



# City of Meriden

## Plan of Conservation and Development



February 12, 2020



# ***Plan of Conservation and Development***

## ***City of Meriden***

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



In February 2019, the City of Meriden began the process to update its Plan of Conservation and Development (POCD), in conformance with Connecticut General Statutes (CGS), which requires each municipality to review its plan every 10 years. Meriden's 2009 POCD was used as a starting point for this effort.

Plans of Conservation and Development are commonly described as cookbooks, toolboxes, and blueprints, all providing guidance and strategies for the municipal future. The process involves research and assessment of existing conditions and trends, reviews of past plans and their recommendations, identification of strengths and weaknesses and a clear summary of the actions needed to most effectively address issues and build on assets. In other words, the process provided an opportunity for the City to reflect upon its past, to appraise its present and to formulate plans for the future.

The recommendations within this POCD do not have the authority of law or regulation; instead, they provide broad-based guidance for future development and improvement of Meriden over the next decade and beyond. Recommendations are implemented through zoning laws and other land-use regulations, capital expenditures and ongoing planning initiatives. Also, the plan enables the City to influence decisions by State and regional agencies, to strengthen the City's ability to attract public funding for projects that support the plan.

The year-long POCD update process was closely coordinated with City staff, a POCD Steering Committee comprised of members of the Planning Commission and the Economic Development Housing and Zoning Committee (EDHZ). The POCD Steering Committee met regularly with City staff and consultant planners to discuss existing condition analysis, plan for public outreach events, and provide guidance on issues, opportunities, goals, and recommendations.

Maximizing citizen participation was an essential part of the Master Planning process. Numerous opportunities for public input were provided, including two community workshops, an online survey with 1,060 responses, pop-up meetings at community events, 10 focus group meetings, and interviews with key stakeholders.



*Public workshops for POCD*



**Vision:**

Based on public outreach and research completed to update chapters of the POCD, the following have emerged as the overarching goals for Meriden:



*Meriden is an attractive **place to live and work**. Encourage the growth of **competitive businesses** and jobs, regional health and other institutions, and help to maintain **attractive and safe** residential neighborhoods.*



*Support redevelopment and **attract quality businesses and market-rate housing downtown** that will increase activity and bring new vitality to the area around the train station and Meriden Green.*



***Provide resources** that will increase the quality of life of all of Meriden's residents.*



***Maximize the value and use of the City's extensive community resources**, such as its public parks, community facilities, historic assets, prominent views, forested open spaces, and water resources.*



*Create a **positive identity** for the City and improve Meriden's image in the region.*



*Improve **communication between the City and residents** to encourage active participation in City initiatives, and to promote events and opportunities in Meriden.*

## ***Goals and Recommendations:***

Each of the chapters provides a list of specific goals and recommendations which provide strategies for the City to follow in the next 10 years. The following is a summary of the goals from each chapter:

### ***Housing:***

- ☆ Maintain and complement the character of existing residential neighborhoods.
- ☆ Ensure that there is a variety of housing types.
- ☆ Focus housing density Downtown and along primary transportation routes.
- ☆ Promote infill development.
- ☆ Encourage reinvestment in residential properties through residential building, renovations and timely maintenance.



### ***Economic Development:***

- ☆ Identify and market vacant or underutilized industrial and commercial properties.
- ☆ Encourage commercial infill development in established commercial corridors.
- ☆ Streamline the development process.
- ☆ Attract skilled workers to Meriden and produce future workers.
- ☆ Promote the “creative economy” in Meriden.
- ☆ Continue to support reinvestment in the Downtown, especially for market rate housing
- ☆ Strengthen business recruitment, retention, and expansion of existing businesses.
- ☆ Enhance the physical attractiveness of commercial and industrial areas.



### ***Transportation:***

- ☆ Continue to maintain and reinvest in City-maintained roadways.
- ☆ Plan for future impacts from development to make sure roadways do not become overburdened.



## 1.0: Introduction

- ☆ Improve the City's bus system to improve multi-modal transportation and mobility in Meriden.
- ☆ Identify ways to improve key intersections and facilitate traffic flow.
- ☆ Promote trail networks for pedestrians and bicyclists as an alternative means of transportation and recreation for residents.



### ***Parks, Recreation, and Open Space:***

- ☆ Focus on maintenance, to existing parks, recreational facilities, and open space resources.
- ☆ Improve accessibility to parks and provide a system of linking public and private open space throughout Meriden and the region.
- ☆ Improve communication and outreach process for parks and recreation activities to promote the use of Meriden's extensive open space/recreation system.



### ***Environment and Sustainability:***

- ☆ Protect Meriden's landscape and unique topography while still permitting future development.
- ☆ Reduce the risk of stormwater inundation, particularly for those properties in the 100-year floodplain.
- ☆ Promote energy-efficient and sustainable patterns of development.



### ***Community Facilities:***

- ☆ Continue to improve and enhance police and fire services and expand effective community policing initiatives.
- ☆ Continue to meet the health and social service needs of Meriden residents in a coordinated and efficient manner.
- ☆ Provide the highest level of educational services to the children of Meriden.
- ☆ Provide enhanced waste disposal, sewage treatment, and other public works infrastructure to ensure that the City can meet both its current and future waste disposal needs.
- ☆ Maintain and enhance the contributions of historic resources to Meriden's community character.





## Chapter 1. INTRODUCTION

### 1.1. THE PLAN OF CONSERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT

The foundation of the planning process is the ability of a municipality to reflect upon its past, to appraise its present and to formulate plans for the future. The process itself results in a comprehensive planning document that serves as a long-range guide for future development of a City. Of crucial importance to the planning process are review and modification as needed, and an assurance that the plan continues to be representative of the community. Methods and designs for its implementation are essential components of the total plan.

The City of Meriden last updated its Plan of Conservation and Development (POCD) in 2009, in conformance with Connecticut General Statutes (CGS), Title B, Chapter 126, Section 8-23, which requires each municipality to review its plan every 10 years. Plans of Conservation and Development are commonly described as cookbooks, toolboxes, and blueprints, all providing guidance and strategies for the municipal future. The plan-writing process is a critical part of the plan update. The process involves research and assessment tasks, reviews of past plans and their recommendations, analyses of current conditions, identification of strengths and weaknesses and a clear summary of the actions needed to most effectively address issues and build on assets.

Connecticut General Statutes requires that municipalities consider several planning issues in the POCD:<sup>1</sup>

- (1) The community development action plan of the municipality, if any,
- (2) the need for affordable housing,
- (3) the need for protection of existing and potential public surface and ground drinking water supplies,
- (4) the use of cluster development and other development patterns to the extent consistent with soil types, terrain, and infrastructure capacity within the municipality,
- (5) the state plan of conservation and development adopted pursuant to chapter 297,
- (6) the regional plan of conservation and development adopted pursuant to section 8-35a,
- (7) physical, social, economic and governmental conditions and trends,
- (8) the needs of the municipality including, but not limited to, human resources, education, health, housing, recreation, social services, public utilities, public protection, transportation and circulation, and cultural and interpersonal communications,
- (9) the objectives of energy-efficient patterns of development, the use of solar and other renewable forms of energy and energy conservation,
- (10) protection and preservation of agriculture, and
- (11) Sea-level change scenarios published by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration in Technical Report OAR CPO-1.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.cga.ct.gov/2015/ACT/PA/2015PA-00095-R00SB-01045-PA.htm>

## 1.0: Introduction

This POCD considers the planning issues listed above. Generally speaking, Meriden’s Plan of Conservation and Development records the City’s best assessment as to its future growth and gives direction to development in both the private and public sectors. The Plan not only encompasses a long-term vision for the community but also offers guidance for short-term decision-making. The Plan should not be thought of as a rigid blueprint, but rather as a general guide for growth in Meriden. In recognition of this, the State Statutes require that the Plan be updated so that the long-term planning process is originating from a relatively current inventory of existing conditions and economic cycles.

The proposals of the Plan do not have the authority of law or regulation; instead, they are broadly based recommendations for future development and improvement of Meriden over the next decade and beyond. Recommendations are implemented through zoning laws and other land-use regulations, capital expenditures and ongoing planning initiatives. Also, the plan enables the City to influence decisions by State agencies (such as ConnDOT, the state Department of Transportation) and the regional planners at SCRCOG (Southern Connecticut Regional Council of Governments), to strengthen the City’s ability to attract state dollars for projects that support the plan.

The key components of the POCD are the guiding Goals and Objectives, the Generalized Future Land Use Plan and the Action Agenda, which details steps towards implementation. The POCD and its associated Generalized Land Use Plan serve to guide the City’s future conservation and development efforts as an advisory or policy-guidance document. Key to the successful implementation of the Plan is the creation and modification of Zoning and Subdivision Regulations, design guidelines, and/or implementation techniques that explicitly outline and enforce the “future visions” described in the Plan.

The Plan of Conservation and Development should not be thought of as a static document. This Plan must remain open to refinement and improvement where and when necessary to reflect new conditions and problems or take into account changing goals and objectives. However, the Plan should be modified only after a thorough study indicates that such changes are in Meriden’s long-range interests. The Planning Commission should maintain a continuing planning program to monitor the implementation of the Action Agenda so that the Plan of Conservation and Development can be of continuing value in guiding the community’s growth in an orderly and satisfactory manner. Such a planning program is key to the successful implementation of the Plan of Conservation and Development.

## 1.2. MERIDEN'S PLANNING PROCESS

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In February 2019, the City began the process of reviewing and updating its 2009 Plan of Conservation and Development. The year-long POCD update process was closely coordinated with City staff, a POCD Steering Committee comprised of members of the Planning Commission and the Economic Development Housing and Zoning Committee (EDHZ). The POCD Steering Committee met regularly with City staff and consultant planners to discuss existing condition analysis, plan for public outreach events, and provide guidance on issues, opportunities, goals, and recommendations.

Maximizing citizen participation was an essential part of the Master Planning process. Numerous opportunities for public input were provided, including community workshops, an online survey, pop-up meetings at community events, various focus group meetings, and interviews with key stakeholders. The first workshop was held to introduce the public to the process and to get feedback on how Meriden should grow and what assets the City should protect over the next 10 years. In the second workshop, the City presented preliminary goals and recommendations for the Master Plan, for comment by the public.

Focus group meetings were held to gather input from local experts about issues and opportunities the City faces. Meetings included informal discussions with stakeholders about how the City should focus resources over the next ten years. Focus groups covered a range of topics related to the POCD, including economic development, health and human services, land use and zoning, housing, community and cultural resources, parks and open space, good governance, traffic and utilities, and public works.

A public survey was conducted from June 2019 through July 2019, primarily as an online tool with hard copies made available at strategic locations throughout the City. The survey was available in both English and Spanish and covered all topics included in the POCD. The City received over 1,073 responses to the survey, with most respondents coming from Meriden. The survey polled respondents on their priorities, goals, and objectives for the next ten years and asked where there is potential for improvement in Meriden.

### Prior Planning Efforts

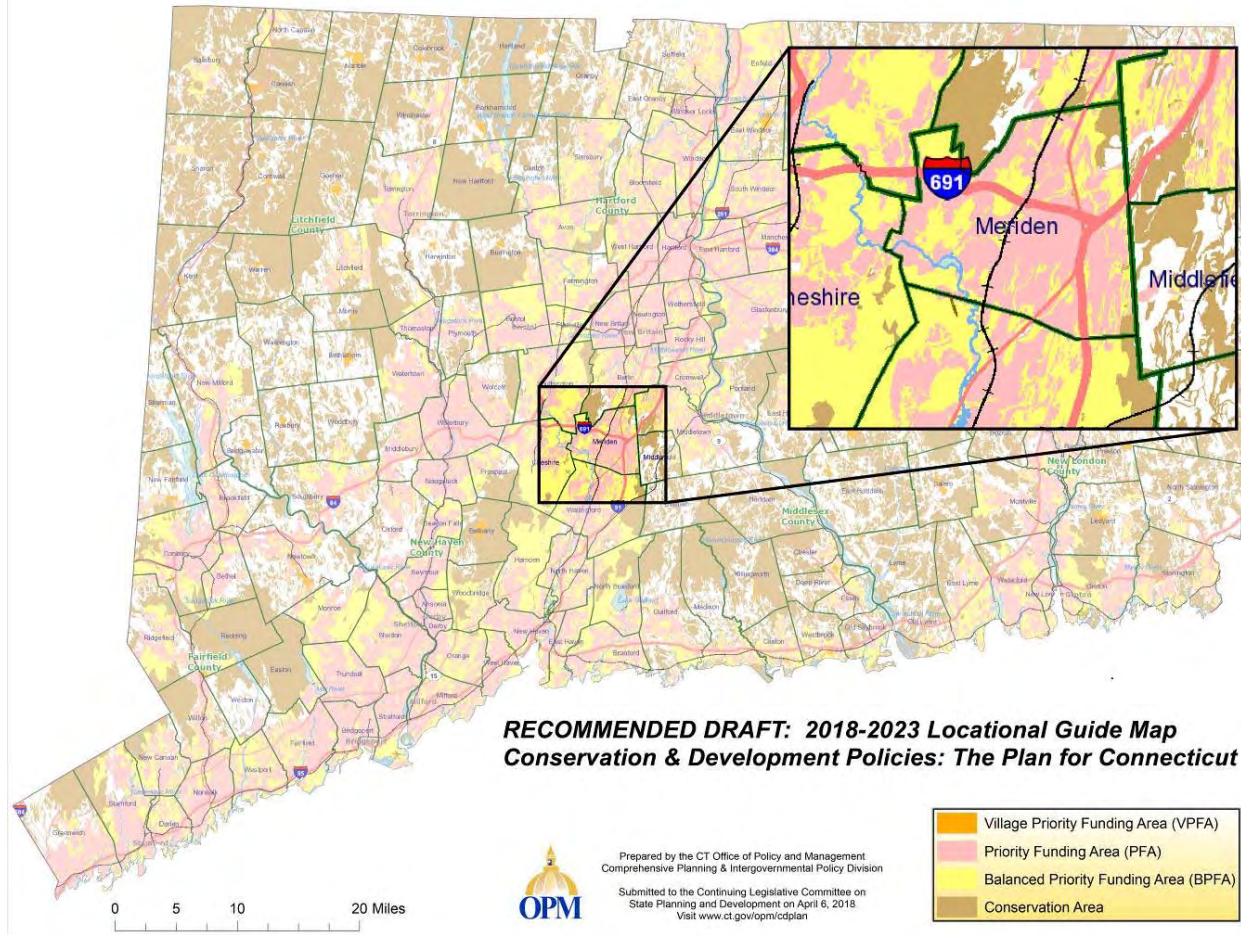
The process of updating Meriden's POCD builds upon many important recent planning initiatives the City and region have undertaken. The 2009 POCD prepared by Harrall – Michalowski associates was used as a starting point for this Plan. Since 2009, the City has done a significant amount of planning in the downtown area, including the Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) master plan and the subsequent adoption of the TOD zoning district. The City redeveloped a 14-acre site adjacent to the Meriden Train Station into a public park, flood control project, and mixed-use residential development site in coordination with the Connecticut Department of Transportation's (CTDOT) launch of the CTTrailHartford Line in summer of 2018. Meriden also completed several market and economic assessments, a downtown parking study, a linear trail study, piloted a downtown shuttle bus program, and was awarded other funding such as the Choice Neighborhoods Implementation Grant.

Transit-oriented development, investment and redevelopment in the Downtown, and enhanced commercial corridors are common themes throughout this Plan of Conservation and Development, as are the need to preserve and protect the City's residential neighborhoods, natural resources of waterways, ridgelines, wetlands, and historic/cultural resources. The focus of the Plan is to enhance and protect the City's assets and to achieve balance through future development and regulatory control. The Plan also provides updated recommendations for parks and recreation, infrastructure, schools and daycare, housing, and an effective multi-modal transportation system.

## 1.0: Introduction

The Report looks at strategies to become a “Smarter City” based on principles of smart growth to make better-informed decisions, develop appropriate policy, better allocate City resources, and improve Meriden’s long-term livability, workability, and sustainability.

**Figure 1. 2018-2023 Locational Guide Map**



## Regional Planning Efforts

The 2018-2023 State Plan of Conservation and Development is currently under consideration by the General Assembly.<sup>2</sup> The State Conservation and Development Plan is centered around six Growth Management Principles related to revitalizing regional centers, expanding housing opportunities, concentrating development around transportation nodes, conserving and restoring the natural environment, protecting the integrity of environmental assets, and promoting integrated planning across State, regional and local levels. The Plan also

<sup>2</sup> As of 7/1/19



## 1.0: Introduction

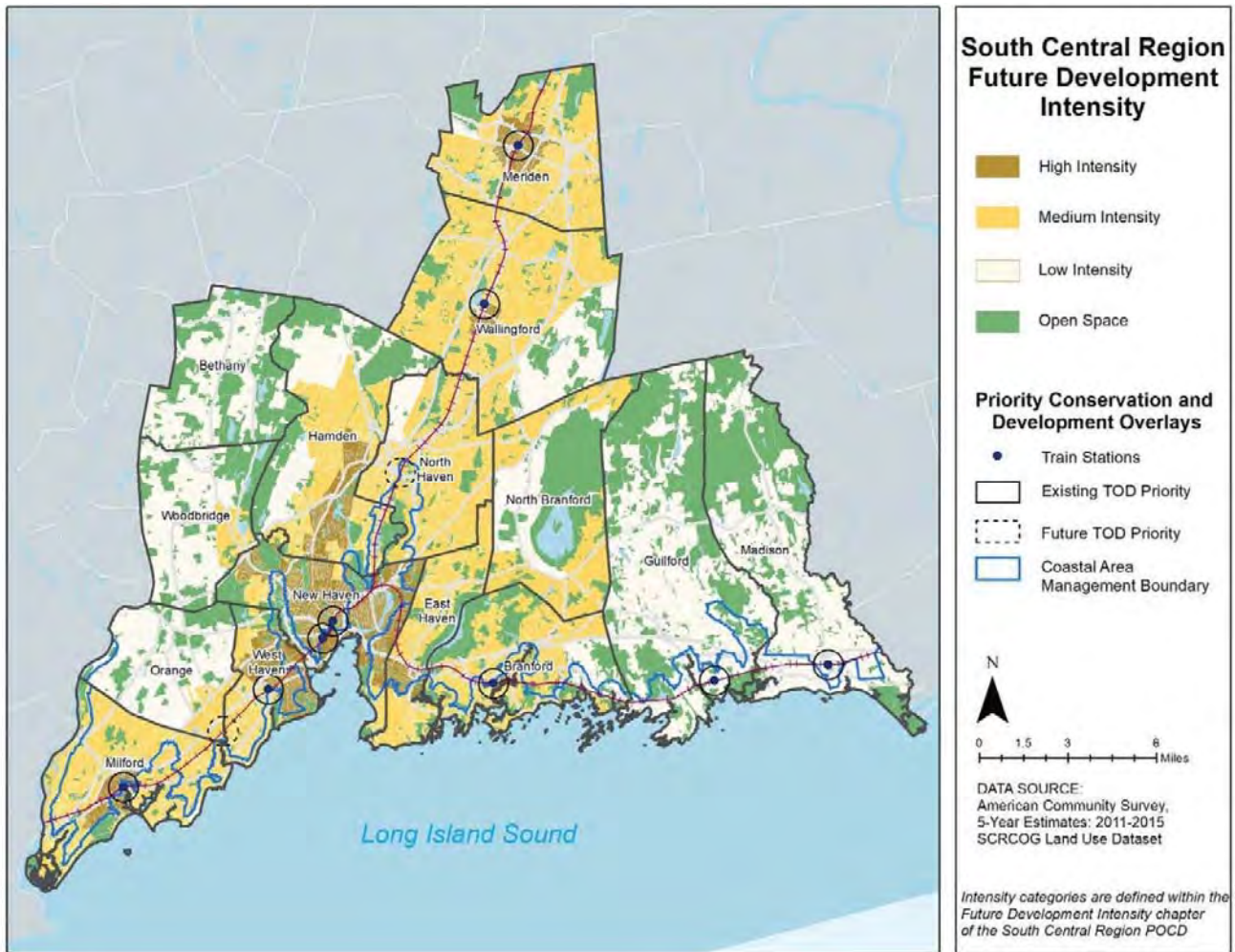
includes a Locational Guide Map (LGM) delineating priority funding areas within the State. The Locational Guide Map classifications are intended to help state agencies comply with administrative requirements associated with Priority Funding Areas. The LGM designates the majority of land in Meriden as a Priority Funding Area, with pockets in the western and periphery areas of the City designated as Balanced Priority Funding Areas. There are small areas at the northeast and southeast corners of Meriden designated as Conservation Areas. Below are State guidelines for each of these designations (see Figure 1).

- Priority Funding Areas – Growth-related projects may proceed without an exception.
- Balanced Priority Funding Areas – Growth-related projects may proceed without an exception if the sponsoring agency documents how it will address any potential policy.
- Conservation Areas – Growth-related projects may proceed with an exception. For a growth-related project to be funded outside of a PFA, CGS Section 16a-35d requires the project to be supported by the municipal Plan of Conservation and Development and to be approved by the Office of Policy and Management.

At the regional level, the Southern Connecticut Regional Council of Governments (SCRCOG) has produced a Plan of Conservation and Development as well as a South Central Regional Metropolitan Transportation Plan. Elements of these plans and others have been incorporated into Meriden's 2020 POCD update, and have informed the description of existing conditions, goals, objectives and recommendations throughout the plan.

The SCRCOG Plan of Conservation and Development outlines a Future Development Intensity Plan based on existing generalized land uses, and the regional goals and strategies identified in the POCD. The Future Development Intensity Plan identifies areas for high, medium, and low intensity development based on an analysis of conservation areas, commercial and industrial development, and residential development of varying intensities. Access to sewer service was another major factor considered in the development of the Future Development Intensity Plan for the South Central Region. As shown in Figure 2, the area surrounding Meriden's center is designated as High-intensity Development. Almost the entire remainder of the land area in Meriden is in yellow, indicating Medium-intensity Development. A small pocket to the western edge of the City between E Johnson Avenue and W Main Street is designated Low-intensity Development.

Figure 2. South Central Region Future Development Intensity



### 1.3. PLAN GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

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Each of the chapters provides a list of goals and recommendations which provide strategies for the City to follow in the next 10 years. Based on public outreach and research completed to update chapters of the POCD, the following have emerged as the overarching priorities for Meriden:

***Meriden is an attractive place to live and work. Encourage the growth of competitive businesses and jobs, regional health and other institutions, and help to maintain attractive and safe residential neighborhoods.***

Economic development is about quality of life and needs to be coordinated across many areas, including education, housing, transportation, and community development. The City takes an active role in helping the city to remain economically stable by helping to ensure neighborhoods and developed areas retain their value and new development adequately contributes to quality services and infrastructure. The City should continue to support upkeep and investment in residential neighborhoods, in particular, residential areas that need some reinvestment to refresh older homes that are in disrepair. Providing additional market-rate housing will help to provide more housing options and bring new residents to the city. As part of this effort, the City shall work with homeowners to reinvest in the neighborhoods so that our communities remain a source of pride.

The City should continue to improve fiscal responsibility and increase the tax base to lower the burden of property taxes on residents. The City takes an active role, assisting existing and potential businesses daily, such as through the Department of Economic Development with help from the Making Meriden Business Center. Some of the economic development priorities identified in this Master Plan include encouraging investment in the downtown area, along the primary commercial corridors, the mall (Westfield Meriden), Research Parkway, and Berlin Turnpike.

***Support redevelopment and attract quality businesses and market-rate housing downtown that will increase activity and bring new vitality to the area around the train station and Meriden Green.***

There has been a significant amount of recent public investment in Meriden, particularly in the downtown area with the new train station and Meriden Green. It is anticipated that this will help to attract private investment in the downtown area which has not been substantial to date. One of the issues to overcome is negative perceptions about the City's image. The City has tremendous resources, it is easy to get to (i.e. at the "crossroads of Connecticut), but the messaging is missing. The table is set with the infrastructure; the City now needs to capture the renaissance with marketing, development efforts, and community engagement.

Despite the recent investment, there are many challenges the City can help to encourage investment. The City should continue to work with Downtown property owners and merchants to focus on upgrading the appearance, safety, and vitality of Downtown as part of the process of business retention and development. Financial/technical assistance may be needed to encourage private investment, particularly in older buildings that need a lot of work. The City can be a resource to find investors, banks, philanthropic organizations, and grants.

