



Meriden Transit Oriented Development Master Plan

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Chapter 1 – Transit-Oriented Development [TOD] Master Plan

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The TOD Master Plan is intended to be a collaborative community process that will include preliminary design concepts for the new Meriden Intermodal Center, a station-area market analysis, a strategy for building long-term public-private partnerships (tax incentives, subsidies, land assemblage), recommendations for improved traffic patterns and parking, and an exploration of the merits of various planning tools (zoning/regulations) and design guidelines (streetscapes/public realm/architecture) for defining the new identity of the City Center.

Meriden, CT, has been identified as a key node for enhanced passenger rail service proposed along the New Haven-Hartford-Springfield (NHHS) regional rail corridor. To capitalize on the increased transit connectivity anticipated to commence in 2016, Meriden — a city of 60,000+ people (2010) — is taking a proactive approach to “re-visioning” its City Center, with a primary focus on the area within a half-mile of the proposed new Meriden Intermodal Center. With the solid framework of a carefully crafted Plan of Conservation and Development (POCD) (City of Meriden 2009), input from numerous recent studies and initiatives, as well as specific recommendations outlined in a new market analysis, the TOD District planning effort strives to guide land assemblage strategies, proposed roadway improvements and public realm enhancements. A new pro-development zoning and regulatory construct will be designed to incentivize public-private partnerships.

One of the greatest challenges, as stated in the POCD, is the *“majority of land is in the form of relatively small (1 acre or less) parcels scattered throughout the City.”* Creative strategies for the reuse, redevelopment and assemblage of property for development will be essential to creating a dense and vibrant downtown. Key focus areas in the TOD District include the following:

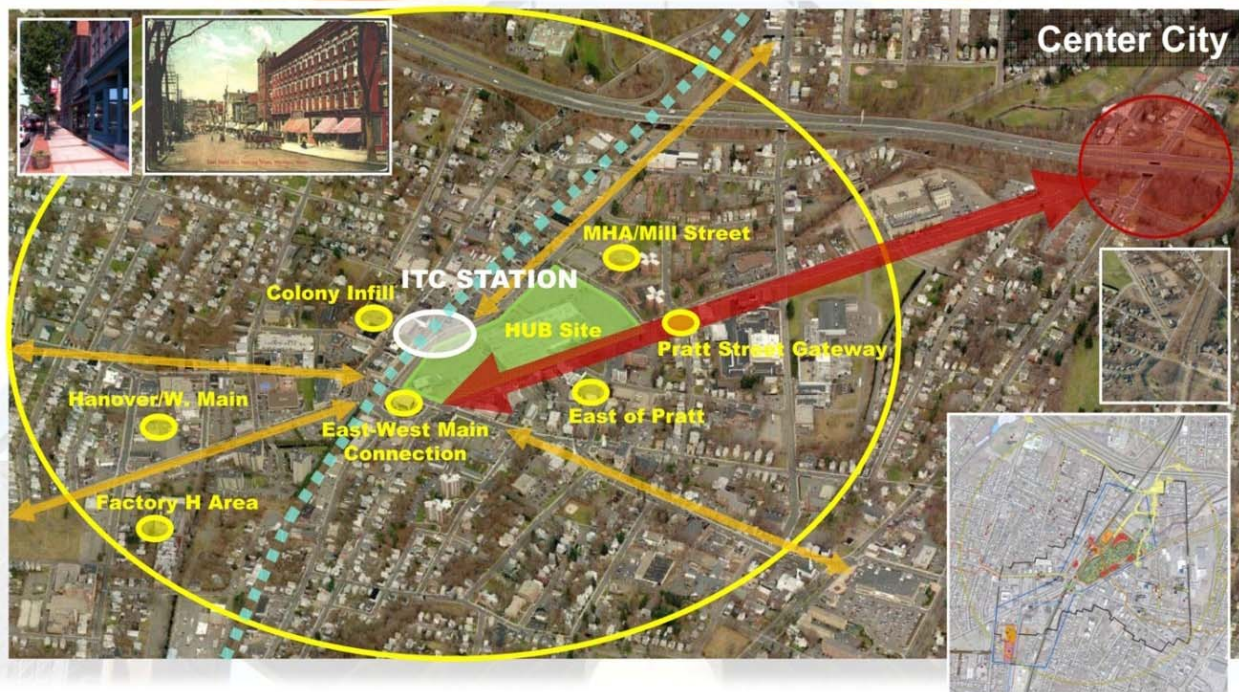
- ◆ **Meriden Intermodal Center:** a pedestrian link across the rail line from Colony Street to the HUB Park; a new mixed-use, multi-modal interface and parking structure
- ◆ **Colony Street:** revitalize the north-south commercial-retail corridor with strategic infill development and the preservation of historic buildings; connect to the new Meriden Intermodal Center
- ◆ **HUB Park:** 14.4-acre park affording public amenities, Harbor Brook flood control, and 150,000 square feet of mixed-use development; the future centerpiece of the Downtown
- ◆ **Meriden Housing Authority site:** a plan to provide quality affordable housing for residents of the Mills Housing complex could facilitate construction of a variety of mixed-income residential typologies within walking distance of the Meriden Intermodal Center
- ◆ **East and West Main Street:** utilizing historic building fabric, plus new infill of the commercial-retail streetscape to revitalize and reconnect civic, educational and community facilities
- ◆ **Factory H Area:** potential mixed-use project (100 housing units / 35,000 square feet commercial-retail space) to anchor area south of Hanover Street. Viable development tied to new traffic, greenway and pedestrian connectivity

- ◆ **Pratt Street “Gateway”:** a grand, landscaped boulevard that connects the interstates directly to the new City Center will be a catalyst for development to the north and east of the park, connecting to the library and City Hall

The Smart Growth movement argues that an integrated mix of land uses within a compact area, well-connected to transportation, allows for a more sustainable, environmentally friendly form of development and a generally more cohesive sense of community and quality of life.

