

2014



CITY OF MERIDEN

A study evaluating the feasibility of development
along South Mountain Road

Prepared by: Research Department
Connecticut Economic Resource Center, Inc.

On Behalf of: Economic Development and Planning Departments
City of Meriden

Connecticut Economic Resource Center, Inc.

The Connecticut Economic Resource Center, Inc. (CERC) is a nonprofit corporation and public-private partnership that provides our clients with objective research, marketing and economic development services. Our mission is to provide services consistent with state strategies, leveraging Connecticut's unique advantages as a premier business location. CERC has proven and relevant expertise providing clients with the knowledge and insight they need to gain a competitive advantage. CERC is a pioneer in the development of programs, technologies and capabilities to support effective economic development and offers a complete range of services from economic impact analysis, strategic planning, data gathering and communications, to outreach, site selection and business assistance. CERC has earned a reputation for excellence in Connecticut's economic development community through our accomplished, professional staff, commitment to customer service, and connection to a network of strategic partners.

Connecticut Economic Resource Center, Inc.

805 Brook Street, Building 4

Rocky Hill, CT 06067

860-571-7136

www.CERC.com

Primary Research Contacts

Alissa K. DeJonge

Vice President of Research

Phone: 860-571-6206

Email: adejonge@cerc.com

Carmel Ford

Research Analyst

Phone: 860-571-6209

Email: cford@cerc.com

Matthew B. Ross

Economist

Phone: 860-571-7138

Email: mross@cerc.com



TABLE OF CONTENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS	III
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	IV
INTRODUCTION	7
DEMOGRAPHIC AND ECONOMIC OVERVIEW	2
Map 1: Geography of Meriden Workforce Area	2
Figure 1: Comparative Racial and Ethnic Demographics, 2008-13	3
Figure 2: Racial and Ethnic Demographic Trends, 2003-23	3
Figure 3: Comparative Age Demographics, 2008-12	4
Figure 4: Age Demographic Trends, 2003-23	5
Figure 5: Comparative Educational Demographics, 2008-12	5
Table 1: Workplace of Meriden Residents, 2008-11	6
Table 2: Residence of Meriden Workforce, 2008-11	7
Figure 6: Comparative Employment Trends, 2005-14	8
Figure 7: Broad Industry Employment Trends, 2003-23	9
Figure 8: Detailed Comparative Industry Employment, 2013	10
Figure 9: Broad Occupational Employment Trends, 2003-23	11
Figure 10: Detailed Comparative Occupational Employment, 2013	12
Figure 11: Comparative Income Distribution, 2011-13	13
LAND USE ANALYSIS	14
Description of Property	14
Zoning and Plan of Conservation & Development	15
INDUSTRY ANALYSIS	17
Table 3: Industry Criteria Selection in the MWA	20
STRATEGIC INTELLIGENCE	20
CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	21



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report explores the economic feasibility of a 300-acre parcel of land that surrounds the former NRG site, located east of the Chamberlain Highway (Route 71) in Meriden. A portion of the property is currently owned by the City and is accessible through a central road that has been built to city standards and equipped with power as well as sewer lines. A 37-acre central portion of the area is not owned by the City of Meriden but is also available for development. The central portion was once previously the site of the NRG natural gas power generation facility that has subsequently been dismantled. In exploring the market economic feasibility of the parcel, the Connecticut Economic Resource Center, Inc. (CERC) is keeping in mind the demographic and economic trends, as well as the constraints of the property including the environmental limitations. Key findings from the demographic and economic data gathering process include:

- The population in Meriden, although predominantly white, has a disproportionate share of the Hispanic population in the region and this share grew at a rapid pace through the next decade. The proportion of the population aged 25 to 34 is much higher in the City of Meriden than in the comparison regions and the population over the age of 25 years old has a relatively low level of educational attainment relative to the rest of the state.
- In line with both of these observations, the region has a particular strength in the manufacturing and healthcare industries and has invested heavily in the human capital necessary to staff occupations working in these industries.
- An industry analysis found that economic trends are currently favorable for light manufacturing and healthcare in the region.

Although development in emerging industries at South Mountain Road is possible and should be considered, encouraging a strategic development and zoning plan for the property that draws on existing regional strengths will help attract potential investors. The site and land use analysis revealed:

- The topography of the site is varied. According to the 2009 Plan of Conservation & Development (PCD) for the City of Meriden, areas of steep slopes of over 25% cover approximately 135 acres of the site which is approximately 40%. The steep slopes cover much of the southern portion of the property, except the remaining NRG site.
- A relatively small area is designated wetlands. This consists of two wetland areas along the entrance road to the NRG property. Another larger wetlands area is located in the northern area of the site. These wetland areas would not appear to present any significant constraints to the use of the property.
- There are currently two points of access to the site, oriented towards the NRG parcel. The major access is from Chamberlain Highway, Route 71. Route 71, at the point of access, is a two lane rural state highway, connecting the west sections of Berlin with Interstate 691.



The access point to the Chamberlain Highway is approximately one half mile north of the westbound interchange of Interstate 691. The interchange at Route 71 is a half interchange, with eastbound off, and westbound on. The westbound off and eastbound on interchange is located on Lewis Avenue, on the other side of the Westfield Shopping Mall. The site also has a secondary access to the south along Sam's Road to Kensington Avenue. The access is at the north side of the Westfield Shopping Mall.

- The overall neighborhood surrounding the subject property is a mixture of uses. The property lies at the border of urban uses to the south and east, and rural uses to the north and west. The most dominant use within this neighborhood is the Westfield Mall and associated retail uses, located just south of the subject property. These regional mall and surrounding uses are the major retail center of Meriden and surrounding areas.
- There are undeveloped and lightly developed parcels to the east of the subject property. However, most of the area to the east is developed as single-family houses, on relatively small lots, with some multi-family development interspersed. The area to the north and west is within the Town of Berlin. All of this area is either undeveloped, or developed with very low density residential uses. The area to the north was part of this larger NRG parcel, is now owned by the Town of Berlin for open space.
- The current entrance road to the site is a rather long and winding narrow road. The length of the road makes access to this site more difficult and less attractive to uses which generate high volumes of traffic, especially truck traffic, such as warehousing and distribution uses. In spite of the access constraints listed above, this site is located within the center of Connecticut, in proximity to the major urban and employment centers of south-central and central Connecticut. The site is less than one-mile from the Mid-State Medical Center, a major regional medical facility, with a large number of outlying related facilities throughout the area.

According to the real estate professionals interviewed, the terrain of the property poses a significant challenge for future development. One significant challenge is the steep grade of the property and the windy road leading to the plateau. These challenges make large-scale construction difficult and limit the uses of the site. Additionally, the location's distance from I-91 limit the potential for large-scale distribution or a technology park. Another concern is the property's lack of visibility along the major highways. In contrast to these factors, an advantage of the property is that nearby access to I-691 would allow for developers to tap into the regional labor market. The secluded nature of the property may limit the property's use for development that requires high visibility or ease of accessibility. However, this same attribute can be seen as an asset when considering development that might need a less public visibility property or one with high elevations.

The uses for the South Mountain Road site that hold the most promise at this time include:

- **Destination Recreation:** A destination recreational facility could take advantage of the site's unique attributes and scenic views. A destination recreation facility would benefit from the close proximity to the retail mall as well as the scenic landscape. However, the



access to the highway could limit some of the potential to market the site for use as a destination recreational facility.

- **Wind or Solar Power Generation:** An alternative use for the site could be for wind or solar power generation. The state's extremely high renewable portfolio goals make the demand for energy produced from these sources definitive. The lofty terrain and site characteristics make the site a potential location for the development of a wind or solar farm. In addition, the large-scale electricity lines that were built to connect the NRG site were constructed to accommodate a similar use and could easily be transitioned for these purposes.
- **Technology or Healthcare Space:** The scenic views and campus-like feel of the hilltop offer an attractive location for the development of an office park. The winding entry road and distance from the Chamberlain Highway make development in this area problematic. The development of office or technology space marketed to companies in healthcare, insurance, in-patient medical facilities, or long-term healthcare facilities would complement the strengths of the regional workforce. The continued shortage of industrial-use property in the region and evolving need for 'smart tech' office space will continue to make the South Mountain Road site a potential option for light manufacturing despite the inherent challenges.
- **Light Manufacturing:** The site has the potential for strategic development in light manufacturing due to the large amount of land available and the shortage of similarly zoned sites within the region. Development in this sector, however, could be problematic due to the steep and winding entry road. The distance from the Chamberlain Highway to the site also makes any large-scale manufacturing problematic. Manufacturing or intensive industrial development activity within the health care, aerospace, or medical research areas would complement the strengths of the regional economy. The continued shortage of industrial-use property in the region will continue to make the South Mountain Road site a potential option for light manufacturing despite the inherent challenges.
- **Mixed-Use Development:** If the former NRG site is combined with the City-owned property, another possible alternative use for the site would be the construction of a mixed-use residential and commercial development. The scenic views and expansive terrain could afford a housing development that could be coupled with commercial retail space. The housing could support the retail space and overcome issues related to visibility that retail space alone would have difficulty overcoming.

The above recommendations for the uses of the South Mountain Road property were generated through a comprehensive review of the economic and demographic characteristics of the region. The recommendations also considered insight afforded from real estate professionals as well as the site specific characteristics of the property. The recommended uses suggest a zoning structure that allows for variety could benefit the City of Meriden in expediting the development of the property.

However, the development potential of the site increases substantially if the NRG site is combined with the existing City-owned property into one cohesive property. This move would signal to developers that the City is interested in a thoughtful and unified plan. As the sites currently exist, the scale of the properties is somewhat limited because there are two landowners and without a unified goal. If both sites were owned by one entity, then parcels could be considered individually



as well as part of the whole. Once the parcel is unified then a unified goal that takes into account the overall character of the City and highlights the assets of the site could be created, and business models and fiscal impacts of proposed developments can then be assessed.