***Provide Resources for the Betterment of all of Meriden's Residents***

Diversity is a strength in Meriden, and it brings in partnerships and new opportunities. Two of the most vulnerable populations are Meriden's elderly residents and their youth. The City shall continue to work with the School District to provide the highest level of educational services to the Children of Meriden. The City should continue to look for ways to attract families and young people to live in the City, including providing more activities for children and teenagers. Demographic trends show that the average resident is getting older. Ensuring seniors' needs are met is and will be a very important priority in the future. Meriden has a vast network of community-based organizations, and the City should continue to support them in their various missions.

***Maximize the value and use of the City's extensive community resources, such as its public parks, community facilities, historic assets, prominent views, forested open spaces, and water resources.***

Meriden has tremendous parks and recreation resources with some of the best urban hiking in the state of Connecticut. Fields used for recreation are generally well utilized and largely meet current demand. The priority in the next 10 years should be to maintain, enhance, and promote the City's existing facilities before developing new resources.

Residents frequently expressed the need to improve the awareness about City resources to both residents and visitors. A lot is happening in Meriden but it is not tied together. For example, there are opportunities to better link and advertise activity centers such as the downtown, Research Parkway, the mall, hospital, and parks. Improved wayfinding signage is needed to let people know where these resources are. There are attractive open space areas that are city-owned that are not easily accessible by the public. Increasing access and further connecting parks will be helpful to set Meriden up for the future and will attract young families with children. There is also an opportunity to connect to other linear trails in surrounding communities. There are also opportunities to improve bicycle infrastructure and to support bicycle riding in the City.

***Create a positive identity for the City and improve Meriden's image in the region.***

Marketing and crafting a positive image of the community is important; Meriden needs to advertise its successes and market itself as a desirable place. Meriden is no longer the "Silver City." It may be time to work with the community on a branding project to help identify the vision for the City. As part of this process, wayfinding signage should be improved. Signage is an important tool to let people know that Meriden is a place to live, work, shop, and visit. As part of this process, the City can also improve governmental procedures to make the City an easier place to live, work, and invest. There are opportunities to improve efficiency, transparency, and accessibility in routine governmental affairs such as with the land use and building permit application process.

***Improve communication between the City and residents to encourage active participation in City initiatives, and to promote events and opportunities in Meriden.***

A lot is happening in Meriden, but there is an opportunity to better tie together activities. The City can have a role in coordinating and publicizing programs by non-profits, community-based organizations, schools, religious institutions, clubs, etc. For example, there may be an opportunity for the City to develop and manage a citywide community calendar of events and advertise those events through various means and partnerships (i.e. a billboard, social media, the media, and the Board of Education through Peach Jar). The City has also placed a focus on improving transparency and public inclusion to ensure that information from the City is provided to residents. In addition to keeping people informed, transparency will help to encourage City initiatives and to help residents understand where tax dollars are being utilized.

## 1.4. HISTORY OF MERIDEN

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Meriden is a community of roughly 60,000 people residing in more than 26,000 housing units throughout 24 square miles. Meriden contains over 1,300 businesses that provide a wide variety of goods and services, employing over 25,000 people.

The history of Meriden spans almost 350 years. In 1661, a fur trader and innkeeper named Jonathan Gilbert was given 350 acres of land by the Connecticut Colony that was situated along the west side of Lamentation Hill. He intended to start a farm and maintain a tavern at his home, which he named Meriden. In the 1600s, the area around Jonathan Gilbert's farm was the rural northern section of Wallingford. By 1666 a trail running through Meriden had become significant enough that the Connecticut General Assembly commissioned a man named Edward Higby to create a crossing over the Quinnipiac River near what is now the intersection of East Main Street and Colony Street that would be suitable for transportation of people and animals. In 1724, 35 families were living in what is now Meriden, which by then was known as the North Farms section of Wallingford. Getting to Wallingford for religious services proved to be difficult at times, so the 35 families petitioned for a separate meetinghouse. This petition was granted, and in 1727 the first meetinghouse in Meriden was built at what is now the intersection of Ann Street and Dryden Drive.

As the 1700s progressed, Broad Street became the focal point of the community. The street overlaid an old Native American trail and came to serve as the main transportation route through the village. The intersection of what is now Broad Street and East Main Street evolved in the center of town, with the meetinghouse relocated there in 1729 and Center Tavern constructed in 1752. Meriden benefited from being adjacent to Middletown, which in the mid-1700s was Connecticut's largest city and had a very active port. In 1770, 123 families lived in Meriden, and as the town continued to grow, new businesses and services arose. Cobbler shops, stone cutting yards, blacksmiths, stagecoach service, mills, general stores and a variety of craftsmen begin to operate in Meriden. A pewter button shop opened on Broad Street in 1794, the first silver-based business in the town. In 1799, a turnpike was constructed through Meriden that connected the town to the larger markets of Hartford and New Haven. By 1806, Meriden's population had reached 1,000 people.

During the 1800s, Meriden quickly shifted from an agricultural community to a manufacturing center. Amid the booming industrial economy, Meriden continued to grow, with its first newspaper, hotels, banks, schools, churches, parks and additional businesses. The development of the railroad further strengthened Meriden's ties with New Haven, Hartford, and points beyond. As rail became the dominant method of transporting goods, the center of development in Meriden shifted from Broad Street to Colony and West Main Streets, near the railroad line. The advent of trolleys allowed development, particularly residential development, to expand out into the furthest reaches of the City.

Meriden remained an industrial center well into the 20<sup>th</sup> Century until the growing dominance of the automobile allowed businesses and manufacturers to move to cheaper land in the suburbs, where more and more of their workers and customers were choosing to live. After World War II, large businesses, particularly in the silver industry, began to move out of the City. A combination of neglect, fires, and demolition took its toll on the Downtown and its surrounding neighborhoods. Urban renewal efforts in the 1960s and 1970s, while removing some areas of blight, failed to revitalize the areas targeted for improvement. However, recent efforts and developments in the 1990s and 2000s were met with more success, such as the creation of the Research Parkway industrial and research/office development, new investment in the Downtown and the Meriden City Center

## 1.0: Introduction

Initiative. In the 2010s, the City has focused significant efforts on the revitalization of the downtown core, including a Transit-Oriented Development initiative around the Meriden Train Station.

## Chapter 2. DEMOGRAPHICS

### Demographic Trends Overview

The understanding of demographic and socio-economic trends, characteristics and forecasts are crucial to the Plan of Conservation and Development process. This information provides the background by which future changes and development within a municipality can be anticipated and planned for. In terms of planning for the next 10 years and beyond, several population, housing, and demographic trends in Meriden have future implications. These include:

- Meriden's population in 2017 was 60,241. The population was at its highest level in 2010. It has since declined by one percent. The slight decline is consistent with the decline or slow growth for municipalities in the surrounding area.
- The population is aging; the number of residents over the age of 65 grew by 15% between 2010 and 2017. Households with children under age 18 decreased by 9% during the same period. Both the number and percent of families with children under 18 have also declined significantly. The decrease in the school-aged population impacts school enrollment, park and recreation facility planning, and youth services planning.
- The poverty level in Meriden decreased from 13.8% to 10.8% between 2010 and 2017. This reduction was much more significant than what was seen in surrounding communities. The poverty rate in New Haven County as a whole increased slightly over the same time.
- The aging demographics may also impact housing turnover, the need for new types of housing, and demand for services (health care, transportation, community facilities). Services for seniors, including the Meriden Senior Center and transportation services for the elderly will become more critical to the community.
- The number of households grew by 8.9% between 2000 and 2017. The growth can be attributed to an increase in non-family households. More of Meriden residents are living alone in 2017, the proportion of single-person households increased by about 9% between 2010 and 2017. With Meriden's declining household size, increased attention to housing type should be considered.
- Meriden is an ethnically diverse community with a wide variety of ancestries represented in the population. In 2017 just under 25% of residents were of Hispanic origin. Approximately 78% of residents speak English at home. 9% of the population 5 years and over speak English less than "very well." The presence of a large Spanish-speaking population is an important consideration as part of communication, outreach, and other social services provided by the City.



## 2.0: Demographics

### A. Population Characteristics

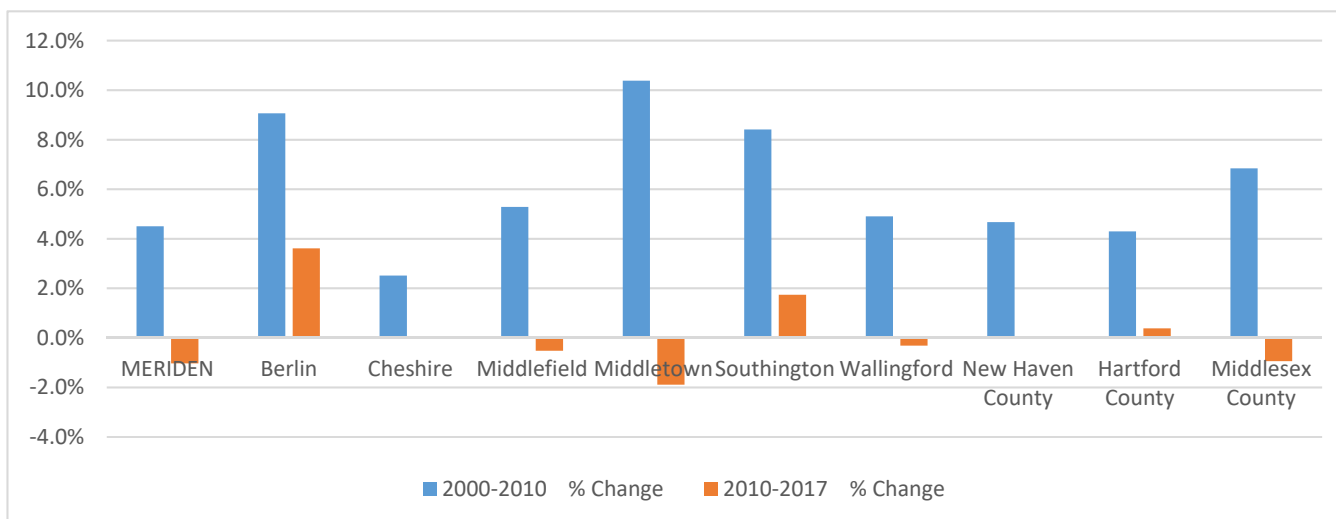
Meriden is a community of roughly 60,000 people residing in more than 26,000 housing units throughout 24 square miles. Meriden contains over 1,300 businesses that provide a broad variety of goods and services, employing over 25,000 people.

Over the past century, Meriden’s population experienced a period of steady growth between 1900 and 1930, a leveling off of the population during the Great Depression, followed by a post-World War II population boom. The largest growth occurred during the mid-century baby boom, with a 17.6% jump between 1950 and 1960. From 1970 through 1990, Meriden’s population slowly climbed, with an increase in 4,000 people during that period. From 1990-2000 the population dipped 2.1%. Since then, growth has leveled at just over 60,000 residents, with a small decline of 1% from 2010 to 2017.

When comparing population change of the City with the adjacent communities of Berlin, Cheshire, Middlefield, Middletown, Southington and Wallingford, regional growth and migration trends are evident. Meriden and its adjacent communities all experienced population growth between 1960 and 2010. Over that period, Meriden registered the smallest percentage increase in population of the seven communities.

Meriden’s population growth rate has generally lagged behind its surrounding communities. It has also lagged behind New Haven County and the two adjacent counties. From 2000 to 2010, Meriden’s population growth was lower (4.5%) than all of the surrounding communities except Cheshire from 2000 to 2010. However, it was about the same as all of New Haven County. From 2010-2017, growth in neighboring communities was varied, with some experiencing limited growth and others a slight population decline (See Figure 3). Meriden’s decline in population of 1% between 2010 and 2017 is consistent with the population decline of less than 1% in the region. Although Berlin and Southington had a modest population increase between 2010 and 2017, both were considerably lower than 2000 to 2010 increases.

**Figure 3. Comparison of Population Change: Meriden and Surrounding Communities**



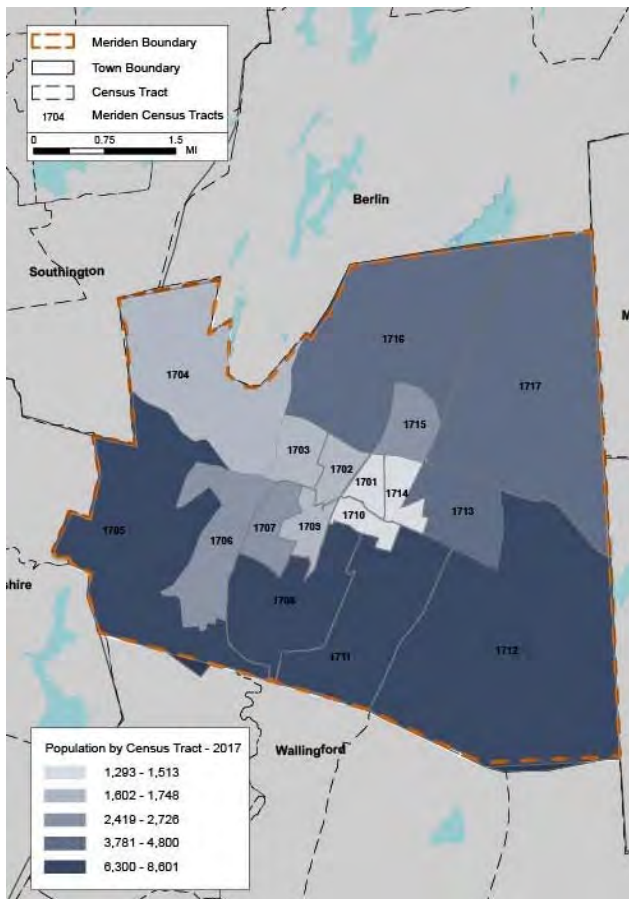
Sources: American FactFinder Census 1990, 2000, 2010 and American Community Survey 2017. 2009 Meriden POCD \* Note: Difference of 7 years between 2010 and 2017

## 2.0: Demographics

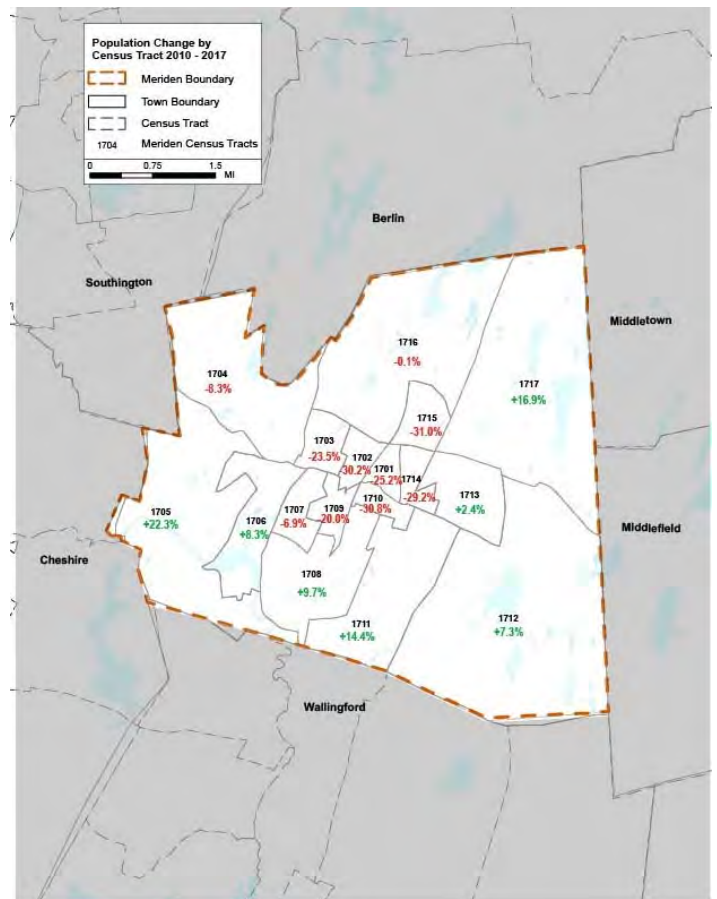
### Population Change from 2010 to 2017

According to the American Community Survey (ACS), all the census tracts within the central area of Meriden and those immediately to its north and south showed a decrease in population from 2010 to 2017. While these areas experienced a drop in population, other areas grew significantly during the same period, demonstrating a redistribution of the City’s population from the downtown to areas outside the center. As noted in the 2009 POCD, 10 of the 17 census tracts experienced population loss between 1990 and 2000. Between 2000 and 2010, all but two of the census tracts had population increases. Census Tract 1703 had a loss of 211 people (-8.95%) and Census Tract 1717 lost only 2 people (-0.05%). See Figure 5 below.

**Figure 4. Population Estimate 2017**



**Figure 5. Population Change (2010-2017)**



Sources: American Community Survey 2010, 2017

## 2.0: Demographics

### B. Household Characteristics

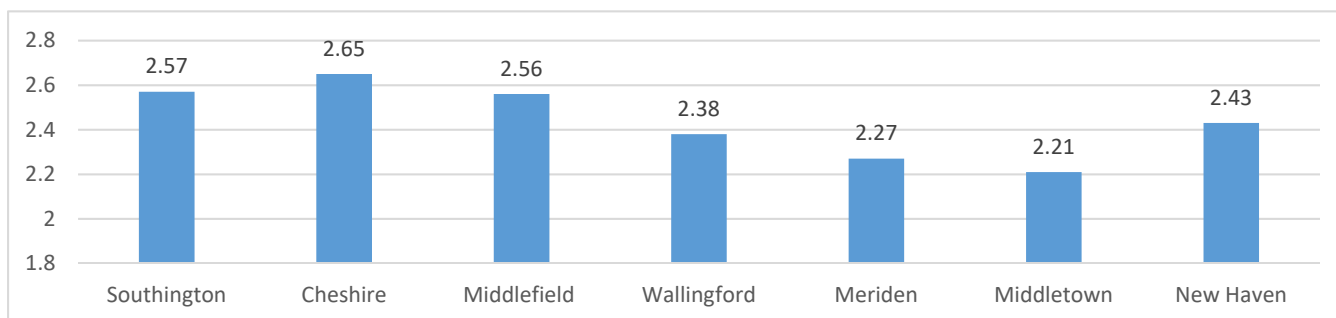
Despite a slight population decline from 2010 to 2017, there has been a growth in the number of households in Meriden. The makeup of households has changed during this period as well: there has been a decline in the number of family households in Meriden and an increase in single households and households of seniors 65 and over.

The total number of households increased from 23,977 in 2010 to 26,109 in 2017 (see Figure 8). In 2017, 56.4% of households were family households containing one or more related individuals and 43.6% were non-family households. The proportion of family households relative to non-family households has been decreasing since 2000. Family households represented 65.8% of the population in 2010. Both the number and percent of families with children under 18 declined by 9% from 2010 to 2017. As shown in Figure 7 and Table 1, 20.8%, or 5,438 households in Meriden are family households with children under the age of 18.

Non-family households include individuals living alone or households that contain one or more non-related individuals. They do not include people living in group quarter situations such as nursing homes, group homes, dormitories or other similar shared housing accommodations. Of the 7,991 non-family households enumerated by the 2000 Census, 6,629 were householders living alone. These single-person households comprised 28.9% of the City's total households. Between 2010 and 2017, individuals living alone increased significantly, going up from 7,047 to 10,106 - an increase from 29.4% of all households to 43.6% of all households. Elderly individuals living alone made up 3,289 of the 10,106 single households in 2017. The number of single-person elderly households, especially those living in private market housing, is an important figure because many of these households will vacate their homes due to health or age-related reasons. Oftentimes, this turnover of units becomes an important resource for new families and households moving to a community. However, this can also have the secondary impact of making the community susceptible to blight as many seniors living alone have less capacity to maintain their homes.

The average household size in 2017 was approximately 2.3, a slight decline from 2010. Drops in average household size are consistent with recent regional and national trends. Household sizes have decreased as a result of an increase in single-person households, an increase in divorce and separations, the tendency for young professionals to delay marriage and families, and an increase in the number of elderly who remain in their own homes as opposed to residing with family. Some of Meriden's surrounding communities have experienced similar declines between 2010 and 2017, including Cheshire (-0.17) and Wallingford (-0.14). Despite these declines, Meriden still has the second lowest average household size in the immediate region, trailing only Middletown whose statistics are heavily influenced by the presence of Wesleyan University (see Figure 6).

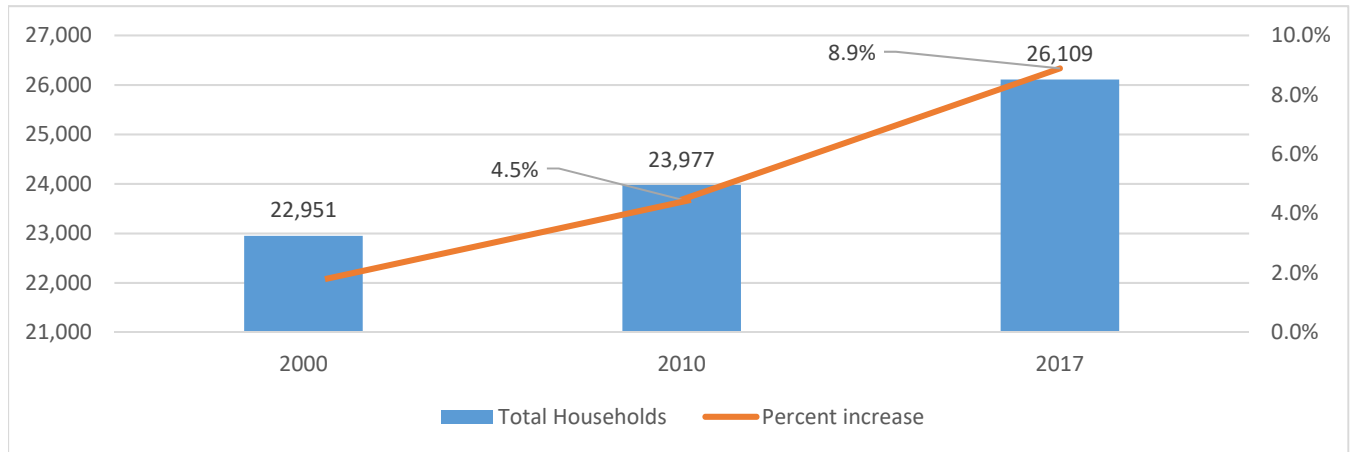
**Figure 6. Median Household Size in Meriden and Surrounding Communities, 2017**



Source: American Fact Finder, US Census Bureau, 2017

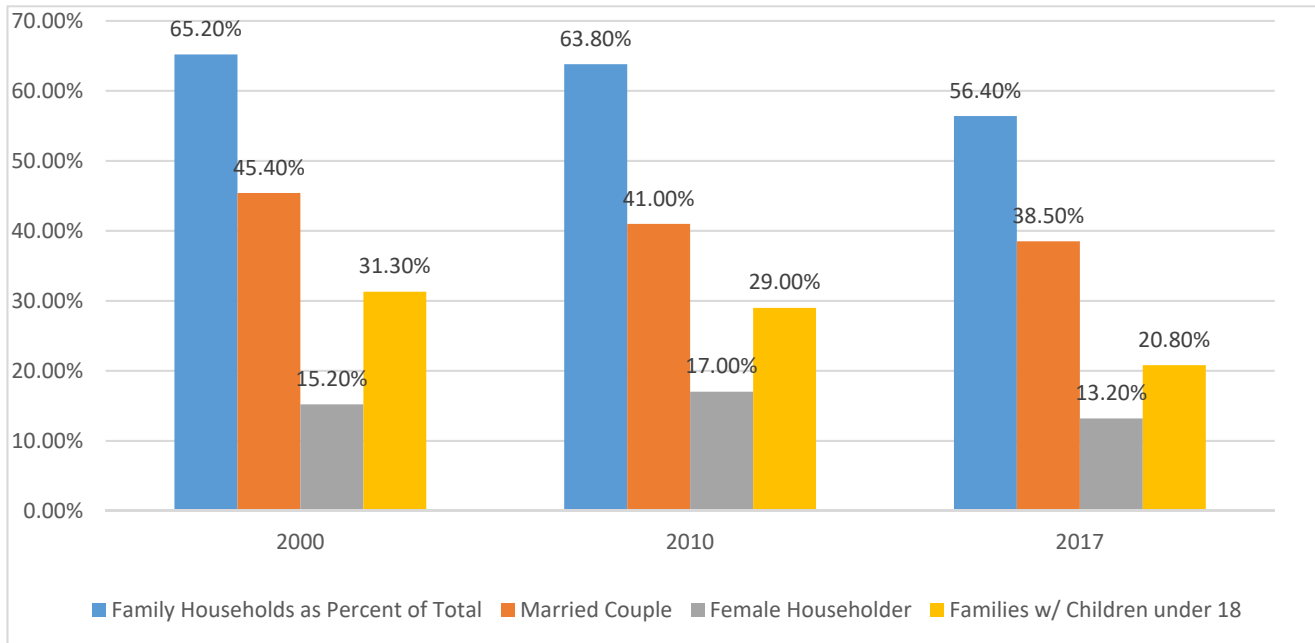
## 2.0: Demographics

**Figure 8. Meriden Households 2000-2017**



Sources: American FactFinder Census 1990, 2000, 2010 and American Community Survey 2017. 2009 Meriden POCD \* Note: Difference of 7 years between 2010 and 2017

**Figure 7: Family Households in Meriden 2000 – 2017**



Sources: American FactFinder Census 1990, 2000, 2010 and American Community Survey 2017. 2009 Meriden POCD \* Note: Difference of 7 years between 2010 and 2017

In 2017, Meriden is an aging community with decreasing household size and more people living alone. This has several potential implications on the City's infrastructure and services. With an aging population and fewer school age children, there may be shifts in the number of students in Meriden's school system. Services for seniors, including the Meriden Senior Center and transportation services for the elderly will become more critical to the community. With Meriden's declining household size, increased attention to housing type should be considered. Smaller, more efficient houses with shared amenities could mitigate sprawl while offering more opportunities for single householders to live in a social and more sustainable environment.

