

MERIDEN BRITANNIA CO.



## City of Meriden

# From Brownfields to Transit-Oriented Development

## A Decade-long Commitment

Reflecting on the Past

Investing in the Future

Moving Forward



## Reflecting on our Past

Located in south central Connecticut, Meriden is a medium-sized urban community situated midway between Hartford and New Haven at the intersection of three major highways. Once an agricultural town, the construction of the railroad in 1839 transformed Meriden into a manufacturing mecca. The railroad and central location of Harbor Brook, which supplied a source of power, catalyzed economic and population growth. Meriden soon became known as the "Silver City" due to the lucrative silver plating industry that took root in the city's manufacturing core.

Over the next century, Meriden, recognized for industrial ingenuity and working class prosperity, attracted generations of immigrants. By the mid-1900s, Meriden's industry base diversified, responding to changing technology and consumer demands. Despite best efforts, like many of Connecticut's industrial cities, Meriden's manufacturing base declined, unable to balance the rising costs of business and global competition. Long-time residents and immigrants of the early 21<sup>st</sup> century were left with obsolete and empty manufacturing buildings and the negative environmental impacts of an industrial legacy.

City leaders recognized that the blight associated with these brownfields sites had a negative impact on the very fabric of the community. Addressing the effects of brownfields was central to both successful revitalization and the city's future.



Blight and Brownfields Committee



Blight and Brownfields Committee

Community input and active stakeholder engagement were critical to Meriden's long-term commitment to brownfields revitalization. In October 2002, the City of Meriden formed the Blight and Brownfields (B&B) Committee to guide the redevelopment of underutilized and vacant properties. This important multi-stakeholder group remains committed to redeveloping brownfields sites, improving the quality of life of Meriden residents, creating investment opportunities, and improving the neighborhoods where they live and work.

### Blight and Brownfields Committee

Action 13 Neighborhood Association	Meriden Council of Neighborhoods
AECOM	Meriden Economic Development Corporation
City of Meriden	Meriden Housing Authority
Colliers Dow & Condon	Northeast Utilities
Connecticut Department of Community and Economic Development (CTDECD)	Tighe & Bond
Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (CTDEEP)	University of Connecticut
Dutch Hill Neighborhood Association	U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) New England Brownfields Program
Flood Control Implementation Agency	Vita Nuova, LLC
Greater Meriden Chamber of Commerce	Women & Families Center
Meriden Children First Initiative	

# Reflecting on our Past

Early in its decade-long commitment to cleaning up brownfields, the Blight and Brownfields (B&B) Committee identified the Dutch Hill/Action 13 Neighborhood, extending from Cook Avenue to South Colony Street, as a critical area in need of revitalization. Later this focus expanded to include other brownfields located within the half mile area surrounding the downtown rail station. This Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) District, and Meriden's efforts for sustainable redevelopment of its downtown, is catalyzed by a new New Haven/Hartford/ Springfield rail service scheduled to start in 2016. Meriden will be the central Connecticut station stop on this line.

Using USEPA Brownfields funding, Meriden created an inventory of vacant and underutilized sites within the Dutch Hill/Action 13 area and larger TOD district. Initially, a dozen brownfields sites were identified using the criteria established by the B&B Committee. Over the next ten years, other properties were identified and assessed under this stakeholder-driven process.