APPLYING SMART GROWTH TOD PRINCIPLES TO MERIDEN

The City of Meriden has been identified as a key node for enhanced passenger rail service proposed along the new New Haven-Hartford-Springfield (NHHS) regional rail corridor. To capitalize on the increased transit connectivity anticipated to commence in 2016, Meriden — a city of 60,000+ people — is taking a proactive approach to “re-visioning” its City Center, with a primary focus on the area within a half-mile radius of the proposed new Meriden Intermodal Center. With the solid framework of a carefully crafted Plan of Conservation and Development (POCD) (City of Meriden 2009), input from several recent studies and ongoing initiatives, as well as specific recommendations outlined in a new market analysis (see Chapter 4, Market Analysis, this Transit Oriented Development (TOD) District master-planning effort strives to guide land assemblage strategies, proposed roadway improvements, and public realm enhancements. A new pro-development zoning and regulatory construct — the goals of which are outlined herein — will be designed to incentivize the desired public-private partnerships.



MERIDEN INTERMODAL CENTER STATION AND THE 1/2-MILE RADIUS TOD DISTRICT

The Smart Growth movement argues that an integrated mix of land uses within a compact area, well-connected to transportation, allows for a more sustainable, environmentally friendly form of development and a generally more cohesive sense of community and quality of life. This concept, known as “nodal development,” suggests that within a walkable area of approximately 5 to 7 minutes from a transit station, development should be encouraged at a medium to high-level of density [See Chapter 4 – Market Analysis]. Cleverly crafted zoning and design standards can define the architectural character of a district and ensure that new development contributes to a revitalized public realm — streetscapes and open space — that is truly pedestrian oriented. This emphasis on a pedestrian-friendly environment, in conjunction with easy access to transit, is intended to reduce reliance on the

automobile. In addition, a well-conceived mixed-use equation, with varying peak hours of usage, can help reduce parking requirements through a shared-use approach.

TOD, as with any form of development, is facilitated by strong market conditions and the availability of significant parcels of developable land. In recent years, development in Meriden has been characterized more by “decentralization,” with major retail tenants migrating north to the Westfield Shopping Center along with the Midstate Medical Center and the Research Parkway office park to the east capturing a fair number of non-retail, commercial tenants. A reworking of zoning in Meriden’s City Center will strongly incentivize infill development and the rehabilitation of existing building stock. A phased revitalization strategy for a sustainable downtown core would be consistent with Smart Growth principles by promoting concentrated development, reducing “sprawl” and preserving natural resources.

Smart Growth calls for the creation of distinctive, attractive communities that are founded in a strong sense of “place.” A memorable public realm evolves over time through the overlapping of multiple layers of “experience” including, but not limited to, the physical attributes of a city, its rich history, and its cultural assets. Allowing for the appreciation of these assets can involve strengthening key connections in the city, clarifying infrastructure and in some cases, eliminating barriers. Meriden’s POCD expresses a desire to have both a “historic downtown and [a] new City Center.” While the mix of uses is an important aspect to authentic “place-making,” providing a wide range of housing alternatives is critical to ensuring a diverse demographic and opportunities for mobility. Meriden’s unique neighborhoods certainly have rich cultural roots and, as the TOD district matures, it will be important to maintain a balanced, mixed-income residential equation so that the people most likely to take advantage of the proximity to transit, and the associated amenities, can afford to remain a vital part of the community.

MERIDEN’S CURRENT FRAMEWORK, INITIATIVES AND OPPORTUNITIES

The formulation of a TOD District can help Meriden achieve many of the key goals outlined in the POCD. The timing is ideal, as there are a number of ongoing initiatives, proximate to the proposed new Meriden Intermodal Center station that will have a synergistic relationship with this effort, including the HUB Reuse project and cleanup and demolition efforts in the Factory H Area. Preventing further fragmentation of existing commercial corridors is a POCD goal that must be addressed to create viable development opportunities in areas immediately adjacent to the downtown core.

A multi-tiered approach to development and redevelopment is essential. The preservation of historic and cultural assets must be one focus, with particular emphasis given to the National Historic District on West Main Street and Colony Street. Many communities institute “façade improvement programs” whereby property owners are incentivized to elevate the appearance of their buildings to desired design standards. Secondly, to facilitate new development, the City should strive to create larger developable sites that are more likely to attract private developers and non-profit development organizations. Thirdly, while there are some larger opportunities emerging in Meriden’s City Center, smaller “infill” projects will remain a real key to reconstituting the vibrant downtown streetscapes that will attract

people and businesses. Infill must be done in contextually sensitive ways, and creative zoning regulations will play an important role in facilitating this process. Meriden has already established Enterprise and Information Technology Zones that offer tax abatements to eligible businesses. Other incentives are critical and can include mechanisms such as creative financing approaches (Tax Increment Financing [TIF]), an expedited approvals process, assistance with environmental remediation and the sharing of infrastructure costs.



DIAGRAM: INFILLING PARCELS ALONG COLONY STREET

The centerpiece of ongoing efforts in the Downtown is the new HUB Park, immediately adjacent to the proposed Meriden Intermodal Center. In addition to solving flood control issues, this major public “green” holds enormous potential for changing the perception of the City Center, providing a needed venue for gathering, entertainment, and cultural events. When completed, the HUB Park will be an amenity at the core of Meriden that will ensure opportunities for active and passive recreation within, while stimulating development along its periphery. Connectivity to Meriden’s surrounding neighborhoods will be a priority, with bicycle and pedestrian paths designed to link into a network of City-wide Greenways and Trails.

The HUB Park holds the potential to anchor new development along the Pratt Street corridor and to the north on property currently owned by the Meriden Housing Authority. It can play a key role in stitching together the east and west sections of the “Main Street” corridor, and it will define the first impression one gets of downtown Meriden when arriving by train.

The environmental cleanup and reuse planning efforts for the Factory H Area south of Hanover Street is another significant, ongoing initiative. Taken in conjunction with the former hospital site across Cook

Avenue, these parcels hold tremendous potential for mixed-use redevelopment, especially if improvements to surrounding infrastructure can increase connectivity.