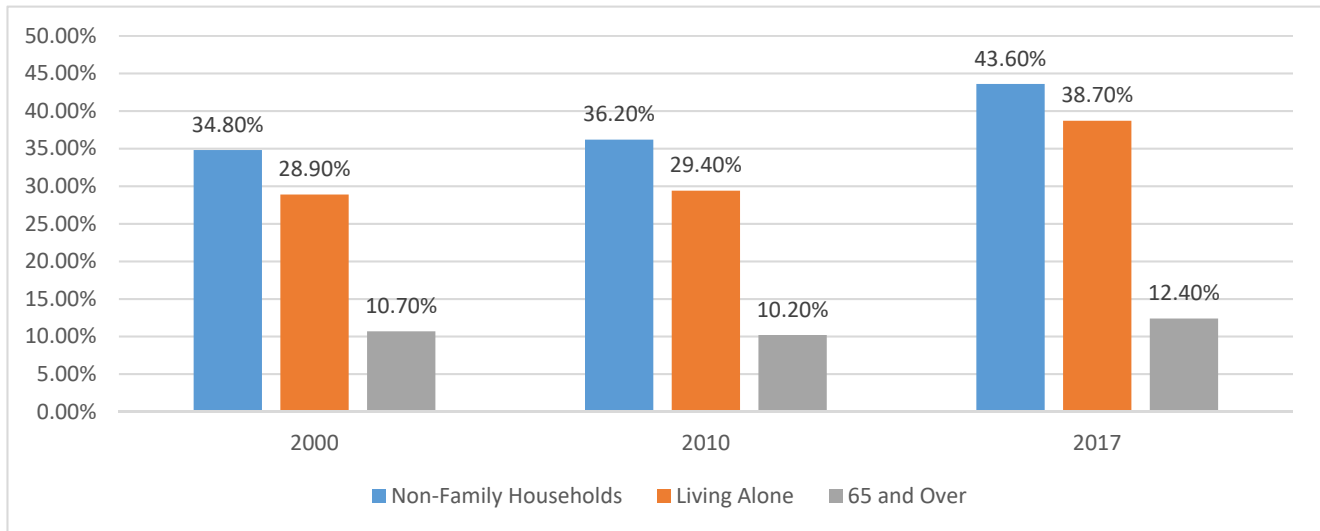
## 2.0: Demographics

**Table 1. Meriden Households 2000-2017**

	2000	2010	2017	Percent of Total
<b>Total population</b>	58,244	60,868	60,241	
<b>Total Households</b>	22,951	23,977	26,109	
<b>Family</b>	14,960	15,304	14,736	56.40%
<b>Married Couple</b>	10,414	9,826	10,039	38.50%
<b>Female Householder</b>	3,479	4,088	3,457	13.20%
<b>Families w/ Children under 18</b>	6,670	6,942	5,438	20.80%
<b>Non-Family Households</b>	7,991	8,673	11,373	43.60%
<b>Living Alone</b>	6,629	7,047	10,106	38.70%
<b>65 years and over</b>	2,446	2,434	3,232	12.40%
<b>Average Household Size</b>	2.49	2.5	2.3*	
<b>Average Family Size</b>	3.08	3.1		

*Source: American FactFinder Census 1990, 2000, 2010 and American Community Survey 2017. 2009 Meriden POCD*  
*Note: 7 year difference between 2010 and 2017 compared to 10 years between 2000 and 2010*  
 \*Based on total population divided by number of occupied housing units.

**Figure 9. Non-Family Households in Meriden 2000 - 2017**



*Sources: American FactFinder Census 1990, 2000, 2010 and American Community Survey 2017. 2009 Meriden POCD \* Note: Difference of 7 years between 2010 and 2017*

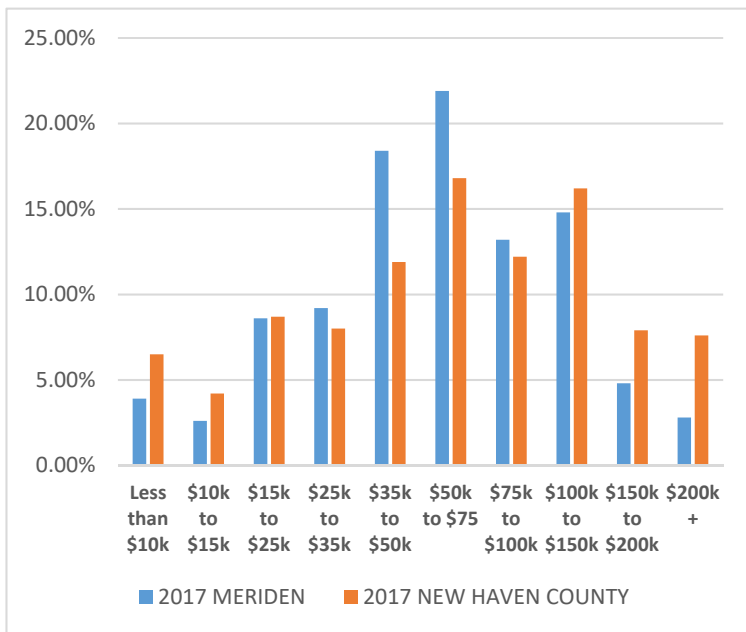
2.0: Demographics

C. Income

Median household income in Meriden was \$57,350. New Haven County in 2017 had a higher median household income than Meriden at \$64,872. The majority of households in Meriden (53%) earned between \$35,000 and \$99,999 in 2017. Nearly a quarter of households' income in Meriden was between \$50,000 and \$75,000. Median household income in Meriden was lower than that of New Haven County in 2000, 2010 and 2017. Despite the relatively low median income, the income range that grew the most was the \$100,000 to \$149,999 range, which nearly doubled from 7.7% of households in 2000 to 14.8% in 2010.

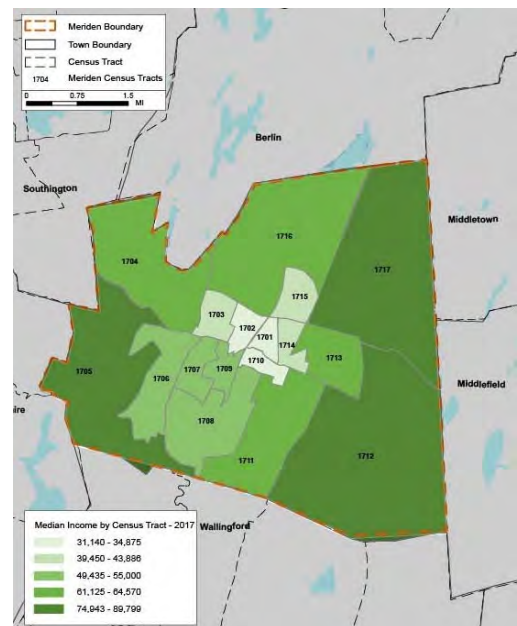
The proportions of households in the income categories from \$75,000 and up grew between 2000 and 2010 and remained about the same as 2010 in 2017. Conversely, the proportion and number of lower-income households (income ranges less than \$35,000) declined between 2000 and 2010 and then again in 2017. This trend is similar to that of the Countywide trend for those income ranges (see Figure 10).

**Figure 10. Household Income Distribution Meriden and New Haven County, 2017**



Sources: American FactFinder Census 2000, 2010 and American Community Survey 2017. 2009 Meriden POCD

**Figure 11. Median Household Income by Census Tract**



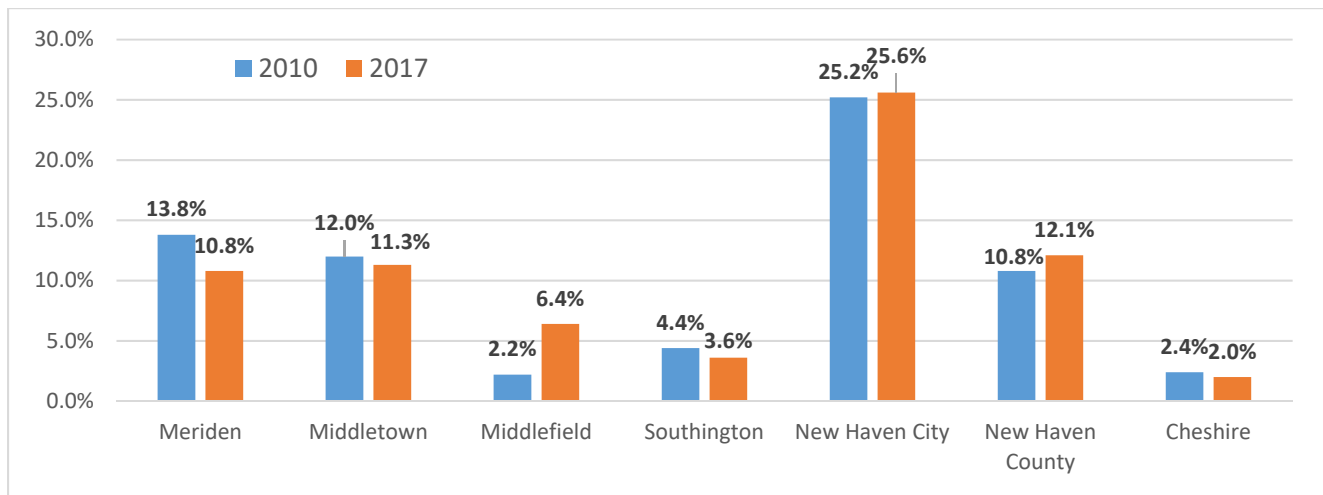
Source: American FactFinder, US. Census Bureau, 2017

Figure 10 and Figure 11 display median household income for each of the Meriden Census Tracts for 2010 and 2017 and the map below shows the 2017 income ranges for each census tract. Median income increased in all but 4 of the 17 census tracts, most significantly, in the central and southeast areas.

The poverty level in Meriden decreased by three percentage points between 2010 and 2017. As shown in Figure 12, this change was much more significant than what was seen in surrounding communities. The poverty rate in New Haven County as a whole increased slightly over the same period.

**Figure 12: Poverty – Meriden and Surrounding Communities**

## 2.0: Demographics



Source: U.S. Census American Community Survey 2010 and 2017

### D. Age Characteristics

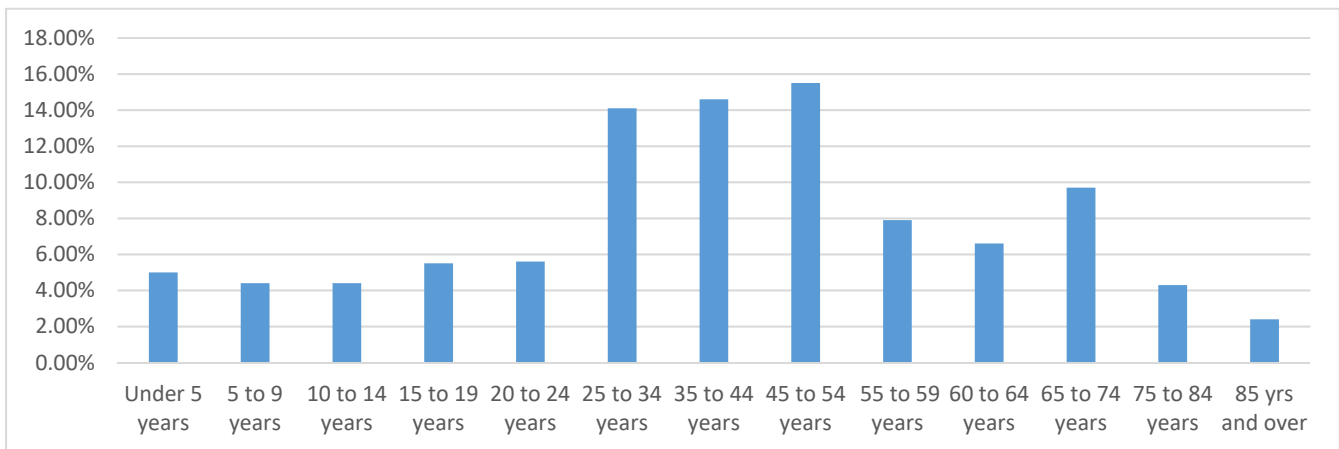
Similar to surrounding communities and a larger trend in Connecticut and the region, the population in Meriden is aging. The older population has increased while there has been a decline in the number of children. The median age in Meriden is now 42.6, higher than Connecticut's median age (40.8).

As illustrated in Chart 3 below, there has been an increase in most age cohorts above 35 years old, and a decrease in all cohorts 34 and below. Between 2010 and 2017, the baby boomer cohort has grown by 53% while the population under 19 decreased by 4,377 or 27%. Another significant change was the 23.86% increase in 85+ year old group from 2000 to 2010. The most notable changes in 2010 and 2017 were the declines in all four of the youngest age groups. This is especially true of 2017 where the groups under age 14 declined by more than 25%.

From a planning perspective, the decrease in the school-aged population impacts school enrollment, park and recreation facility planning, and youth services planning. The growth in population between 45 to 54 years of age, regarded to be the age cohort of adults in their prime earning years, may impact housing turnover, the demand for new housing situations and the demand for town services and programs. The population aged 60 and up will shift the demand for services (health care, transportation, community facilities) and housing.

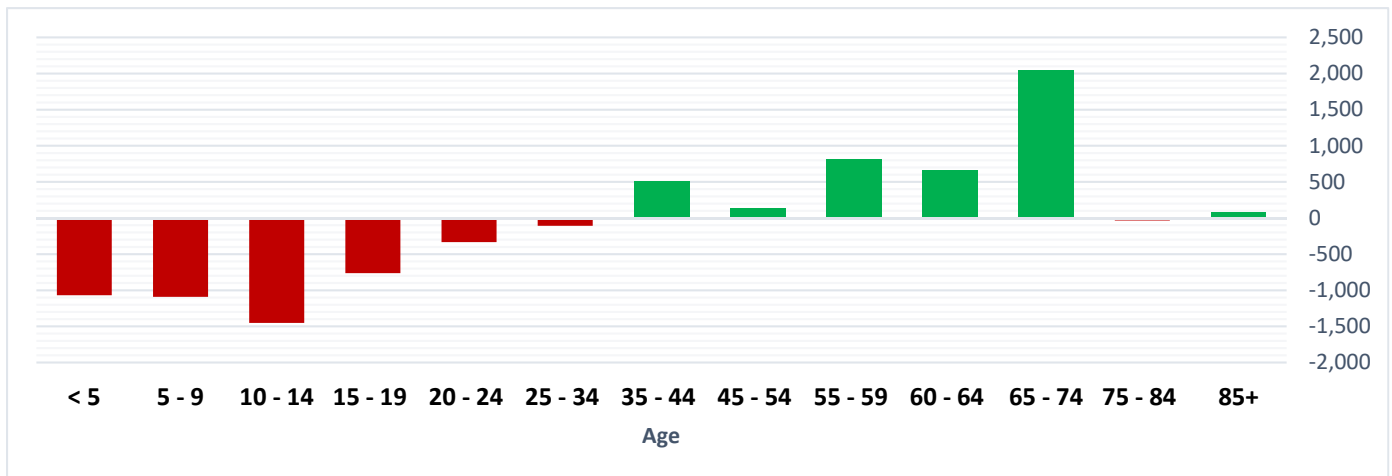
## 2.0: Demographics

**Figure 13. Meriden Age Distribution - 2017**



Source: American Community Survey 2017

**Figure 14: Change in Age of Population 2010-2017**



Sources: American FactFinder Census 1990, 2000, 2010 and American Community Survey 2017. 2009 Meriden POCD

Often, a dependency ratio, which tells how many young people (under 18) and older people (over 64) depend on people of working age (19 to 64), is determined as part of a socio-economic analysis. While many people over 65 have income from social security, 401k or investments, this figure is used to calculate or analyze a community’s ability to support its “dependent population.” This support includes the provision of facilities such as schools, playgrounds, and senior centers; programs; and services targeted toward the City’s youth and elderly populations. Meriden has a dependency ratio of 0.51, indicating that there are approximately 51 dependents per 100 working individuals. This number is consistent with the region and nation at large.

The City’s population, although aging at a steady pace, remains one of the youngest populations in the immediate region, when comparing median age. New Haven and Middletown had a lower median age than Meriden in 2017 (30.7 and 37 respectively), while Southington (45), Cheshire (45.8), Middlefield (48.8), and Wallingford (46.6) were all higher than Meriden’s median age of 42.6.

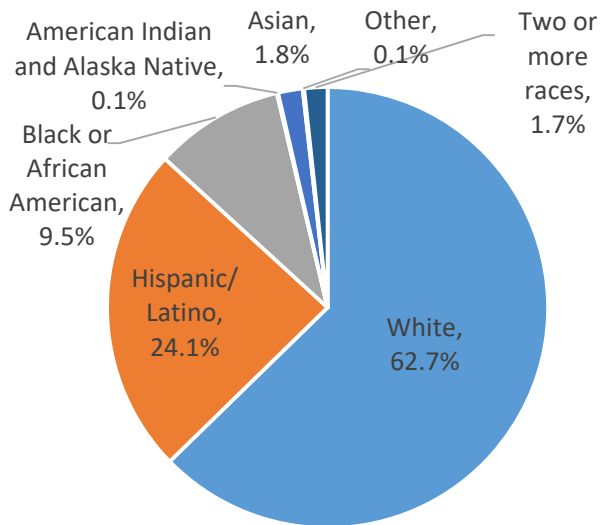


## 2.0: Demographics

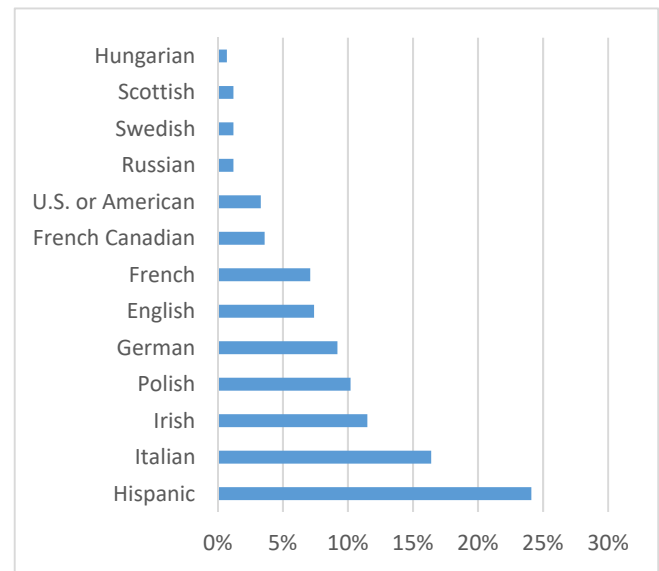
### E. Racial and Ethnic Characteristics

Meriden is an ethnically diverse city with a large Hispanic population. In 2017 just under 25% of residents were of Hispanic origin. This number has dropped since 2010 when the percentage of the total population was closer to 30%. The largest percentage of the population is white (62.7%), and 9.5% of the population is black. The Hispanic population of Meriden is predominantly Puerto Rican with approximately three quarters claiming this heritage in 2000, 2010 and 2017. The next largest group is Mexican, which comprised approximately 13% of the 2010 Hispanic population and only 8% of the 2017 Hispanic population. Figure 15 represents the racial/ethnic makeup of Meriden’s population in 2017.

**Figure 15. Race and Ethnicity in Meriden, 2017**



**Figure 16. Population by Ancestry in Meriden, 2017**



Sources: American FactFinder American Community Survey 2017

From 2010 to 2017, Meriden’s racial and ethnic makeup has remained relatively consistent. The largest portion of the population was white in both 2010 (60%) and 2017 (62.7%). The Hispanic population decreased slightly between 2010 and 2017, from 28.2% to 24.1%, and the population recorded as black or African American grew from 6.5% to 9.5%. Other categories that experienced small decreases were Asian (2.6% in 2010 to 1.8% in 2017), some other race, and two or more races.

Meriden is an ethnically diverse community with a wide variety of ancestries represented in the population. Although persons of Hispanic ancestry now form the leading ancestry category, those individuals claiming Italian, Irish, Polish and German descent still represent substantial percentages of the City’s population. Ancestries represented by approximately 1% or more of Meriden’s population are listed in Figure 16.

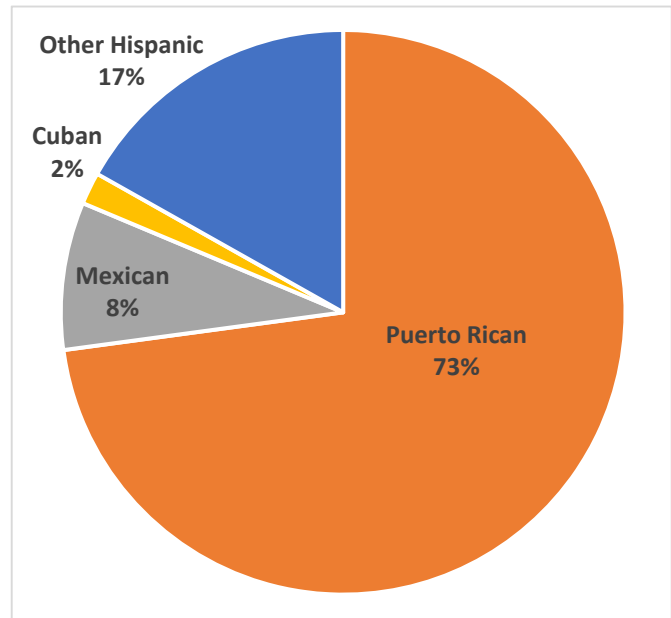
Figure 17 breaks down Hispanic ancestry by specific nationality or the place of origin for their heritage. As this chart illustrates, over 78% of Meriden’s Hispanic population is of Puerto Rican descent. Individuals of Mexican descent and those who classify themselves as “Other Hispanic or Latino” comprise a majority of the non-Puerto Rican Hispanic population.

## 2.0: Demographics

Meriden's population also includes a significant portion of non-English speakers. While 77.6% of the population speaks English, 17.2% speak Spanish, and 5.2% speak another language.

Approximately 5,174 residents, or 9% of the population 5 years and over speak English less than "very well." In communities with large populations of non-English speakers, it is important to maintain access to public services in multiple languages. In Meriden, the presence of a large Hispanic population and population that is Spanish-speaking indicates that services should be accessible in both Spanish and English.

**Figure 17. Hispanic Origin in Meriden, 2017**



Sources: American FactFinder American Community Survey 2017.

