



Meriden
Just Better For Business

City of Meriden, Connecticut
Economic Development Office

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MEMORANDUM

TO: Economic Development Housing and Zoning Committee
Interested Parties

FROM: Juliet Burdelski, Director of Economic Development

RE: Update of Economic Development Activities May 20, 2014 through
August 18, 2014

DATE: August 18, 2014

CC: Lawrence J. Kendzior, City Manager

Attached please find a report of activities conducted by the City of Meriden Office of Economic Development for the period May 20, 2014 through August 18, 2014.

**Update of Economic Development Activities for the period
May 20, 2014 through August 18, 2014**

The mission of the Office of Economic Development is to sustain and grow the tax base, provide jobs, and create economic activity across numerous sectors within our community. Towards this end, we will focus on the following objectives:

- Collaborate with private, public and non-profit organizations that create jobs and economic activity in Meriden.
- Support and champion community leaders who work to make Meriden an attractive and economically viable place to live, work and recreate.
- Increase investment in Meriden's inner city, attract businesses to Meriden across numerous economic sectors, and retain existing businesses that have invested in our community.
- Pursue funding for and help implement critical infrastructure improvements that are necessary to support and sustain economic growth.
- Engage in long-term planning while at the same time recognizing the short-term needs of Meriden business owners, residents and workers.

I. General

The Office of Economic Development is currently staffed by Director Juliet Burdelski, Economic Development Associate Paola Mantilla, and intern Chris McGoldrick.

II. Marketing & Outreach Activities

A. Website updates

1. Staff uploaded regular news updates to www.meridenbiz.com, including:
 - *Public Meeting on Downtown Living (Aug 2014)*
 - *Free Live Music (July/Aug2014)*
 - *Virtual Tour of the HUB Site (July 2014)*
 - *CEDF Training (July 2014)*
2. Hired Luchs Engineering to prepare 3D renderings of the HUB project. 3D renderings can be accessed using a QR code reader. QR code launched to the public via Twitter, Facebook and on meridenbiz.com website.
3. Continued enhancements to Meriden2020.com website. Relaunch scheduled for late August.



- B. Billboard campaign. The Office of Economic Development is coordinating 2000 hours (annually) of public service messaging for the LAMAR electronic billboard installed on City property off I-91 south. Four billboard designs were developed and have been running over the past several weeks, including National Night Out, the Oct 18 Fly In Festival, the Friday Summer Music Series, and the Meriden Farmer's Market.



C. Local/Regional Economic Development Outreach

1. Small Business Administration (SBA): Participated in SBA training held at CEDF in June 2014.
2. Met with SBA Deputy District Director Julio Casiano to learn more about available resources for Small Businesses, including Loans, Technical Assistance, marketing assistance, façade improvement funds, etc. Follow up will include scheduling SBA-sponsored small business trainings in Meriden.
3. Met with SCORE representatives to discuss small business mentoring program. Follow up will include referring small businesses and startups to work with SCORE for mentoring.
4. Hosted meeting of CCAED-Central CT Economic Development Alliance to discuss regional economic development issues. Coordinated August newsletter, which is distributed to list of 4000 from Meriden, Wallingford, Cheshire, Southington and Berlin.

D. Press Events/Press Outreach

1. *Fielded regular calls from RJ reporters regarding economic development issues. Some of the stories covered included:*
 - *Meriden officials anxious to hear plans for 116 Cook Ave., Published: August 17, 2014*
 - *Housing developer tours downtown Meriden properties, Published: August 8, 2014 |*
 - *Mexican eatery in Meriden may be replaced by auto parts store, Published: August 5, 2014*
 - *Meriden apartment complex sells for \$2.1 million*
 - *Published: August 5, 2014*

- *Meriden seeking private developers for nine downtown properties, Published: June 2, 2014*
- *New Café to open n downtown Meriden, Published July 18, 2014*
- *City creates virtual tour of Meriden Hub project, Published July 18, 2014*
- *Cautious optimism, Published July 9, 2014*
- *It's official: Private developers see potential in downtown sites, Published July 4, 2014*
- *Hub of Activity, June 22, 2014*
- *Meriden officials hopeful about getting state funding for brownfield sites, Published June 19, 2014*

E. Co-star commercial real estate reports

1. Continued to utilize CoStar commercial real estate subscription to identify available commercial properties in Meriden. Downloaded info for several businesses interested in moving to Meriden. Information allows City to access latest information on commercial real estate listings.

