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MEMORANDUM

TO: Guy Scaife, City Manager
Economic Development Housing and Zoning Committee
Interested Parties

FROM: Juliet Burdelski, Director of Economic Development

RE: Update of Economic Development & Community Development Activities
January 19, 2017 to April 17, 2017

DATE: April 18, 2017

Attached please find a report of activities conducted by the City of Meriden Economic Development Department for the period January 19, 2017 through April 17, 2017.



City of Meriden, Office of Economic Development

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**Update of Economic & Community Development Activities for the period
January 19, 2017 through April 17, 2017**

The mission of the Economic Development Department 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. Marketing and Outreach

The Economic Development Department promotes Meriden as a great place to live, work and play through Meriden2020 campaign and through Meridenbiz.com. Specific activities include:

- **Meriden 2020.com and Meridenbiz.com:** 4100 users visited Meriden2020.com between January 19 and April 17, 2017. Most popular pages visited were “Events”, “News”, specifically news related to 24 Colony Street leasing. 17 users visited Meridenbiz.com during the same time period.
- **Downtown Street Banner Program:** Businesses, non-profits and property owners are invited to purchase a banner to be displayed on street poles along West Main and Colony Streets. Over 50 banners have been sold. A listing of all of the participating businesses and organizations can be found at <http://www.meriden2020.com/Downtown-Redevelopment/meet-your-downtown-merchants/>. New banners for 24 Colony Street to be installed in 2017.

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- Meriden 2020 Campaign-Lamar/I-91 S billboard.** Under the digital public service component of the lease agreement with Lamar, the City is entitled to 2000 hours annually. From January through April, billboards were designed requested to run for the following special events and organizations: Meriden Rotary 5K on April 23, Meriden Daffodil Festival April 29-30, Meriden Markham Airport Fly In Festival on May 13, Memorial Day Mile Race for Veterans on May 29.



- Co-star commercial real estate reports: We utilize CoStar commercial real estate subscription to identify available commercial properties in Meriden. We provided info for several businesses interested in moving to Meriden (20,000- 40,000 sf manufacturing, 5,000 sf manufacturing, 3000 sf retail/restaurant).
- Small Business Outreach: Completed a bran storming session at Nina’s Café in April with Chamber, the Community Economic Development Fund (CEDF) and Small Business Administration (SBA) on Small Business Bootcamp series to kick off spring 2017 small business workshops.

II. Downtown Redevelopment

The Economic Development Department works to foster development around transit and encourage infill development in downtown Meriden. This may include creating a more walkable and attractive downtown. Specific activities include:

- **CT Main Street Center “Come Home to Downtown” Program:** City was selected by the CT Main Street Center to participate in a “downtown fellowship” program that would provide a staff person for two years to assist with downtown management and marketing. Presentation was made by City staff and several downtown stakeholders on March 24. Discussions are ongoing. City is also working with CT Main Street Center to identify funding for 21 Colony Street historic adaptive reuse project. Potential funding sources includes state and federal historic tax credits (Part II historic tax credit application from SHPO has been approved), DOH CHAMP, and private sources.
- **Secured commitments from CEDF and YMCA/Downtown Neighborhood Association (\$12,500 total) to support “downtown beautification program”** including purchase of trash receptacles, flower planter boxes and the installation of community art in downtown Meriden. Gallery 53 and Wepa Art Studio completed their community project. Planters are being designed by students at Wilcox Tech, they will be available for Spring 2017. YMCA will also be completing a community arts project and new refuse cans will be purchased following completion of the new sidewalks on W. Main and Colony Street this summer.



- **Held meetings with DECD on January 11 and on March 29, 2017 to follow up on placemaking discussion and resources for arts and culture, small business development and brownfields redevelopment. Conversations ongoing.**

III. Business Retention and Development (new activity during the reporting period)

The Economic Development department assists Meriden business owners access capital and incentives through private, local, state and federal programs for their business growth. We also provide information on available incentives and state funding programs for new and expanding businesses. Specific activities included:

- **Banana Brasil** – Assisted business owner with find appropriate location for restaurant. Owner purchased 124 Hanover Street (former Verdolini’s restaurant) November 2016. Work is underway and restaurant to open Spring 2017.
- **Crystal Grocery 226 West Main Street** – assisting owner purchase property where they currently lease. Application to assist in business expansion was submitted to DECD and has been approved for a loan of \$226K and \$30k Grant through the Small Business Express program.
- **TFF Range** – New business start up. SBDC and City assisted business owner with business plan and financing application to CEDF. CEDF loan approved December 2016.
- **Show Lab** – New business at 16 Church Street (formerly the Vault). They are working with SBDC and were recently approved for a loan through CEDF. May opening is planned. Site will be a special events venue specializing in custom lighting and entertainment.
- **Tradebe** – 234 Pratt Street. Ec Dev. Staff assisted with finding office space for company offices. Company was previously leasing at 47 Gracey Ave. Tradebe purchased property in April. Potential applicant for CT Small Business Express program for business expansion.
- **Thompson Chocolate** --80 S. Vine St.– held meeting in February with executive team to discuss opportunities for marketing and other collaboration. Potential applicant for CT Small Business Express program.
- **Ragozzino Foods** – held meeting in January with executive team to discuss future plans. Potential applicant to State Manufacturing Assistance program.
- **1388 East Main/Former Jacoby’s**. Construction progressing for east side restaurant/market. Staff continues to work with owner to assist him with permitting and other building issues as they come up.
- **Moran Appliances** – 664 W. Main Street. Assisted owner complete Phase I/II Environmental Site Assessments using USEPA funds. Working with owner on financing options for first mortgage through CEDF. Loan application approved and pending closing possibly May 2017.
- **Aperture Optical 170 Pond View**—City approved \$300,000 MAP Loan to the business. Loan closing pending and subject to first mortgage holder approval.
- **Nina’s Café, 39 West Main Street**– City and SBDC assisted owner submit CT DECD Small Business Express funding application to DECD for expansion and upgrades. \$30,000 matching grant application approved December 2016. Improvements are underway including expanded first floor dining and second floor pool hall.
- **Skybox Restaurant, 1376 East Main Street**-Assisting owner identify permanent financing for restaurant operation. Discussions ongoing.

IV. Grant Funded Projects

The Economic Development Department manages several grant funded projects aimed at fostering economic development and improving quality of life for all Meriden residents. Specific activities include:

- TOD Pilot Project: City was awarded \$870,000 in 2016 TOD Pilot funds awarded to advance TOD multi modal improvement project in downtown Meriden. Funds will be used in summer 2017 for roadway and sidewalk improvements downtown. Copy of grant application is available at <http://www.meriden2020.com/Downtown-Redevelopment/tod-transportation-grant-2016/>.
- Brownfields Assessment and Cleanup Grants:
 - 116 Cook Ave. Cleanup Grant (USEPA \$240,000) & HUD Section 108 Loan (\$335,000). 250 tons of interior debris and hazardous materials removed from building July-Sept 2016. Plans for development pending.
 - CT DECD Municipal Brownfields Assessment at the Mills (State \$200,000): Worked with AECOM to complete assessment of environmental hazards 62 Cedar St, 161 State St and 144 Mills Memorial. Work is ongoing. Grant funds are being used to develop technical bid specifications for Mills demo.
 - CT DECD Municipal Brownfields Cleanup 177 State Street (\$597,000): Worked with AECOM to complete final plans for cleanup at 177 State Street. Soil cleanup completed February 2017. Property transfer to be completed in April 2017.
 - CT DECD Municipal Brownfields Assessment at 1 King Place (\$180,000 grant, \$221,000 loan): State awarded \$221,000 Interim cleanup work completed March 2016. Fuss & O'Neill selected to complete Phase II/III Environmental Site assessments and a Hazardous Building Materials survey of the property. Work (partial cleanup of asbestos) is substantially completed. Developer has been selected and a proposed developer agreement to be presented to council May 2017.
 - CT DECD Municipal Brownfields Cleanup at 11 Crown Street (\$1.73 million). Manafort awarded demo contract December 2016. Remediation started March 2017. Demolition ceremony scheduled May 5, 2017. Demo to be completed by Aug. 2017. .
 - USEPA Brownfields Assessment. \$200,000 awarded for brownfield assessment, reuse planning, community outreach, and project management. Work is ongoing. Assessment sites include: 53 Colony, 55 Colony and 664 W. Main Street (Moran's), 208-226 West Main Street (Crystal Grocery)124 Hanover Street, 48 Arch Parkway, 21 Colony Street, 69 East Main Street, 84 Grove Street and 88 Grove Street.
 - DECD Brownfields Area wide Revitalization (BAR): Received \$100,000 application to develop a commercial/retail marketing strategy for the TOD area and to complete site use planning at 16 Church St. and 25-33 Colony Street. BL Companies selected. Kick off meeting held September 27, 2016. BL Companies and City participated in Deal Making Conference March 8, 2017 at the CT Convention Center. BL held a series of meeting to review branding for downtown. City and other partners presented and update on the grant to DECD on March 29, 2017. Public meeting to be held in May 2017.
 - DECD Brownfields Cleanup: Received \$2 million to fund demolition and remediation of Mills housing complex. Demo specifications in development. MHA received approval to relocate all tenants (demo dispo approval). Demo scheduled for fall 2017.
 - USEPA Cleanup grant: Applied for \$200,000 cleanup grant from USEPA to be matched with \$40,000 in local funds for UST and PCB cleanup at 1 King Place. Award pending.