Together with the new Meriden Intermodal Center, these projects should play a major role in re-branding the “new” City Center by anchoring efforts to reduce vacancy, blight, and crime.

SUB-DISTRICTS AND A FLEXIBLE TOD MASTER PLAN “ROAD MAP”

Whether contemplating site-specific solutions, neighborhood-level initiatives or city-wide efforts, such as the 2002 Meriden City Center Initiative, recent studies have recited numerous common themes that are central to revitalization. One theme that consistently emerges is that, while remaining cognizant of a larger, more comprehensive framework, each neighborhood that helps comprise the City Center should have a unique character and an understandable sense of “place.” The synergy derived from the proximity of these various districts is what makes living and working in the urban environment so engaging.



POTENTIAL TOD SUB-DISTRICTS
PRATT GATEWAY — THE GRAND BOULEVARD

Connecting these neighborhoods requires a network of revitalized streetscapes and memorable public spaces that can attract a new mix of commercial, institutional, and residential users that are the essential economic drivers for the future of the Downtown. Similarly-scaled downtowns that have successful arts districts, educational districts, medical areas or restaurant, entertainment and shopping districts, have managed to attract a critical mass of residents to live in the core, helping to create a “24-7” experience. Meriden, as this study’s Market Analysis (Chapter 4) suggests, must first look to forge opportunities in its City Center for new residential product — largely in mixed-use contexts — in order to stimulate further economic growth. Providing a diversity of housing types across a range of price

points with affordable units located in mixed-income developments scattered throughout the City Center would be ideal.

While any master-plan [a.k.a. “road map”] must have the flexibility to follow changing market conditions, the following proposed interventions to selected “focus areas” in the TOD core area suggest that an overlay zoning strategy that establishes a series of sub-districts is a valid construct.

While the expectation is that increased rail service and the new Meriden Intermodal Center will reshape the arrival experience of many visitors, Meriden’s strategic location at the crossroads of numerous interstates and parkways will still mandate thoughtful accommodation of the automobile. Alternative approaches to linking Interstate 691 (I-691) with the City Center have been authored in great detail, many focusing on the westbound State Street exit #7, which still remains the most proximate connection to the downtown. Given aesthetic concerns and the new multi-modal interface that will need to be accommodated in conjunction with the proposed station, the shifting of the main vehicular approach to the core to Pratt Street is merited.

Pratt Street serves as a direct connection between the new HUB Park and the I-691 exit #8 interchange, serving both eastbound and westbound traffic. Pratt Street has the benefit of a wide street section that could be redesigned to create a grand entrance boulevard. With well-conceived way-finding signage and landscaping, this “re-centering” of the vehicular approach would help with the re-branding effort in the City Center and stimulate mixed-use development to the east of the HUB Park. City-owned and vacant lots along Pratt Street, particularly near the intersections with Twiss Street and Mill Street, could offer the opportunity to create a new “gateway” to the downtown at the northeast corner of the park.



LOOKING SOUTH ON PRATT STREET: A NEW ENTRY BOULEVARD TO THE DOWNTOWN

East of Pratt

Home to the public library, bordered by numerous civic buildings — including City Hall — and fronting on the new HUB Park, this small neighborhood has tremendous redevelopment potential. There are a number of City-owned parcels and vacant lots, such as the property on the southwest corner of Miller Street and Center Street, that could be made available for early phases of mixed-use, mixed-income residential development. The City has the opportunity to purchase additional key properties through a \$730,000 Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Challenge Grant, and there are certainly highly visible parcels in this area that would be strong candidates for acquisition and repositioning. Lining the eastern edge of Pratt Street with mixed-use, multi-family residential buildings that offer ground-floor retail space could truly enhance this key focal point in the Downtown. Improvements to streetscapes, the creation of new pocket parks and the embellishment of existing open spaces within the neighborhood fabric would make this a highly desirable location.



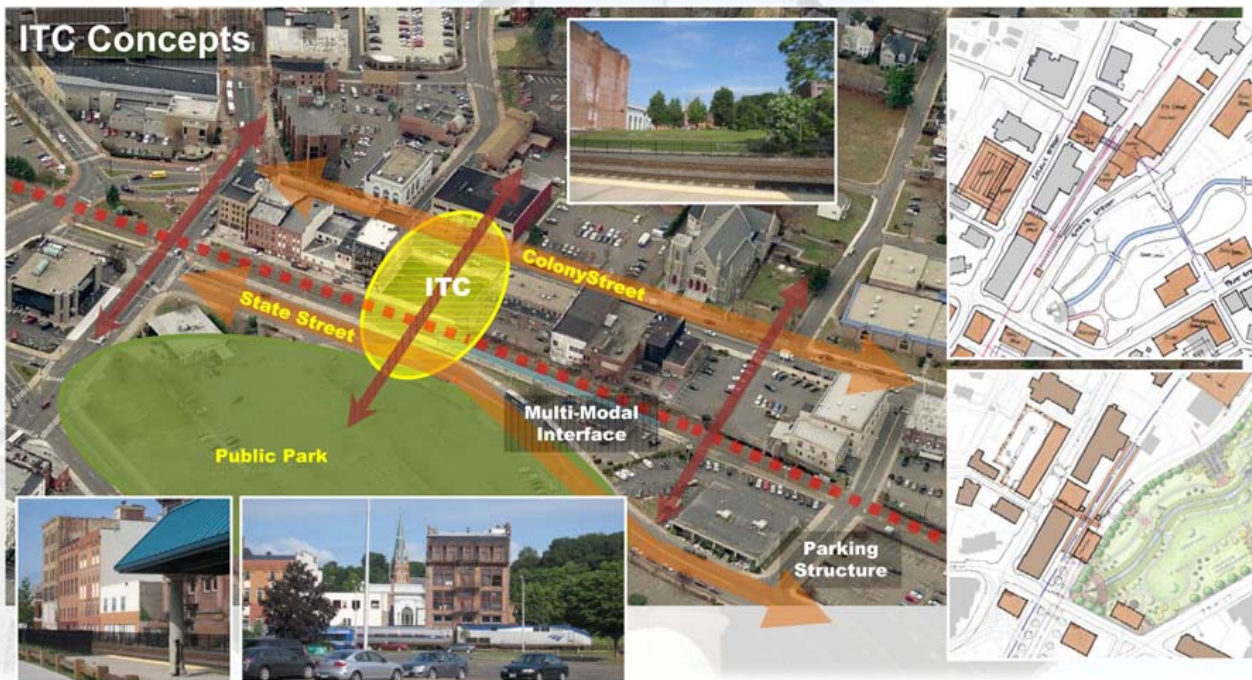
AERIAL VIEW OF EAST OF PRATT NEIGHBORHOOD SHOWING NEW MIXED-USE DEVELOPMENT LINING PRATT STREET