F. CT Main Street Center “Come Home to Downtown” Program

1. The Connecticut Main Street Center (CMSC) has selected Meriden to participate in the CMSC’s “Come Home to Downtown” Program. CMSC, with the support of the Connecticut Housing Finance Authority (CHFA), has developed “Come Home to Downtown”, a mixed-use real estate development program, which will provide selected communities with new tools to strengthen economic health and restore vitality to their downtowns. CMSC has selected Meriden to be one of two pilot communities to participate in 2014. The City held an advisory committee meeting on May 30 to review the preliminary findings and recommendations. A public meeting is scheduled for September 9 at 5:30 PM at Middlesex Community College.
2. Downtown Street Art Campaign Continues with Local Support: Chris Webster from Gallery 53 worked with students to install a “Meriden” mosaic art tile project on West Main Street. This is a part of an effort to adorn empty spaces in downtown with local art to engage the community to do so. The City is seeking a federal grant to expand this program in 2015. “Lincoln students make mosaic sign”, Record Journal, *June 6, 2014*

G. South Mountain Road Study: Held kick off meeting and site visit with CERC in June. The Connecticut Economic Resource Center (CERC) has been retained by the City to complete a market study to explore development opportunities on City-owned South Mountain Road parcel. Project is co-managed with Planning Dept. Staff also submitted proposal to SCRCOG to study transportation/utility access to development site. SCRCOG RFP process is ongoing.

H. CPACE Marketing Program: City and Chamber were awarded \$6500 from CT Energy Finance and Investment Authority to market CPACE energy retrofit program in Meriden. City and Chamber will work together to hold two informational workshops and highlight the CPACE program under construction at 290 Pratt Street. Dates have been set for first meeting to be held October 6, 2014 and second meeting/presentation November 12, 2014 at 290 Pratt Street.

III. Downtown Redevelopment & Infrastructure Improvement

- A. HUB Redevelopment—Attended work progress meetings held onsite.
- B. 24 Colony Street Mixed Use Development— Met with Yankee Gas to discuss gas infrastructure needs for the project.
- C. The Mills – The MHA held an outdoor event to help complete the choice surveys. The City attended the event to assist in the completion of these surveys provide environmental information to the Mill residents. Committee is working on survey goal of 500 to be completed by mid August. Applied for Cleanup grant to address environmental conditions at 177 State St.

IV. Business Retention and Development

- 290 Pratt Street/Lockheed Martin: Lockheed Martin/290 Pratt will not seek microgrid grant due to feasibility concerns. Project partners will work with City and Chamber to implement CPACE marketing program.
- 508/580 North Colony Street/ Accel- Discussions are ongoing regarding feasibility of an expansion project.
- 1388 East Main/Former Jacoby’s. Met with bank representatives to discuss future use opportunities. Discussions are ongoing.
- CEO One Stop. Provided information on City/State tax incentives to small volume manufacturer of residential/commercial heating units. Discussions are ongoing.
- 81 West Main Street – Eben-ezer Restaurant ongoing meetings to assist business owner with DECD financing for business enhancements, obtain permits for outside sitting and liquor permits. Loan application submitted to state for review and permitting application also submitted for review to allow outside sitting and has been approved.
- 72 Cook Avenue – United Laundry, ongoing outreach to assist new business maximize benefits at the local level and state. Closing still pending.
- CannLabs from Denver CO inquired about sites to potentially opening a lab/testing facility related to medical marijuana in Meriden.
- C-Town – ongoing conversations with owners to assist them to meet their opening date and submitting state applications for funding. Attended C-Town opening Aug 8.
- 39 West Main Street – Met restaurant owner, presented information on City/State tax incentives and other programs. Toured the site to share our ideas.
- 39 West Main Street – Ali Baba Bails Bond working with them to request a grant/loan from State and creating one full time position to assist with walk in traffic.
- Alternative Paths – Assisting owner open a second office. She currently has a mental therapy office in Wallingford and is looking to expand as many of her clients are from Meriden.
- Colony Street Auto Body & Sales LLC – 341 Colony Street has opened for business Mid July. Provided information on tax incentives related to property improvements to the site.
- Trail of Terror – Assisting owner with permitting, financial and other tax benefits. Location will be ready and operating Early Spring 2015

