



Meriden
Just Better For Business

City of Meriden, Connecticut
Economic Development Office

City Hall
142 East Main Street
Room 217
Meriden, Connecticut 06450

Tel: 203-630-4152
Fax: 203-630-4274

www.MeridenBiz.com

MEMORANDUM

TO: Economic Development Housing and Zoning Committee
Interested Parties

FROM: Juliet Burdelski, Director of Economic Development

RE: Update of Economic Development Activities August 19, 2014 through
November 18, 2014

DATE: November 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 August 19, 2014 through November 18, 2014.

**Update of Economic Development Activities for the period
August 19, 2014 through November 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, and Economic Development Associate Paola Mantilla.

II. Marketing & Outreach Activities

A. Website & Social Media updates

1. Relaunched Meriden2020 with new content downtown redevelopment page, 3D renderings of the HUB project, things to do, events and community calendar, and news. Using Google Analysis, we show that 1359 users visited meriden2020.com between August 19 and November 18 2014.
2. Set up twitter feed and regularly posted Ec Dev news and info to @JulietBurdelski on twitter
3. Set up Contant Contact account for Ec. Dev. News/announcements

B. Marketing and Research

1. Initiated two studies to assess the feasibility of developing City-owned South Mountain Road Parcel. Staff will present findings to EHDZ committee and Plannign Commission at completion of project.
 - CERC South Mountain Road Study: 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. Held kick off meeting and site visit with CERC in June, planning meetings in August & October we also held. Project includes analysis of industry types that might fit the site and developer interviews for comments/input on site potential on the site. October 1, 2014 Centerplan Development

Company and Forest Park Development Group visited the site with CERC and other city staff. .

- SCRCOG has retained Milone and MacBroom on the City’s behalf to study transportation/utility access to South Mountain Road site. Kick off meeting held September 30, 2014. Study will incorporate findings from CERC market feasibility study.
2. Hired CERC/Liz Panke Designs to develop additional marketing materials for city using the meriden2020/Bringing It Together brand. Materials to include Meriden 2020 logo, letterhead template, flyer template, folder for presentations, PPT template and six billboard designs. Billboards developed and running from August through October included the Oct 18 Fly In Festival, the Meriden Farmer’s Market, and the United Way Campaign.



C. Local/Regional Economic Development Outreach

1. Had ongoing communication with SCORE (Seasoned Corps of Retired Executives) and Midstate Chamber of commerce to set up free training appointments for start up businesses.
2. Presented info on downtown redevelopment efforts to Wallingford Rotary October 1, 2014
3. Attended Meriden Business Networking Inc. group meeting October 23, 2014

4. Held SBA small business workshop on November 13, 2014. 15 small businesses attended along with Midstate Chamber, SBA, city staff and others.
- D. Press Events/Press Outreach
1. Fielded regular calls from *Record Journal* reporters regarding economic development issues. Some of the stories covered included:
 - **Breaking the mold at 290 Pratt**
Published: November 15, 2014 |
 - **City close to finding developers for downtown Meriden properties**
Published: November 12, 2014 |
Restaurant featuring Puerto Rican cuisine to open in downtown Meriden
Published: November 7, 2014 |
 - **Pair works to fix up classic downtown Meriden diner**
Published: November 3, 2014 |
 - **Meriden's Colony Street well-positioned for growth**
Published: October 27, 2014 |
 - **Plans change, but Meriden's Colony St. building gets a boost**
Published: October 26, 2014 |
 - **Meriden resident organizes weekend food festival at mall**
Published: October 20, 2014 |
 - **Signs of new life along Meriden's West Main**
Published: October 16, 2014 |
 - **City, developer form partnership to renovate downtown Meriden building**
Published: October 16, 2014 |
 - **Best Buy in Westfield Meriden Mall to remain open**
Published: October 15, 2014 |
 - **Protein Sciences of Meriden receives \$669,156 HHS grant**
Published: September 29, 2014 |
 - **Meriden mall hosts Midstate Chamber health expo**
Published: October 2, 2014 |
 2. Worked with CT Magazine on feature article celebrating Castle Craig
<http://www.connecticutmag.com/Blog/History/September-2014/Castle-Craig-Offers-Towering-Views-of-Fall-Foliage/>
- 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. A public meeting was held September 9 at 5:30 PM at Middlesex Community College and over 60 residents were in attendance. The City is working with the CT Main Street Center to study additional properties in 2016.