NEW MIXED-USE, MIXED-INCOME RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT LINING PRATT STREET

The HUB Park

From a purely TOD perspective, the HUB Park is a critical site for development, given its immediate proximity to the new Meriden Intermodal Center. While one would typically encourage development at a high level of density in this type of location, the park is designed to balance the City’s storm-water management goals and usable public open space with development parcels at the perimeter. Each edge of the park will play a key role in the urban design goals of the City Center.



STUDYING THE RELATIONSHIP OF THE HUB PARK TO THE MERIDEN INTERMODAL CENTER STATION

To the west along State Street, the park will address the new Meriden Intermodal Center and include landscaping designed to create a desirable pedestrian realm that is buffered from the new multi-modal interface at the bus loading area. The southern edge along East Main Street will use landscaped plazas and perhaps a one-story pavilion-style building to improve the sense of continuity along the East/West Main Street commercial corridor, which is currently challenged by railroad crossings and complex traffic patterns.

To the east, the HUB Park is designed to accommodate numerous development parcels fronting onto Pratt Street. The opportunity for “double-loaded” mixed-use development, with buildings lining both sides of the new Pratt Street spine, is very intriguing. The careful placement of built form with respect to key aspects of the park design, namely the central bridge on axis with Benjamin Street, as well as a thoughtful integration of adjacent urban features including the “triangle” park at Catlin Street, will make this an engaging new public realm. These Pratt Street buildings could contain ground-floor restaurants with outdoor dining, plus additional commercial space above.

The potential relocation of Mill Street to align with the intersection of Twiss Street and Pratt Street could create unique opportunities for residential development along the northern edge of the HUB Park.

A reconfiguration of Mill Street and Cedar Street could also facilitate the extension of a redesigned Harbor Brook, saving considerable infrastructure costs. In addition, the proposed amphitheater at the northern end of the park could be tied to a mixed-use development parcel that includes cultural and/or community space. In general, ground-floor space in buildings on the HUB Park — whether community-related, retail or restaurant — should be publically accessible.



OUTDOOR DINING ALONG PRATT STREET ON THE EASTERN EDGE OF THE HUB PARK



NEW CIVIC/COMMERCIAL BUILDING AND AMPHITHEATER IN THE HUB PARK

Meriden Housing Authority Site

Meriden is designated by HUD as an Entitlement Community for Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds. A central goal of these funds is to eliminate blighting influences, reduce isolation, and

increase housing choice for lower-income persons. The relocation of residents from the Mills Memorial Apartments would dovetail nicely with the City of Meriden’s preference to provide affordable housing alternatives in mixed-use, mixed-income developments throughout the new TOD district. The potential realignment of Mill and Cedar Streets would set the stage for redevelopment on the northern edge of the HUB Park with a variety of new residential opportunities ranging from multi-family construction to townhomes, with a density and diversity consistent with TOD goals. Spanning from Pratt Street to State Street, these parcels are strategically located and will play a critical role in redefining the identity of Meriden’s City Center, whether arriving by automobile, bus, or train.



POTENTIAL REALIGNMENT OF MILL STREET AND NEW DEVELOPMENT PARCELS NORTH OF THE HUB PARK



CONCEPTUAL AERIAL OF MULTI-FAMILY RESIDENTIAL AND TOWNHOUSES ALONG A REALIGNED MILL STREET

Meriden Intermodal Center

While the development of a new Meriden Intermodal Center and garage brings obvious economic benefit, it also plays a critical role in the urban design of the TOD district. Early studies for locating the station considered different approaches to the design of State Street and looked at placement

alternatives more closely tied to East Main Street. But with the significant increase in the number of trains passing through Meriden on a daily basis, it became clear that having a variety of alternatives for connecting the east and west sides of the “tracks” in meaningful, pedestrian-friendly ways would hold obvious value. As currently proposed, the station and associated mixed-use development – located between Colony Street and the tracks - will have the opportunity to address the new HUB Park and its State Street frontage with a potentially more modern aesthetic, while transitioning to fit into the sensitive architectural context of historic Colony Street. The proposed location for the “up-and-over” should prove to be a significant catalyst for a public-private partnership looking to create meaningful infill development on the vacant, City-owned and privately-held parcels near the intersection of Colony and Church Streets. With the majority of the multi-modal interface — taxis, busses and drop-off — accommodated along State Street, the Colony Street experience will be appropriately focused on the pedestrian.



AERIAL VIEW OF THE NEW MERIDEN INTERMODAL CENTER STATION CONNECTING THE HUB PARK TO NEW INFILL DEVELOPMENT ON COLONY STREET

Historic Colony Street Corridor

As inventoried in the 2002 Meriden City Center Initiative, Colony Street is home to numerous historic structures characterized by a range of architectural styles from the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The charm of the streetscape, as captured in photos from the early 1900s, is due not only to the architectural merit of the individual buildings but to the continuous, uninterrupted quality of the urban fabric. The cohesive character of today's Colony Street can be enhanced by



PHOTO OF COLONY STREET LOOKING NORTH C.1895 [CONNECTICUT HISTORICAL SOCIETY, HARTFORD]

programs that incentivize the restoration of important existing buildings, as well as encourage the “infill” of vacant lots. In addition to the City-owned lot targeted for a mixed-use, station facility, the underutilized parcel across the street on the corner of Colony and Church Streets holds enormous development potential. A rendered streetscape view shows how infilling this block with 2- and 3-story buildings “completes” the street, providing a cohesive pedestrian realm with active ground-floor retail space. This site could also contain a surface parking lot behind the building, accessed off Church Street, while maintaining the flexibility for constructing a future parking deck when the downtown reaches a certain threshold of density. The use of design guidelines to specify the siting, scale, articulation and materials of built form in this type of location, adjacent to the First Congregational Church, is essential for ensuring that new construction is compatible with the existing context.