- Wood Pellets – Owner looking to expand his wood pellet retail/distribution business to Meriden. We have been working with him for months to find a suitable location in the M zone area.
- Cono Restaurant Colony Street. Currently finishing up construction. Provided information on tax incentives related to property improvements to the site.
- La Frontera Grill, 800 East Main Street. Spoke to property owner, restaurant owner and manager. Offered assistance to owner and manager related to relocating restaurant in Meriden.
- Party Pros Plus-Food Truck operator and manufacturer. Working with owner to schedule food trucks at Meriden events.

V. Grant Funded Projects

A. TOD Pilot Project

1. TOD Developer RFQ. RFQ released first week of June and proposals were due June 27. Seven RFQs were received. RFQs have been reviewed and four developers were selected for a follow up interview. Interviews scheduled for August 19, 2014. .
2. Environmental Assessments/Property Acquisition
 - 177 State St. and 11 Crown Street purchased May 21, 2014.
 - Environmental Assessments, Remedial Action plans completed for 177 State Street and 11 Crown Street.
3. TOD Traffic Study
 - 35% plans completed
 - NEPA review of Traffic plans underway
 - Seeking proposals to update 2006 parking study to take into account proposed changes in TOD related to traffic and parking capacity.

B. Brownfields Assessment and Cleanup Grants

1. 116 Cook Ave. Cleanup Grant (\$240K)
 - Worked with Tighe & Bond, Licensed Environmental Professional, to develop specs for cleanup of underground storage tank at 116 Cook Ave. Bid documents to remove underground storage tank completed and bid out in June. Award expected in Aug/Sept 2014.
2. HUB/50 East Main Street Cleanup Grant (\$240K)
 - Community Outreach meeting at Choice Neighborhoods Spring event held 5/31/2014. Work is ongoing.
3. CT DECD Municipal Brownfields Assessment and Inventory grant.
 - \$200,000 grant funds awarded. DECD contract award in process. Funds will be used to investigate Mills site, a prerequisite for future development.
4. DECD Office of Brownfield
 - On June 30, the City submitted three Brownfield Clean Up applications for 177 State Street, 11 Crown Street and 116 Cook Avenue. The total grant requested was just about \$4m. The City received an interview invitation for 177 State Street cleanup project.

This application was for just under \$500,000. Awards announcement expected in the fall.

C. EV Connecticut

1. Submitted and received award notification of \$2000 state grant to install a public access Electric Vehicle charging station in Meriden. EV charger to be installed in 2014 at City Hall/Library parking lot.
2. Received commitment of \$500 rebate for the project from Capitol CT Clean Cities

D. Choice Neighborhoods

1. Participated in project meetings with WRT, MHA, HUD, and other organizations to discuss project overview and City's role.
2. Participated in planning of 5/31/2014 community outreach event, in regular staff conference calls and in Joint City/MHA meeting.

VI. Other

- Met with Economic Development Task Force in May and July. Following up on various property negotiations.
- Ongoing discussions with MHA to place self sufficient Section 8 buyers in city owned properties. Buyers to obtain their own private financing.
- Working with Tax office and State of CT to come up with an updated list of opened Tax Abatement applications. Letters to be mailed out to all upcoming due applications as reminder of benefit expiring.
- Assisted in preparation of Rating Agency Presentation on August 18.

VII. Committees/Boards

- a) Blight & Brownfields: Held on June 19, 2014. Next meeting October 23.
- b) Economic Development Task Force. Meeting held July 1, 2014. Advanced disposition of city owned properties in accordance with City codes. Updating list of City owned properties. Developing recommendations for future property disposal programs.
- c) MEDCO. Meeting held June 18.
- d) Economic Development Housing and Zoning Committee. Meeting schedule Aug 19.
- e) Greater Meriden Chamber. Attended May, August Board meetings.

Report prepared by:

Juliet Burdelski
& Paola Mantilla
August 18, 2014