied for.

Final HUB park design and construction bid documents are complete and the project is fully permitted. The design includes several key features that will help enhance the quality of life and provide an element of environmental justice in the City Center:

- Public park with gathering places and links to the regional greenway system
- Pedestrian links to the new Intermodal Transit Center
- Amphitheater and great lawn area for public events
- Day lighted Harbor Brook
- 3.4 Acres available for economic development that would provide a 150,000 square foot footprint on which 1.2 million square feet of development would be allowed under the City’s new Transit Oriented Development Zoning ordinance

Construction will commence after all funds have been secured. Funding secured to date includes:

- \$3.5 million Urban Act funds (12/2011)
- \$2 million State Bond Funds (PA 7-07, 9/2011)
- \$500,000 OBRD funds , (3/2012)
- \$7 million State Bond funds (PA 7-07), legislatively authorized; \$3.8 million awarded June 2013; remainder awaiting State Bond Commission Approval.

All permits for construction have been secured, including:

- DEEP Water Diversion and Water Quality Certificate issued, RAP approved
- FEMA Conditional Letter of Map Revision issued
- US Army Corps of Engineers permit approved

THE IMPACT OF FLOOD CONTROL ON FUTURE DEVELOPMENT

The Hub site was initially developed as a manufacturing site to take advantage of the nearby rail line and Harbor Brook as a source of power. The City believes that if rail fostered economic development then, it can do so again in a better, smarter way. Implementation of the Flood Control Plan will:

- Open up properties to development and protect existing development by removing 227 properties wholly or partially within the 100-year floodplain and reducing acres wholly or partially within the 100-year floodplain from 225 to 95 acres
- Allow for the redevelopment of the Mills Memorial Housing Complex, a distressed and obsolete high rise public housing complex which currently is in the 100-year flood plain
- Allow development to occur on two key brownfields sites, Factory H and the HUB, without the risk of economic damage from future flood events.
- Create new development opportunities in a timely manner to coincide with State and Federal investments in rail infrastructure
- Reduce flooding risks for new development throughout the central city
- Create an attractive public park and town green around which development can be constructed

POTENTIAL DEVELOPMENT SITES

MERIDEN HUB: The Meriden HUB site historically served as a center of industrial and commercial activity in Meriden's downtown. The City will transform this brownfield site into a City park that serves the dual purposes of providing public green space and flood storage. Construction is planned for 2013 dependent on funding. Project completion is estimated in 18 months.



MERIDEN TRANSIT CENTER: Meriden has been identified as a station stop on the new high speed/commuter rail line proposed for the New Haven Hartford Springfield corridor. The existing station area will be developed into multi-modal transit center that includes commuter parking, a pedestrian flyover and new rail passenger platforms. Construction is anticipated to begin in 2014 and service is scheduled to begin in 2016.

COLONY STREET: The City is developing preliminary traffic engineering plans to convert Colony Street into a "complete street", provide a link to the new Transit Center via a new pedestrian walkway and restore two-way traffic to adjacent downtown streets. Together with several state agencies, the City is preparing plans to leverage the State investment in rail parking facilities with mixed income housing in the Colony Street area.



MILLS MEMORIAL HOUSING COMPLEX: The City and the Meriden Housing Authority are working together to develop a plan to replace 140 Mills units with up to 500 mixed income units in mixed use developments in the TOD area. The City and MHA, which will be jointly filing a HUD Choice Neighborhood Planning Grant application this month, are committed to reusing the current Mills site, providing affordable housing opportunities to existing residents and ensuring that new development is integrated into the neighborhood transformation plan.



OTHER DEVELOPMENT SITES: The City owns the former International Silver Factory H and 116 Cook Avenue sites that together comprise approximately 10 acres. The industrial buildings at the Factory H site have been demolished and extensive environmental assessment has been completed. Completion of flood control infrastructure is necessary to redevelop the site for housing and other uses. This site and a nearby vacant 300,000

square foot former hospital site are located in the TOD zone and within walking distance to the new rail service. The City is utilizing a HUD Sustainable Communities Challenge Grant to identify, assess and purchase other sites within the one-half mile TOD area suitable for new housing development.

TOD POLICY SUPPORT

The City is working closely with its partners to help them provide the resources needed for neighborhood families to have the cradle to career educational and employment opportunities necessary to produce sustainable transformation in the city center. The Meriden Family Zone project, recipient of a USDOE Promise Neighborhood planning grant, will coordinate the efforts of over 40 agencies, foundations and educational institutions to connect families to needed services in a coordinated data driven plan with a special emphasis on early childhood education. The Meriden Board of Education is a State leader in addressing education achievement gaps by incorporating national best practices.

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