INTRODUCTION

The City of Meriden commissioned this report in an effort to explore the economic feasibility of a 300-acre parcel along South Mountain Road. A portion of the property is currently owned by the City and is accessible through a central road that has been built to city standards and equipped with power as well as sewer lines. A 37-acre central portion of the area is not owned by the City of Meriden but is also available for development. The central portion was once previously the site of the NRG natural gas power generation facility that has subsequently been dismantled.

The purpose of this report is to inform planning and economic development officials within the City of Meriden as well as potential developers about the best possible uses for the site. This report will consider demographic and economic trends in the City of Meriden itself as well as the surrounding commuter area. In addition, the latter half of the report will explore the environmental and geographic advantages of the site while paying close attention to inherent limitations. Finally, the report will conclude by offering recommendations for the potential uses for the site that can be used to inform appropriate zoning and solicit industrial development.

The outline for the structure of the report is described below and includes the following components:

Demographic and Economic Overview: The overall demographic and economic trends occurring in Meriden and the surrounding region are analyzed in an effort to contextualize the remainder of the findings that directly pertain to the South Mountain Road development site.

Land Use Analysis: The land use analysis investigates the site characteristics of the South Mountain Road property and evaluate various aspects as they pertain to potential development.

Industry Analysis: The economy is investigated further by conducting a complete industry analysis that ranks prospective sectors based on a stringent set of criteria.

Strategic Intelligence: The property on South Mountain Road is directly evaluated by developers with knowledge of the local commercial real estate market in an effort to provide greater insight about what is actually feasible on the property.

Conclusions and Recommendations: This final section of the report summarizes the findings from the prior sections and weaves the findings into an actionable list of recommendations pertaining to the property.



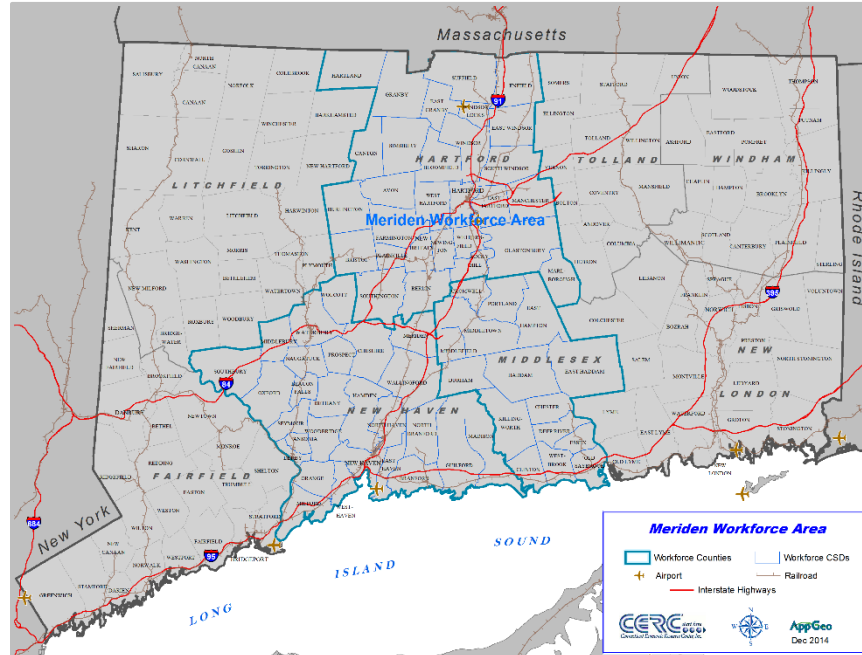
The report analyzes the relevant land use factors which are likely to impact the use of the NRG site, located east of the Chamberlain Highway, (Route 71) in Meriden. The analysis is based upon the demography and economic condition of the region as well as a direct evaluation of the property itself for the purposes of creating tailored zoning and planning considerations. Strategic zoning and planning of the property will enable and promote the use of the site in an economically viable manner for the beneficial community and economic growth of the City of Meriden.

DEMOGRAPHIC AND ECONOMIC OVERVIEW

The purpose of the demographic and economic overview is to provide an overall picture of the composition and characteristics of the local economy within the City of Meriden and the surrounding communities. The demographic and economic analysis conducted in this section will help to inform the findings from the land use, and industry analyses. An appropriate understanding of local and regional economic trends as well as changes to the demography will position the City of Meriden to effectively target zoning and planning initiatives involving the South Mountain Road property.

Map 1: Geography of Meriden Workforce Area

Source: American Community Survey. United States Census Bureau. 2008-12.



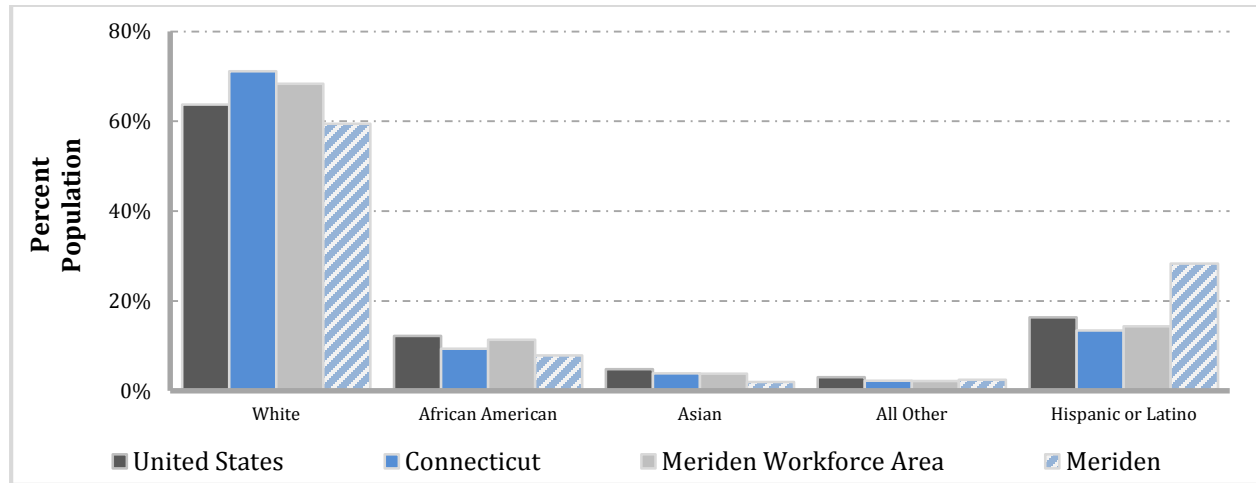
The analysis will evaluate the economy at the city level as well as a larger commuter area that accounts for the potential workforce accessible to a development at South Mountain Road. The larger of the two geographies will be referred to throughout as the Meriden Workforce Area (MWA). As can be seen in **Map 1**, the MWA has been composed from aggregate statistics for



Hartford, Middlesex, and New Haven counties. The statistics in this section will also be contrasted against two additional geographies in an effort to better contextualize the findings. Aggregate statistics for Connecticut as well as the United States will be used as benchmarks to assess findings and identify regional advantages.

Figure 1: Comparative Racial and Ethnic Demographics, 2008-13

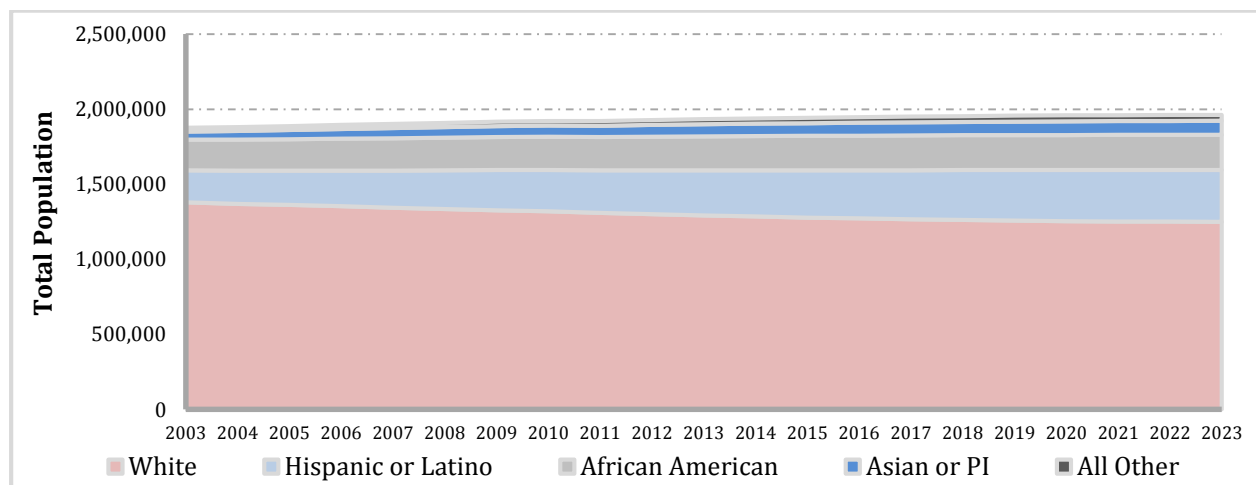
Source: American Community Survey. United States Census Bureau. 2008-12.



The historic and projected demographic trends for the MWA show a consistent pattern of moderate growth throughout both time periods. As can be seen in **Figure 1**, the overall population grew by 57,999 or 3.1 percent in the region from 2003-13 and is projected to grow by an additional 28,318 or 1.5 percent from 2013-23. According to the demographic data, the MWA region grew at a slightly slower rate than the 3.6 percent the state population as a whole grew by from 2003-13. The MWA is projected to continue this pattern of slightly lower growth as it is expected to be outpaced by the state’s anticipated 1.8 percent growth from 2013-23.