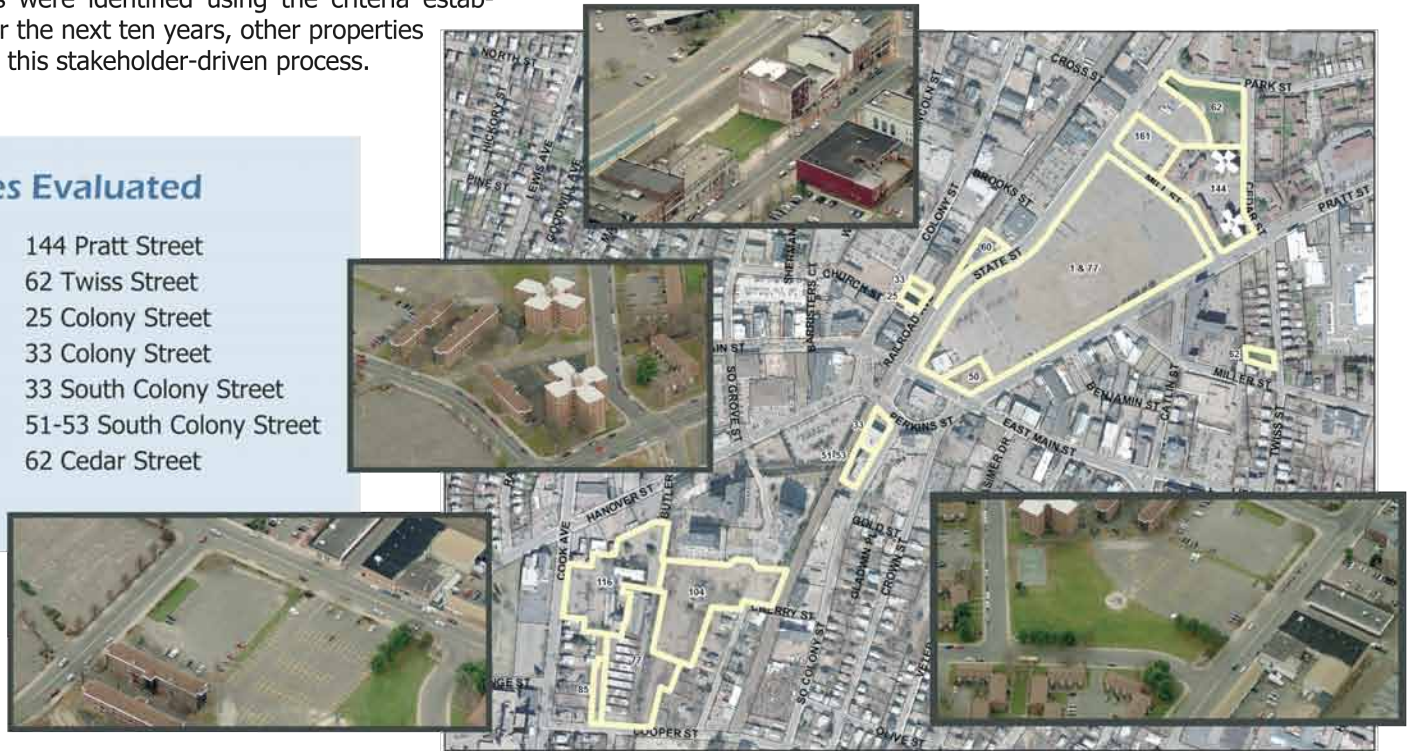
## Property Prioritization Criteria

The B&B Committee established a set of criteria to prioritize downtown sites for assessment.

- likelihood of significant environmental impacts
- ability to gain site access for assessment activities
- the potential to take control or ownership of the property in the future,
- opportunities for community benefit through economic development, green space or flood control improvements on the site.

### Properties Evaluated

- |                     |                           |
|---------------------|---------------------------|
| 104 Butler Street   | 144 Pratt Street          |
| 77 Cooper Street    | 62 Twiss Street           |
| 85 Cooper Street    | 25 Colony Street          |
| 116 Cook Avenue     | 33 Colony Street          |
| 1 & 77 State Street | 33 South Colony Street    |
| 60 State Street     | 51-53 South Colony Street |
| 161 State Street    | 62 Cedar Street           |
| 50 East Main Street |                           |



## Reflecting on our Past

### The Role of Harbor Brook

Harbor Brook, which energized early economic development in Meriden's downtown, has become a major deterrent to economic revitalization and healthy neighborhoods. The city has experienced numerous major flood events dating back to the mid-1800s, causing tens of millions of dollars in property damage.