- Farmers Market Promotion Program: in March 2017 the City applied for a \$75,000 grant from the U.S. Department of Agriculture to market, promote and expand programming at the downtown Farmers Market. Award announcement pending.
- Neglected Cemetery Grant: The City was awarded a \$2,000 grant on December 5, 2016 through the State Office of Policy and Management’s Neglected Cemetery Account Grant Program. The grant will contribute to the cleanup and maintenance of West Cemetery, located between Hanover Street, Orange Street and Cook Avenue. Award announcement pending.
- Community Development Block Grant: The City of Meriden administers the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Program, an annual entitlement grant from the Department of Housing and Urban Development aimed to benefit low- and moderate-income Meriden residents. During this program year, the City has approved seven (7) loans to income-eligible homeowners to make critical repairs to their homes and/or to address code violations through the CDBG-funded Neighborhood Preservation Program. Grant activities – including programs for youth, senior citizens, employment training/opportunities, the homeless, and adults with special needs – carried out by CDBG subrecipients have benefited 26,328 people through the first three quarters of the program year.
- Uniform Chart of Accounts Grant: the State Office of Policy and Management granted the City an eighteen month extension on its \$30,000 grant award to complete its financial accounting system upgrade from a local chart of accounts to a state-developed uniform chart of accounts.
- CT Next-Innovative Places Grant: The Midstate Chamber has been awarded a CT Next Innovation Places Planning grant. Planning grant was used to develop an innovation plan for downtown Meriden. City staff participated in **CT Next-Innovation Places Planning Grant and Implementation Grant application in cooperation with the Midstate Chamber and MEDCO**. If awarded, grant funds will be used to foster new business development and entrepreneurial support activities in Meriden.

V. Committees/Boards and other activities

- 1) Blight & Brownfields held on March 16, 2017. Copies of meeting summary available at <http://www.meridenbiz.com/brownfields/blight-and-brownfields-committee/>
- 2) Economic Development Task Force. Meetings held February 1 and April 10, 2017. Department staff initiates requests to dispose city-owned properties.
- 3) Midstate Chamber meetings: Attended monthly board meetings
- 4) MEDCO: Attended quarterly board meeting and monthly Executive Committee meetings.
- 5) Attended City MHA Joint Working Group February 2017.
- 6) Economic Development Housing Zoning Committee meeting January 2017.
- 7) Downtown Neighborhood Association Meeting February 15, 2017.
- 8) Connecticut Economic Development Association: Attended monthly Board of Directors meetings.
- 9) Community Economic Development Fund: Attended monthly Board meetings.
- 10) Attended DECD Annual Conference in Hartford March 21, 2017.
- 11) Attended CHAMP roundtable in Hartford March 28, 2017.
- 12) Attended Chamber Annual Dinner at the Aqua Turf March 4, 2017.
- 13) Attended DECD Quarterly Enterprise Zone meeting March 5, 2017.

- 14) Attended transportation roundtable with Congresswoman Esty at the Midstate Chamber January 27, 2017.
- 15) Attended CDBG public hearing associated with Annual Action Plan for Program Year 43, March 8, 2017.
- 16) Hosted HUD roundtable March 23, 2017.
- 17) Attended NCDAs Region 1 Spring Meeting in Worcester, MA on March 28, 2017.
- 18) Attended second CDBG public hearing on March 29, 2017.
- 19) Attended third CDBG public hearing on April 13, 2017.
- 20) On February 23, 2017 staff attended DOT and CT Rides presentation at Rocky Hill Marriott on new updates to state transportation investments.

Report prepared by: Juliet Burdelski, Paola Mantilla, and Tyler Fairbairn, April 18, 2017.