Figure 2: Racial and Ethnic Demographic Trends, 2003-23

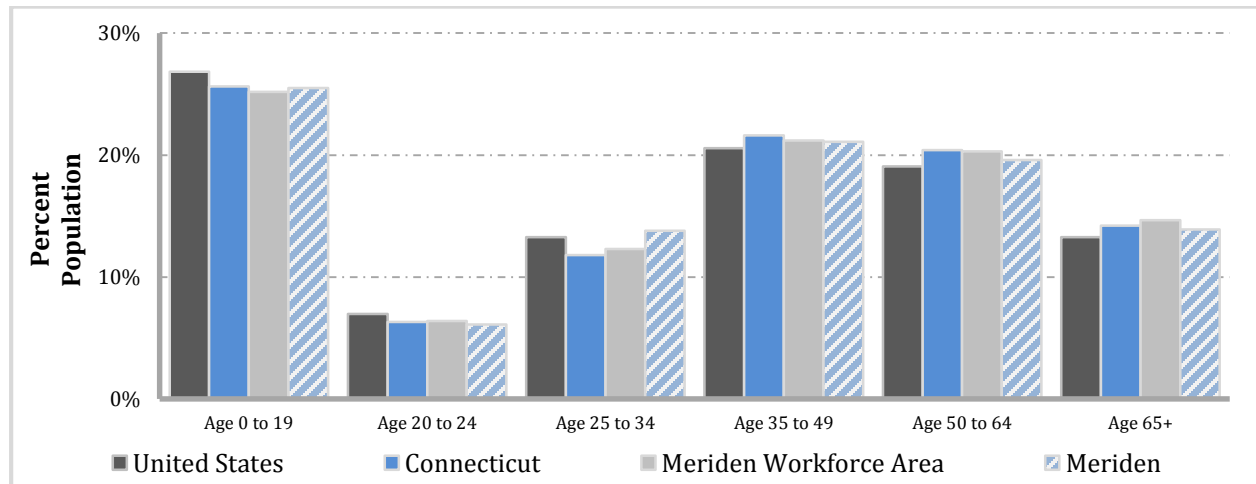
Source: Economic Modeling Specialists International. 2014.



The historic and projected demographic trends for the MWA also show a consistent shift in the racial composition of the population. As can be seen in **Figure 2**, the non-minority population represented 73.5 percent of the population in 2003 but has decreased by nearly 6.2 percent over the last decade and now represents only 66.9 percent of the population in 2013. The non-minority population is expected to drop to 63.7 percent by 2023. The overall demographic shift seen in the MWA is representative of both state and national trends that are creating a more racially and ethnically diverse workforce.

Figure 3: Comparative Age Demographics, 2008-12

Source: American Community Survey, United States Census Bureau, 2008-12.



The workforces of Meriden and the MWA have moderately different age distributions than Connecticut or the United States. As can be seen in **Figure 3**, Meriden and the MWA both have slightly lower proportions of those under the age of 19 years old than Connecticut and a substantially lower share than the United States. The prime working age population, those aged 25 to 50 years old, was slightly higher in City of Meriden than the MWA. The City of Meriden and the MWA had slightly higher shares of that population segment than Connecticut as a whole and, more surprisingly, the United States.

As has been widely reported across the country, the Hispanic and Latino population has grown most rapidly amongst all minority groups. This demographic group represented only 11.4 percent of the population in 2003 but has grown 40.6 percent and now stands at 15.5 percent in 2013. The growth rate is expected to slow to 15 percent as the group climbs to 17.6 percent of the overall population by 2023.

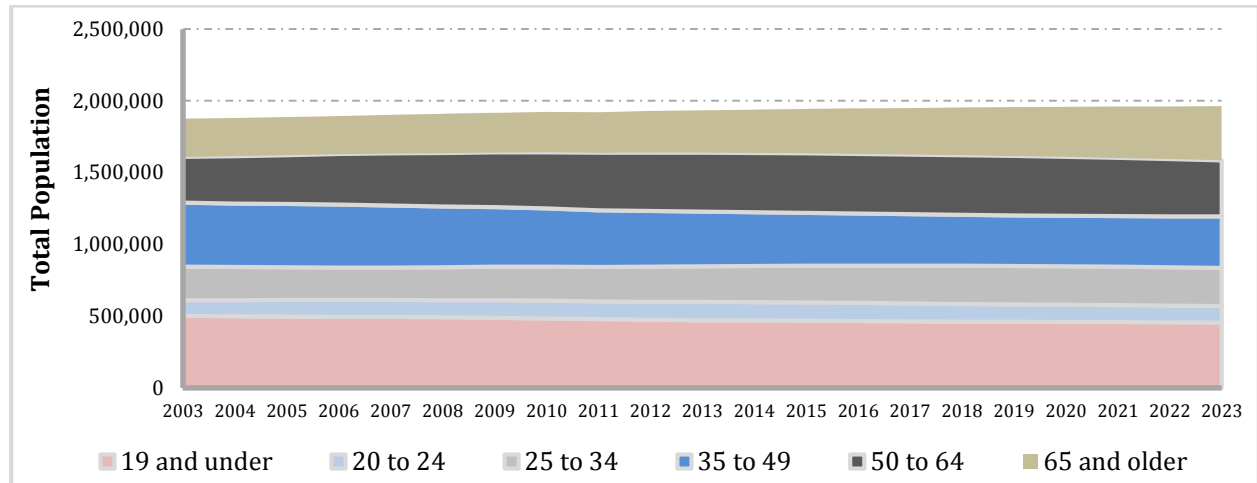
The historic age demographics of the MWA show a consistent pattern of aging in the population that is projected to continue throughout the coming decade. As can be seen in **Figure 4**, the portion of the population under the age of 19 years old representing 26.7 percent of the population in 2003 declined by a modest six percent and reached 24.4 percent by 2013. The pattern of low but steady decline is expected to continue as those under the age of 19 years old are projected to drop by 3.3 percent to only 23.2 percent of the population by 2023. Similarly, the portion of the population aged 35 to 49 years old constituted 23.7 percent of the population in 2003 but has declined by 14.4



percent to 19.7 percent of the population in 2013. The two demographic trends in the MWA echo a concern that has been voiced across the state pertaining to a decline in the prime working age population and a related decline in the number of the state’s young children.

Figure 4: Age Demographic Trends, 2003-23

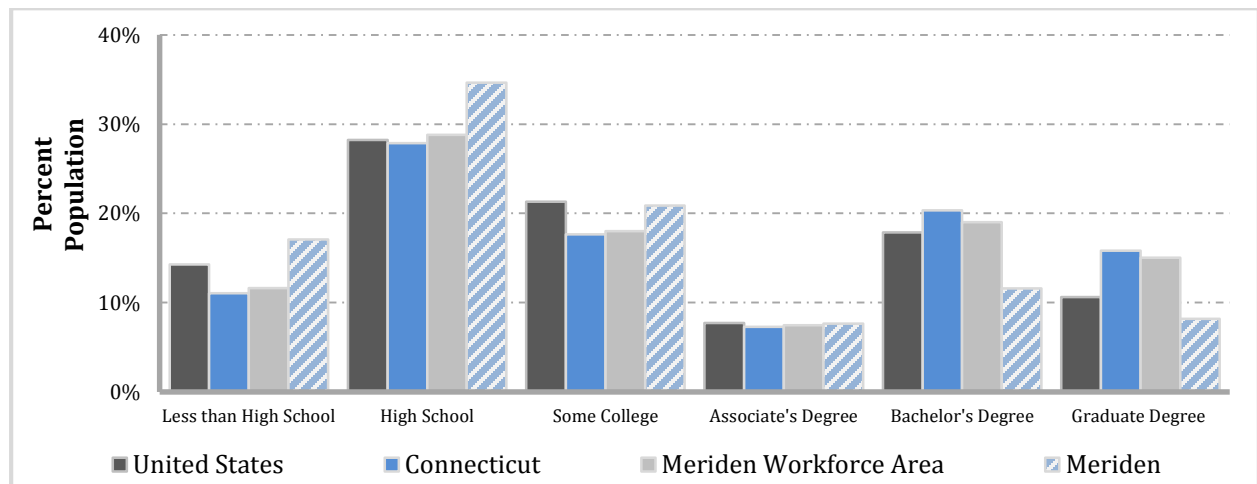
Source: Economic Modeling Specialists International. 2014.



The percentage of the population aged 65 and older has grown substantially in the MWA since 2003 and is projected to grow even more rapidly in the next decade. The proportion of the population in this older age demographic constituted only 14.2 percent of the population in 2003. This segment of the population grew by 10.7 percent and now represents 15.3 percent of the population in 2013. Echoing national trends, albeit at a more rapid pace, the population aged 65 and older is expected to grow by 27.6 percent and represent 19.2 percent of the population in 2023.

Figure 5: Comparative Educational Demographics, 2008-12

Source: American Community Survey. United States Census Bureau. 2008-12.



The educational demographics of the region, as seen in **Figure 5**, for Meriden provide an interesting glimpse into the level of human capital across the workforce. The highest level of education that 35



percent of the population over the age of 25 had achieved was a high school diploma. An additional 21 percent of the population had attended some college while another eight percent earned an associate's degree. In aggregate, a total of 26,217 or 63 percent of residents living in the City of Meriden had an education level that fell within this attainment range. This proportion was significantly higher than the 54 percent in the MWA, the 53 percent across Connecticut, and the 57 percent in the United States.

In contrast, the proportion of the population in the City of Meriden with a bachelor's degree or higher was 20 percent or a total of 8,208 residents. In the MWA, the share of the population with comparable educational credentials was substantially higher at 34 percent. The rate in Connecticut, however, was even higher at 36 percent as compared to the United States with only 28 percent of the population having acquired at least a bachelor's degree.

Table 1: Workplace of Meriden Residents, 2008-11

Source: LEHD Origin-Destination Employment Statistics. United States Census Bureau. 2011.