In April 2000, the Harbor Brook Flood Control and Linear Trail Project outlined a series of actions to reduce flooding in the downtown. This plan recommended the redesign and replacement of numerous bridges and channel improvements and the acquisition of floodplain property for storage during flood events.

With the help of state and federal resources, the City of Meriden began implementing these recommendations through a strategic and phased approach. Since 2000, over 15 million dollars has been invested in engineering and design, bridge improvements, and property acquisition.



Harbor Brook,  
downtown  
Meriden



Harbor Brook, downtown Meriden

Addressing consistent flooding in the downtown not only eliminates risk to property, but has other environmental benefits.

The HUB and Factory H, two brownfields sites anchoring the TOD, are both heavily influenced by Harbor Brook. Harbor Brook, and its two tributaries, Clark and Jordan Brooks, lie in culverts beneath the HUB property. Seasonal and severe flooding events were significant factors resulting in property vacancy.

Harbor Brook runs through the Factory H site and the adjacent property at 116 Cook Street. Flooding in the area poses a constraint on the future use of these sites.

For these reasons, the City of Meriden recognized the critical need to integrate brownfields revitalization with flood control improvement plans, leveraging the benefits obtained from both investments.

# Investing in Our Future

## Leveraging Resources in the Community

Over the past decade, the City of Meriden, with the help of federal and state agencies, has been very successful in leveraging available funding from a variety of sources to support its TOD effort, community revitalization and sustainable brownfields redevelopment. The extensive work to identify, quantify, acquire, clean up and revitalize key parcels in the downtown core could not have been done without the funding support from these agencies:

- U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA)
- City of Meriden
- Connecticut Department of Economic and Community Development (CTDECD)
- Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (CTDEEP)
- Connecticut Department of Transportation (CTDOT)
- U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)

## Healthy Neighborhood Initiative

In 2010, the B&B Committee sponsored The Healthy Neighborhood Initiative. This program reached into the residential communities impacted by brownfields, engaging residents, creating a better understanding of healthy lifestyles, and building a closer connection to the revitalization efforts. Through these efforts, a healthy neighborhood inventory was created, identifying issues of concern such as stormwater problems, lack of greenspace, food deserts within the walkable areas, and remaining environmental impacts. Workshops were held in Spanish and English to understand the needs of the neighborhood residents.

## Community Commitment to Well-being

Brownfields revitalization is only one aspect of Meriden's community-wide commitment to improving its environment. The Women and Families Center, leader of the B&B Committee, shapes and directs efforts city-wide and is dedicated to improving the quality of life for all residents of Meriden.

The Meriden Children First Initiative (CFI), another active community organization, supports the health, development and early learning of children. In early 2010, CFI launched The Meriden Family Zone to improve health, early learning and self-sufficiency outcomes for young children in targeted lower-income Meriden neighborhoods. Recently, CFI received a Promise Neighborhoods Planning Grant from the U.S. Department of Education to fund a network of support services for families in distressed neighborhoods surrounding the downtown.



# Investing in Our Future

## The Meriden Transit-Oriented Development District

The Meriden TOD initiative seeks to transform the half-mile center city area into a TOD District that includes new residential and commercial development, public open space, and improved access to public transportation. The TOD district will incorporate an intermodal center that has been identified as a key location for enhanced passenger rail service proposed along the New Haven-Hartford-Springfield regional rail corridor.

According to an analysis of ridership and parking projections, ridership is estimated to reach 432 daily boardings by 2030. The potential for this number of commuters creates an unprecedented opportunity for economic growth in Meriden's downtown core.



Meriden Transit-Oriented Development District

The City of Meriden developed a TOD Master Plan through a collaborative community process. Preliminary design concepts for a new Intermodal Transportation Center, a station area market analysis, and a traffic improvement plan have been developed to help reshape a new identity of the city's downtown. Additional traffic engineering, market analysis and TOD zoning regulation modifications will be completed in 2013. In addition, Meriden has secured permits from both the CTDEEP and the Army Corps of Engineers for improvements along the Harbor Brook corridor.