STREET-LEVEL RENDERING OF NEW INFILL DEVELOPMENT AT THE CORNER OF COLONY AND CHURCH STREETS

Connecting East and West Main Streets

Preventing the fragmentation of commercial corridors is a stated goal of the POCD, and the section of East Main Street between Pratt Street and Colony Street shows how challenging this can be, even in an area that is at the heart of the Downtown. The transformation of the HUB Park and the proposed reconfiguration of State Street provide the opportunity to craft an attractive pedestrian realm along the north side of the street that can help re-link the civic core to the east with the historic fabric of West Main Street. Early concept sketches contemplated creating a more continuous street edge on the south side of East Main Street by infilling new building fabric, but potential land acquisition issues, the accommodation of the Harbor Brook culvert and proximity to the rail line may make this challenging. Should areas adjacent to the Wells Fargo Bank building be considered for development, additional parking could be accommodated on the City-owned parcel located just to the west between Hanover Street and the rail line — also a good site for future structured parking. In any case, an important first step should be to simplify traffic patterns at this key node — an advisable undertaking not only for pedestrian connections but to accommodate vehicular queuing with the anticipated increase in train service through these key at-grade crossings (see Chapter 3, Traffic Infrastructure). Converting West Main Street and Hanover Street to two-way traffic will greatly improve circulation through this area, help with the visibility of retail leases, and promote connectivity with neighborhoods to the west and south, including the Factory H Area. A continuous flow of traffic both eastbound and westbound along “Main Street” should, at a minimum, help create the perception of a continuous commercial corridor. In addition, there are a few infill opportunities along East Main Street between Pratt Street and City Hall that could prove complimentary to this goal.



EAST MAIN STREET WITH TRADITIONAL STOREFRONTS



RECONNECTING THE “MAIN STREET” COMMERCIAL CORRIDOR

Rethinking the West Main – Hanover Streets Area

West Main Street is a perfect case study for how transformation of an historic downtown streetscape occurs over time without a comprehensive plan that includes a careful zoning construct with design guidelines. While the northern edge of West Main Street has a relatively intact building fabric, the south side of the street lacks matching definition. The courthouse and police station buildings, located around a large landscaped plaza, are sited in a manner more characteristic of campus planning than downtown urban planning. Despite attention given to paving, lighting, urban furniture and landscaping, the fact that the main entries to these civic buildings are either set back or not oriented towards the sidewalk means that they do not contribute to activating the streetscape in a traditional urban fashion. The smaller plaza on the north side of the street, which leads to a well-placed parking deck and provides site-lines to St. Mary’s German Catholic Church, is more successful in that it has a scale reminiscent of an urban pocket park, or even a midblock pedestrian mews.

Further down West Main Street, at the corner of Cook Avenue, there are examples of properties that are designed in conformance with suburban-style strip commercial zoning, where buildings are setback off the street with multiple curb cuts and parking fields in front. Efforts to extend the pedestrian “Main Street” experience to a potential Lewis Avenue “gateway” would require addressing this key intersection at Cook Avenue first. The West Main Street spine continues to have enormous potential to evolve as a vibrant urban environment due in part to an ideal mix of civic, community, educational, and commercial-retail uses, including Middlesex Community College.

The conversion of West Main Street, Hanover Street and possibly Cook Avenue to two-way traffic would have a dramatic effect on the viability of development in this sub-district. An increase in density that gives greater definition to the blocks between West Main Street and Hanover Street would likely require the careful placement of additional structured parking, perhaps on the site of the current Butler Street municipal lot (with retail liners on Hanover and West Main Streets). The revitalization of these blocks would be reinforced by significant mixed-use residential projects to the south in the Factory H Area.



COURTHOUSE BUILDING ORIENTS



VIEW OF CORRIDOR TO THE NORTH TOWARDS PLAZA



NORTH SIDE OF WEST MAIN STREET



SOUTH SIDE OF WEST MAIN STREET AT COOK AVENUE

The Factory H Area

The 2009 Preliminary Reuse Planning and Market Analysis study for the Factory H Area rightfully concluded that the viability of development on these parcels — generally defined by Hanover Street, Cook Avenue, Cooper Street and the rail line — is largely dependent on efforts to reconnect this neighborhood to the downtown core. With demolition and cleanup efforts well underway, in conjunction with flood control work on Harbor Brook, the Factory H Area is poised to play a significant role in the phased redevelopment of the City Center. A mixed-use, mixed-income residential project, incorporating the renovation and reuse of 116 Cook Avenue, could help with efforts to decentralize affordable housing throughout the TOD district, unlocking potential development opportunities on the Meriden Housing Authority property north of the HUB Park.



RECONNECTING THE FACTORY H AREA; PROPOSED REDEVELOPMENT ALTERNATIVE [VITA NUOVA, LLC (2009)]

While a two-way Hanover Street can act as a new “spine” for this neighborhood, focus on the north-south pedestrian linkages along Cook Avenue, Butler Street, and South Grove Street will be critical to the sense of “walkability” for residents wanting to feel connected with West Main Street and the new TOD core. In addition to efforts to promote infill and enhance streetscapes in these blocks, connectivity to the city-wide trail network / bike path will provide a significant amenity.

As with so many key nodes in the Downtown, the careful crafting of long-term public-private partnerships will be essential to the financial viability of redevelopment in this neighborhood. The City’s ongoing efforts to prepare the area for development are a necessary first step.