## Chapter 3. LAND USE AND ZONING

### Land Use and Zoning Findings and Implications

Understanding the existing land use patterns of the City is an important component of the Plan of Conservation and Development. Knowledge of where specific types of uses are located, particularly on a parcel basis, can help local officials identify areas that may have the potential for economic development or open space protection. Some noteworthy findings from this chapter include:

- The major land use category in Meriden is residential with 41.4% of the land committed to this use. Single-family housing comprises 76.9% of the residential acreage.
- The combined area currently in use for commercial and industrial purposes is 9.4% of the City's acreage. While this figure is lower than comparable communities, it is partially skewed by the large amount of open space in the City. The percentage of the commercial built area (buildings alone) is slightly higher than surrounding communities, except Wallingford to the south.
- Currently, 19.7% of the land area in Meriden is zoned for commercial and industrial use.
- Commercial land is clustered along major transportation corridors, creating the perception that Meriden is much more commercially and industrially developed than in fact it is.
- Much of Meriden's vacant land is located in low-density residential zones.
- The lack of a sizeable inventory of raw vacant land in commercial and industrial zones indicates that much of Meriden's future development activity will be a combination of infill development, redevelopment and revitalization projects.
- In terms of population and housing unit density, Meriden is very similar to other Connecticut communities of roughly the same size, and given its number of residents is not overly dense.

With limited amounts of readily developable land available, difficult decisions involving development versus conservation will become more frequent in the coming years. In terms of planning for the next 10 years and beyond, several trends may have future implications. These include:

- Remaining underdeveloped and vacant land in neighborhoods will likely be the future focus of development pressure.
- A review of future subdivisions and development of land should ensure that prime features (topography, watercourses, wetlands, and woodlands) of Meriden's natural landscape are not threatened or unnecessarily disturbed.
- Increased usage and the age of historic assets will necessitate continued maintenance and upgrading.

### 3.1. LAND USE

The built environment in Meriden—the residential neighborhoods, traditional downtown, parks, and other land uses—helps to define the character of the City. The type, location, and intensity of different kinds of land uses have changed over time in Meriden. To understand how the City should control or promote future land use changes, it is important to know where and how much land is presently developed for residential, commercial, recreation and other uses. Examining these developed areas helps residents visualize desirable and undesirable aspects of land use patterns and provides a foundation for the planning policies guiding the future development of vacant or under-developed parcels. A municipality’s zoning and subdivision regulations are the major regulatory tools with which it can control land uses and influence future development patterns and practices. Below is a summary of the existing land use, development patterns, and zoning in Meriden.

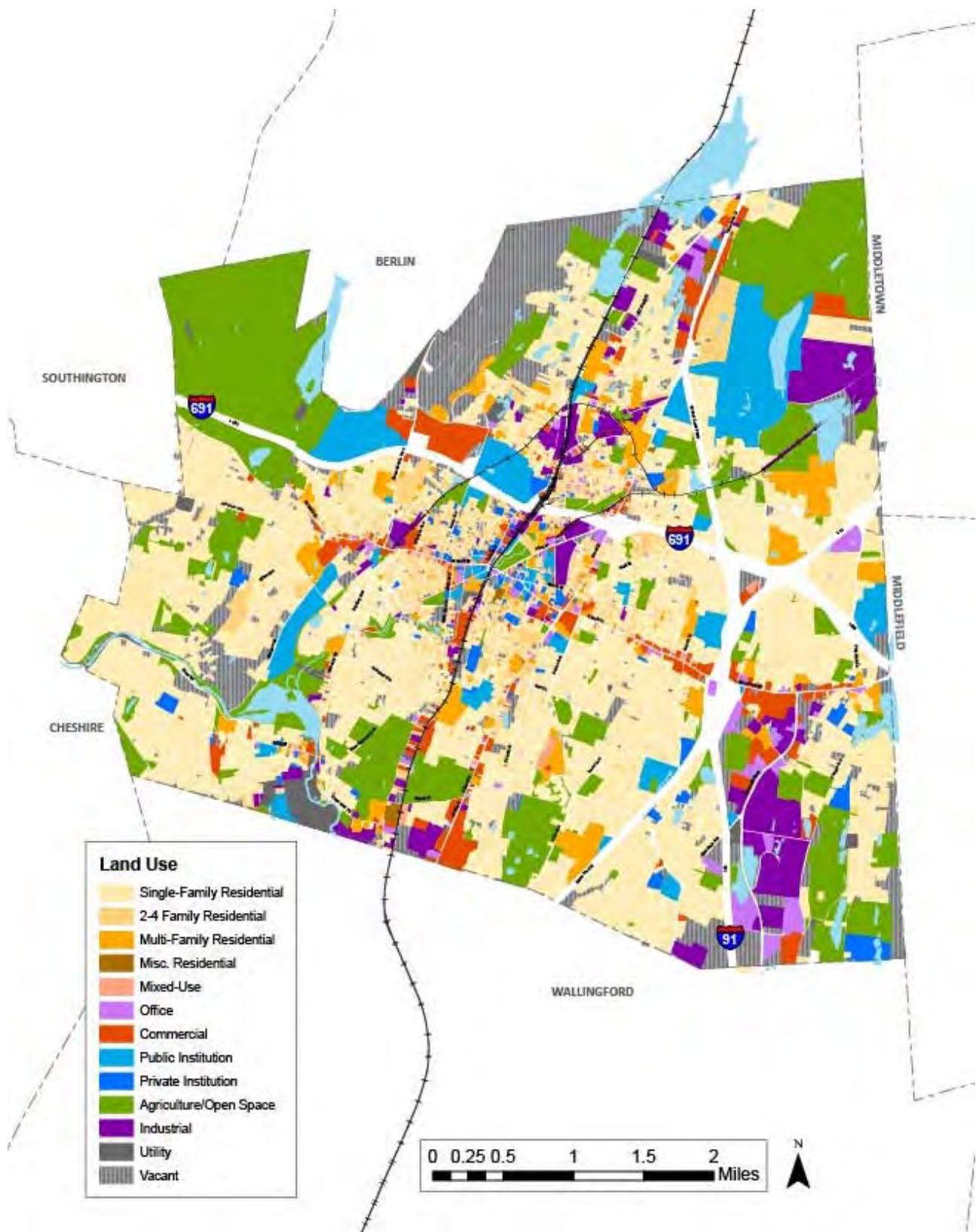
The City of Meriden has a total area of approximately 15,390 acres or 24 square miles. The top three land use categories in 2019 are Residential at 41.7% including mixed-use, Open Land at 29.8%, and Institutional /Infrastructure at 19.5%. In total, approximately 70% of the land within the City is in a developed category. Figure 18 and Table 2 illustrate and describe the concentration of existing land uses in the City. The data utilizes property records from the tax assessor. Land use information was then compared against data from the prior POCD, and then vetted by City staff, the POCD Steering Committee, and the Public at the first public workshop. It is recognized that there may be some differences in the inventory, methodology, and categorization of land uses between previous plans (1981 and 2007) and the updated 2019 POCD.

The top three land use categories in 2019 are Residential at 41.7% including mixed-use, Open Land at 29.8%, and Institutional /Infrastructure at 19.5%. In total, approximately 70% of the land within the City is in a developed category.

**Table 2. Meriden Land Use 2019**

Land Use	Acres	Percentage
<b>Residential</b>		
Single-Family Residential	4,896.6	31.8%
2-4 Family Residential	243.5	1.6%
Multi-Family Residential	1,210.6	7.9%
Misc. Residential	16.6	0.1%
<b>Commercial</b>		
Commercial	581.7	3.8%
Office	214.1	1.4%
Mixed-Use	50.3	0.3%
<b>Industrial</b>		
Industrial	593.	3.9%
<b>Institutional/Infrastructure</b>		
Private Institution	195.6	1.3%
Public Institution	467.9	3.0%
Utility	155.2	1.0%
Roads	2,181.7	14.2%
<b>Open Land</b>		
Agriculture/Open Space	3,205.5	20.8%
Vacant	1,374.8	8.9%
<b>Total</b>	<b>15,387.1</b>	

Figure 18. Existing Land Use



**Table 3. Building Area by Use (Meriden and Comparable Communities)**

	Meriden	New Haven	Wallingford	Mid-dletown	West Haven	East Hartford	New Britain
<b>Residential</b>	63%	54%	55%	65%	68%	68%	72%
<b>Retail</b>	13%	10%	18%	9%	11%	10%	9%
<b>Office</b>	16%	15%	10%	14%	8%	11%	13%
<b>Public</b>	3%	17%	5%	6%	3%	2%	2%
<b>Industrial</b>	5%	3%	12%	7%	10%	9%	4%
<b>Total Building Area (Million SF)</b>	45.18	108.02	15.70	42.33	33.48	30.34	47.04

**A. Residential**

Historically, Meriden has been a residential community, consisting largely of low-density single-family residential units. With a total area of 6,367.2 acres, residential land use is the single largest category in the City. In 2019 single-family residences comprise over 76% of all residential land or 4,896 acres. The City has been experiencing significant growth in the residential land use category over the last few decades. From 1981 to 2007, residential land use grew by 29% from 4,800 acres to 6,197 acres. In 2019, that growth was much more moderate, with an increase of only 3.6% or 220 acres. A more detailed description of housing resources is provided in Chapter 4.

**B. Commercial / Industrial**

Meriden’s land area is made up of approximately 1,439 acres or 9.4% commercial/industrial use. This represents a small growth in terms of acreage and overall percentage from 2009. For a city of Meriden’s size and maturity, this remains a relatively small percentage of land for commercial or industrial use. This is largely due to the significant amount of land dedicated to open space and right-of-ways in the City. As seen in Table 3, the percentage of Meriden’s retail, office and industrial built area (33%) is slightly higher than other comparable nearby municipalities aside from Wallingford (40%).<sup>3</sup>

Commercial land is densely clustered in both the main east/west (East/West Main St.) and north/south (N. Broad, S. Broad, Broad St, Colony Road, and Research Parkway) transportation corridors, creating the perception that the City is much more commercially and industrially developed than in fact it is. Of all the parcels with frontage along the 4.1 mile stretch of Main Street from Pomeroy Avenue to Allen Avenue, commercial or industrial use accounts for over approximately two-thirds of the total land, and there are many pockets with residential uses. Many of these residential properties are in lands zoned commercial. The issue of non-conforming residential uses in commercially zoned property is discussed further in Chapter 5.

**C. Institutional / Infrastructure**

Meriden has 3,000 acres or 19.5% of its land categorized as institutional/ infrastructure. Of the 3,304 acres in this category, 2,182 acres or 14.2% of all land in Meriden is classified as a transportation right-of-way (ROW). This

<sup>3</sup> Source: Urban Footprint

### 3.0: Land Use and Zoning

category includes land associated with Interstate 91, Interstate 691, and Route 15. The remaining 818.8 acres contain the municipal, educational, medical, religious, fraternal, and other non-profit service institutions in the City. A more detailed description of community facilities is provided in Chapter 9.

#### **D. Open Space and Vacant Land**

The open space category represents land used for active and passive recreation and illustrates areas generally protected from future development. This category represents the second-largest land use, occupying 20.3% of the land in Meriden. This percentage exceeds the States' goal of 11% for Open Space for municipalities.

The City of Meriden contains several open space parcels owned by the City, the School District, and other private organizations such as the Meriden Land Trust. The City also has a large network of trails providing most residents with relatively easy access park and open space areas. Prominent public parks include Hubbard Park, Guiffrida Park, and the Hunter Memorial Golf Course. A variety of smaller neighborhood parks play integral roles in the physical layouts of individual neighborhoods as well as the social and recreational lives of Meriden's citizens. A more detailed discussion of parks and open space areas is provided in Chapter 7: Parks, Recreation and Open Space.

Approximately 8.5% of Meriden's land is vacant (either undeveloped or unoccupied). Vacant parcels are scattered throughout the City, with larger parcels located in the northwest of the city, adjacent to the Berlin town line; in southwestern Meriden near Hanover Pond; and in the southern portion of the City on the Wallingford border near I-91.

While the overwhelming majority of Meriden's land area is developed in some form, there remain several large areas of undeveloped woodland areas. These areas are primarily concentrated along the northern border of the City and include Hubbard Park, West Peak, East Peak, South Mountain, Cathole Mountain, Lamentation Mountain, and Guiffrida Park. While small vestiges of Meriden's agricultural past remain in the form of a few open fields and farms in the southeastern portion of the City, the woodland characteristics of the City's remaining undeveloped land dominate its visual character.

In addition to the Quinnipiac River, Meriden contains several significant natural water features, including Harbor Brook, which effectively divides the City in half and whose periodic flooding has caused problems for over a century; Sodom Brook, which like Harbor Brook is a tributary of the Quinnipiac River and Hanover Pond and runs north-south through the City; Willow Brook and Spoon Shop Brook, which both run through the eastern side of the City; Hanover Pond, which lies at a turn of the Quinnipiac River; the Bradley Hubbard Reservoir; the Merimere Reservoir; New Dam; and many small ponds that dot the local landscape.

The largely built-out nature of the City indicates that future growth, especially in core areas of the City, will likely involve "infill" development projects to fill in the gaps of the existing land use pattern. It is also likely that many of the new commercial developments that will occur in Meriden over the decade or so will involve redevelopment projects, or conversion of old and abandoned land uses and brownfields into new redefined development projects. The distribution of the City's remaining vacant land is illustrated on the map titled *Vacant Land and Open Space* (see Figure 19).

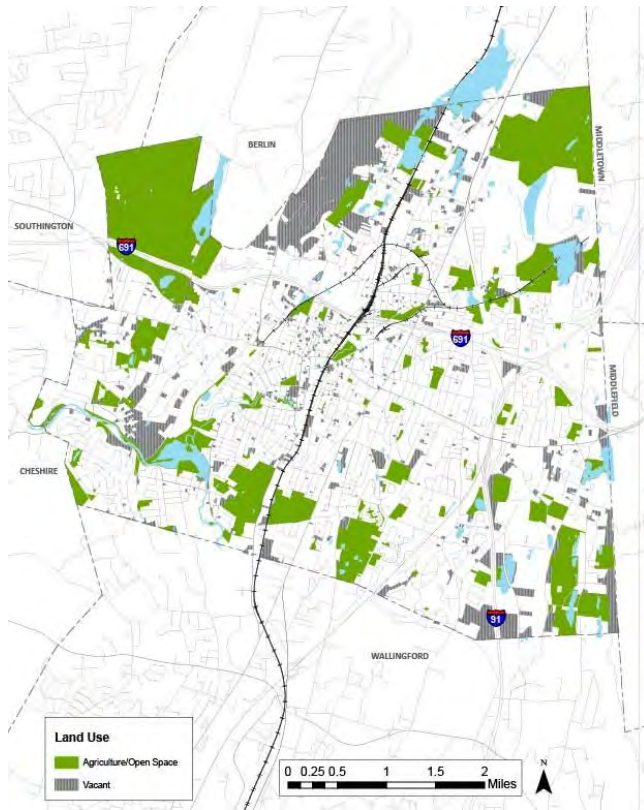
#### **E. Tax-exempt Land Use**

The City's land use map was derived from the tax assessor's parcel data. This data also includes a category indicating tax-exempt status for land uses. According to the assessor's data, approximately 25% of Meriden's land

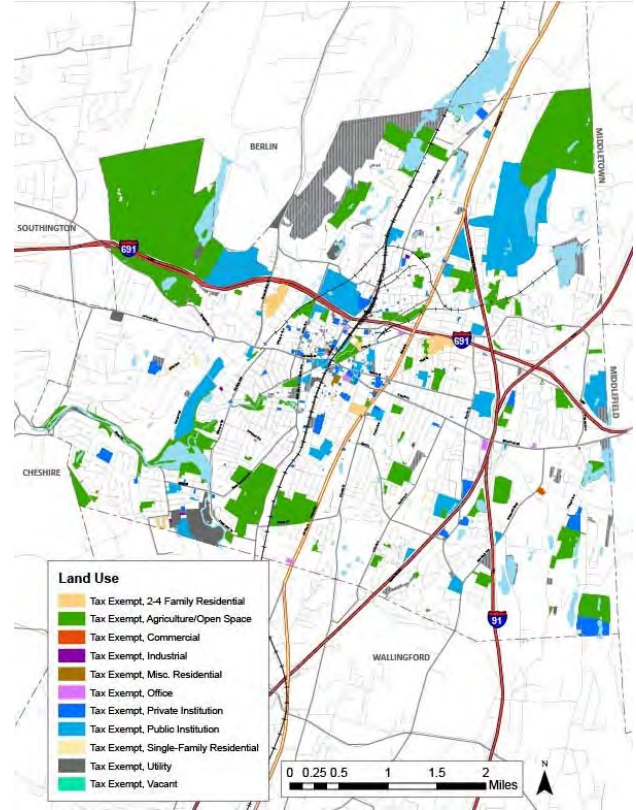
### 3.0: Land Use and Zoning

area is tax-exempt. These include open space, vacant land, public institutional uses, and private institutional uses. The largest portion of the City's tax-exempt land is open space – over 68%. The second-largest category is public institutional use, including government buildings and nonprofit organizations, at 12% of tax-exempt uses. Vacant parcels are 10% of tax-exempt parcels and private institutional uses, such as the Hospital, make up 4%. Figure 20 shows tax-exempt properties classified by land use (as shown in Figure 18).

**Figure 19. Vacant Land and Open Space**



**Figure 20. Tax-exempt Land**





## 3.2. NEIGHBORHOODS

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Meriden’s built environment, as characterized by its land use patterns and associated zoning regulations, is an important component of understanding the City’s make up. However, the City’s diversity of neighborhoods also contributes to the overall feel of Meriden and its perceptible community character. This chapter provides an overview of the various neighborhoods that help to define the community character of the City.

### *Downtown Meriden and Immediate Neighborhoods*

Downtown Meriden and neighborhoods immediately surrounding it generally encompass the area centered around the Meriden Train Station and the new Meriden Green, bounded by Broad Street to the east, I-691 to the north, Sodom Brook to the west, and Harbor Brook and Olive Street to the south. In addition to the part traditionally recognized as Downtown Meriden, this area includes the neighborhoods of Action 13, Bartlett James Monroe, ECHO, Goodwill and Lewis, Grove Street, Hobart, the Lower East Side, Mid-City, Randolph, Westsider and Windsor. This area is the historic heart of the City, with much of Meriden’s governmental services, religious institutions, and higher density housing contained within its boundaries. The portion of East Main Street that passes through Downtown is home to the Meriden City Hall, a mix of retail businesses and residential apartments, office space two fraternal organizations, several churches, and a synagogue. This area is the “civic block” that forms the perceived center of Downtown. The state courthouse and Meriden Senior Center are located along West Main Street along with retail shops and office uses.

The neighborhoods immediately surrounding the Downtown core include a mix of housing types with single-family homes on small lots, two- to four-family structures, apartment buildings, and elderly housing. Industrial properties are also scattered around the periphery of Downtown, most notably around the intersection of State Street and Camp Street; along Center Street; near the intersection of Charles Street and High Street; and along Cooper Street. In addition to the Green, Columbus Park on Lewis Avenue, and Gillman Park on Cook Avenue provide open space and recreation opportunities for Downtown area residents. Finally, railroad access plays an important role in the character of Downtown Meriden, as the newly opened CTRail line from New Haven to Springfield bisects the Downtown area, providing access to the regional rail system via a passenger platform on State Street. The railroad has a long history of shaping development in Meriden, and its influence will continue well into the future.

### *South Meriden*

The South Meriden area generally encompasses the area bounded by the Quinnipiac River and Hanover Pond to the north and the east, the Cheshire town line to the west, and the Wallingford town line to the south. South Meriden consists primarily of single-family homes on quarter-acre and half-acre lots. The neighborhood centers around Main Street, which is home to several business establishments, some higher density housing and various religious and institutional uses such as Hanover Elementary School and the South Meriden Trinity United Methodist Church add “village flavor”. Route 70 (River Road) runs along the northern periphery of the area into the Town of Cheshire along with the most prominent geographic feature in the neighborhood – the Quinnipiac Gorge. Hanover Pond and its associated natural environs lie along the northern fringe of the neighborhood as well. Evansville Avenue, which runs south from Main Street, provides a connection with the Town of Wallingford, as well as providing access to the Meriden-Markham Airport and the City’s former landfill and sewage treatment plant. Numerous commercial and industrial businesses are also located on this road along the Wallingford town line.

#### ***North Meriden/Silver Lake***

The North Meriden/Silver Lake area generally encompasses the portion of Meriden west of the Berlin Turnpike and north of Britannia Street and Westfield Road running north to the Berlin town line. The area is visually dominated by the presence of the Berlin Turnpike with its multiple travel lanes and associated strip commercial development. Lamentation Mountain overlooks the neighborhood from the Town of Berlin, and a portion of Silver Lake extends into Meriden just west of North Colony Road. Along North Colony Road, a mix of industrial properties, businesses, single-family residences and condominiums can be found. The southern portion of the neighborhood, in the area of Britannia Street, Griswold Street and the southern end of North Colony Road, contains an eclectic mix of uses. A variety of residential styles from single-family homes and two-family structures to apartments and condominiums intermingle with industrial uses and automotive businesses.

#### ***The East Side***

The East Side of Meriden is generally defined as the portion of the City east of South Broad Street and south of East Main Street, and the area north of East Main Street up to I-91. Given its large area, the East Side contains a diverse range of building types, land uses and natural features. Transportation linkages play a key role in defining this area of Meriden. East Main Street, which bisects the East Side in the east-west direction, is home to much of the strip commercial development in the City, with both regional and national retailers and food service establishments having a substantial presence along the road. East Main Street also serves as the link between Downtown Meriden and I-91. I-91 also has an important presence in the East Side, with three exits serving the immediate area. Finally, Route 66 links the area with Middlefield and the City of Middletown.

The residential portions of the East Side are generally composed of single-family homes on medium-sized lots often situated on cul-de-sac roads. Several condominium developments are also scattered around the neighborhood. Open space and recreational opportunities are available at Nessing Field located off of Murdock Avenue and the recreational facilities associated with the Thomas Hooker Elementary School on Overlook Road. Additional retail and commercial development can be found in a strip development configuration along Broad Street on the western edge of the neighborhood.

Located off of East Main Street in the southeastern section of the City, Research Parkway is the primary industrial park area in Meriden. Most of the City's largest developed office and industrial properties can be found along this road. Some development potential still exists in the form of unoccupied buildings and vacant land parcels. Research Parkway also connects with a similarly developed portion of northern Wallingford and benefits from excellent access to the regional transportation network via I-91.

#### ***Dutch Hill/Hall Avenue***

The Dutch Hill/Hall Avenue area encompasses the portion of Meriden south of Downtown, generally bounded by Olive Street, the railroad tracks, Summer Street and Grove Road to the north, Hanover Avenue to the west, Broad Street to the east and the Wallingford town line to the south. Along Broad Street, a variety of retail and service establishments can be found, which tend to become larger and more intense in use as one travels south toward Wallingford. To the west of Broad Street lie small residential streets generally populated with single-family homes, with some two-family and multi-family structures mixed in as one gets closer to the Downtown area. Two large cemeteries, Sacred Heart and Walnut Grove, occupy a substantial portion of the southern half of the neighborhood. The 10-acre Ceppa Field on Gale Avenue provides usable open space for the neighborhood. One of the more

### 3.0: Land Use and Zoning

distinctive features of the neighborhood is the Curtis Home, a facility located on Crown Street that provides a wide range of specialized elderly services. Several condominium and elderly housing developments are located in the area, particularly along Crown Street and near the intersection of Hanover Avenue and Old Colony Road. Old Colony Road from Hall Avenue south to the Wallingford town line has a mix of land uses ranging from automotive businesses, office space and warehousing to single-family residential and apartments.

#### ***Washington Park***

The Washington Park area encompasses the portion of Meriden between Downtown and the I-91/Berlin Turnpike, east of the center of the City. It is generally bounded by I-691 to the north, Broad Street to the west, the I-91/Berlin Turnpike corridor to the east and East Main Street to the south. The neighborhood is characterized by a mix of single-family and two-family residences on small lots that are situated north of the strip commercial development along East Main Street. The neighborhood is home to two schools: Maloney High School, located at the eastern end of the area along Gravel Street, and Roger Sherman Elementary School on North Pearl Street. The 10-acre Washington Park located on Liberty Street is another prominent feature from which the neighborhood derives its name. Along the northern and western fringes of the neighborhood are several apartment buildings, along with additional commercial development.

#### ***Glen Hills***

The Glen Hills area encompasses the western portion of Meriden between Downtown and the Cheshire town line. It is generally bounded by I-691 and Reservoir Avenue to the north, Hanover Road and Bradley Avenue to the east, the Quinnipiac River and Hanover Pond to the south and the Cheshire town line to the west. The neighborhood is primarily composed of single-family homes on large lots; however, other land uses also have a substantial presence in this part of Meriden. Lincoln Middle School, Wilcox Vocational-Technical High School and Platt High School form an educational corridor along Centennial Avenue and Oregon Road; in addition, Benjamin Franklin Elementary School is located a short distance away on West Main Street. Higher density housing can be found in the northeastern section of the neighborhood along Chamberlain Highway (Route 71) and adjacent to the Downtown area. Both the northern and southern sides of West Main Street have retail and commercial space, along with some apartment buildings. The entrance to the 1,800-acre Hubbard Park, the centerpiece of the Meriden parks system, is located along the northern edge of the neighborhood, while the southern edge is defined by the Quinnipiac Gorge and Hanover Pond.