Meriden		10-Mile		20-Mile		30-Mile	
Town	Share of Commuters	Town	Share of Commuters	Town	Share of Commuters	Town	Share of Commuters
Meriden	22%	Hartford	9%	Hartford	10%	Hartford	9%
Wallingford	13%	Waterbury	6%	New Haven	8%	New Haven	6%
New Haven	5%	Wallingford	5%	Waterbury	4%	Waterbury	3%
Middletown	4%	New Haven	5%	Farmington	3%	Bridgeport	3%
Hartford	4%	New Britain	5%	Wallingford	3%	Farmington	3%
Cheshire	3%	Meriden	4%	New Britain	3%	East Hartford	2%
North Haven	3%	Middletown	4%	Middletown	3%	Wallingford	2%
Waterbury	3%	Farmington	4%	West Hartford	3%	Milford	2%
Southington	2%	Bristol	3%	East Hartford	2%	New Britain	2%
New Britain	2%	Southington	3%	Meriden	2%	Manchester	2%
Hamden	2%	Cheshire	3%	Bristol	2%	West Hartford	2%
Farmington	2%	Newington	2%	North Haven	2%	Stratford	2%
Berlin	2%	North Haven	2%	Manchester	2%	Middletown	2%
Newington	2%	Berlin	2%	Hamden	2%	Meriden	2%
Milford	1%	West Hartford	2%	Newington	2%	Danbury	2%
Rocky Hill	1%	Hamden	2%	Southington	2%	Bristol	2%
Stratford	1%	Rocky Hill	2%	Cheshire	2%	Shelton	2%
East Hartford	1%	East Hartford	2%	Milford	2%	Windsor	2%
Bridgeport	1%	Plainville	2%	Windsor	1%	North Haven	2%
Bristol	1%	Cromwell	1%	Glastonbury	1%	Hamden	2%
<i>All Other</i>	<i>25%</i>	<i>All Other</i>	<i>32%</i>	<i>All Other</i>	<i>41%</i>	<i>All Other</i>	<i>47%</i>



As can be seen from the distribution of human capital in Meriden, the city is primarily a working class community with lower rates of educational attainment than the surrounding region. The advantage of this is that there is a surplus of low skill labor which is advantageous for industries looking to higher from this subset of the population. On the other hand, the surrounding MWA has an elevated concentration of highly skilled labor which makes it equally possible that Meriden could cultivate higher value-added industries.

Table 2: Residence of Meriden Workforce, 2008-11

Source: LEHD Origin-Destination Employment Statistics. United States Census Bureau. 2011.

Meriden		10-Mile		20-Mile		30-Mile	
Town	Share of Commuters	Town	Share of Commuters	Town	Share of Commuters	Town	Share of Commuters
Meriden	27%	Waterbury	6%	New Haven	4%	New Haven	3%
Wallingford	7%	Meriden	6%	Hartford	4%	Hartford	3%
Southington	4%	Bristol	6%	Waterbury	4%	Waterbury	3%
Middletown	4%	New Britain	6%	Bristol	3%	Bridgeport	3%
Waterbury	3%	Wallingford	4%	New Britain	3%	Bristol	3%
New Britain	3%	Southington	4%	West Hartford	3%	New Britain	3%
Cheshire	2%	Middletown	4%	Meriden	3%	West Hartford	2%
Bristol	2%	Hartford	2%	Hamden	3%	Meriden	2%
New Haven	2%	Cheshire	2%	Manchester	3%	Manchester	2%
Hamden	2%	Newington	2%	Wallingford	2%	Hamden	2%
Hartford	2%	West Hartford	2%	Middletown	2%	East Hartford	2%
Berlin	1%	Hamden	2%	East Hartford	2%	West Haven	2%
Bridgeport	1%	Berlin	2%	Southington	2%	Milford	2%
North Haven	1%	Plainville	2%	West Haven	2%	Wallingford	2%
Newington	1%	New Haven	2%	Newington	2%	Middletown	2%
Naugatuck	1%	Wolcott	2%	Glastonbury	2%	Southington	2%
Manchester	1%	Naugatuck	1%	East Haven	1%	Torrington	1%
East Hartford	1%	Wethersfield	1%	Wethersfield	1%	Stratford	1%
East Haven	1%	Farmington	1%	Branford	1%	Enfield	1%
Wolcott	1%	Manchester	1%	Cheshire	1%	Newington	1%
<i>All Other</i>	<i>35%</i>	<i>All Other</i>	<i>42%</i>	<i>All Other</i>	<i>50%</i>	<i>All Other</i>	<i>56%</i>

The workplace location of commuters living in Meriden as well as those living within 10-mile, 20-mile, and 30-mile radii around the City is shown in **Table 1**. The largest share of residents working outside of Meriden commuted to Wallingford for employment and represented 13 percent of the total commuter population from 2008-11. Further south, nearly five percent of Meriden's commuter population drove to New Haven for employment. In the other direction, four percent of the population commuted to Middletown and Hartford. The larger radius regions around Meriden echo a similar trend where I-91 creates a North-South divide of commuters heading primarily to the state's larger cities. The promising news, however, is that there is an excess supply of workers

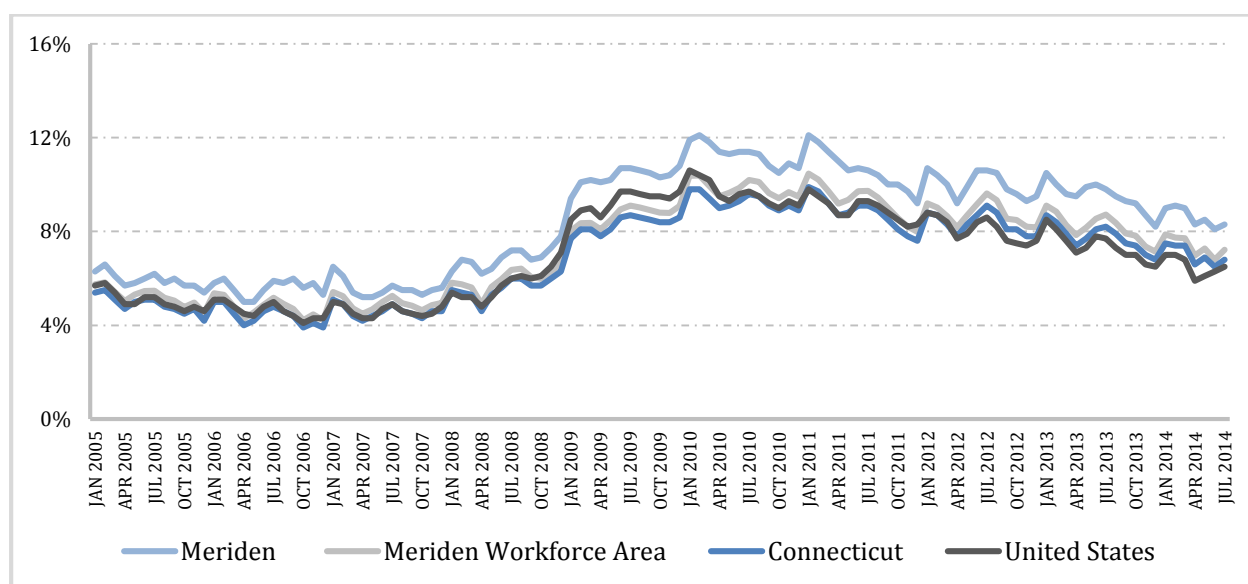


directly in Meriden and the surrounding communities that would likely value a shorter commute in exchange for gainful employment. Meriden's connection to I-91 via I-691 is an important factor in the city's attractiveness for future industrial development.

The residence of commuters working in Meriden as well as those working within 10-mile, 20-mile, and 30-mile radii around the City is shown in **Table 2**. The largest share of residents working in Meriden but living outside of the city was found in Wallingford and represented seven percent of the total commuter population from 2008-11. Further north and to the west, four percent of Meriden's workers commuted from Southington. Still to the north but more eastward than Southington, an additional four percent of workers commuted from Middletown. The larger radius regions around Meriden echo a similar trend where I-91, as with out-commuters, in-commuters primarily traverse a North-South divide coming primarily between the state's larger cities.

Figure 6: Comparative Employment Trends, 2005-14

Source: Local Area Unemployment Statistics. Connecticut Department of Labor, 2014.



Examining the unemployment rates for Meriden and the MWA as compared to regional and national trends in labor underutilization helps to assess the impact of the recession. The pattern of unemployment, as seen in **Figure 6**, remained fairly consistent from January 2005 through December 2008 with Meriden remaining consistently higher than the MWA followed by the United States and Connecticut. Unemployment in the MWA grew from 5.7 percent in January 2005 to 6.6 percent in December 2008. In December 2008, at the onset of the recession, the unemployment rate of each region surged upwards converging to a national average of 7.1 percent.