APPROACHES TO ZONING AND DESIGN GUIDELINES

The creation of a new regulatory framework would help Meriden to be seen as a development-friendly city ensuring the character of the new built environment and public realm is consistent with the holistic vision for the community outlined in the POCD and other key City documents.

Whether refining the design of streetscapes (lighting, paving, landscaping, urban furniture) or outlining the character of the built environment (materials, massing, architectural style), zoning and design guidelines are essential for framing future development. Realizing the importance of these types of design parameters, a number of New England communities have turned to form-based codes to help shape development in the downtown. Dover, New Hampshire, a historic mill town with a fairly intact architectural vernacular, is an example of a community that instituted a new form-based code in 2009.



CENTRAL AVENUE IN DOVER, NH

The code states as its goal *“increased emphasis on the form and placement of structures, and a decreased emphasis on the function(s) contained within them.”* This speaks directly to the role of buildings in defining the street as a “vital and safe public space.” In addition, applicants are given the option of following a series of architectural standards which, if reasonably demonstrated, offer incentives such as “fast track review” of the project by the Planning Commission.

The establishment of form-based codes can be a publically intensive process that is most successful when thoroughly vetted with the local development community. Form-based codes are often seen as most applicable in communities that have a well-established building stock with a clear architectural vernacular. There are certain aspects of form-based codes that can be utilized when contemplating alternative zoning approaches, such as a mixed-use overlay district. A “regulating plan” that establishes the extents of the overall district can be a very useful tool for creating “sub-districts” that are defined by specific contextual refinements. As discussed above, this approach could be quite applicable to the Meriden TOD district, where the character of a revitalized Factory H / Cook Avenue sub-district might want to be quite different from new development along the proposed Pratt Street “gateway” on the east edge of the new HUB Park.

A carefully crafted mixed-use overlay district (MUOD) can capture many of the qualities of form-based codes if adequate focus is placed on integrated physical design. An appropriate overall balance of land uses and density can be achieved while permitting flexibility on individual lots. An MUOD regulation should define broad development goals, establish a clear approvals process and outline desired performance standards and design guidelines. Many municipalities will offer a two-track approvals process for applicants who have different scales of development goals.

One example is the 1.1-million-square-foot mixed-use project, Wisconsin Place, recently completed by New England Development in Friendship Heights, Maryland. The base zoning allowed for significantly less development, but through a series of incentives — constructing a new community center, providing a percentage of usable open space (public parks, etc.) and a targeted mix of land uses — the applicant was allowed to increase the buildable floor-area ratio (FAR). The larger scope also triggered a more in-depth site plan approvals process.



WISCONSIN PLACE IS A MIXED-USE TOD PROJECT ON THE WASHINGTON, D.C., METRO

Meriden’s Central Commercial Design District [CCDD] Sign Regulations utilize a similar two-track mechanism, whereby applications that are deemed to comply with specified design requirements can be administratively approved by the Planning Director and Design Review Board chairperson without a formal review process.

Planned Development Districts (PDD) are another useful tool, especially when a key development parcel, or city neighborhood, has been identified [and assembled] for revitalization. The 55+ acre Steelpointe Harbor project in Bridgeport, CT, is an example of the power that PDDs possess to facilitate the development process. Whether dealing with traffic mitigation, parking requirements or other required public amenities such as open space, being able to plan for the accommodation of these critical components on a district-wide basis, as opposed to subjecting individual lots to certain restrictions, can truly unlock complex projects that require sophisticated phasing to be realized.



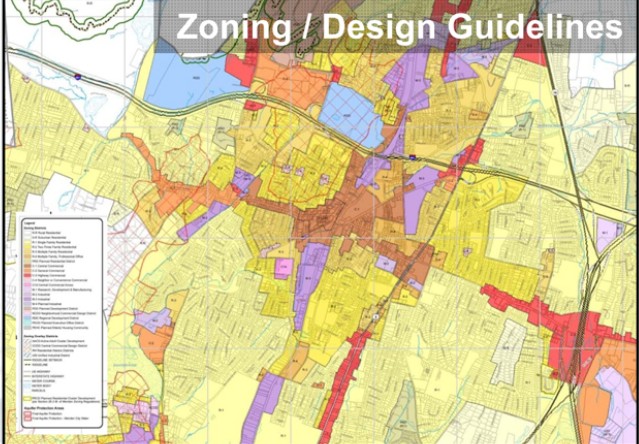


STEELPOINTE HARBOR MIXED-USE NEIGHBORHOOD IN DOWNTOWN BRIDGEPORT, CT




A **Transit-Oriented Development Overlay District** for Meriden would encourage the appropriate “densification” of the area within a half-mile radius of the new Meriden Intermodal Center. It would incentivize residentially-driven mixed-use development and promote a vibrant, pedestrian-friendly public realm. A typical TOD Overlay District bylaw might define the following:

- ◆ **Approvals Process:** submittal and procedural requirements; as-of-right vs. special permit; new construction vs. renovation of existing
- ◆ **Mix of uses:** conducive to a compact, pedestrian-friendly environment; has varying peak hours of active use throughout the day and night; encourages transit use and discourages automobile dependence
- ◆ **Parking:** limit residential and non-residential spaces by encouraging shared parking among complimentary uses (Shared Parking Matrix); carefully design, locate and access surface lots and structures so as not to negatively impact the pedestrian environment [behind buildings, ground-floor retail wrappers, landscaping requirements]; encourage on-street parking; accommodate bicycles
- ◆ **Dimensional Requirements:** limit setbacks to encourage street definition; balance FAR and lot coverage to target density and open space goals; minimum and maximum building height; sidewalks [accessibility]
- ◆ **Design Standards:**
 - Buildings – architectural style and materials, façade articulation and ground-floor transparency, entry, signage, loading (discreet/screened), sustainable design/efficiency
 - Streetscapes and public space – landscaping, lighting, paving, urban furniture, public art, utilities, way-finding