#### ***Kensington Avenue/Wilcox Avenue***

Kensington Avenue/Wilcox Avenue encompasses an area northwest of Downtown Meriden generally bounded by Reservoir Avenue, Sodom Brook and I-691 to the south, the main railroad line to the east, and the Berlin town line to the north and west. This area includes the Westfield Shopping center (Meriden mall) and the various big-box retail stores located in its vicinity. Midstate Medical Center, located across Chamberlain Highway from the mall, is a regional medical facility with substantial drawing power for the area off of I-691. The neighborhood is set against the dramatic backdrop of South Mountain and the Hanging Hills, with several apartment complexes situated near the base of these natural features. Single-family homes stretch from Kensington Avenue up Gracey Avenue to the subdivisions around 15-acre Beaver Lake and its associated park space at the northern end of the neighborhood. In addition, several industrial uses are clustered along the southern end of Gracey Avenue near the historic Wilcox Avenue area. The first historic district in Meriden. The area is also home to 320+ acre former NRG site.

### 3.0: Land Use and Zoning

#### ***City Park/Brookside***

The City Park/Brookside area encompasses a small area northeast of Downtown Meriden generally bounded by I-691 to the south, the main railroad line to the west, Sherman Avenue to the north and Broad Street to the east. The neighborhood is primarily single-family and two-family homes mixed in with several vacant parcels. Some higher density housing is located along Sherman Avenue, and various commercial and industrial businesses are situated on the eastern and western fringes of the neighborhood, including along Pratt Street and Broad Street and along Center Street. The dominant feature of the neighborhood is the 11-acre Brookside Park, through which Harbor Brook passes.

#### ***Nathan Hale/Baldwin Avenue***

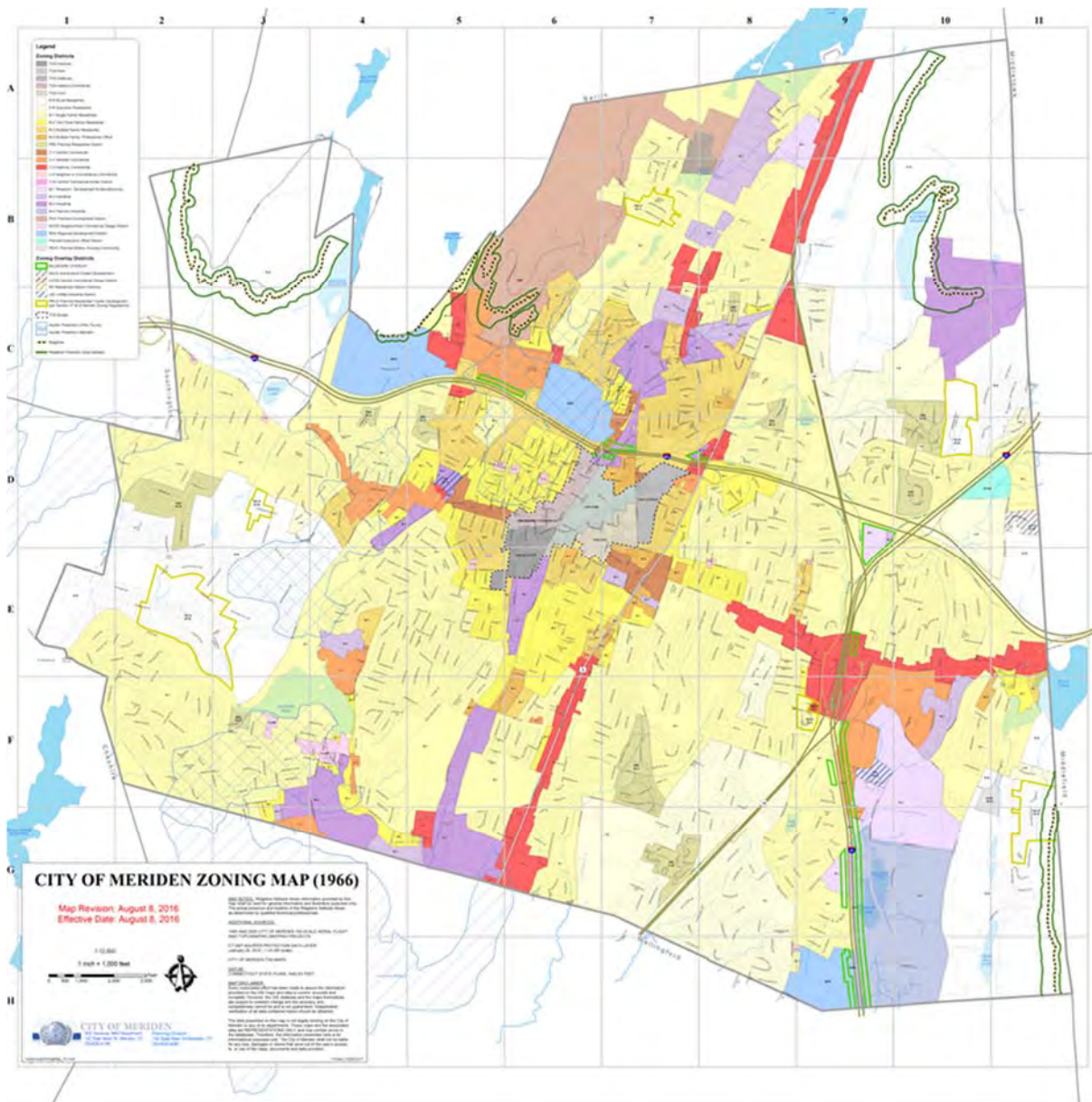
The Nathan Hale/Baldwin Avenue area encompasses the northeast quadrant of Meriden, generally bounded by I-691 and I-91 to the south, Broad Street and North Broad Street to the west, the Berlin town line to the north and the Middletown city line to the east.

While the area is overwhelmingly single-family residential, there are also significant institutional, industrial and open space facilities located in this part of Meriden. Washington Middle School and the new Thomas Edison Middle Magnet School are both located along North Broad Street, while Nathan Hale Elementary School is located at the end of Atkins Street and along Baldwin Avenue. The parks in the area include Baldwin Pond and its associated park space, Falcon Field along Westfield Road, Carroll Park at the intersection of Bee Street and Baldwin Avenue, and the expansive Guiffrida Park and Bradley Hubbard Reservoir. In addition, the Hunter Memorial Golf Course owned and operated by the City of Meriden is located next to Guiffrida Park and is generally recognized as one of the finest municipal golf courses in Connecticut.

### 3.3. ZONING

Zoning powers are the primary control for development and redevelopment of land. The role of the zoning code is to regulate which types of land use are permitted or prevented in specified areas of the City. Zoning also controls density, scale, and design of buildings. The Meriden zoning code has 11 mapped zoning classifications. There are six residential districts, five commercial districts, four manufacturing/industrial districts and five TOD Districts. Meriden has an additional 11 special districts that include cluster developments, overlay districts, and protection zones (see Figure 21). This chapter provides some general information about the intent for each of the zoning districts. Details on zoning regulations can be found on the City’s website.

**Figure 21. Meriden Zoning Map**



**A. Residential**

Meriden has a total of six residential districts and one special district, including three that allow only single-family residential use, with minimum lot area ranging from two acres (R-R) to 11,250 square feet (R-1 with public water and sanitation). Single-family zones are mapped generally in the periphery of the City, with the least dense zoning districts farthest from the downtown.

The City has one district for two- and three-family residential (R-2) and two districts for multi-family dwellings (R-3, R-4). Multi-family and two- and three-family districts are mapped in the City’s center and close to downtown.

The Residential Historic (RH) is an overlay district that may be mapped on another residential district by the Zoning Commission. The purpose of the RH district is to protect and enhance Meriden’s historically significant residential structures and neighborhoods and guide the maintenance, restoration, rehabilitation, or alteration of these structures to preserve Meriden’s history through architecture. The RH district provides additional oversight by the Design Review Board. The RH is currently mapped in the R-2 district along Wilcox Avenue just north of I-691.

The City has made recent zoning changes to promote neighborhood stability. In 2012, the City rezoned 540 residential properties in nine areas of the City from R-2 (two/three family residential) to R-1 (single-family residential). Staff research indicated that the nine areas were primarily composed of single-family homes and revising zoning would help to maintain the neighborhoods. A recent review of these areas indicates that the neighborhoods are stable or improving, specifically in areas previously showing a decline.<sup>4</sup>

**Land Uses in Residential Zones**

Residential zones account for a total of 6,886 acres or 44.7% of the total land area.

In residential zones, 71% of land is used for residential dwellings. Beyond residential use, the second-largest land use is open space at 15.7%, followed by vacant land area at 6.4% of acres zoned residential. Under 2% of land area in residential zones is used for commercial use.

**Table 4. Land Uses in Residential Zones**

Land Use in Residential Zones	Acres	Percentage
<b>Single-Family Residential</b>	4005.4	58.2%
<b>2-4 Family Residential</b>	515	7.5%
<b>Multi-Family Residential</b>	351.7	5.1%
<b>Misc. Residential</b>	4.6	0.1%
<b>Mixed-Use</b>	17.2	0.3%
<b>Commercial</b>	51.9	0.8%
<b>Office</b>	14.7	0.2%
<b>Industrial</b>	20.6	0.3%
<b>Private Institution</b>	139.9	2.0%
<b>Public Institution</b>	195.1	2.8%
<b>Agriculture/Open Space</b>	1081.9	15.7%
<b>Utility</b>	45.5	0.7%
<b>Vacant</b>	442.6	6.4%
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>6886.3</b>	<b>100.0</b>

<sup>4</sup> City of Meriden Comprehensive Annual Financial Report (Fiscal Year Ended June 30, 2018)

**B. Commercial**

Meriden has six commercial districts, totaling just under 3,000 acres or about 20% of the total land area. The Central Commercial or C-1 district is designed to encourage retail and service business as well as professional office use, entertainment, and light industrial activities in proximity to downtown. The C-1 district is located along East and West Main Street, Colony Street and in other commercial pockets surrounding the downtown. The Central Commercial Annex (C-1-A) district is written as a transition zone between all zones and the C-1 but is not mapped.

The C-2 General Commercial and C-3 Highway Commercial districts provide commercial uses geared toward motorists in areas with good access to major arterials. The C-3 district is intended to provide for the same uses as the C-2 but at lower densities. New residential development is excluded from these districts except by special exception.

The Convenience or Neighborhood Commercial district (C-4) is mapped near residential areas throughout the City and is intended to provide for local convenience-scale commerce with a range of retail and services for the daily needs of residents. The City Council may designate an area within any zoning district as a Neighborhood Commercial Design district (NCDD), which is intended to provide for a range of low-density commercial and residential uses using criteria to emphasize density, scale, architectural conformity, and streetscape.

**Land Uses in Commercial Zones**

While the commercial zones allow for a variety of commercial uses, they also generally allow for residential uses or mixed-uses (i.e. residential over commercial). Approximately 45% of the commercially zoned land is used for commercial alone. Residential use covers approximately 10% of land use in commercial zones and 22.6% of commercially zoned land is currently vacant.

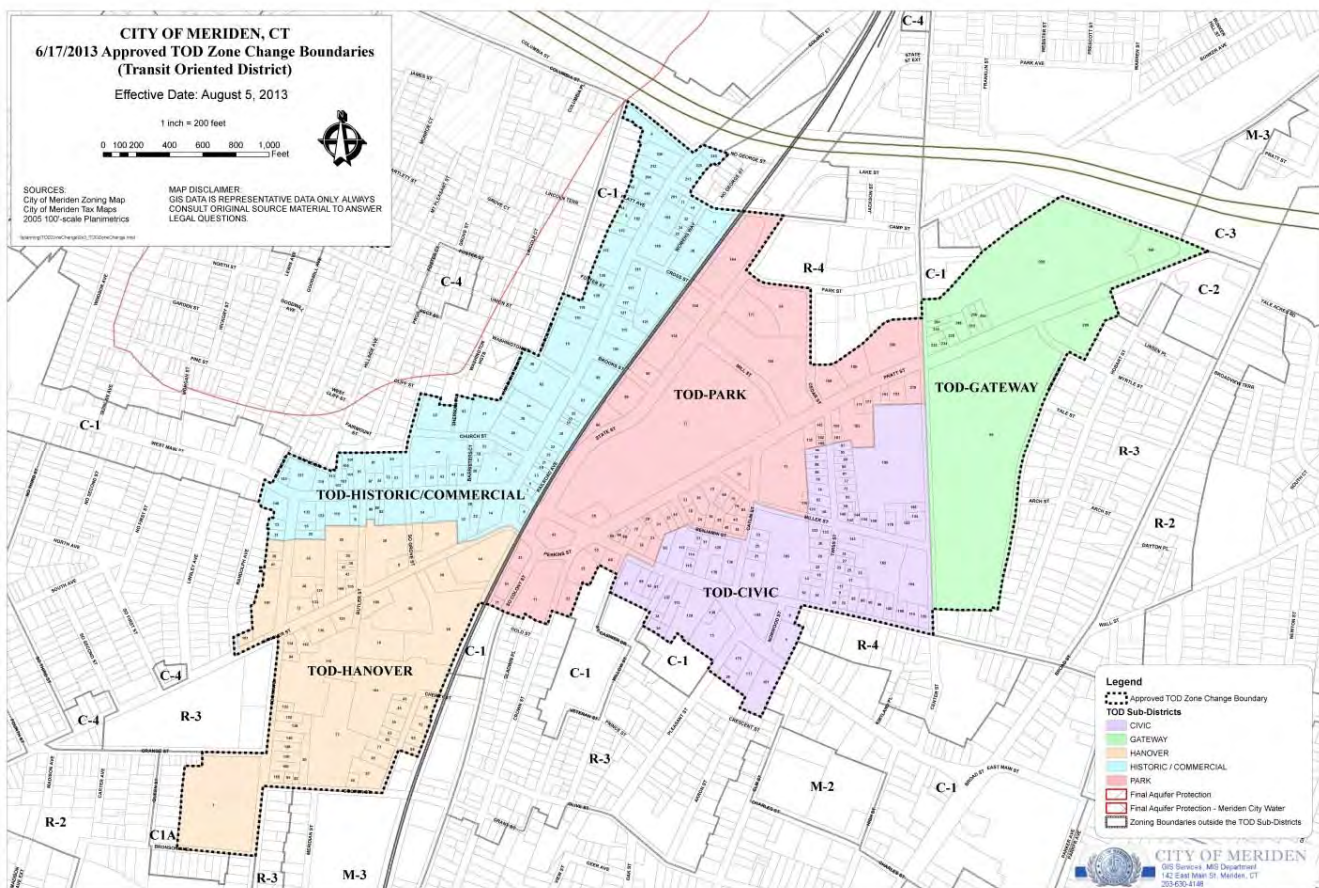
*Table 5. Land Uses in Commercial Zones*

Land Use in Commercial Zones	Area (Acres)	Percentage
Single-Family Residential	126.4	4.3%
2-4 Family Residential	46.2	1.6%
Multi-Family Residential	107.1	3.6%
Misc. Residential	24.1	0.8%
Mixed-Use	31.3	1.1%
Commercial	482.1	16.2%
Office	168.8	5.7%
Industrial	644.6	21.7%
Private Institution	19.6	0.7%
Public Institution	284.7	9.6%
Agriculture/Open Space	270.5	9.1%
Utility	90.1	3%
Vacant	671.6	22.6%
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,966.85</b>	<b>100%</b>

### C. Transit-Oriented Development

In 2013, the City adopted a Transit-Oriented Development (“TOD”) District Zoning Regulation to ensure that new development is of high quality and blends with the existing historic character. The purpose of the TOD District is to support a viable mixture of uses and implement the Smart Growth principles outlined in the 2009 POCD and 2012 Meriden TOD Master Plan. The regulations provide flexibility in terms of use while establishing design criteria, flexible adaptive reuse guidelines, and a streamlined permitting process. The TOD District is made up of five sub-districts, including the Historic – Commercial Sub-District (TOD-HC), Park Sub-District (TOD-P), Hanover Sub-District (TOD-H), Civic Sub-District (TOD-C), and the Gateway Sub-District (TOD-G).

Figure 22. TOD Zoning Districts





#### **D. Industrial**

Meriden has five industrial districts that provide for office, industrial, manufacturing and research activities. The Research, Development, and Manufacturing M-1 district has the lowest density of these five districts with a minimum lot area of three acres. The M-2 and M-3 districts allow industrial uses on minimum one-acre lots. The M-3 Industrial District is designed for uses that have a greater dependence on trucks and are potentially noisier. The Planned Industrial M-4 district allows for industrial development integrated with mixed-uses, with a minimum lot size of 100 acres. The Unified Industrial district (UID) is intended to provide flexibility and efficiency in industrial land development and the more efficient use of public facilities to support industrial development. Industrial districts are generally mapped in the perimeter of the City and along the north-south corridor, Old Colony Road/South and North Colony Street.

#### **E. Special Districts**

The Planned Residential Development District (PRD) allows for the clustering of detached dwelling units in areas with sufficient resources and amenities, including open space, sanitary sewer capacity, and water supply. This district is mapped in various R-1, S-R and R-R districts throughout Meriden.

The Planned Executive Office Development district (PEOD) is written to integrate office developments and corporate facilities in attractive, efficient environmentally sensitive campus settings. This district is not mapped in Meriden.

The Regional Development district (RDD) permits institutional uses such as conference center hotels, executive offices, research and development, medical centers, colleges and universities, and distribution facilities. The RDD is mapped along Research Parkway at the southern border of Meriden, and north of I-691 along Kensington Avenue (Midstate Medical Center) and Undercliff Road.

Active adult cluster developments (AACD) was created to encourage alternative housing choices for people 55 years or older. This district permits variations in lot sizes for detached single-family dwellings in R-R, S-R, and R-1 zones without an increase in density. This district is mapped in one location at the eastern border of the City off of Preston Avenue.

The Planned Elderly Housing Community (PEHC) permits the creation of developments for the elderly that provides a continuum of care. These may include detached and attached residential units with convalescent homes on a single site. This district is mapped in one R-R district on the eastern side of the City off of High Hill Road.

The Assisted and Independent Living Facilities Overlay (ASSIST) district provides a mechanism for the approval of assisted and independent living facilities in the M-1, C-1, C-2, R-2 and R-4 zoning districts. This district is mapped in the M-1 district in a triangle of land located at the intersection of I-91, Route 15, and I-691.

The Planned Development (PDD) district was created to allow for diverse but integrated uses on a single unit of development to encourage better site planning practices. This district is mapped across a large piece of land off of South Mountain Road at the City's northern boundary with the Town of Berlin.

### 3.0: Land Use and Zoning

The Ridgeline Protection Zone restricts development in the ridgeline setback area. This is applied along ridgelines in the northeastern part of the City near Bradley & Hubbard Reservoir and to the south.

## 3.4. LAND USE AND ZONING ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES

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As a component of Meriden’s 2009 POCD, an analysis was conducted assessing the development potential for the City. This analysis reviewed vacant and agricultural land zoned for residential and non-residential uses for its physical capacity to support new or expanded growth. Development capacity considered environmental constraints (i.e. wetlands, steep slopes, floodplains, water features) and zoning allowances. Recent development within the past 10 years has been relatively modest, and the key takeaways from the 2009 analysis largely remain for most of the City.

### Residential Development Trends

The housing chapter discusses changes to the housing stock since the prior POCD. According to available data from the Census and American Community Survey (ACS), between 2010 and 2017, the City saw a moderate increase in multi-family units (5 or more units), as well as a slight increase in single-family units. The City has recently undertaken several renovations of existing housing units and new construction of mixed-income developments downtown. Multi-family housing has been primarily concentrated in mixed-use and transit-oriented developments (TOD) surrounding the Meriden Green, as described above. It is anticipated that most of the new units that are built will be accommodated within the TOD district.

The City should continue to encourage new commercial and residential development to occur in the established centers of individual neighborhoods, such as Downtown, and along Britannia Street and Parker Avenue, to reinforce the economic and social vitality of these centers and to keep development where infrastructure is already in place to support it. The City should consider neighborhood-specific zoning controls in certain areas to improve the overall look and feel of an area. This might include streetscape and signage guidelines, ensuring proper access management, and good building design. In some neighborhood centers, it may be appropriate to consider the implementation of village district zoning regulations. A Village Districts allows the City to have greater control over the design, construction, or rehabilitation of buildings. The control will help the City to ensure that new buildings are compatible with other uses in the immediate neighborhood. A “Civic Block” designation for the area around City Hall in Downtown would help to highlight the historic nature of this particular area through lighting, streetscape, and other urban design elements. The City should also consider designating local historic districts, which would assist property owners to rehabilitate and maintain their historic properties. Properties in a locally designated historic district would be eligible for certain tax credits such as the CT Historic Rehabilitation Tax Credit Program.

### Neighborhood Planning

The City has continued efforts to ensure the preservation and improvement of the quality of life in the various distinct and historic neighborhoods. The preservation effort is primarily addressed through the Neighborhood Code Enforcement Walk. This continuing program includes six inner core neighborhoods covering 525 acres and 20 miles of street. Code violations reviewed include building, zoning, housing, and health codes. More specifically,

### 3.0: Land Use and Zoning

the major quality of life issues addressed are painting, drainage, overgrown grass, garbage and debris, abandoned vehicles, and illegal apartments.<sup>5</sup>

#### Commercial and Industrial District Development Trends

The City has a limited amount of available land for development in commercial zones, industrial zones, and planned development districts. The majority of this land is in the form of relatively small (1 acre or less) parcels scattered throughout the City, with a significant number of them located along the main arterials feeding the City center. The most notable cluster of larger parcels is located along Research Parkway. Due to the limited amount of land, it is clear that reuse, redevelopment, and assemblage of properties will play an increasingly critical role in the City's future development. Studies have shown that the life cycle of commercial buildings continues to shrink, with 25 to 40 years of use as the current range. As buildings become obsolete they will be adapted to new uses or replaced by contemporary structures. The locational attributes of easy access and infrastructure remain important to the continued viability of the non-residential zones throughout Meriden. The remaining vacant land in these zones will play a role in reshaping parcels to accommodate expansions of existing business or the creation of new development sites. It is in the City's best interest to remain flexible in its regulations so that the ever-changing building forms required by businesses can be accommodated while respecting traditional neighborhood values.

As discussed in Chapter 5: Economic Development, the retail environment in Meriden has shifted over the past few years. Factors such as the rise in internet sales have resulted in a general decline in traditional brick and mortar retail sales, nationwide. This impact is being felt in Meriden's commercial areas, including the Meriden Westfield Mall, major retail corridors and downtown. Each of these areas provides a different type of retail opportunity, and similarly, faces different challenges. All contribute to the City's economic base and must be planned for.

The impact of online shopping has impacted the types and sizes of stores being provided. Many retailers have adapted to provide more in-store experiences to make the retail experience more than just shopping. For example, a clothing store might adapt to offer alteration services, online order pick up, and personal stylist consultation. For larger stores, there has been a trend in downsizing footprints in efforts to optimize layouts and get closer to their customer base. Some traditional big-box brands are experimenting with smaller model stores which allow them to open more stores with convenient locations.

The Westfield Meriden Mall is the single largest tax-payer and a critical economic driver in Meriden. While privately owned, the City should consider ways in which it can provide ample flexibility for the mall to adapt to market conditions as brick and mortar retail, and malls, in particular, become more challenging to keep in business. Recent case studies demonstrate opportunities for adaptive reuse in the event that closures prevent the mall from continuing to operate. Meriden can help to ensure that the mall is in a good position to adapt to future change by creating a flexible regulatory environment with zoning that will not present a barrier to ongoing success. There have been comparable projects that have been reconfigured to include a broader mix of tenants, including uses as diverse as residential, healthcare, academic, and initiatives include redevelopment of and other institutions.

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<sup>5</sup> City of Meriden Comprehensive Annual Financial Report (Fiscal Year Ended June 30, 2018)

### 3.0: Land Use and Zoning

The current zoning (C-2) allows for most commercial uses but does not allow for residential uses. If the site were ever to be redeveloped, the City might consider the creation of a Planned Development District, or another similar mechanism to ensure that the proposed buildings, street systems, utility networks, open space, etc. are appropriately designed and relate to each other and the surrounding areas.

