

# MERIDEN GREEN

The "**Meriden Green**" is a 14-acre flood control/park and economic development project located in the heart of downtown Meriden, CT. The project is a key component of Meriden's downtown transformation, which includes an unprecedented amount of private, local, state, and federal investment in the areas of flood control infrastructure, brownfield remediation, transportation and housing development. The Meriden Green formally



opened in 2016. Expansion of the Green is planned to the north following the demolition of the former Mills public housing project in 2019.

## Site History

The Meriden Green is located at the former "Hub" site, a 14-acre remediated brownfield site located at 1-77 State Street and 50 East Main Street in downtown Meriden, CT. Once a center of industrial and commercial activity, the site became abandoned and environmentally contaminated over time. In 2007, the City was awarded \$2.9 million in federal and state funds matched by local sources to assess the environmental damage at the site, to demolish the commercial buildings located there, clear the site for reuse, and to work with the community to develop a Site Reuse Plan.

Under the direction of the City Manager, the City of Meriden formed and coordinated a Hub Site Reuse Committee tasked with planning the reuse of the site. It was a considerable challenge given the fact that the site first and foremost needed to address the flooding problems associated with Harbor Brook. The design team, led by the City of Meriden and engineering firm Milone and MacBroom, offered an opportunity to create a vibrant, public open space in the center of the distressed downtown. Also participating in the design process was environmental engineering firm AECOM.

The Site Reuse Plan completed in 2007 recommended the implementation of several key components. First, the plans would daylight and restore Harbor Brook and construct a town green that serves as a flood storage area. The implementation of these measures were designed to reduce the risk of flood damage to downtown properties in conjunction with several major bridge improvement and channel

widening projects along Harbor Brook. Second, the site reuse plan created approximately three acres within the site, located outside of the 100-year floodplain, to be set aside for future economic development. Finally, the site would be remediated and capped with hardscapes, landscaping, grass and development pads.

In 2012, the City of Meriden received permitting approval from the CT Department of Energy and Environmental Protection and the Army Corps of Engineers to implement the Hub Site Reuse Plan and the entire Harbor Brook Flood Control and Linear Trail Project, a comprehensive plan to alleviate flooding along 3.5 miles of Harbor Brook. Following the permitting approval, the City applied to the state and was awarded \$12.9 million in state bond funds matched by \$1 million in local capital improvement program (CIP) bond funds to implement the project. An analysis of the project prepared by the CT DEEP states that the project will “result in positive benefits to public safety and property”, and that “many public safety, health, and economic benefits of Harbor Brook Master Plan Alternative will have a positive effect on minority and low income residents.” In June, 2016, the City completed the construction of the park and flood control project, on time and within the approved budget, using 100 percent small business contracting and over 25% women and minority owned business contracting services for site construction. The City opened the park to the public on September 9, 2016. Future development or modifications to the site are regulated by the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection under an Environmental Land Use Restriction (ELUR) in place at the site.

### **Future expansion of the Meriden Green**

In 2018, the City of Meriden acquired 144 Pratt Street from the Meriden Housing Authority for the purposes of demolishing the former Mills public housing complex and expanding the Green and flood control project at the site. The Harbor Brook Flood Control Plan calls for the demolition of the Mills and the daylighting of Harbor Brook at 144 Pratt Street to continue to improve water flows to decrease upstream flooding. The City is currently designing the expansion of the Meriden Green at the 4-acre site. An estimated \$4 million will be required to implement the project after design completion in 2020.



### **Future development at the Meriden Green**

In 2014, the City issued a Request for Qualifications and a Request for Proposals for the development at the site. The process resulted in the choice of Pennrose Properties and the Cloud Company, LLC as the preferred developer for the site. The designation, which was approved by the City Council on July

20, 2015, authorized the City Manager to negotiate a Master Development Agreement (MDA) with Pennrose Properties and the Cloud Company, LLC.

On June 6, 2016, the Meriden City Council adopted the Master Development Agreement which outlines the terms and conditions of a two-phased, private development. The first



phase consists of development at the corner of State Street and Mill Street, including ninety residential units, 80% of which are “market rate” and 20% of which shall be affordable housing units reserved for residents at or below 80% of the New Haven area median income; 8,400 square feet of rentable retail space; and approximately 3,500 square feet of rentable restaurant space with an estimated cost of \$24 million. Phase II involves the development of two parcels along Pratt Street including eighty residential units, 80% of which are “market rate” and 20% of which shall be affordable housing units reserved for residents at or below 80% of the New Haven area median income; 3,500 square feet of rentable retail space; 3,000 square feet of rentable restaurant space; and 1,600 square feet of rental pavilion/café retail space “envisioned as a sculptural building to serve as a signature visual element for the park”, with a portion of the building reserved for use by the City for park management and maintenance purposes, with a total project cost of \$20.74 million. The MDA provides, among other terms, that there shall be a development plan and budget subject to City approval and that 20% of the value of all contracting services shall be sourced locally to companies or individuals within New Haven County. Pennrose will acquire the development parcels from the City for \$1.25 million. The result is the transformation of a once abandoned former industrial site located in the center of the downtown into a City park that serves the dual purposes of providing public green space and flood storage downtown while freeing up new land for economic development.

### **How residents can enjoy the park**

Meriden residents can enjoy the Meriden Green in many ways—from active use of the trails and walkways to attending a public event at the amphitheater. For more information on the use of the Meriden Green, contact the Parks Department at 203-630-4259 or visit <http://www.meriden2020.com/Events/>.