The unemployment rates for the MWA and Connecticut mirrored the national trend from January 2005 through September 2008. The unemployment rate in these two regions, however, rose above the national average and remained there consistently from September 2008 through the first quarter of 2010. In the first quarter of 2010, the trend began to change for a third time and both regions grew to a rate seen nationally. It is fairly clear that the trend in the MWA is reflective of

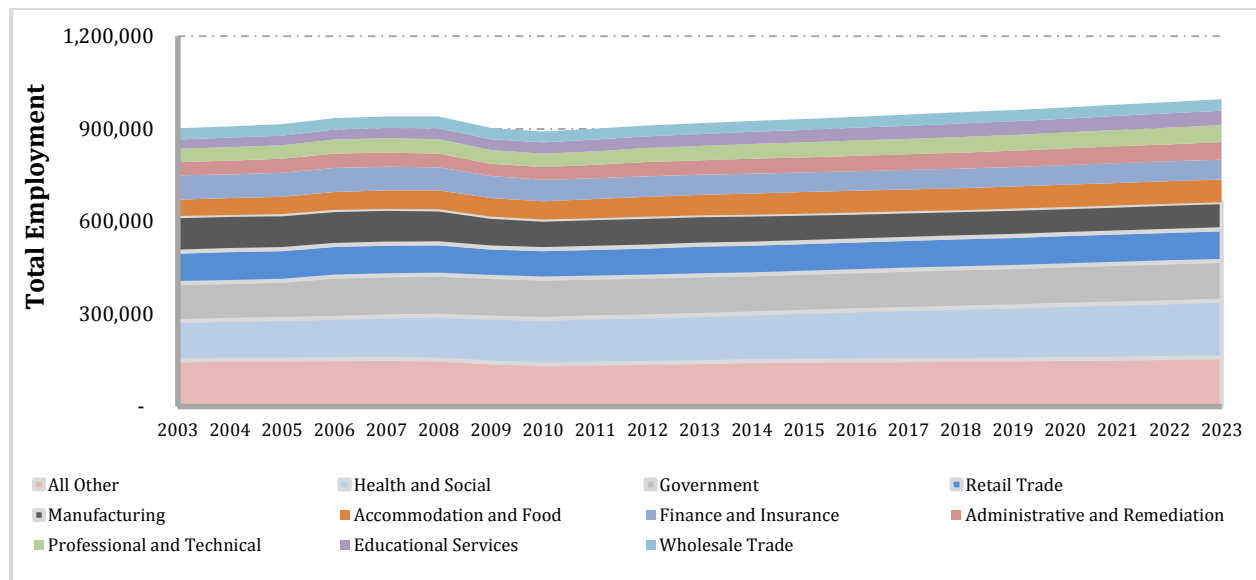


larger statewide employment fluctuations that are likely related to the finance industry as well as government aerospace contractors.

The industrial composition in the MWA has changed drastically since 2003 and is projected to continue to do so through 2023. **Figure 7** shows the historic and projected employment in each of the ten largest broadly defined (2-digit NAICS) industries. The largest rate of employment growth was observed in educational services (non-public) with a net increase of 5,116 jobs from 2003-08 and 3,596 from 2008-13 or 29.2 percent growth from 2003-13. The outlook for this industry continues to be bright as it is expected to grow by 21.5 percent and create 8,291 jobs from 2013-23.

Figure 7: Broad Industry Employment Trends, 2003-23

Source: Economic Modeling Specialists International. 2014.



The accommodation and food service industry also experienced a major demand increase within the region over the last decade. The industry added a total of 8,368 jobs and grew by 15.9 percent from 2003-08. The growth continued through the recession with an additional 4,629 jobs added at a rate of 7.6 percent growth from 2008-13. In total, the industry added 12,997 jobs and grew by 24.7 percent from 2003-13. Although the outlook for the industry is positive, the expected expansion of 7,916 jobs within the region from 2013-23 comes at a more tempered pace of 12 percent growth as compared to the rate seen in the previous decade.

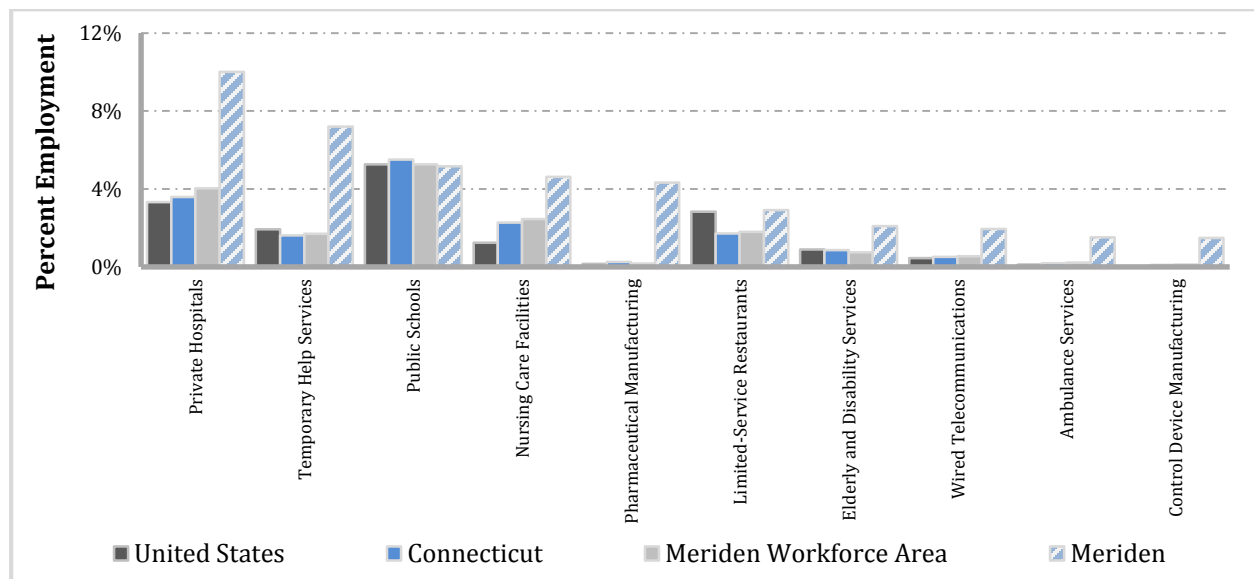
The manufacturing industry, on the other hand, experienced a significant decline within the region and is projected to continue the contraction into the next decade. This trend is not surprising as it mirrors structural shifts in the national economy that are being driven by globalization and technological change. Employment in manufacturing declined by 5,014 jobs from 2003-08 and lost an additional 14,586 jobs from 2008-13. The industry lost a total of 19,600 jobs in aggregate from 2003-13 and declined at a rate of 17 percent. The contraction of this industry is expected to continue at a reduced but still extremely rapid pace. The industry is expected to decline by 8,082 jobs at a rate of 8.5 percent from 2013-23.



Similarly, the finance and insurance industry also experienced a significant contraction as a result of a short-term business cycle fluctuation. Although the regional finance and insurance industry contraction also mirror national trends, unlike the manufacturing industry, the job losses in this sector were the result of a market correction rather than long-term structural changes. The industry lost a total of 4,209 jobs from 2003-08 followed by an additional 9,527 jobs from 2008-13. In aggregate, the industry lost 13,736 jobs or about 17.4 percent of total employment from 2003-13. The outlook for the industry over the next decade, however, reaffirms the interpretation that this industry experienced a market correction because the employment numbers are expected to remain stable. Employment is expected to decline by a negligible 881 workers or about 1.3 percent from 2013-23.

Figure 8: Detailed Comparative Industry Employment, 2013

Source: Economic Modeling Specialists International. 2014.



A cross sectional approach to industrial composition is another useful strategy for understanding the strengths and weaknesses of Meriden relative to the surrounding region. **Figure 8** shows the current employment in each of the ten largest narrowly defined (6-digit NAICS) industry categories. Private hospitals employ the largest proportion of the workforce within the City of Meriden. A location quotient is a descriptive statistic that evaluates industrial concentration in a given region relative to the concentration of the same sector in an overarching base geography. The location quotient for this industry is 2.5 with the MWA, 2.8 with Connecticut, and three with the United States as the base region. In real terms, private hospitals employ 2,395 or 10 percent of the city’s workforce as compared to about four percent across the comparison regions in 2013.

Interestingly, three of the ten largest occupations in Meriden are healthcare related. These occupations not only represent a large portion of the workforce in the city but they are disproportionately represented relative to the comparison regions. The largest of these occupational categories is registered nurses at 1,028 workers or 4.1 percent of employment in 2013. The location quotient for this segment of the workforce is extremely high at 1.7 with the

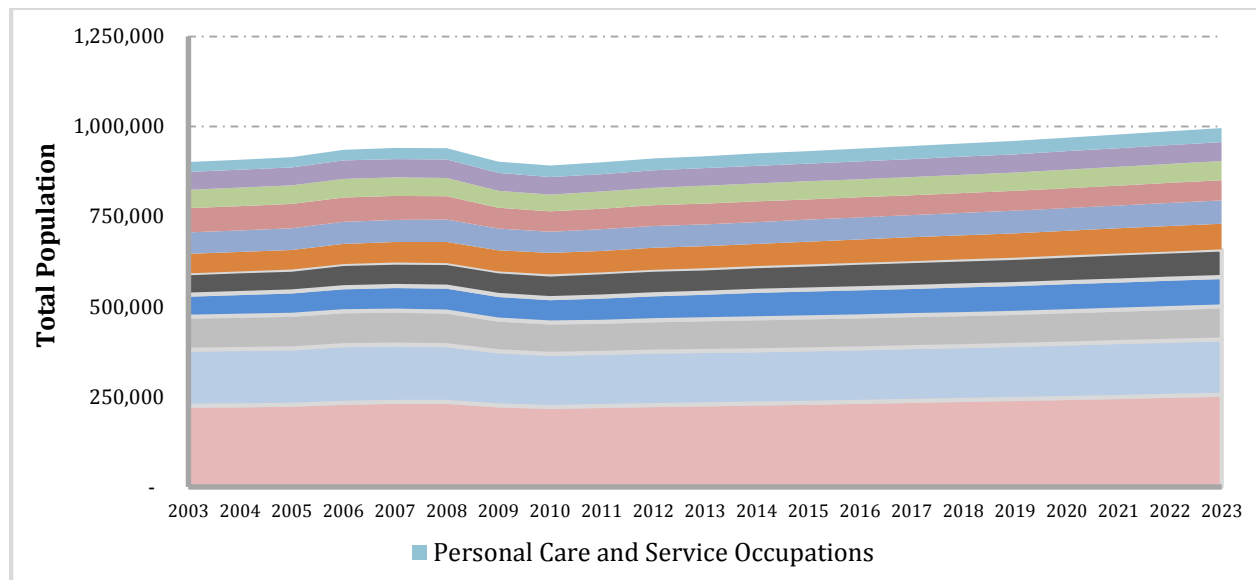


MWA, 1.9 with Connecticut, and two with the United States as the base. Similarly, nursing assistants and personal care aides were observed to be highly concentrated in the city relative to the MWA, Connecticut, and the United States. It is clear from this analysis that Meriden represents a healthcare hub for the surrounding region and that the workforce has invested human capital into this set of skills.