One of the priorities for the City will be to foster the renovation and reuse of older structures that are vacant or underutilized. The City has advanced numerous initiatives, such as the TOD Zoning regulations to promote adaptive reuse of structures with historical, architectural, or cultural value. The City has also engaged in a long-term commitment to assess and clean up brownfield sites in the community and return them to active reuse. Since 2002, the City has leveraged over \$30 million for assessment, cleanup and remediation activities to create more available land for housing and commercial development.<sup>6</sup>

Recent brownfield remediation initiatives include the redevelopment of the former Meriden Wallingford hospital and 116 Cook Avenue. The hospital site includes a 245,000 square foot building, a former parking garage on a 5.6-acre property. 116 Cook Avenue is a 73,000 square foot former medical office. The City selected a master developer for both sites and funds have been awarded for site cleanup that commenced in 2018. There are still many underutilized properties that remain in the City, particularly along Research Parkway, where there are a few former industrial buildings on large parcels that are vacant. Opportunities for reuse of these areas are discussed further in Chapter 5.

The City should continue to encourage infill development along the main commercial corridors (East and West Main Street, and Broad Street/Route 5) to make those areas more cohesive. Some of the commercial corridors may require some zoning changes to allow for the reuse, redevelopment, and assemblage of properties. For example, the C-3 district which is the predominant zoning for the commercial corridors does not allow mixed-use buildings, which may be appropriate in some locations. In other areas, such as along Broad Street, south of Gale Avenue, the corridor has a patchwork feel with pockets of both commercial and single-family residential uses. The single-family residential uses are in a C-3 district and are thus a pre-existing non-conforming use. There may be opportunities to reinforce the corridor by encouraging the assemblage of some of the single-family homes. There may also be an opportunity along certain areas of East Main Street to extend commercial zoning on corner lots onto the residential side streets (i.e. a 100-foot depth), so long as commercial uses were contiguous. The intent would be to reinforce the commercial corridors while not unduly disturbing stable single-family neighborhoods. A detailed zoning study of these commercial areas is needed to determine the most appropriate approach. The City should examine opportunities to improve zoning regulations and update design guidelines to ensure that these areas can be developed to their highest and best use in a way that improves the streetscape, allows for better access and egress, and promotes good site design.

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<sup>6</sup> City of Meriden Comprehensive Annual Financial Report (Fiscal Year Ended June 30, 2018)

## Chapter 4. HOUSING

### Housing Findings and Implications

Similar to population and demographic characteristics, current and future housing needs play a role in determining who will be able to live in a community. As one of the principal land uses within a community, housing and housing-related issues affect all residents. The form, layout, condition, and cost of housing available are key to the quality of life within Meriden. The data and discussion presented in this chapter suggest several trends that are of importance for Meriden:

- Meriden's housing stock consists of 49.3% single-family detached housing; 3.9% single-family attached (generally condominium) housing; 24.3% two-four family housing; 22.3% multi-family housing; and 0.3% mobile home or other. (2017 ACS)
- While Meriden has a balance of housing styles, types and unit configurations, the housing stock is generally comprised of low and moderate-valued residential structures with few high-end residential structures, particularly in the single-family detached housing category.
- Over the past 20 years (1997 through 2017) Meriden had a net gain of 605 units, half of which (306) were in 2004.
- More than half (56.2%) of the housing stock in Meriden was built before 1960. A third of the homes were built before 1940. Generally speaking, many of the older homes throughout the community in need of some maintenance or refurbishment. As is the case with other towns in the region, older housing stock will require additional reinvestment to remain in good condition.
- Of the total 22,951 occupied housing units, 59.7% were owner-occupied 40.3% were renter-occupied units. (2017 ACS). Meriden's percentage of rental units (40.3%) is higher than the New Haven County (37.7%) and Hartford County (35.4%) rates.
- In 2017, Meriden's Median home value was \$173,000, less than the County's median value at \$244,400. Home value decreased both in Meriden and the County from 2010 – 2017. However, home values have regained most of the lost value that occurred after the 2010 recession. On a regional basis, Meriden has the lowest median home value of the 15 municipalities in the South Central Connecticut Regional Council of Governments (SCRCOG).
- There may be an affordability gap for Meriden workers, as the average annual wage (\$50,903) is enough to afford to buy a \$150,000 home or rent an apartment at \$1,270 per month. Two incomes would be required to afford median cost housing in Meriden.
- Median rent in Meriden (\$978) was less than the County median (\$1,100). Median rent went up in both the City and the County 2010-2017. Trends suggest the demand for rental housing is increasing.
- Meriden provides its fair share of affordable housing. It is one of the few communities in Connecticut that meets the goal of 10% of its housing stock as affordable as defined under Section 8-30g of State Statute. The City of Meriden has been addressing affordable housing needs locally for decades through the local Housing Authority and the City's Community Development Office.

## 4.1. EXISTING HOUSING CHARACTERISTICS AND DEVELOPMENT TRENDS

Section 8-30g of the General Statutes for the State of Connecticut sets standards for a municipal Plan of Conservation and Development. The Statute reads, “Such plan shall make provision for the development of housing opportunities, including opportunities for multi-family dwellings, consistent with soil types, terrain, and infrastructure capacity. Such plan shall also promote housing choice and economic diversity in housing, including housing for both low and moderate-income households.” As indicated in the summary findings on the previous page, Meriden meets these housing goals set out by the State.

In 2017, the American Community Survey (ACS) recorded 30,411 total housing units. According to the 2017 American Community Survey, in 2017, 59.7% were owner-occupied, and 40.3% renter-occupied.

Meriden’s urban character is evident in the variety of housing structure types with single-family detached structures comprising just under half (48.9% in 2010 and 49.3% in 2017) of the housing stock. In 2017, approximately 22% of the housing units are in multi-family structures; half of those units are in structures with 20 units or more, indicating a relatively high density (see Figure 23).

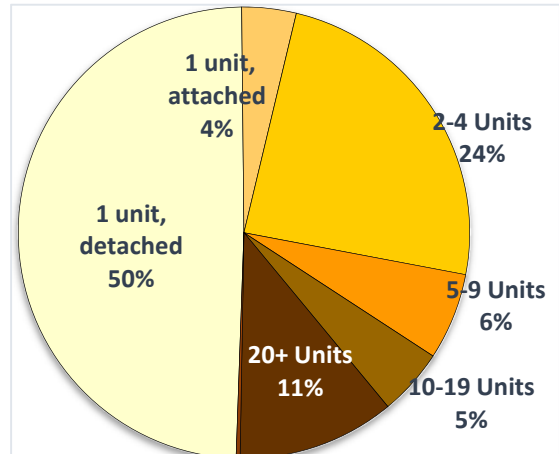
This is about the same proportion as New Haven County, 9.7% in 2010 and 10% in 2017. New Haven County’s relatively high proportion of units in structures with 20 units or more is most likely influenced most by the presence of City of New Haven, a college town with nearly one-fifth of its housing stock in such large structures (18% in 2010 and 19% in 2017).

The densest housing in Meriden is concentrated in a central area of the City from Britannia Street south to Hall Avenue and bounded to the east by Route 5 and to the west by Sodom Brook. High-density housing is also found in numerous individual locations scattered around the rest of the City. The oldest housing in the City is in the form of center chimney timber-style homes that dot the landscape along such streets as North Colony Street, Hall Avenue, Murdock Avenue, South Broad Street, and East Main Street, and date from the early to mid-1700s. Housing options in downtown Meriden have transformed with the recent redevelopment of the area. In 2018, the City received federal funding to demolish the Mills Memorial Apartments, a public housing complex located on Cedar Street. New housing development downtown includes multi-family apartment buildings on Colony Street, and the Meriden Commons buildings on State Street and Cedar Street bordering the newly constructed Meriden Green.

### Changes in Housing Stock

According to available data from the Census and American Community Survey (ACS), between 2010 and 2017, the City saw a moderate increase in multi-family units (5 or more units), as well as a slight increase in single-family units. As Table 6 illustrates, half of Meriden’s residential stock is single-family detached units. Another quarter of

*Figure 23: Total Housing Units by Structure Type - Meriden 2017*



#### 4.0: Housing

the housing stock is in structures with two-four units. Just under one quarter (22.3%) is in multi-family housing (structures with five units or more).

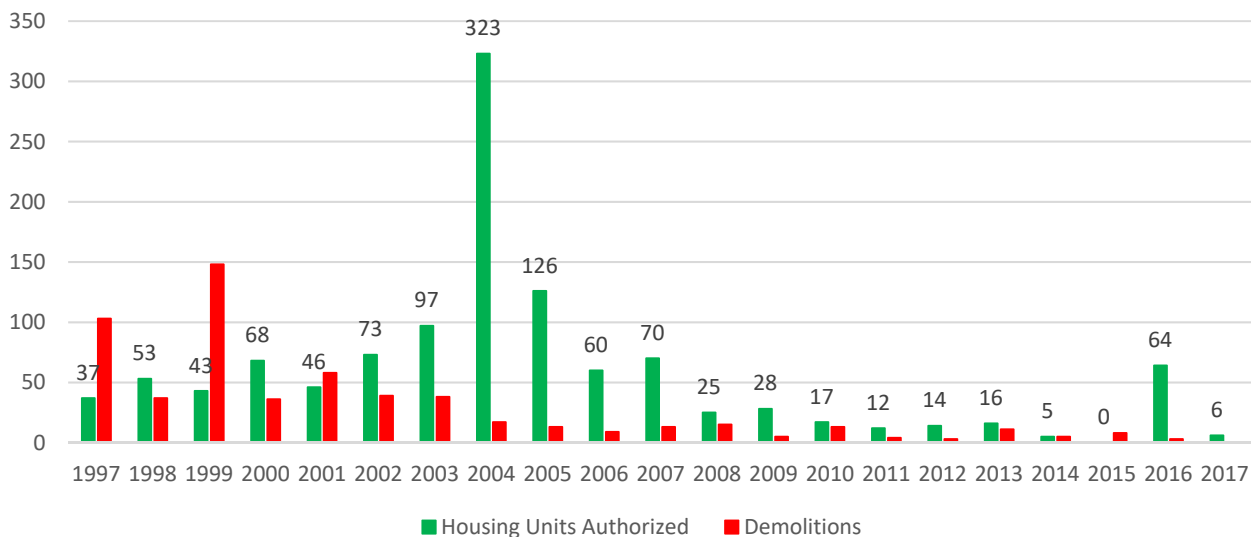
**Table 6. Housing Units by Structure Type, 2017 Meriden, CT**

Type of Structure	2017 % of Housing Stock	2017 Est. Total Housing Units
<b>1 unit, detached</b>	49.3%	<b>14,989</b>
<b>1 unit, attached</b>	3.9%	<b>1,184</b>
<b>2 to 4 units</b>	24.3%	<b>7,372</b>
<b>5 or more units</b>	22.3%	<b>6,780</b>
5 to 9 units	6.2%	1,892
10 to 19 units	4.8%	1,458
20 or more units	11.3%	3,430
<b>Mobile home, trailer, other</b>	0.3%	<b>86</b>
<b>TOTALS</b>		<b>30,411</b>

Source: American Community Survey (2017)

Connecticut’s Department of Economic and Community Development (CEDC) tabulates the building permit data annually for each of its municipalities. Over the past 20 years (1997 through 2017) Meriden had a net gain of 605 units, half of which (306) were in 2004. The net gain declined significantly most years thereafter. In some cases (2008, 2010, 2013, 2014, and 2015) this was due to new construction being offset by several demolitions (see Figure 24).

**Figure 24. Units Authorized and Demolished in Meriden 2007-2017**



#### Housing Stock Age

**Figure 25: Age of Structure, 2017**

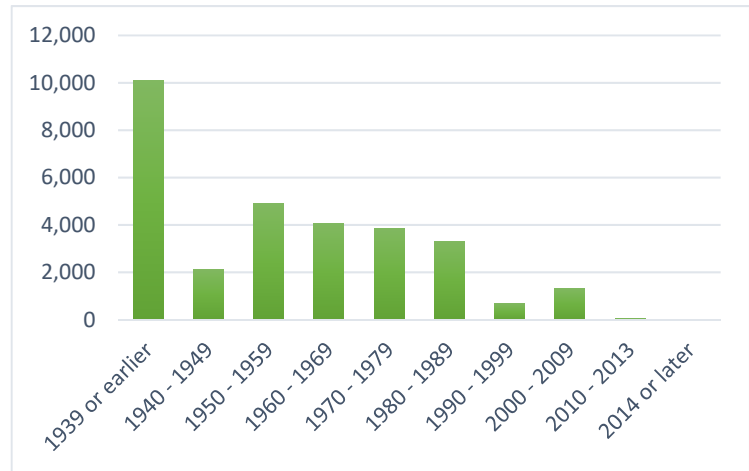


## 4.0: Housing

An indicator of housing condition and housing variety in a community is the age of the housing stock, shown in Figure 25. The age of the housing stock generally affects both aesthetic appeal as well as the availability of a variety of housing types.

As of 2017, one-third of Meriden's 30,411 residential structures were built in 1939 or earlier. The next greatest building activity period was during the 1950s and then the 1960s due to the post World War II Baby Boom. As is the case with other towns in the region, older housing stock will require

additional reinvestment to keep homes in good condition. With more than half (56.2%) of the housing stock built before 1960, Meriden has a significant number of housing units that are over 50 years old, requiring investment and potential upgrades to maintain their value and ensure they are attractive to homebuyers.



Source: American Community Survey 2017

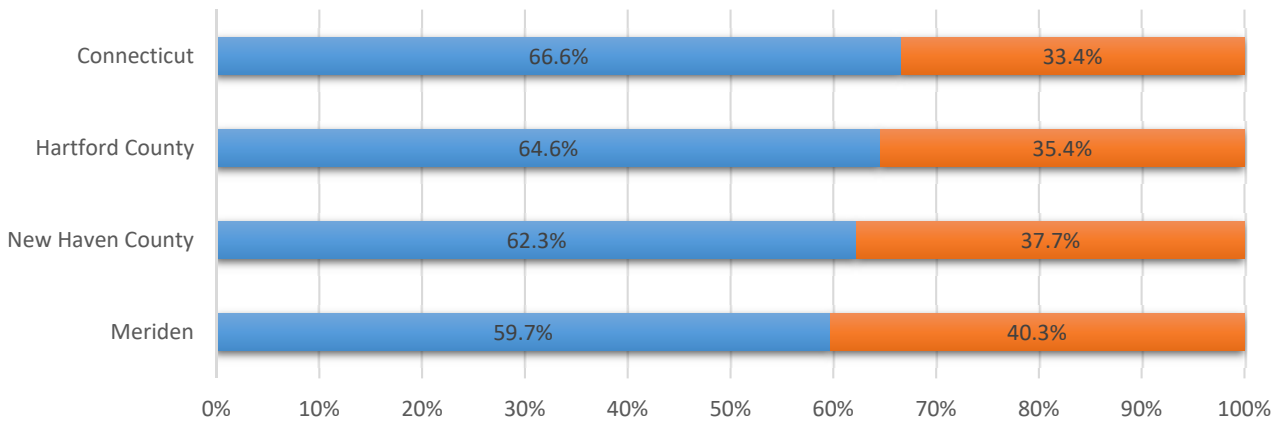
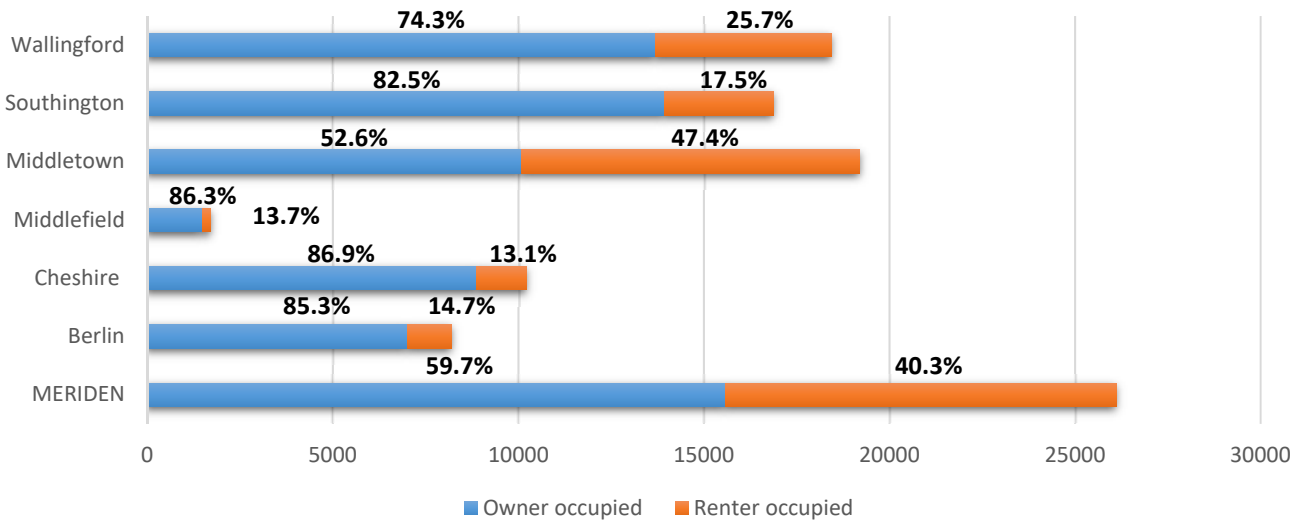
### Rental Units

Meriden's percentage of rental units (40.1%) is only slightly higher than the New Haven County rate (36.9%). The communities in the immediate region all have renter percentages that are much lower than Meriden, except Middletown, where almost half of the housing stock is renter-occupied. Middletown's higher percentage of rental housing can largely be attributed to the impact of off-campus student housing for Wesleyan University.

As illustrated in Figure 26 and Figure 27 Meriden's owner-occupancy is 10 to 26 percent less than the neighboring communities, all of which have considerably fewer housing units with a majority of single-family detached structures. Compared with neighboring communities, Meriden has the second lowest rate of home-ownership, just above Middletown. Meriden's owner-occupancy is only slightly less than that of New Haven County, indicating that the City, like the over-all County, is demonstrably urban. Hartford County (64%) and the State of Connecticut (66%) also have higher ownership rates than Meriden and New Haven County (Figure 26).

#### 4.0: Housing

**Figure 26. Owner/Renter Occupied Units in Meriden and Surrounding Communities - 2017**



#### **A. Affordability of Housing**

The issue of housing affordability is a state-wide concern. Affordability on a regional basis is also complex and requires a comprehensive approach. The cost of housing is the result of a variety of factors including, but not limited to, the demand for a specific location, availability of buildable land, and labor and material costs. Other factors, such as the age and quality of the existing housing stock as well as the introduction of new product to the market greatly affect the cost of housing. Other factors independent of housing cost, including interest rates, job growth, and local economic conditions, all work together to influence the cost and availability of housing. Most of these factors are beyond the control of local governments.

The State of Connecticut requires that the issue of affordable housing be addressed in each community's Plan of Conservation and Development. Development over the years in Meriden has resulted in a housing stock that is quite diverse in terms of housing types and styles. Current zoning regulations are flexible in terms of providing a wide range of allowable densities and housing types.

### Meriden's Program to Address Affordability

The City of Meriden has been addressing the issue of affordable housing needs locally for decades through the local Housing Authority and the City's Community Development Office. Meriden is designated by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) as an Entitlement Community for Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds only. Other sources of federal funding such as HOME fund, Emergency Shelter Grants (ESG) and Housing for People with AIDS (HOPWA) are available by applying through the State of Connecticut's Department of Economic and Community Development (DECD).

In 2015, the City of Meriden prepared a five-year Consolidated Plan which enabled it to receive CDBG funds from the federal government. In terms of housing goals, the Consolidated Plan listed nine specific objectives under the national objective heading of "Provision of Decent Housing". These goals were:<sup>7</sup>

- To maintain and rehabilitate its existing housing stock both privately and publicly owned.
- To retain its housing stock in a standard, livable condition.
- To reduce and eliminate slum and blighting influences.
- To reduce severe cost burden problems of rental households.
- To promote development and expand homeownership opportunities.
- To reduce isolation, and increase housing choice for lower-income persons.
- To reduce and prevent lead poisoning.
- To provide for the housing needs of the homeless, victims of domestic violence, the emotionally challenged, and other specific population.
- To upgrade and improve the local infrastructure.

### Home Value

According to the American Community Survey, the median home value in Meriden in 2017 was \$173,100, a decrease from 2010. The median home value in Meriden is lower than it is in the County, where home value has also decreased from 2010 to 2017 (Figure 27). The distribution of home value in Meriden is less diverse than it is at the County level (see Figure 28). In Meriden, the vast majority (nearly 84%) of the housing stock is valued between \$100,000 and \$300,000. Home value is more evenly distributed at the County level, where approximately three-quarters of housing is distributed between \$100,000 and \$500,000.

According to Trulia, a real estate search engine with both listings and rental properties, as of February 2019, the median sale price for homes in Meriden was \$168,000. This is 11 percent greater than the median sale price in

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<sup>7</sup> City of Meriden, "Consolidated Plan for 2015-2020 and Annual Action Plan for CD PY 41"; p. 4.107

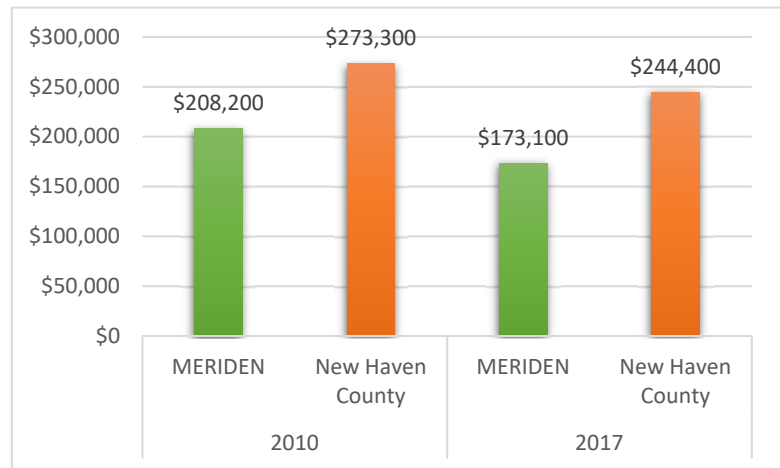
<sup>2</sup> City of Meriden, "Consolidated Plan for 2015-2020 and Annual Action Plan for CD PY 41"; p. 96.

#### 4.0: Housing

2018. Along the same period (between February 2018 and February 2019), the average price per square foot increased by 6 percent to \$120 from \$113 and median rent per month increased to \$1,550 from \$1,275.

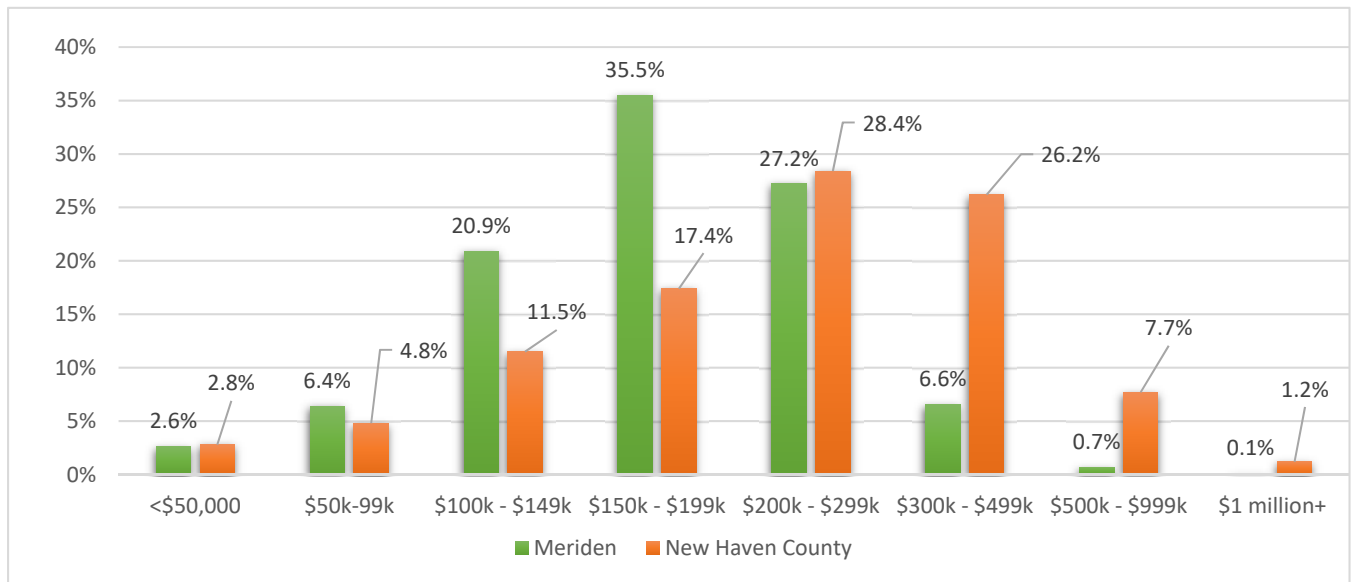
There may be an affordability gap for Meriden workers, as the average annual wage (\$50,903) is enough to afford to buy a \$150,000 home or rent an apartment at \$1,270 per month. Two incomes would be required to afford median cost housing in Meriden. On a regional basis, Meriden had the lowest median home value of the 15 municipalities in the South Central Connecticut Regional Council of Governments (SCRCOG) in 2017 (see Figure 29).