Development Criterion	FDD Standard	Conditions & Comments
Minimum FAR	No Minimum	LDA minimum govern
Maximum FAR	No Maximum	
Minimum Lot Area	No Minimum	
Minimum Frontage	15 feet	
Minimum Building Setback	0	
Maximum Building Setback	18 feet	50% of linear footage of a building must have a maximum of a 1 foot setback
Stepback on Street-Facing Facades	6 feet minimum setback above 4 th story	Not required if building elements are used to break up facade
Ground-Level Facades	60% required to have architectural articulation	Architectural articulation includes 60% glass between 3' or 4' or above grade, facade elements, material changes and reveals, recesses / projections or landscape screens
Maximum Blank Facade	40%	Maximum of 50 linear feet without articulation or entry
Landscaping Setbacks	0	FDD does not affect any other zone. Open space has been combined to form the Harborwalk and adjacent park.
Maximum Building Coverage	100%	
Minimum Landscaped Area	0	
Maximum Height	100 feet north of Stratford Avenue, 300 feet south of Stratford Avenue	
Parking Allowed Between Building and Street	Yes	Permitted north of Stratford Avenue, only interior drive-through facilities permitted south of Stratford Avenue.
Drive-Through Facilities Permitted	Yes	
Outdoor Display Permitted	Yes	
Trucks & Equipment Permitted	Light and Medium only except for service vehicles	
Minimum Harborwalk Width	25'	

Use	Interim Ratio	Shared Ratio
Residential		
Multi-Family	1.5 spaces/RU ¹	1.0 spaces/RU ¹
Short-Term Lodging	75 spaces/key ²	0.75 spaces/key ²
Lodging Ancillary Uses	4 spaces/1,000 NSP ³	3.0 spaces/1,000 NSP ³
Office	3.0 spaces/1,000 NSP ³	2.0 spaces/1,000 NSP ³
Medical Office	3.3 spaces/1,000 NSP ³	2.5 spaces/1,000 NSP ³
Institutional	3.0 spaces/1,000 NSP ³	1.0 spaces/1,000 NSP ³
Industrial	3.0 spaces/1,000 NSP ³	1.0 spaces/1,000 NSP ³
Marina	1 space/4 slips	1 space/4 slips
Retail	4.0 spaces/1,000 NSP ³	3.5 spaces/1,000 NSP ³
Restaurant, Entertainment	7.5 spaces/1,000 NSP ³	5.0 spaces/1,000 NSP ³

ZONING: THE USE OF DESIGN GUIDELINES AND A LAND USE PLAN TO SHAPE FUTURE DEVELOPMENT

Consistent with the tenets of Smart Growth, development in the TOD core could be characterized by vertically integrated mixed-use, with residential, commercial or institutional space above retail / restaurant. The resulting density, in turn, would shape the street section — the proportion of building height to combined sidewalk and street width — creating a truly urban feel and enlivening the

pedestrian experience with a safe and attractive ground plane. Understanding the hierarchical nature of primary, secondary and tertiary streets, along with the most desirable design characteristics of sidewalks and pedestrian mews, will support this goal. As always, a balance of flexibility and certainty must be achieved as any community looks to define a recognizable “identity” (brand) that respects its heritage while looking towards its future.

GOALS AND IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

This TOD District planning study was designed to be a collaborative process seeking to systematically solicit feedback from key stakeholders in the community — the Chamber of Commerce, Downtown Businesses, Neighborhood Groups, members of various committees, and City officials and staff. In general, the sentiment expressed reflected a desire to “plant seeds to catalyze revitalization and future development throughout the City, so that there is a meaningful change to the tax base.”

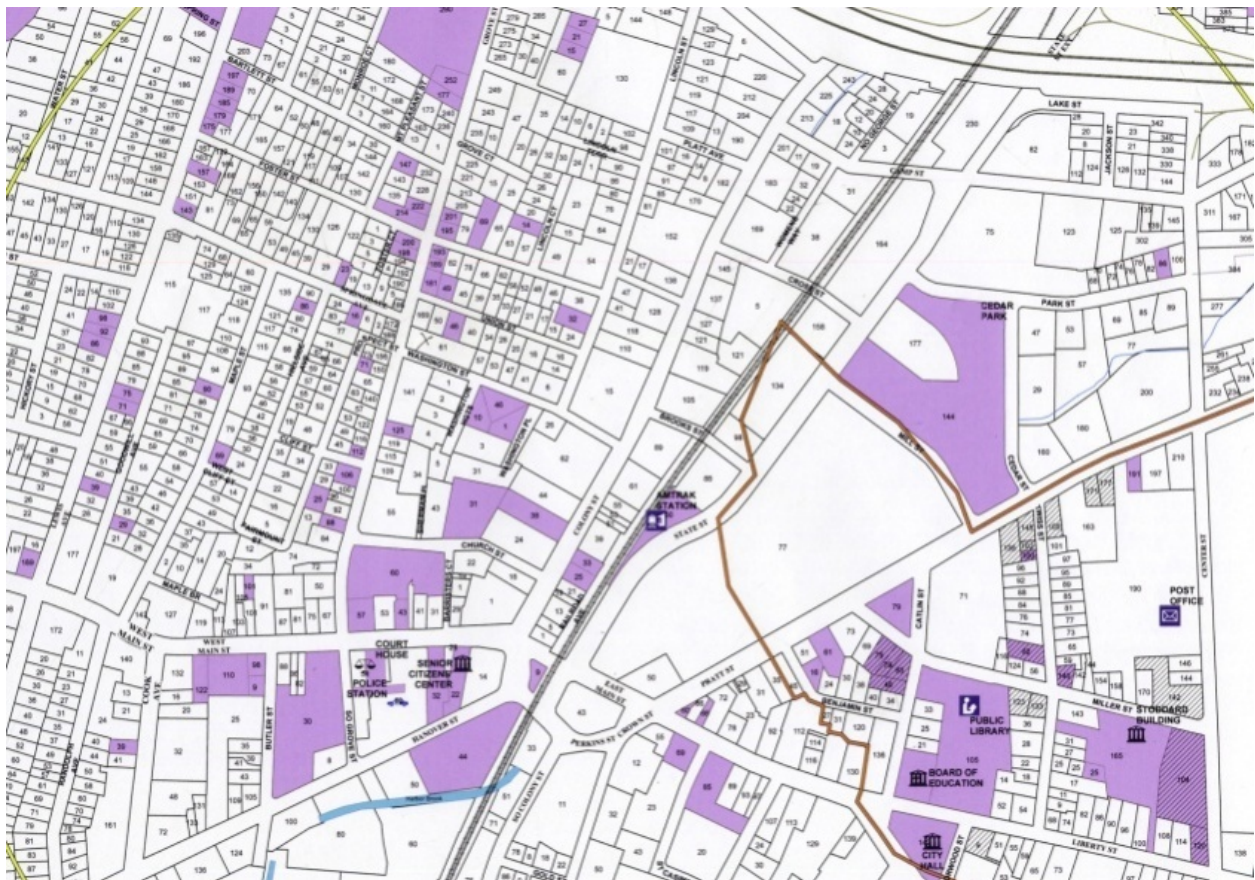
Consistent with many of the themes outlined in the POCD, there are key next steps that are essential for successful implementation:

- ◆ Target **Land Acquisition**: assemblage of contiguous development parcels
- ◆ Preparing land to be **Development-ready**: assisting with relocation, demolition, environmental remediation
- ◆ Support programs that assist property owners with the **Renovation** of existing properties and encourage **Infill** development
- ◆ Release RFPs based on a **Comprehensive Phasing Concept** that balances the reality of local and regional market conditions with the desired mix of uses
- ◆ Facilitate **Infrastructure** and utility improvements: roadway network, public transportation, etc.; plan for their ongoing maintenance
- ◆ Invest in **Public Amenities**: HUB Park, neighborhood parks, trail system, bike paths
- ◆ Consider long-range **Parking** goals and funding strategies; designate future structured parking locations; encourage shared parking
- ◆ Rework the current **Zoning Framework** to encourage density and diversity of land uses [TOD Overlay District]
- ◆ Institute **Local Policies** that are development-friendly and streamline the approvals process; “two-track” approach: administrative vs. Design Review Board approval
- ◆ Provide **Design Guidelines** to ensure the attractive development and redevelopment of private properties and the public realm; flexibility to allow for unique character in sub-districts / neighborhoods
- ◆ Maintain strong local **Leadership** that can secure funding for infrastructure improvements and assist with a variety of creative financing tools and programs, such as Tax Increment Financing [TIF], Business Improvement Districts [BID], Enterprise Zones, Location Efficient Mortgages, etc.; nurture long-term public-private partnerships

A “road map” for the phasing of parcel development in the TOD District is subject to countless variables, including the availability of developable land, the necessary layering of funding and market interest. Here is one possible development scenario for the future of Meriden’s City Center:

- ◆ **HUB Park**
 - Construction of the HUB Park commences with the promise of a beautiful and usable public open space, flood control and future development parcels at the heart of the Downtown
- ◆ **Intermodal Transportation Station**
 - The Meriden Intermodal Center and garage are completed in time for the new NHHS high-speed rail service in 2016.
 - A public-private partnership is established to build a mixed-use infill project along Colony Street connecting directly to the new station
 - Subsequent development on City-owned and privately-held parcels at the corner of Church and Colony Streets begins
- ◆ **Factory H Area**
 - A mixed-use, mixed-income housing project is constructed in the Factory H Area, reusing a renovated 116 Cook Avenue [City-owned]
 - Hanover Street and West/East Main Street are converted to two-way traffic and streetscape improvements along Butler Street, Cook Avenue and Hanover Street spark hope for renovations and infill throughout the neighborhood
- ◆ **East of Pratt**
 - With existing City-owned property and new parcels acquired through the use of HUD Challenge Grant funds prepared for development, new mixed-income multi-family housing with ground-floor retail is constructed along a newly landscaped Pratt Boulevard
 - Mixed-income townhouses are proposed on City-owned property at the corner of Center and Miller Streets
 - Two new neighborhood “pocket” parks are constructed
- ◆ **Meriden Housing Authority Site**
 - With residents of these apartments relocated to new affordable housing in mixed-income properties in the Factory H and East of Pratt neighborhoods, demolition of the Mills Memorial Apartments takes place
 - Construction begins on the relocation of Mill Street and the reconfiguration of Cedar Street, allowing for the continuation of work on sections of Harbor Brook north of the HUB Park
 - A variety of new multi-family residential buildings and townhomes are built overlooking the park and within easy walking distance of the Meriden Intermodal Center
- ◆ **HUB Park Development Parcels**
 - With the HUB Park construction nearly complete, new restaurants and commercial space begin to take form along Pratt Street.

- Commercial uses above ground- floor public amenity space, tying in with the new HUB amphitheater, open across from the new Meriden Intermodal Center garage
- ◆ **The East/West Main Street Corridor**
 - The completion of roadway improvements along the East/West Main Street corridor triggers small infill and renovation projects along East Main Street
 - New zoning regulations help reconstitute the definition of West Main Street at the intersection of Cook Avenue, completing the refurbishment of a neighborhood that began with development in the Factory H Area
 - A new iconic office building opens on the corner of West Main Street, Hanover Street, and Colony Street
- ◆ Proposals for developing the old hospital site across from the Factory H area, as well as numerous parcels along the new Pratt Boulevard stretching towards the I-691 “gateway,” begin to get traction



CITY OF MERIDEN: CITY-OWNED AND VACANT LOTS [2011]

Meriden is on the right “track.” With high-speed rail service soon to arrive, the development of the new HUB Park well underway, and other active initiatives aimed at preparing significant land parcels for

future development, the revitalization of Meriden is steadily progressing. The formulation of a TOD Overlay District that will shape the character of the Downtown core will have a tremendously positive impact on surrounding neighborhoods. Informed by a clear understanding of market conditions, this new zoning construct, consisting of design guidelines, a well-defined approvals process, and a thoughtful regulating plan should ensure the flexibility necessary to achieve the vital mix of uses and quality public realm that will help shape the “new” Meriden.