- G. 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 held two informational workshops and highlight the CPACE program October 24, 2014 and second meeting/presentation November 12, 2014 at 290 Pratt Street. The *Record Journal* featured the event and the 290 Pratt Street project in a November article. <http://www.myrecordjournal.com/meriden/meridennews/6136678-129/breaking-the-mold-at-290-pratt.html>

III. Downtown Redevelopment & Infrastructure Improvement

- A. HUB Redevelopment—attended work progress meetings held onsite.
- B. Worked with Luchs engineering to develop 3D renderings of construction plans. Posted renderings to meriden2020.com, set up QR code reader and mobile app “123View” (keycode KGKQ) to allow smartphone and tablet users access to the 3D model

IV. Business Retention and Development

- A. .508/580 North Colony Street/ Accel- Accel, Meriden LLC, a manufacturing firm located at 508 North Colony Street, has been working for several months on a financing strategy that will allow them to maintain and expand their operations here in Meriden. Towards that end, Accel has identified a third party that has agreed to purchase and lease back its property located at 508 North Colony Street for a 20-year period. The transaction will allow Accel Meriden LLC to expand its Meriden operations without taking on additional debt. Accel will pay off its Meriden Manufacturing Assistance Program loan in full upon closing. The property is subject to an environmental land use restriction that has been in place since 1995 when the property was remediated under a joint City-State cleanup action. Under the cleanup action and to facilitate continued use of the site, property owners were granted environmental indemnity for contamination present prior to 1995. That indemnity was granted to TI Automotive (prior property owner) and to Accel Meriden LLC. Accel Meriden LLC has requested that the Meriden Manufacturing Agency transfer the environmental indemnification previously held by Accel to the purchaser, Spirit. Staff has consulted with the representatives of the CT Department of Energy and Environmental Protection, outside legal counsel, and a Licensed Environmental Professional. Staff recommends that the purchaser, Spirit, receive all of the rights of and benefits currently provided to Accel under the Indemnity Agreement dated September 16, 2008 upon Spirit’s purchase of the Property. The property closing was scheduled for September 30, 2014, however has been delayed pending DEEP review.
- B. 1388 East Main/Former Jacoby’s. Met with bank representatives to discuss future use opportunities. Discussions are ongoing.
- C. Thompson Candy – Thompson, located at 80 South Vine St., has a \$500,000 Meriden Manufacturing Assistance Program loan. Thompson refinanced its first loans from Webster Bank/WBCC Loans to Santander Bank, N.A. and requested subordination the MMAP Loan to this loan. Staff reviewed documentation and recommends that the MMAP loan be subordinated to the new loan with no change to the MMAP loan. The bank loan closed in October 2014.
- D. CEO One Stop. Assisted with Small Business Express loan application to DECD and loan application to CEDF September 2014. Pending approval.
- E. 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. Pending approval from DECD for loan.

- F. 72 Cook Avenue – United Laundry, ongoing outreach to assist new business maximize benefits at the local level and state. Purchased property in September 2014..
- G. C-Town – ongoing conversations with owners to assist them to meet their opening date and submit state applications for funding. Attended C-Town opening Aug 8. Grand opening celebration still pending.
- H. 39 West Main Street – Met restaurant owner, presented information on City/State tax incentives and other programs. Toured the site to share our ideas. On going permitting issues and all being worked on. Café to open November 2014
- I. 39 West Main Street – Ali Baba Bails Bonds-Working with them on grant/loan application from State to add one full time position to assist with walk in traffic.
- J. Alternative Paths – Mental therapy office expanded to 3 Colony Street and has opened for business, grand opening to be Mid November 2014. Grant and loan application to DECD submitted October 2014.
- K. Condado Grill Restaurant Colony Street. Currently finishing up construction. Provided information on tax incentives related to property improvements to the site. Restaurant owner working closely with Fire Marshall and business owner to meet code and open doors. Private opening for city officials to be held December 5, 2014.
- L. Party Pros Plus-Food Truck operator and manufacturer. City staff worked with owner on planning/arrangements/permitting for Food Truck fair held at the Westfield Mall October 25 & 26. 35 Food truck vendors participated and a spring event is planned.
- M. John La Rosa, 21 Colony Street. Worked with Mr. La Rosa to submit funding application for development of 12 housing units at 21 Colony Street.
- N. Peter Limosani, 55 Colony Street. Provided information on CT Main Street program. Site visit with CT Main Street scheduled 11/20 to look at conversion of upper floors to housing.
- O. Chris Webster, 53 Colony Street. Participating in CT Main Street program. Site visit with CT Main Street scheduled 11/20 to look at conversion of upper floors to housing.