The structure of the workforce in the MWA has changed dramatically since 2003 and is projected to continue to do so through 2023. **Figure 9** shows the historic and projected employment in each of the ten largest broadly defined (2-digit SOC) occupational categories. The largest rate of employment growth was observed in personal care and service occupations with a net increase of 3,437 jobs from 2003-08 and 2,666 from 2008-13 or about 22.4 percent growth from 2003-13. The outlook for these occupations continues to be bright as it is expected to grow by 17.1 percent and create 5,698 jobs from 2013-23.

Figure 9: Broad Occupational Employment Trends, 2003-23

Source: Economic Modeling Specialists International. 2014.



Another segment of the labor market that experienced a significant demand shift within the region can be seen in food preparation and serving related occupations. These occupations experienced a net gain of nearly 7,327 workers from 2003-08 and continued to increase through the recession by adding an additional 4,666 workers. The occupation group saw a growth rate of nearly 19.5 percent and added a total of 11,993 workers for the entirety of the time period from 2003-13. The outlook for this occupation, like personal care and service occupations, is also bright and is expected to grow by 10.9 percent and add an additional 8,014 jobs from 2013-23.

On the other hand, a portion of the regional labor market that experienced a substantial demand reduction was seen in production related occupations. Employment in these occupations declined by 2,491 jobs from 2003-08 and an additional 7,189 jobs from 2008-13. These occupations lost an aggregate 9,680 jobs and declined at a rate of 14.3 percent from 2003-13. These occupations are

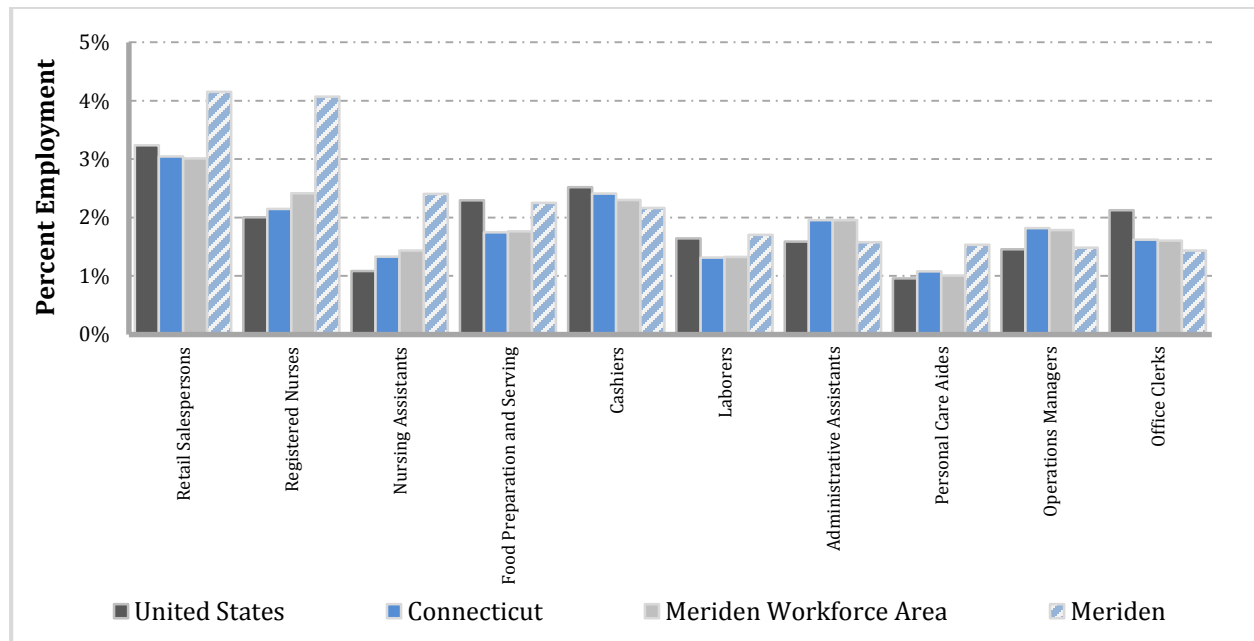


expected to continue their downward trend with an expected decline of 3.2 percent and a loss of 1,839 jobs from 2013-23.

A cross sectional approach to workforce composition is another useful strategy for understanding the strengths and weaknesses of Meriden relative to the surrounding region. **Figure 10** shows the current employment in each of the ten largest narrowly defined (6-digit SOC) occupational categories. Retail sales persons are employed at the highest rate amongst all other occupations within the City of Meriden. The location quotient, or relative concentration, for this industry is 1.4 with the MWA and Connecticut as the base but only 1.3 with the United States used as the base. In real terms, retail salespersons constitute 1,049 or 4.2 percent of the city’s workforce as compared to 3 percent across the comparison regions in 2013.

Figure 10: Detailed Comparative Occupational Employment, 2013

Source: Economic Modeling Specialists International. 2014.



The demographic and economic overview of the City of Meriden and the MWA provides valuable insight about the structure of the regional economy and helps inform the development of the South Mountain Road property. The population in Meriden, although predominantly white, has a disproportionate share of the Hispanic population in the region and this share grow at a rapid pace through the next decade. The proportion of the population aged 25 to 34 is much higher in the City of Meriden and the MWA than in the comparison regions and the population over the age of 25 years old has a relatively low level of educational attainment relative to the rest of the state.

In line with both of these observations, the region has a particular strength in the manufacturing and healthcare industries and has invested heavily in the human capital necessary to staff occupations working in these industries. The previously mentioned demographic statistics support the conclusion that these areas, in particular, are existing regional strengths. Although development

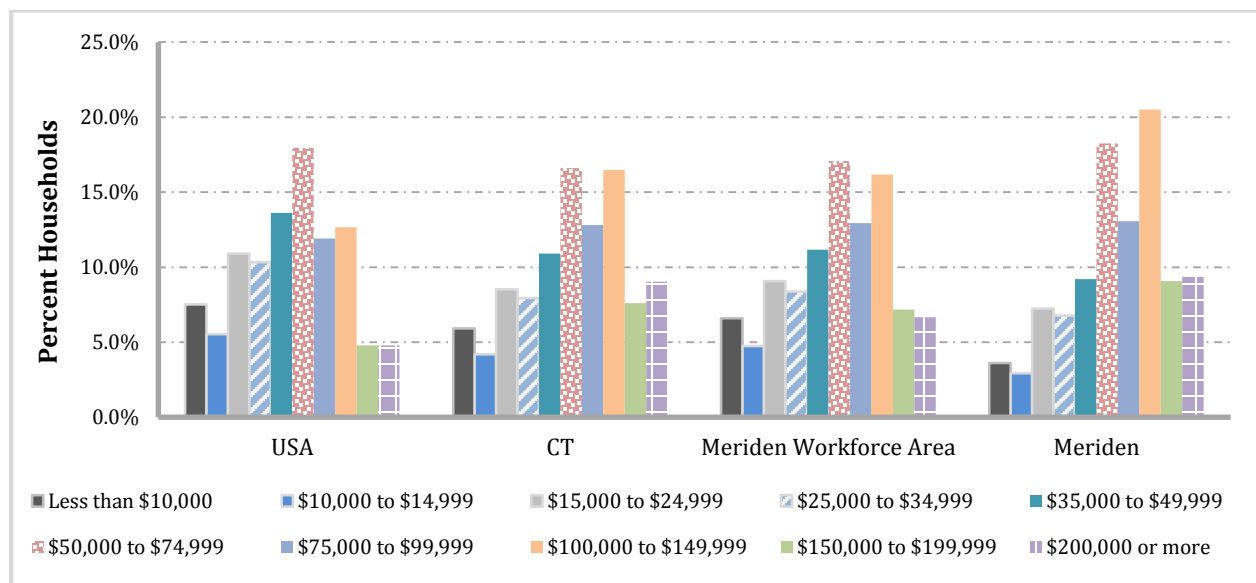


in emerging industries at South Mountain Road is possible and should be considered, encouraging a strategic development and zoning plan for the property that draws on existing regional strengths will help attract potential investors.

The income distribution in Meriden is considerably different as compared to the MWA, state, or the nation. **Figure 11** shows the proportion of total households that had an annual income within each of ten distinct income categories. As one might expect, the distribution of income in Connecticut is skewed slightly more to the right than the national distribution. This observation reflects the considerably higher cost of living, elevated education levels, and concentration of value-added employment located within the region.

Figure 11: Comparative Income Distribution, 2011-13

Source: American Community Survey. United States Census Bureau. 2008-12.



The distribution of income within the MWA is quite similar to the state as a whole. It does, however, have a noticeably higher proportion of individuals from the lower income brackets. This is likely due to the presence of the state’s two largest urban areas within the MWA and the exclusion of Connecticut’s most affluent communities. The distribution of income in Meriden shows that although the City of Meriden has a high proportion of individuals in higher socio-economic groups, it also has substantial proportions from the lowest groups.

The mean household income in Meriden was \$88,808 as compared to \$91,023 in Connecticut and \$67,799 in the United States. The mean income for the city of Meriden grew by nearly 13 percent to reach a level of nearly \$100,328 from 2011-13. This rate far exceeded the 6.3 percent growth to \$96,755 in Connecticut and 7.5 percent growth to \$72,897 in the United States. The gap between the mean and median income in Meriden was a difference of \$15,501 from 2005-07 but grew to \$22,675 from 2011-13. The growth of this gap indicates that the distribution of income has become more leftward skewed over the period. This is a positive indication that Meriden is becoming more



successful at attracting higher income households and will have the potential to support residency for high-skill workers.