# Investing in Our Future

## Transit-Oriented Development Focus Areas

The TOD initiative includes a number of key focus areas involving multiple redevelopment and infrastructure projects intended to improve the economic vitality and quality of life in the downtown.

- **Meriden Intermodal Center:** a pedestrian link across the rail line from Colony Street to the HUB Park, including a new mixed-use, multi-modal interface and parking structure.
- **Colony Street:** revitalization of the north-south commercial-retail corridor with strategic infill development and the preservation of historic buildings, connecting to the new Meriden Intermodal Center.
- **HUB Park:** the future centerpiece of the downtown is a 14.4-acre park affording public amenities, Harbor Brook flood control, and 150,000 square feet of footprint for mixed use development.
- **Meriden Housing Authority Property:** new quality affordable housing options for residents of the Mills Housing complex within walking distance of the Meriden Intermodal Center.
- **East and West Main Street:** combining historic building fabric with new infill of the commercial-retail streetscape to revitalize and reconnect civic, educational and community facilities.
- **Factory H Area:** a mixed-use housing and retail project to anchor the area south of Hanover Street integrated with new traffic, greenway and pedestrian connectivity.
- **Pratt Street Gateway:** a grand, landscaped boulevard that connects the interstates directly to the new city center will serve as a catalyst for development.



The Meriden TOD initiative and its related projects are supported by local, state and federal agencies, including:

- City of Meriden
- Connecticut Department of Transportation (CTDOT)
- Federal Rail Administration
- U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)
- Connecticut Department of Economic and Community Development (CTDECD)
- Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (CTDEEP)
- U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA)
- Army Corps of Engineers



# Investing in Our Future

## The HUB of Meriden

The HUB site, located in Meriden's historic downtown center, is a 14.4 acre property surrounded by commercial buildings, light industrial uses, professional offices, cultural establishments and residential neighborhoods. The property once served as a center of industrial and commercial activity in the downtown. In the 1970's, the site housed the Meriden Mall, one of the region's first indoor retail shopping malls.

The HUB property sits atop Harbor Brook and two tributaries, Clark and Jordan Brooks, which lie in culverts beneath the property. Significant flooding caused by these waterways in the 1990's caused an estimated \$26 million in property damage, resulting in vacated and deteriorated properties. In 2002, the Meriden Economic Development Corporation provided seed funding for the development of a Comprehensive City Center Plan in which the HUB was the focal point of a larger downtown vision.

With Targeted Site Assessment funding from USEPA and subsequent funding from CTDEEP, the site was fully assessed by 2005. Later that year, the City took ownership of the HUB property, demonstrating its commitment to long-term, sustained growth in its central downtown core. Over the next five years, millions of dollars of federal, state, and local funds were invested to reduce the negative environmental impacts of the HUB site on the surrounding community. CTDECD provided \$2 million dollars for demolition and additional monies for a redevelopment plan and market analysis. USEPA supported the effort with additional funding from both the Brownfields and Water Programs. Throughout the entire project, the City of Meriden committed staff and monetary resources to move this critical project forward.

## Community Workshops

Since the very beginning of Meriden's brownfields program community involvement has been the guiding principle of the decision-making process. Throughout this decade-long process, a series of workshops have been held to engage and inform stakeholders about the various projects.

For example, the City of Meriden presented **Reuse of the HUB: The Impact on Meriden's Downtown**, an interactive community program. The meeting offered residents and stakeholders an in-depth look at the environmental investigations and cleanup activities at the HUB site, the role of the property in the City's Flood Control Plan, and economic opportunities for the future. Breakout sessions provided attendees the opportunity to talk in small groups with City leaders and technical experts and provide input into the future of the downtown.

On another occasion, the City of Meriden and the B&B Committee hosted a design charrette, or workshop, to provide an opportunity for stakeholders to explore planning issues and reuse alternatives for Factory H and surrounding properties. Community participants were led by Vita Nuova, LLC, the City's brownfields consultant, and architects from the Yale Urban Design Workshop, through a day-long workshop to identify a sustainable comprehensive redevelopment plan for the entire city block.