V. Grant Funded Projects

A. TOD Pilot Project

1. Parking Study Update

The City retained Fuss & O’neill to update the 2006 Parking Study. A kickoff meeting was held in October. Research and recommendations will be developed by the consultant with recommendation to be completed by January 2015. Study will recommended updates to 2006 parking study based on changes/new development resulting from TOD programs.

2. Developer RFQ/RFP Process

The 2011 TOD Pilot grant provides funds to complete a TOD Developer RFP process. The City is currently in the final stage of this process with the goal to advance several city-owned sites to the development stage. Towards this end, the City issued a TOD Developer Request for Qualifications (RFQ) in August 2014 for nine city-owned sites located in the TOD district. Four developers were shortlisted during the RFQ process for six city-owned sites comprising 26 acres of developable including: HUB (30-50 East Main Street), 116 Cook Ave, 25-33 Colony Street, 11 Crown Street, and Factory H (77Cooper Street/104 Butler Street/85 Cooper Street) and 1 King Place (former Meriden-Wallingford hospital). These developers were invited to respond to an RFP issued in November 2014. Proposals are due Dec 19,

2014. Developers invited to respond to the RFP include: JHM, The Michaels Organization, Pennrose Properties and POKO. We expect to select one or more developers in January or February 2015. Information on the developer bid process can be found here, RFQ 14-05:

http://www.cityofmeriden.org/Content/RFP_Legal_Notices/

The RFP process includes submittal of development proposals by the developers, a review of development proposals by a team of city staff, and developer selection. Proposals are required to include a description of the proposed buildings and site improvements, the proposed building uses, budget and financing sources, a development schedule and other information. A staff committee comprised of the City Manager, Planning Director, Director of Public Works, Director of Economic Development, Grants Administrator and Purchasing Director will review the proposals and conditionally designate one developer for each site. Developers may be selected for more than one site.

B. OPM TOD Planning Grant

Submitted application to continue TOD Planning activities in 2015/2016 and for legal work associated with TOD developer agreements (\$250,000)

C. Brownfields Assessment and Cleanup Grants

1. 116 Cook Ave. Cleanup Grant (\$240,000)

- 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. Awarded to Red Technologies September 2014. Work completed November 14, 2014.

2. HUB/50 East Main Street Cleanup Grant (\$240,000)

- Work is ongoing.

3. CT DECD Municipal Brownfields Assessment and Inventory grant.

- \$200,000 grant funds awarded to assess environmental hazards at the Mills redevelopment site. DECD contract award in process. Funds will be used to investigate Mills site, a prerequisite for future development. RFP for environmental engineering services to be issued 60-90 days.

4. DECD Office of Brownfield Redevelopment

- City was awarded \$597,000 to clean up 177 State Street and \$180,000 to assess 1 King. Work to be completed in 2016.

5. FY 2015 EPA Brownfields Assessment and Cleanup grants

- Application in development, City wide assessment (\$200,000)
- Application in development 11 Crown Street cleanup (\$240,000)

D. 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 November 2014 at City Hall/Library parking lot.

2. Received commitment of \$500 rebate for the project from Capitol CT Clean Cities

E. Choice Neighborhoods

1. Participated in project meetings with WRT, MHA, HUD, and other organizations to discuss project overview and City's role.

2. Participated on Boston trip September 24, 2014 to visit other choice neighborhoods and neighborhood business planning training session on Oct 28-29, 2014.

F. Preservation of Place grant

1. Submitted funding application to CT Main Street's Preservation of Place grant in cooperation with Meriden Chamber of Commerce & MEDCO. Application seeks funds to develop business plan for downtown management and events programming at the new park.

VI. Other

- A. Met with Economic Development Task Force in November. Following up on various property negotiations and property disposals.
- B. Ongoing discussions with MHA to place self sufficient Section 8 buyers in city owned properties. Buyers to obtain their own private financing. First deal on its way and will be presented to council December 2014
- C. Working with Tax office 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.

VII. Committees/Boards

- A. Blight & Brownfields: Held on October 23. Next meeting January 29 2015.
- B. Economic Development Task Force. Meeting held November 10, 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. Economic Development Housing and Zoning Committee. Meetings held August 19, November 18, 2014.
- D. Greater Meriden Chamber. Attended August, September, November Board meetings.
- E. Connecticut Alliance for Economic Development, attended October 31 meeting.
- F. Meriden Manufacturing Assistance Committee. Meeting held September 29, 2014.

Report prepared by:
Juliet Burdelski
& Paola Mantilla
November 18, 2014