LAND USE ANALYSIS

The South Mountain Road property was originally part of a much larger parcel located within the City of Meriden and the Town of Berlin, totaling approximately 820 acres. The site was planned to be developed as a natural gas generation plant, with accompanying gas lines and electric transmission lines. The confluence of these facilities at this site was a major determinant for the selection of this site for this facility.

The generation plant only required 20 to 30 acres of this large site for the actual construction of the plant. NRG, as an inducement for local approvals and support for state approvals, offered the remainder of the land to both municipalities, to be used for whatever purposes the municipalities deemed appropriate. The City of Meriden is studying the potential uses of the land within its jurisdiction. The Town of Berlin chose to keep their land in open space. As such, it forms a large open space buffer across the southern boundary of that town.

Description of Property

Property Size: The NRG site consists of 310 acres owned by the City of Meriden. In addition 37 acres are still owned by NRG. The subject property is located to the east of the Chamberlain Highway, State Route 71, within the northern part of the City of Meriden. It is north of Kensington Avenue and the Westfield Shopping Mall, a major regional commercial center.

Environmental Considerations: The topography of the site is varied. According to the 2009 Plan of Conservation & Development (PCD) for the City of Meriden, areas of steep slopes of over 25% cover approximately 135 acres of the site which is approximately 40%. The steep slopes cover much of the southern portion of the property, except the remaining NRG site. The northern section of the parcel, towards the Berlin town line, has less severe topography.

A relatively small area is designated wetlands. This consists of two wetland areas along the entrance road to the NRG property. Another larger wetlands area is located in the northern area of the site. These wetland areas would not appear to present any significant constraints to the use of the property.

Use of the Property: Most of the property is undeveloped. The only improvements on the site are the unused NRG buildings originally planned for power generation which are being dismantled; access roads; and water, gas and electrical transmission lines. There are several easements related to the proposed development of the power generation plant.

Access: There are currently two points of access to the site, oriented towards the NRG parcel.



The major access is from Chamberlain Highway, Route 71. Route 71, at the point of access, is a two lane rural state highway, connecting the west sections of Berlin with Interstate 691. The access point to the Chamberlain Highway is approximately one half mile north of the westbound interchange of Interstate 691. The interchange at Route 71 is a half interchange, with eastbound off, and westbound on. The westbound off and eastbound on interchange is located on Lewis Avenue, on the other side of the Westfield Shopping Mall.

The site also has a secondary access to the south along Sam's Road to Kensington Avenue. The access is at the north side of the Westfield Shopping Mall.

Neighborhood Environment: The overall neighborhood surrounding the subject property is a mixture of uses. The property lies at the border of urban uses to the south and east, and rural uses to the north and west. The most dominant use within this neighborhood is the Westfield Mall and associated retail uses, located just south of the subject property. These regional mall and surrounding uses are the major retail center of Meriden and surrounding areas.

There are undeveloped and lightly developed parcels to the east of the subject property. However, most of the area to the east is developed as single-family houses, on relatively small lots, with some multi-family development interspersed. The area to the north and west is within the Town of Berlin. All of this area is either undeveloped, or developed with very low density residential uses. The area to the north was part of this larger NRG parcel, is now owned by the Town of Berlin for open space.

Zoning and Plan of Conservation & Development

The subject property is currently zoned PDD, Planned Development District. As stated in the Meriden Zoning regulations, the purpose of this district is to allow diverse but integrated uses, including but not limited to; open space, recreation, industrial, education, retail, commercial and housing, in accordance with the PCD. The uses are to be planned and developed in a coordinated manner.

Land Use Influences

- 1) The existing building was constructed for a special and unique use, power generation. It is unlikely that it could be used for an alternative use, thereby the dismantling enhances the property.
- 2) The major access to the site is by the Chamberlain Highway. This road is a two lane road north of the intersection of Kensington Road. From the entry point northward, Chamberlain Highway has a distinctly rural character, as it passes through a canyon like area going into Berlin. Any improvement to this area would need to address many environmental issues.



According to the Connecticut Department of Transportation, the Chamberlain Highway has an average daily traffic volume of 5,800 ADT (Average Daily Trips) at the existing point of access to the subject site, the road north of the intersection of Kensington Avenue. The Chamberlain Highway, south of Kensington Avenue to the I-691 Interchange is mostly a four lane road, with turn lanes, having been improved to accommodate the traffic from the Westfield Mall and the Mid-State Hospital. The traffic volumes are considerable higher here, with a volume of 10,700 ADT.

Although a potential traffic impact study was not included as part of this study, observations have indicated little congestion along Chamberlain Highway. However, any future use on the subject site would generate significant traffic on Chamberlain Highway, as well as Sam's Road, Kensington Avenue and Lewis Road. It is likely that any significant development on this site would require improvements to Chamberlain Highway between the entrance to the site and Kensington Avenue. Additional improvements may also be required to the secondary entrances.

- 3) The current entrance road to the site is a rather long and winding narrow road. The length of the road makes access to this site more difficult and less attractive to uses which generate high volumes of traffic, especially truck traffic, such as warehousing and distribution uses.
- 4) As indicated previously, the topography of this site is rather severe in many places, with large areas of steep slopes. This is certainly a limitation on extensive development. The NRG site is on the most level section of the property, and would be available for development. However, most of the rest of the site includes steep slopes.

Any development beyond the area of the NRG plant would require extensive re-grading, primarily in the form of removal of earth material from the site. At this time, the nature, type and amount of material to be excavated is uncertain. However, it is likely that a substantial amount of earth material would be required to prepare this area for development. The amount may result is several hundred thousand cubic yards of earth material.

The specific amount of earth material to be removed would depend upon the type and intensity of development. The removal of several hundred thousand yards of material may require an extended period of time, perhaps several years. The amount of material needed to be removed would depend upon the specific design of the proposed development.

- 5) This is one of the few remaining potential development parcels within the city of Meriden. Therefore the potential future use of this property is likely to be a critical component of the City's future growth.
- 6) In spite of the access constraints listed above, this site is located within the center of Connecticut, in proximity to the major urban and employment centers of south-central and



central Connecticut.

- 7) The site is less than one-mile from the Mid-State Medical Center, a major regional medical facility, with a large number of outlying related facilities throughout the area.

Although more site analysis is required for a specific development plan, the conceptual plan within the 2009 POCD showed intensive development within the northern section of the site, where the topography is less severe, and less intensive, strategic development in the southern section of the property. One concept for the plan is residential in the northeastern section of the property, some limited commercial to serve the nearby residents and businesses, and business/industrial park type uses elsewhere within the site, possibly including the NRG parcel.

INDUSTRY ANALYSIS

The industry analysis evaluates the most economically viable opportunities within the MWA and considers appropriateness for development at the South Mountain Road property. After an analysis of all 6-digit NAICS industries, the 22 industries that satisfied the majority of the ten criteria are outlined in **Table 3**. In addition, the table also includes an assessment of locational criteria and how the specific uses conform to the locational characteristics of this subject site. The location criteria outlines specific aspects of the site that make the industry an appealing target for economic development and the potential attraction of various uses of the site.

The components used to evaluate potential development options at the South Mountain Road property were evaluated in the MWA based upon the following criteria:

- 1) Did the Industry have a high relative employment concentration (location quotient) in the region in 2013?

The first factor considered in the industry segmentation analysis involved identifying the location quotient of the industry. The location quotient is a statistic that evaluates the concentration of industry employment in a region relative to the concentration of employment in a larger base region. The industries identified with a location quotient larger than one have a relative competitive advantage in the given region.

- 2) Was the industry a current or emerging strength, or high priority retention target, according to the industry segmentation analysis?

Industry segmentation analysis is an expansion of a location quotient analysis. The calculations include looking at the relative employment concentration, determining whether there was any change in employment since the end of the last recession; and determining those changes that resulted from overall national trends or a particular local advantage. Industries classified as current strengths or retention targets are assumed to have the most promise for the future local economy, based on these calculations.



- 3) Did the industry experience positive share growth in US employment between 2008 and 2013?

The industry employment trend in the national economy is an important consideration in selecting an industry for strategic development. The percent employment growth by industry was examined to assess the extent of growth in the given sector. Those industries found to have a positive share of national employment growth were considered to have a positive outlook.

- 4) Does local knowledge confirm that this industry could be a strength in the area?

This criteria was developed based on interviews with local officials, developers, and real estate professionals, a general qualitative assessment was determined based on all of the feedback garnered from those interviews.

- 5) Was the industry's employment multiplier greater than the average of all the employment multipliers in the region?

An employment multiplier is an excellent indicator of the return on strategic investment in economic development for a given sector. An employment multiplier is a measure that reports the number of supply chain and other jobs created as a result from a single job being created in the given industry. Those industries found to have an employment multiplier larger than the average across all industries in the region were considered to have a greater return on investment in economic development.

- 6) Was the industry's income multiplier greater than the average of all the income multipliers in the region?

An income multiplier is an excellent indicator of the labor share of value in a given sector. An income multiplier is a measure that reports the scale of income created through supply chain and other jobs as a result of a single dollar of labor income being created in a given industry. Those industries found to have an income multiplier larger than the average across all industries in the region were considered to have a more equitable distribution on the returns from industrial growth.

- 7) Did the industry buy at least \$75 million of its inputs within the region?

The scale of an industry's factor inputs that are purchased within a given region help to evaluate the real impact of a region on the state and local economy. An industry with a larger share, in real dollar terms, of inputs purchased within the region were considered to have a larger impact on the local economy. Those industries found to have an elevated share of factor inputs purchased within the region were considered to be more beneficial to the state and regional economy.