# Investing in Our Future

## Factory H

The Factory H complex at 77 Cooper Street and 104 Butler Street was once home to the International Silver Company, a silver business with roots back to 1898. The densely built property included three main buildings and several minor structures situated along Harbor Book. When the company shut its doors, it left behind one of the most contaminated brownfields in the city. The vacant and blighted site negatively impacted the health of the neighborhood and surrounding properties.

The City, CTDEEP and USEPA teamed with neighborhood stakeholders to embark on a comprehensive effort to eliminate the blight and contamination caused by Factory H. Significant resources from USEPA's Brownfields Program helped support this long term commitment and the development of comprehensive brownfields remediation program for the TOD area.

Emergency action on the part of the USEPA funded the removal of friable asbestos that posed an imminent health and safety risk to the neighborhood. The USEPA New England Brownfields Program funded extensive environmental investigations and remediation activities. CTDEEP, CTDECD, HUD, the City of Meriden and other sources, funded remediation and the demolition of structures at the Factory H site. In 2007, the City of Meriden took ownership of the property through condemnation to facilitate cleanup and redevelopment.



Factory H Buildings



116 Cook Avenue

## The 116 Cook Avenue Story

The adjacent property at 116 Cook Avenue was also once part of the sprawling International Silver Company operation. This 70,000 square foot structure shared a common wall with one of the Factory H buildings. The property and building enjoyed a short period of economic resurgence as medical office space. After the neighborhood hospital moved out of the downtown, sustainable reuse of the Cook Avenue property was hindered by flooding and the stigma associated with the adjacent Factory H blight.

Once again, the City of Meriden invested significant resources to understand the property's role in the downtown. As part of the City's strategic vision for brownfields redevelopment, the City acquired title to 116 Cook Avenue in 2009. USEPA's Brownfields Program came to the plate again with funding and technical support for site and structural assessments, interim clean up and stabilization activities, and stakeholder-driven reuse planning.

## Moving Forward



### The Future of the Factory H Property

Eight years after the site was identified as a priority brownfields site by the B&B Committee, all structures at 77 Cooper and 104 Butler Streets were remediated and demolished. After years of site investigations and hazardous materials abatement, the blighted remnant of the International Silver Company has been removed.

With buildings gone and interim remediation and stabilization activities complete, the property will serve as an anchor for sustainable redevelopment in the TOD. Plans call for the former Factory H property and the adjacent 116 Cook Avenue building to be redeveloped into a mixed use center likely incorporating residential and commercial uses. The land will include neighborhood open space, featuring an open Harbor Brook channel and pedestrian connections to the city center.

### The HUB of the Community

With the solid support of federal, state, and local funding, the City of Meriden has conducted demolition and interim cleanup activities at the HUB site, achieving several significant milestones to reduce the environmental impacts on the community. Located adjacent to the planned Intermodal Transportation Station, the HUB property offers 150,000 square feet of footprint for mixed use development and the creation of a downtown green with a daylighted and restored Harbor Brook.

The HUB once served as a center of industrial and commercial activity. Today, the property is the HUB of activity in the downtown. Numerous community events are held at the site annually. A farmer's market provides residents with access to fresh, healthy food options.

As plans move forward to create a vibrant, pedestrian-friendly integrated downtown, the HUB will serve as a centerpiece in a revitalized city center.