**Figure 27. Median Housing Value in Meriden and New Haven County 2010-2017**



Source: American Community Survey 2017

**Figure 28. Distribution of Home Value – Meriden and New Haven County, 2017**

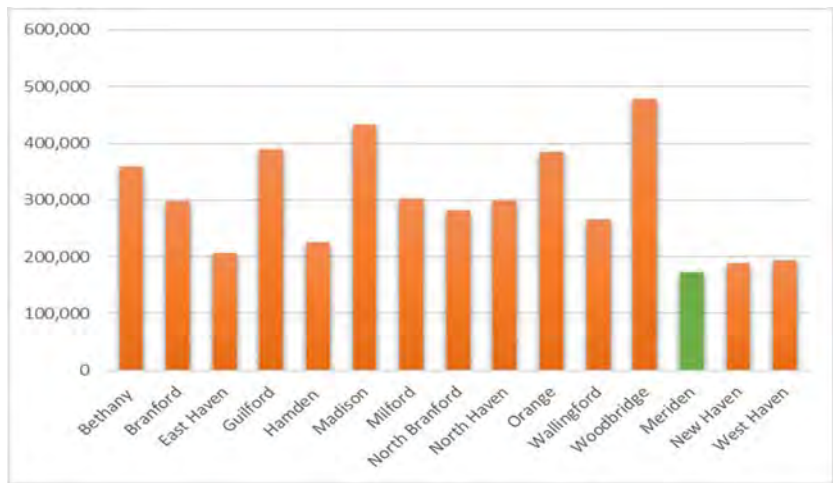


Source: American Community Survey 2017

#### 4.0: Housing

According to Zillow, an online real estate database, the home value index in Meriden is at \$167,100, lower than New Haven County, which is around \$216,000. The chart below illustrates Zillow’s Home Value Index in Meriden and New Haven County over time (see Figure 30). The Zillow Home Value Index (ZHVI) is a time series tracking the monthly median home value in a particular geographical region. While the data is not an official census tabulation, it is a valuable tool that can compare real estate trends for different areas.

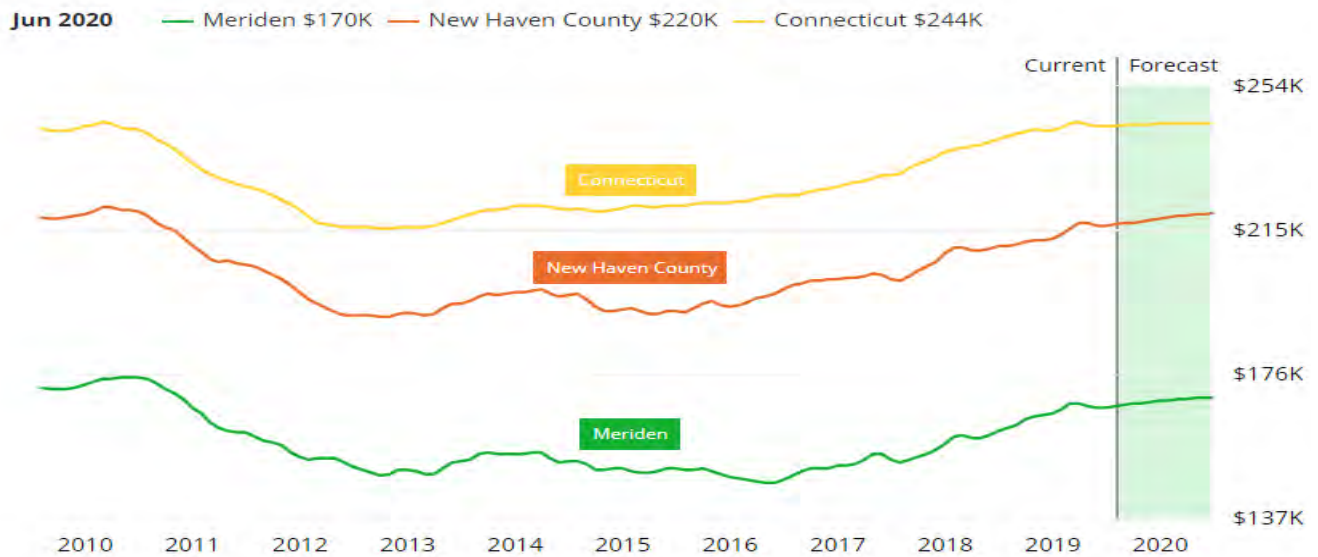
**Figure 29. Median Home Value in SCRCOG Municipalities (2017)**



Source: American Community Survey 2017

Meriden’s position in the region as an affordable place to purchase or rent a home offers an opportunity to attract young families to the City. Together with its location at the intersection of the regional transportation network, Meriden is well-positioned to be a central location for workers looking to locate within easy commuting distance of their place of employment. The City’s availability of homes and apartments at accessible prices could serve as an asset. In addition, the presence of lower-cost housing options could result from the City’s affordable housing stock (discussed in detail below). This may also indicate that there could be an opportunity to increase the supply of market-rate housing available in Meriden. A greater diversity of market-rate and affordable units could spur new investment in the City’s housing market.

**Figure 30. Zillow's Home Value Index for Meriden and New Haven County 2010 - 2017**



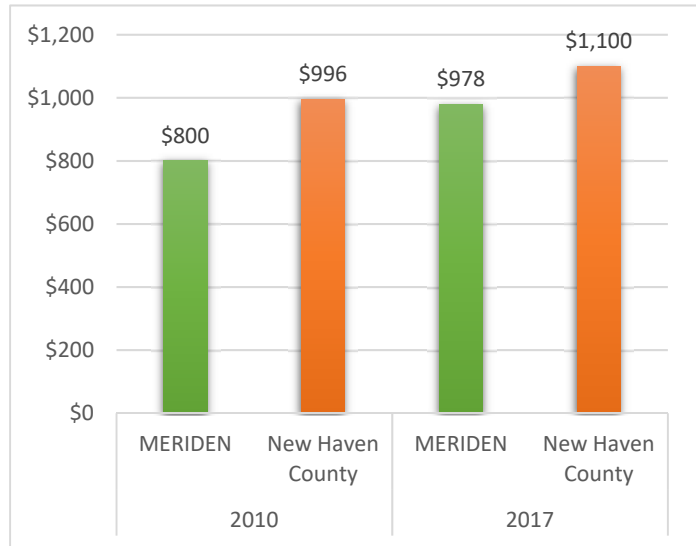
Source: Zillow Group, Inc. <https://www.zillow.com/meriden-ct/home-values/>

**Gross Rent**

Detailed housing figures from the 2010 Census and 2017 American Community Survey included statistics on gross rent for renter-occupied units and median rents in Meriden and New Haven County. With 9,756 specified renter-occupied units in 2017 (i.e., the sample size from the Census for purposes of computing rent data), Meriden’s median rent in 2017 was \$978. In the same year, New Haven County had a total occupied rental inventory of 123,365 units and a median rent of \$1,100 (Figure 31).

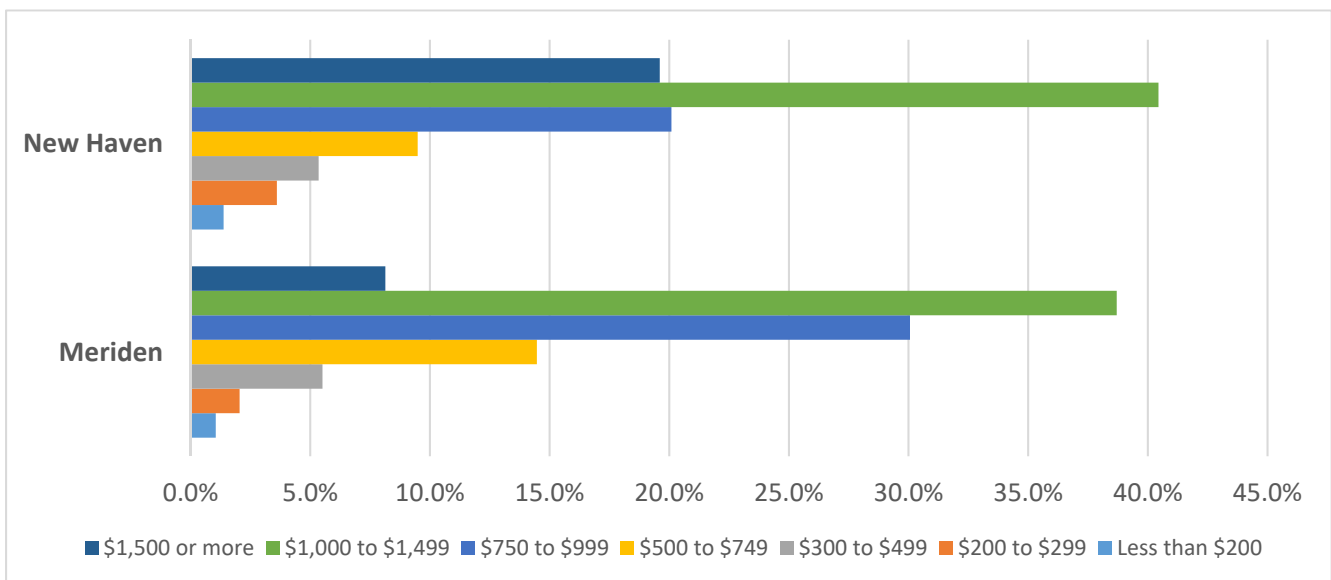
In 2017, just under 40% of the Meriden’s rental units fell within the \$1,000 to \$1,499 gross rent cohort, the highest percentage of any of the rent cohorts, followed closely by the \$750 to \$999 rental cohort, which captured 30% of all rental units. Units renting for more than \$1,500 per month accounted for 8.1% of the Meriden’s total. New Haven County’s gross rent by cohort included a higher percentage of units in the highest gross rent cohort. Nearly 20% of rental units were \$1,500 or more. Like Meriden, the largest single cohort was the \$1,000 to \$1,499 with just over 40% of units (Figure 32).

**Figure 31. Median Rent in Meriden and New Haven County 2010 - 2017**



Source: American Community Survey 2017

**Figure 32. Gross Rent in Meriden and New Haven County 2017**



Source: American Community Survey 2017

**HUD Fair Market Rents**

HUD issues, on an annual basis, a schedule of Fair Market Rents for counties and metropolitan areas across the United States. HUD’s FY 2019 Final Fair Market Rents for Existing Housing provide a better picture of actual rents in these areas at present. Fair Market Rents are based upon 2012-2016 American Community Survey (ACS) estimates of two-bedroom adjusted standard quality gross rents and adjusted to ensure they are relevant to the fiscal year for which they are calculated. Table 7 below shows Fair Market Rents by the number of bedrooms, indicating that FMR in Hartford-West Hartford-East Hartford is roughly \$200-\$300 less than New Haven-Meriden for each unit size. The Hartford-West Hartford-East Hartford area had Fair Market Rents of \$768 for a studio apartment, \$960 for a one-bedroom apartment, \$1,194 for a two-bedroom apartment, \$1,496 for a three-bedroom apartment and \$1,674 for a four-bedroom apartment.

**Table 7. Final FY 2019 FMRs by Unit Bedrooms in New Haven – Meriden and Hartford – West Hartford – East Hartford**

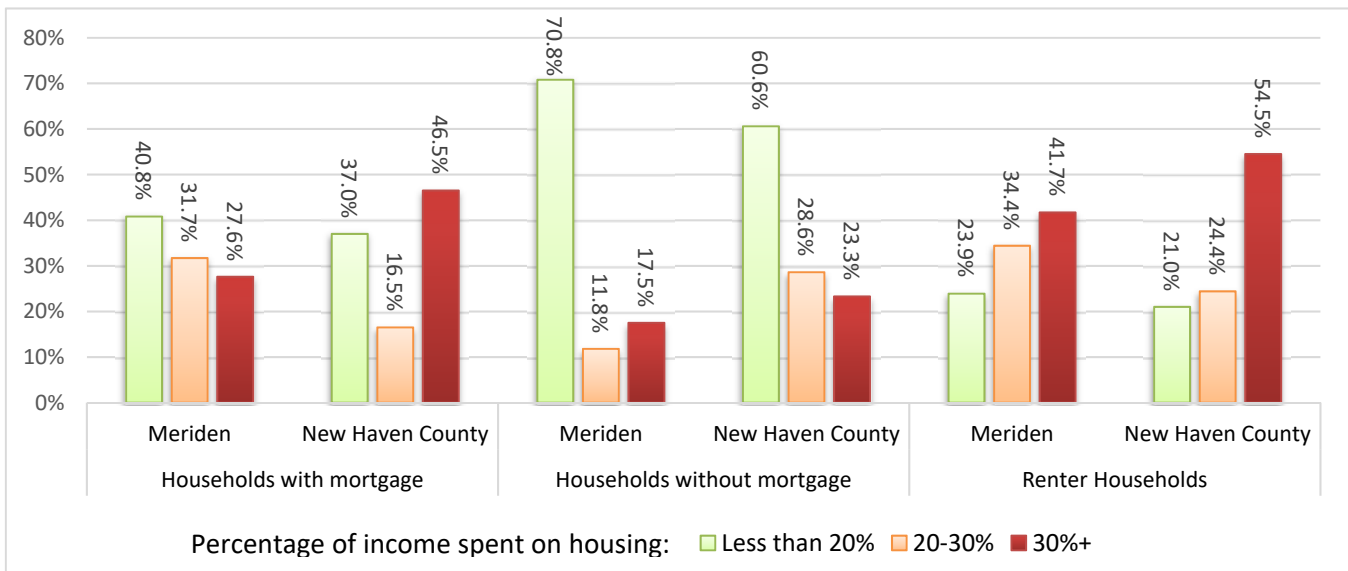
	Efficiency	1-Bedroom	2-Bedroom	3-Bedroom	4-Bedroom
<b>New Haven-Meriden, CT</b>	\$1,049	\$1,163	\$1,403	\$1,788	\$2,070
<b>Hartford- West Hartford – East Hartford, CT</b>	\$768	\$960	\$1,194	\$1,496	\$1,674

Source: HUD FY 2019 Final Fair Market Rents for Existing Housing

**Housing Cost Burden**

Renters and owners are considered burdened by housing cost if they are paying 30% or more of household income towards the cost of housing (illustrated in Figure 33 as a red bar). In 2017, Meriden has a high level of households that are housing cost-burdened. Renters are burdened at the highest rate (41.7%) but a high percentage of owners also experience housing cost burden in the City. Households without a mortgage have the lowest housing cost burden (17.5%) and more than a quarter of households with a mortgage are burdened by the cost of housing (27.6%). The housing cost burden in Meriden is lower than it is at the county level. In New Haven County, over half (54.5%) of renters and nearly half of households with a mortgage (46.5%) are housing cost-burdened. 23.3% of households without a mortgage are housing cost-burdened in New Haven County.

**Figure 33. Housing Cost Burden – Meriden and New Haven County, 2017**



Source: American Community Survey 2017

### Affordable Housing Inventory

Despite a high percentage of households experiencing housing cost burden, Meriden has a significant supply of affordable housing. Table 8 and Figure 34 show the number and percent of affordable housing stock available in Meriden and surrounding communities according to the CT Department of Housing. These include all units that receive government assistance or subsidy through programs including the Connecticut Housing Finance Authority (CHFA), United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Mortgage assistance and deed restrictions. Second to New Haven, Meriden has the highest number (4,077) of affordable units. These 4,077 affordable units made up 13.41% of the City’s housing stock in 2017. This meets the State’s goal of having 10% affordable units within a municipality according to Section 8-30g of the State Statutes.

In a community such as Meriden, which not only has an ample number of affordable housing units but also has a significant percentage of the total region’s affordable housing stock, different strategies must be utilized to decrease the “gap” between median household income and median home sales price. In Meriden, it is important to focus on economic development and public policy initiatives that would raise household incomes to higher levels.

The most recent data from the State Department of Economic and Community Development Affordable Housing Appeals Program puts the number of affordable housing units in Meriden in 2018 at 4,077. This is 13.41% of the number of housing units in the City according to the 2017 Census. This level exempts the City from the affordable housing appeals procedure. The Meriden Housing Authority administers 723 federal Section 8 housing choice vouchers as part of its operations. In addition, the Housing Authority operates several public housing developments, including Chamberlain Heights, Community Towers, Johnson Farms and Yale Acres. Many of these developments have undergone recent renovations and improvements to energy efficiency. Meriden Commons is a two-phase mixed-income development located downtown, which has provided some replacement housing for the recently demolished Mills Memorial Apartment complex.



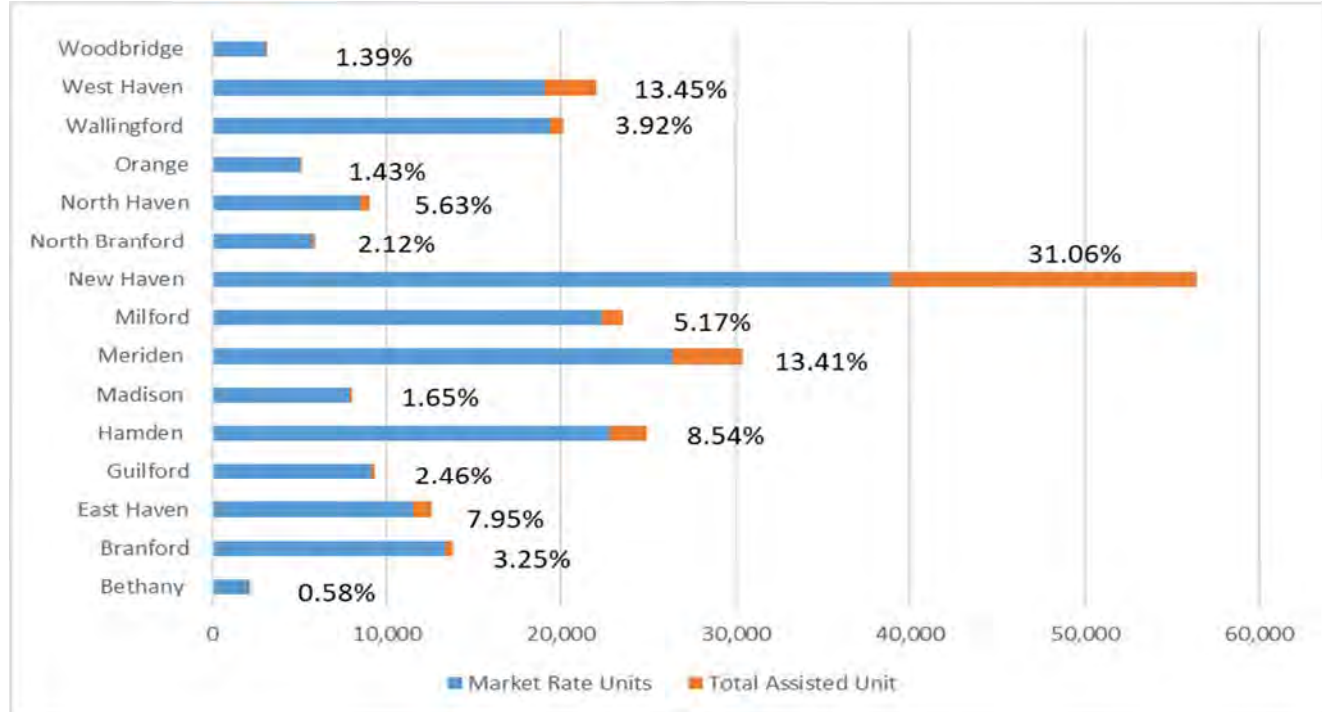
#### 4.0: Housing

**Table 8. 2018 Affordable Housing Appeals List, New Haven County Municipalities**

Town	Total Housing Units (2017 ACS)	Government Assisted	Tenant Rental Assistance	Single Family CHFA / USDA Mortgages	Deed Restricted Units	Total Assisted Unit	% of Housing Stock
Bethany	2,065	0	2	9	1	12	0.58%
Branford	13,773	233	63	152	0	448	3.25%
East Haven	12,553	542	154	302	0	998	7.95%
Guilford	9,324	186	11	32	0	229	2.46%
Hamden	24,907	937	699	486	4	2,126	8.54%
Madison	7,989	90	2	7	33	132	1.65%
Meriden	30,411	1,887	1,168	1,011	11	4,077	13.41%
Milford	23,571	726	225	192	76	1,219	5.17%
New Haven	56,423	9,434	6,600	1,008	481	17,523	31.06%
North Branford	5,892	62	14	45	4	125	2.12%
North Haven	8,998	343	53	88	23	507	5.63%
Orange	5,106	46	9	12	6	73	1.43%
Wallingford	20,109	354	120	280	35	789	3.92%
West Haven	22,040	1,024	1,499	442	0	2,965	13.45%
Woodbridge	3,096	30	8	5	0	43	1.39%
<b>Total</b>	<b>243,161</b>	<b>15,894</b>	<b>10,627</b>	<b>4,071</b>	<b>674</b>	<b>31,266</b>	

Source: CT Dept. of Housing and American Community Survey 2017.

**Figure 34. Affordable Housing as a Percentage of All Units - SCRCOG Municipalities**



Source: CT Dept. of Housing and American Community Survey 2017

### **B. Recent Development Activity**

The City has recently undertaken several renovations of existing housing units and new construction of mixed-income developments downtown. In 2015, Meriden's HUD Choice Neighborhoods Transformation Plan for downtown identified a strategy driven by three community-based goals: (1) Create a mix of housing types and attractive styles that serve the identified needs of current and future residents at all income levels; (2) Develop housing that best leverages downtown Meriden's unique assets – train station, Meriden Green, central location, Community Health Center, and employment opportunities; (3) Ensure minimal disruption to the residents of Mills Memorial and assure that every Mills household has the first choice of new housing. As the City takes on the implementation of this housing strategy, it has completed several important components:

**24 Colony** - \$30 million mixed-use, mixed-income with 63 total rental units including 24 Mills replacement units, 11,000 square feet of retail space, and a 273-space parking garage tenants and commuter rail passengers. The residential portion of the project is fully leased up.

**Meriden Commons** - The \$28 million Meriden Commons 1 project includes 75 total rental units including 26 Mills replacement units and 5,500 square feet of retail space. This project is fully leased up, and Meriden Commons II is nearing completion and is currently leasing.

**11 Crown** - The \$28 million 11 Crown project (with 81 total rental units including 20 Mills replacement units) is fully funded with a 9% LIHTC award in 2017 and scheduled to finish construction in 2019 or 2020.

**Transit-Oriented Development and Future Housing** – The Meriden Train Station opened and service on the CTRail New Haven to Springfield line began in the summer of 2018. The former HUB Site has been successfully converted into the Meriden Green. Pennrose, the developer for Meriden Commons, is currently the preferred developer for the reserved development sites on the Meriden Green.

Where possible Meriden should focus on market-rate housing opportunities downtown so that it does not encourage minority concentration. A greater mix of housing types and affordability throughout the City will encourage more diverse populations in terms of age, ability, race, ethnicity, and socio-economic background.