- 8) Was the industry's regional purchasing coefficient (RPC) stronger than the average of the RPC in the region?

A regional purchasing coefficient evaluates the extent to which an industry's factor inputs are purchased within a given region. A regional purchasing coefficient reports the share of total inputs purchased within a region as a percent of total inputs. Those industries found to have an elevated share of factor inputs purchased within the region were considered to be more beneficial to the state and regional economy.

- 9) Were the region's average industry earnings greater than the state's average industry earnings in 2013?

An industry's average earnings are another measure of labor share of value that help evaluate the extent that profits are distributed to the workforce in a given industry. An industry with a larger average earnings will have workers with a larger amount of disposable income available to spend within the region which will have a multiplier effect on the local economy.

- 10) Was the industry's average productivity greater than the regional productivity?

Industry productivity is a measure that can be useful to evaluate the level of output normalized by the level of employment. Productivity, in this case, is a measure created by dividing the total output created in a given industry by employment within a region. An industry with a level of productivity greater than the regional average was identified as having the largest contribution to regional output relative to the size of the workforce.

The design of the proposed development should minimize to the extent feasible, the amount of regrading required. Extensive regrading may take a long time in the preparation of this site. This would suggest that small building footprints would be preferable to large building footprints. **Table 3** indicates which industries may find the site attractive. However, the City of Meriden, through its land use policies and growth goals, may not find all of the uses attractive. These decisions will need to be made by the City, in its evaluation as to how this fits into the overall plan of the City.

Extensive development of the site would require access improvements, as recommended by the 2009 POCD. However, the principal access is likely to remain onto the Chamberlain Highway. This is likely to require certain improvements, including turning access and widening of the road to the south. The existing PDD zoning permits a full range of uses, including a planned mixed-use development. This zoning is an appropriate framework for the development of this property.

Many of the industries within **Table 3** which may be preferable to the City may be accommodated in a business office park environment, which would be permitted by current zoning and was indicated as a potential use in the 2009 POCD. One alternative plan would be mixed uses for the site. Given current levels of industrial demand, it is likely to take many years to fill that site up. A mixed use development can provide a more feasible financial basis for development, and make it more attractive to investors.



Table 3: Industry Criteria Selection in the MWA

Source: Economic Modeling Specialists International. 2014.

NAICS Code	NAICS Industry Description	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	SUM
336413	Other Aircraft Parts and Auxiliary Equipment Manufacturing	1	1	1		1	1	1	1	1	1	9
221121	Electric Bulk Power Transmission and Control	1	1		1	1	1	1	1	1	1	9
339112	Surgical and Medical Instrument Manufacturing	1		1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	9
524126	Direct Property and Casualty Insurance Carriers	1	1		1	1	1	1	1	1	1	9
531312	Nonresidential Property Managers	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1		1	9
621111	Offices of Physicians (except Mental Health Specialists)	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1		9
621498	All Other Outpatient Care Centers	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1		9
331315	Aluminum Sheet, Plate, and Foil Manufacturing	1	1			1	1	1	1	1	1	8
332995	Other Ordnance and Accessories Manufacturing	1	1	1		1	1		1	1	1	8
532120	Truck, Utility Trailer, and RV (Recreational Vehicle) Rental and Leasing	1		1		1	1	1	1	1	1	8
621493	Freestanding Ambulatory Surgical and Emergency Centers	1	1	1		1	1	1	1	1		8
221122	Electric Power Distribution			1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	8
221210	Natural Gas Distribution	1	1	1	1	1		1	1		1	8
332912	Fluid Power Valve and Hose Fitting Manufacturing	1	1	1		1			1	1	1	7
333611	Turbine and Turbine Generator Set Units Manufacturing	1		1		1	1		1	1	1	7
311520	Ice Cream and Frozen Dessert Manufacturing	1	1	1		1			1	1	1	7
331222	Steel Wire Drawing	1	1	1		1			1	1	1	7
331421	Copper Rolling, Drawing, and Extruding	1				1	1	1	1	1	1	7

STRATEGIC INTELLIGENCE

The purpose of this portion of the analysis is to gather strategic intelligence about the development potential for the South Mountain Road site from real estate professionals, the listing agent, brokers, and developers. The information was gathered from a series of interviews conducted with members of these groups that operate within the MWA and represent industries related to those seen as viable for the site. The following inferences were drawn from these interviews and this analysis represents strategic intelligence that can be used for proper zoning and planning as well as for marketing the property for subsequent commercial or residential uses.

The terrain of the property poses a significant challenge for future development. One significant challenge is the steep grade of the property and the windy road leading to the plateau. These challenges make large-scale construction difficult and limit the uses of the site. Additionally, the location's distance from I-91 limit the potential for large-scale distribution or a technology park. Another concern is the property's lack of visibility along the major highways. In contrast to these factors, an advantage of the property is that nearby access to I-691 would allow for developers to



tap into the regional labor market. The secluded nature of the property may limit the property's use for development that requires high visibility or ease of accessibility. However, this same attribute can be seen as an asset when considering development that might need a less public visibility property or one with high elevations.

Although all of the real estate professionals agreed that the MWA is particularly short of industrial property relative to the rest of Connecticut, the South Mountain Road property is problematic for development of this nature. The interviewees, instead, recommended development that would take advantage of the site's unique attributes. The site has a high potential for use as a recreational or hospitality facility both because of the proximity to the retail mall and scenic landscape. An inpatient medical facility or rehabilitation center could also take advantage of the site's tremendous views. At the other end of the spectrum, the site has some limited potential for mixed-use development. Housing development coupled with limited retail space might also take advantage of the scenic views atop the property. It should be noted that residential development would likely necessitate additional roadway connections potentially with Sam's Road or Bailey Ave.

Another potential use for the site that was suggested by developers is wind or solar power generation. Although development in these areas may seem far-fetched, the state's extremely high renewable portfolio goals make the demand for energy produced from these sources definitive. The lofty terrain and site characteristics actually make the site a potential location for the development of a wind farm. In addition, the large-scale electricity lines that connect to the NRG site were built with the intent to accommodate this use.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The report explored the economic feasibility of a 300 acre parcel of land that surrounds the former NRG site, located east of the Chamberlain Highway (Route 71) in Meriden. A portion of the property is currently owned by the City and is accessible through a central road that has been built to city standards and equipped with power as well as sewer lines. A 37 acre central portion of the area is not owned by the City of Meriden but is also available for development. The central portion was once previously the site of the NRG natural gas power generation facility that has subsequently been dismantled.

The report informs planning and economic development officials within the City of Meriden as well as potential developers about the best possible uses for the site. The analysis considered demographic and economic trends in the City of Meriden itself as well as the surrounding commuter area. In addition, the latter half of the report explored the environmental and geographic advantages of the site while paying close attention to inherent limitations. Finally, the report summarized strategic intelligence garnered from interviews with real estate professionals about the property. Strategic zoning and planning of the property will enable and promote the use of the site in an economically viable manner for the beneficial community and economic growth of the City of Meriden.



The uses for the South Mountain Road site that hold the most promise at this time include:

- **Destination Recreation:** A destination recreational facility could take advantage of the site's unique attributes and scenic views. A destination recreation facility would benefit from the close proximity to the retail mall as well as the scenic landscape. However, the access to the highway could limit some of the potential to market the site for use as a destination recreational facility.
- **Wind or Solar Power Generation:** An alternative use for the site could be for wind or solar power generation. The state's extremely high renewable portfolio goals make the demand for energy produced from these sources definitive. The lofty terrain and site characteristics make the site a potential location for the development of a wind or solar farm. In addition, the large-scale electricity lines that were built to connect the NRG site were constructed to accommodate a similar use and could easily be transitioned for these purposes.
- **Technology or Healthcare Space:** The scenic views and campus-like feel of the hilltop offer an attractive location for the development of an office park. Again, the winding entry road and distance from the Chamberlain Highway make development in this area problematic. The development of office or technology space marketed to companies in health care, insurance, in-patient medical facilities, or long-term healthcare facilities would complement the strengths of the regional workforce. Again, the continued shortage of industrial-use property in the region and evolving need for 'smart tech' office space will continue to make the South Mountain Road site a potential option for light manufacturing despite the inherent challenges.
- **Light Manufacturing:** The site has the potential for strategic development in light manufacturing due to the large amount of land available and the shortage of similarly zoned sites within the region. Development in this sector, however, could be problematic due to the steep and winding entry road. The distance from the Chamberlain Highway to the site also makes any large-scale manufacturing problematic. Manufacturing or intensive industrial development activity within the health care, aerospace, or medical research areas would complement the strengths of the regional economy. The continued shortage of industrial-use property in the region will continue to make the South Mountain Road site a potential option for light manufacturing despite the inherent challenges.
- **Mixed-Use Development:** Another possible alternative use for the site would be the construction of a mixed-use residential and commercial development. The scenic views and expansive terrain could afford a housing development that could be coupled with commercial retail space. The housing could support the retail space and overcome issues related to visibility that retail space alone would have difficulty overcoming.

The above recommendations for the uses of the South Mountain Road property were generated through a comprehensive review of the economic and demographic characteristics of the region. The recommendations also considered insight afforded from real estate professionals as well as the site specific characteristics of the property. The recommended uses suggest that a zoning structure that allowed for a wide variety of uses could benefit the City of Meriden in expediting the sale and development of the property.



However, the development potential of the site increases substantially if the NRG site is combined with the existing City-owned property into one cohesive property. This move would signal to developers that the City is interested in a thoughtful and unified plan. As the sites currently exist, the scale of the properties is somewhat limited because there are two landowners and without a unified goal. If both sites were owned by one entity, then parcels could be considered individually as well as part of the whole. Once the parcel is unified then a unified goal that takes into account the overall character of the City and highlights the assets of the site could be created, and business models and fiscal impacts of proposed developments can then be assessed.