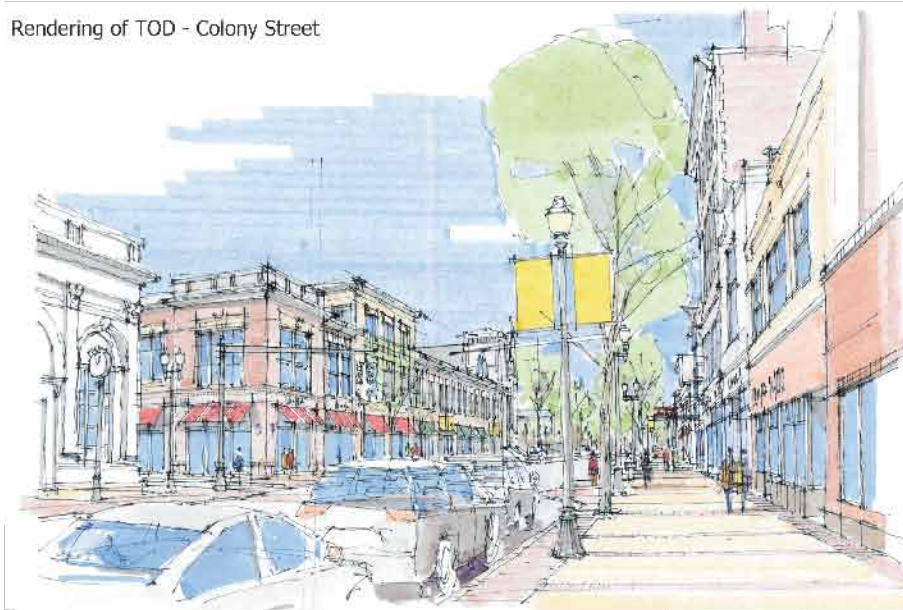
Rendering of HUB Park / Mill Street

## Moving Forward

The City of Meriden has been committed to the sustainable redevelopment of its downtown and core neighborhoods for over ten years. Early in the process, city leaders and the B&B Committee identified two priority sites strategically located within the city's downtown. Today, these two sites anchor a new Transit-Oriented Development District that seeks to create the sustainable rebirth of the downtown in a cohesive and deliberate process.

The community's vision creates a connection between residential, commercial and open space opportunities in the half mile area surrounding the new downtown train station. Future plans and funding commitments for enhancing both the Harbor Brook floodplain and Meriden's Linear Trail system, along with the new commuter rail service, will serve to significantly improve economic opportunities and the quality of life for Meriden residents.

Rendering of TOD - Colony Street



Blight and Brownfields Committee

Over 150 years after the railroad first arrived in Meriden, the vacant and deteriorated buildings of the city's industrial past were a source of blight and an ever-present reminder of economic loss. The City of Meriden recognized that addressing the effects of these brownfields head on was critical to the city's future. Over the past decade, the community has worked together – with the help of local, state and federal stakeholders – to create and implement a new image for the city's TOD core. Once again, the railroad stands as a centerpiece of the Meriden community, helping to create interconnections that will restore the vibrancy of residential and commercial areas in downtown and its adjoining neighborhoods.

# From Brownfields to Transit-Oriented Development

## A Decade-long Commitment

### Acknowledgements

The City of Meriden would like to acknowledge the contributions and efforts of these key agencies and consultants:

Meriden City Council & Office of the Mayor  
Meriden Economic Development Corporation  
USEPA New England Brownfields Program  
USEPA New England Emergency Planning and Response Branch  
CT Department of Energy and Environmental Protection  
CT Department of Economic and Community Development  
CT Department of Transportation  
US Department of Housing and Urban Development

Blight and Brownfields Committee  
Women and Families Center  
Dutch Hill and Action 13 Neighborhood Associations  
Greater Meriden Chamber of Commerce

Vita Nuova, LLC  
AECOM  
Tighe & Bond, Inc.  
Milone & MacBroom, Inc.  
Fuss & O'Neill, Inc.  
Form + Place  
Parsons Brinckerhoff  
Luchs Consulting Engineers, LLC  
Arrowstreet, Inc.  
Zared Enterprises LLC  
BL Companies, Inc.

**For more information on  
The City of Meriden's Brownfields Program**

**Visit:**

[CityofMeriden.org](http://CityofMeriden.org)  
[MeridenBiz.com](http://MeridenBiz.com)  
[MeridenTOD.com](http://MeridenTOD.com)

**Contact:**

Peggy Brennan  
Economic Development Director  
City of Meriden, CT  
203-630-4152