## 4.2. HOUSING ISSUES, TRENDS, AND IMPLICATIONS

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### Demographic Shifts and Market Opportunities

A significant market opportunity exists in Meriden due to the changing demographics of the region, Connecticut and the nation as a whole. The average household size has decreased while the median age has increased. Changes in the age distribution of the population will also impact future housing development. In the coming years, it is expected that there will continue to be more senior households with a greater number living alone. In order to serve this population and attract younger households, Meriden can capitalize on its existing well-defined downtown area. In many cases, through their choices of housing, both seniors and younger households alike are demanding active, mixed-use locations in established urban areas and town centers where higher densities of development create an environment that combines housing, employment, shopping, dining and entertainment opportunities. Meriden can capture a segment of this housing market to strengthen its existing Downtown core assets.

Multi-family housing in Meriden has been primarily concentrated in mixed-use and transit-oriented developments (TOD) surrounding Meriden Green and the HUB project, as described above.

Housing for the elderly is a critical concern for most communities. Meriden's median age continues to increase, and at 42.6; it is now higher than the State's median age. As the population of a city ages, a community must provide alternative living arrangements from single-family detached homes to multi-unit communities as options for seniors. This gives the elderly population opportunities to continue to reside in the community where they have spent the majority of their years and not be forced out by escalating housing prices. In 2016, Meriden added the Assisted and Independent Living Facilities Overlay District (ASSIST) to its zoning code with the goal of providing a mechanism for the approval of assisted and independent living facilities in the M-1, C-1, C-2, R-2, and R-4 zoning districts. As Meriden's population ages, greater diversity of housing options will enable seniors to choose appropriate options for remaining in the community. The City should consider ways to facilitate the types of development or reuse that will serve residents of all ages, abilities and income levels moving forward. Potential actions may include facilitating land use approvals processes and identifying opportunities or appropriate sites for infill, adaptive reuse, and rehabilitation of existing housing stock in ways that will be accessible to the City's existing demographics.

### Past Investment in and Future Potential of Single-Family Housing Stock

Significant potential exists for additional investment in existing single-family homes by property owners. Reinvestment can come in a wide range of forms, from additions and large-scale renovations to smaller improvements. These add to the assessed value of the existing home, and thereby stabilize the City's Grand List and capture additional tax dollars for the City. Reinvestment in terms of the quality of homes is also beneficial. For instance, there are many older neighborhoods primarily composed of modestly-sized ranches. Such housing may provide a niche for "empty-nester" couples or parents with one child. The neighborhood remains livable because the small lots have compatible small houses and small households. Existing housing stock in Meriden is mostly older and in many instances in need of repairs and reinvestment. Identifying opportunities to encourage property owners to invest in their homes will improve the appearance of the City as a whole and will create greater value for residents who may look to sell their property in the near future.



### 4.3. GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

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Over its long history, Meriden has evolved as the social, political, economic and demographic forces impacting the City have changed over time. This evolution will continue over the next ten years, and one of the most dynamic segments of a municipality in terms of change is the housing stock. Today, Meriden’s housing stock is a dominant feature of the City, providing a variety of residential options to accommodate the evolving nature of the 21<sup>st</sup>-century household. Since so much of the City’s land is used for residential purposes, a substantial amount of Meriden’s fiscal well-being is predicated on the strength and quality of its housing stock and housing market. Meriden’s housing stock must be viewed as a portfolio of investments for the City, and as in any investment strategy, diversity is important. Relying too heavily on only one or a few types of housing leaves the City open to negative impacts should the market for the relied-upon housing types contract. In addition, different housing types can have significantly different fiscal impacts in terms of tax revenue and municipal expenditures. A housing stock that has many different types of housing is better able to cope with setbacks in the market for individual housing types or styles.

***Maintain and complement the character of existing residential neighborhoods.***

#### Strategies

- Support measures that will improve quality of life and reinforce residential neighborhoods by mitigating blighting influences.
- Revise lot standards (i.e. height, bulk, and setbacks) as appropriate to ensure that new developments are compatible with the existing neighborhood fabric.
- Ensure that any new development is consistent and sensitive to the historic nature of the community, particularly in neighborhood centers.

***Ensure that there is a variety of housing types to reflect the needs and desires of all Meriden residents.***

#### Strategies:

- Encourage a diversity of housing options in unit type and price point to encourage a mix of people living together of all ages, abilities and socio-economic groups.
- Market rate multi-family and mixed-use development targeted to young professionals should be considered for appropriate areas near the train station.
- Consider appropriate areas to promote work-live housing for artists and young professionals.
- Housing needs and residential growth should be carefully balanced with fiscal needs, open space conservation and natural resource protection and economic development by monitoring development trends and considering options.
- Encourage the use of accessory units to help families that may be cost-burdened in single-family houses.

***Housing unit density should be focused in areas such as the Downtown and along primary transportation routes.***

**Strategies:**

- Guide development pressure away from sensitive natural areas and into parts of City that have existing infrastructure capable of supporting development.
- Develop the Downtown area as the location for high-density housing and other transit-oriented development (TOD).
- Continue to evaluate opportunities to develop for market-rate mixed-use or multi-family development.

***Promote infill development as a primary strategy for meeting the City's housing needs given the limited amount of readily buildable residential land, the sensitive environmental nature of many remaining open land parcels, and the availability of small previously developed vacant lots within the core neighborhoods of the City.***

**Strategies:**

- Infill development should be emphasized given the limited amount of available buildable land, the sensitive environmental nature of many remaining open land parcels, and the availability of small previously developed vacant lots within core neighborhoods. This type of development will also help to knit together neighborhoods broken up by vacant lots.
- Consider establishing an Infill Regulation, to retain more public control in assuring new investment is respectful and representative of the surrounding environment.
- Encourage infill commercial and residential development in established neighborhood centers to support vitality of these centers, potentially through zoning regulations that are supportive of a mix of uses. Improve the appearance of these areas through improved streetscape (e.g. signage, lighting, landscaping) and infrastructure improvements.

***Encourage increased reinvestment in residential properties, particularly in Meriden's core neighborhoods, through residential building, renovations and timely maintenance.***

**Strategies:**

- Continue and expand programs that encourage homeowners to reinvest in their properties such as financial incentives, reduced loan rates for home improvements, façade grants, and tax abatements.

## Chapter 5. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

### Economic Development Findings and Implications

The data and discussion presented in this chapter suggest several trends that are of importance for Meriden:

- Labor Force:
  - Meriden saw a significant drop in unemployment between 2010 and 2017. This trend was also true for the New Haven Labor Market Area (LMA) and the state as a whole.
  - Meriden's unemployment rate in 2017 (4.8%) remains slightly higher than the New Haven LMA (4%) and the state (4.1%).
  - Meriden's residents earn less than residents in surrounding areas. Median household income in Meriden was \$57,350 in 2017. This is lower than the New Haven LMA by 33% lower than the state's median income by 22%.
- Labor Force Demographics:
  - Meriden has a lower educational attainment than the New Haven LMA and Connecticut. Residents are more likely to work in the production and trade industries than the New Haven LMA and Connecticut labor force.
- Meriden's Job Base:
  - Meriden has over 1,600 businesses. While Meriden has several high-profile businesses that employ several hundred people each, the City's economy is very much centered around small businesses. 78% of businesses in Meriden have fewer than 10 employees.
  - The greatest number of jobs are in health care, retail, administration, and government.
  - The number of jobs in Meriden increased by 6.1% between 2010 and 2017. In comparison, the number of jobs in Connecticut grew by 4.8% during the same period.
  - 28.8% of jobs in Meriden are held by residents of Meriden. This number is slightly higher than all of the surrounding municipalities except Southington.
  - The annual average wage in Meriden is \$50,903, lower than the median household income.
- Economic Development:
  - According to Meriden's Comprehensive Annual Financial Report for 2018, the City's recent development points to a stable, slowly growing economy. The average annual growth rate for approved commercial/industrial site plan development was 140,057 square feet between 2015 and 2017. There have been 164 constructed residential units between 2015 and 2017, most of which are in multi-family residential buildings.
  - Meriden has significant retail development along East Main Street, Broad Street, and the Westfield mall, as well as the Research Parkway area and the Midstate Medical Center.
  - The City's focus for future economic development includes infill of existing commercial corridors, adaptive reuse of historic buildings and removing barriers to development by streamlining the development process.

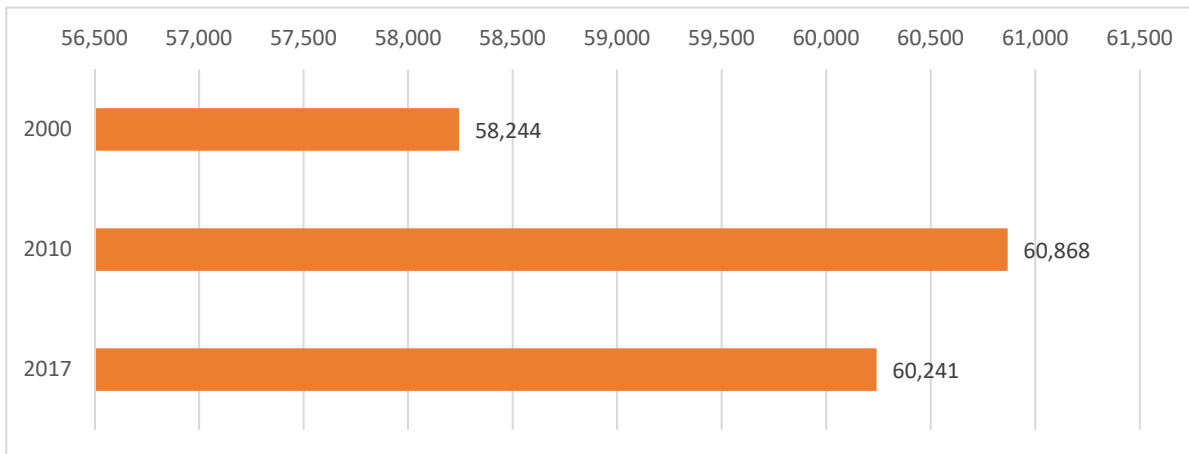
## 5.1. CONNECTICUT, NEW HAVEN LABOR MARKET AREA, AND MERIDEN ECONOMIES

During the past ten years, the Connecticut economy has provided most residents with a high economic standard of living, enabled by one of the highest per capita income levels in the United States.

### Population Changes:

As of 2017, the population of Meriden was 60,241, which was a 1.04% decline (627 people) from the population in 2010 (see Figure 35). During the same period, the population of Connecticut increased by only 0.57%, adding just 20,381 people. The New Haven Labor Market Area (LMA) decreased by .09%, losing 546 people.<sup>8</sup> The New Haven LMA accounts for 16.7% of Connecticut’s population.

**Figure 35. Meriden's Population 2000 - 2017**



Source: U.S. Census, ACS 2017

### Labor Force

On the statewide level, the total labor force decreased in size between 2010 and 2018, likely as a result of the low rate of population growth and the aging of Connecticut’s population. The state lost 6,400 workers to its labor force (a 0.33% decrease) while only losing 1,432 people to its population total. These figures may indicate that many older workers are retiring. The New Haven LMA experienced very minor change, with a small increase of 100 workers between 2010 and 2018. The resident labor force of Meriden decreased by 775 workers (0.23%) between 2010 and 2018.

In 2018, the unemployment rates in Meriden, the New Haven LMA and Connecticut were less than half the 2010 totals. Meriden’s unemployment rate was greater than the New Haven LMA and Connecticut. Meriden’s unemployment rate (4.8% in 2018) tends to be higher than that of the New Haven LMA and Connecticut. Since

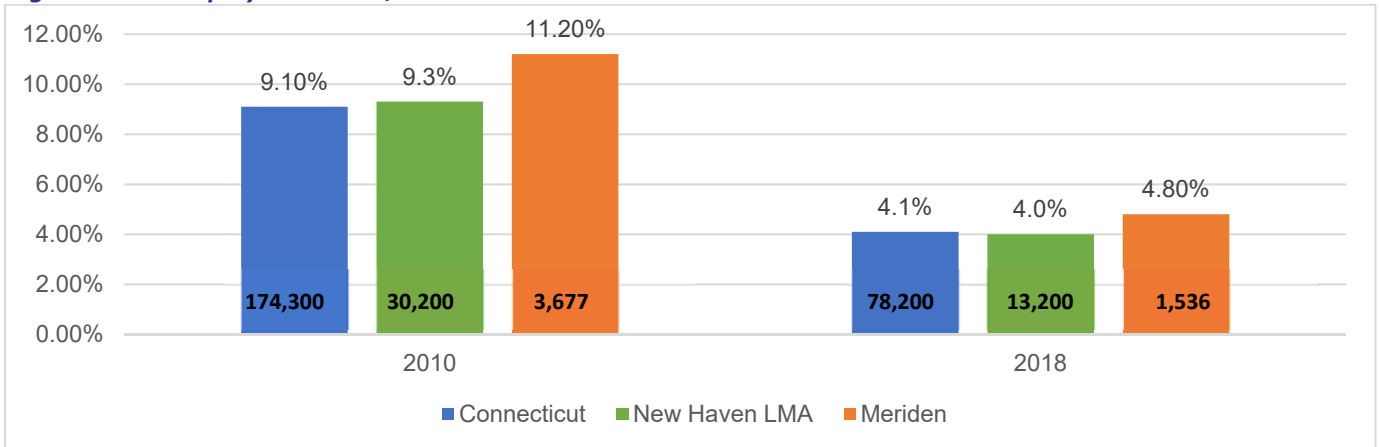
<sup>8</sup> The New Haven LMA is slightly larger than New Haven County. It includes some adjacent municipalities in the surrounding counties.



## 5.0: Economic Development

2010, the total number of people in the labor force (employed and/or looking for work) in Connecticut and Meriden both decreased by .01% and 2.34%, respectively.

**Figure 36. Unemployment Rate, 2010 - 2018**



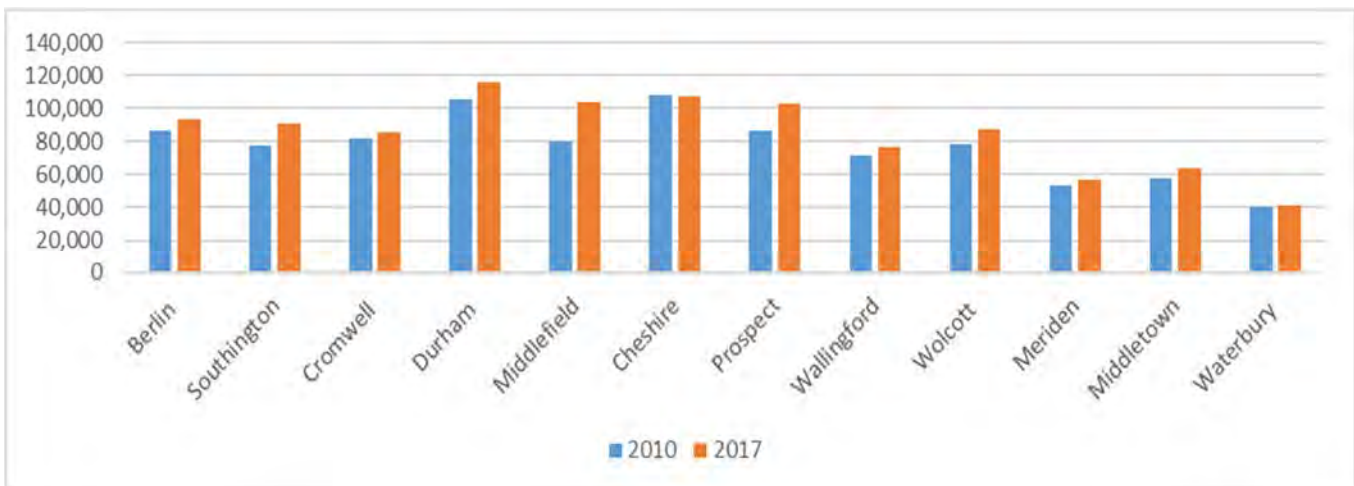
### Median Household Income

From 2010 to 2017, the median household income in Meriden increased by 6.1% to \$57,350. However, during that same period, the median household income in the New Haven LMA and median household income in Connecticut increased by 7.4% and 8.2%, respectively.

**Table 9: Median Household Income**

	Meriden	New Haven LMA	Connecticut
2010	\$53,873	\$80,062	\$67,740
2017	\$57,350	\$86,418	\$73,781

**Figure 37. Median Household Income in 2010 and 2017**



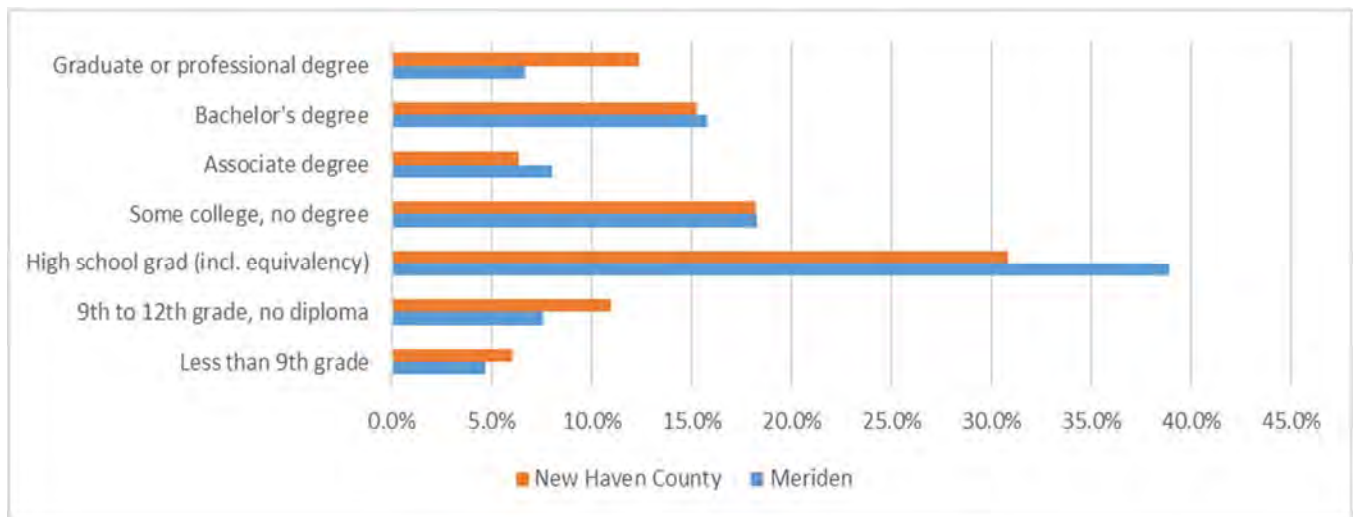
## 5.0: Economic Development

Median household income data for both 2010 and 2017 was examined for both the City of Meriden and 11 surrounding communities (see Figure 37). Over the past seven years, median household income has increased slightly in most towns or remained the same as in the case of Waterbury and Cheshire. Most of the communities have median household incomes that fall between \$80,000 and \$120,000 in 2017; Durham, Middlefield, Prospect, and Cheshire form the high end, with median incomes over \$100,000. Waterbury, Meriden, and Middletown form the low end of the area in terms of income. Waterbury has the lowest median household income at \$40,000. Meriden's median income was \$57,350 in 2017, approximately 50% of Durham's.

### Educational Attainment of the Adult Population

In 2017, the largest share (38.7%) of those ages 25 to 64 within Meriden were high school graduates. Only 24.8% of residents have a Bachelor's degree or higher, compared to the New Haven LMA and Connecticut as a whole where roughly 40% of the population has a Bachelor's degree or higher. Educational attainment was not as high in Meriden as in New Haven County. Typically communities with the highest percentage of adults with at least a four-year college degree generally have the highest median household incomes.

**Figure 38. Educational Attainment in Meriden and New Haven County, 2017**



### A. Economic Base

According to ESRI data, as of January 2018, there are over 1,600 businesses within Meriden. Of those businesses, approximately 78% of employees work for firms with less than 10 employees. About 16% of employees work in businesses with 10 to 49 employees and only 6% of businesses employ 50 or more workers. This indicates that Meriden has a large share of small businesses and only a few high-profile businesses.

The Connecticut Department of Labor (CTDOL) reported the nine largest private-sector employers in Meriden as of 2018 are:

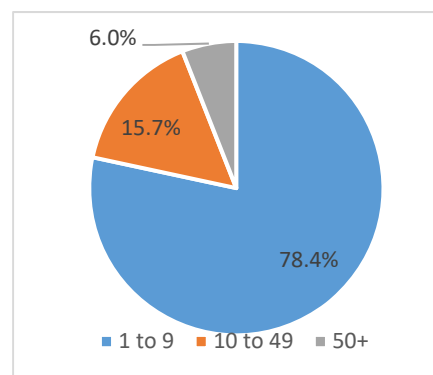
Employer	Sector	Size
<b>Midstate Medical Ctr</b>	Hospitals	500 - 999
<b>CANBERRA Industries Inc</b>	Radioactivity Instruments Supls/Svc-Whls	250 - 499
<b>Hunter's Ambulance Svc</b>	Ambulance Service	250 - 499
<b>3M Purification Inc</b>	Filtering Materials & Supplies (mfrs)	250 - 499
<b>BI Graphics</b>	Engineering	250 - 499
<b>Bob's Stores Corp</b>	Business Management Consultants	250 - 499
<b>Macy's</b>	Department Stores	100 - 249
<b>Carabetta Management</b>	Real Estate-Rental Service	100 - 249
<b>Securitas Security Svc USA</b>	Security Guard & Patrol Service	100 - 249

Source: CTDOL, October 2018

The changes in the size and composition of a community's employment base over time are good indicators of that community's economic health. Data from the State of Connecticut Department of Labor from 2017 indicates that Meriden's economy contains over 1,600 businesses that provide a broad variety of goods and services, employing over 22,000 people. This represents roughly 300 additional businesses since 2005, but approximately 3,000 fewer employees. Data from Esri Demographics for 2018 indicates that over 78% of businesses in Meriden have fewer than 10 employees, while 15.7% had between 10 and 49 employees, and only 6% had 50 or more employees. While Meriden has several high-profile businesses that employ several hundred people each, the City's economy is very much centered around small businesses.

The top three most common local industries in Meriden are Health Care and Social Assistance (4,792 workers), Retail Trade (2,989 workers) and Administrative Support and Waste Management (2,547 workers). Another 2,861 workers work in Government. None of these industries are in the higher wage categories, as demonstrated by Meriden's 2017 annual average wage of \$50,903.

**Figure 39. Businesses by Number of Employees, 2018 - Meriden**

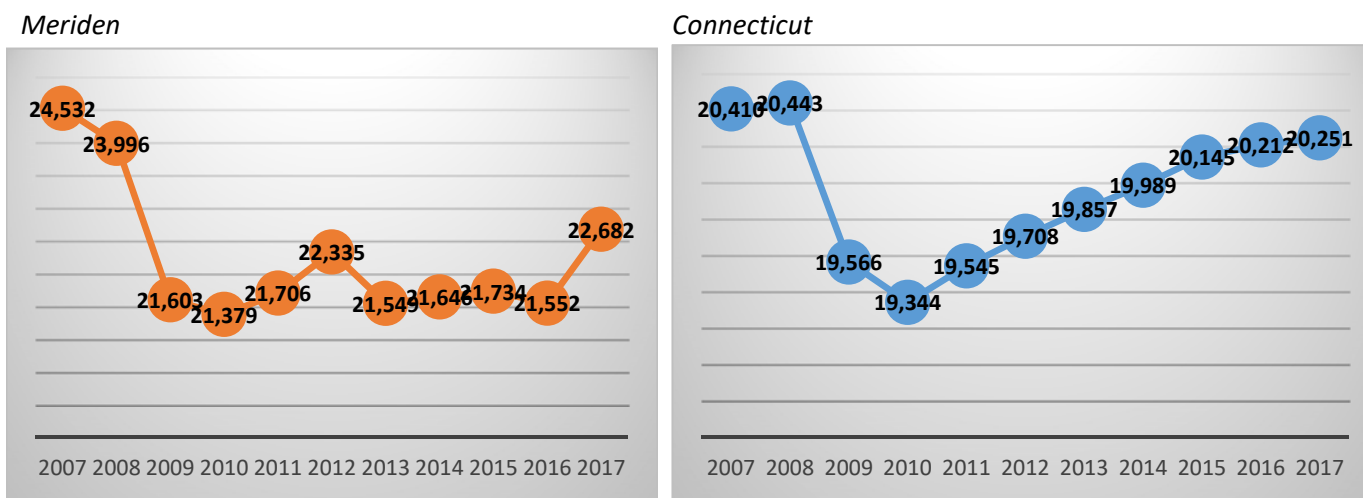


Source: Esri 2018

## 5.2. EMPLOYMENT BASE

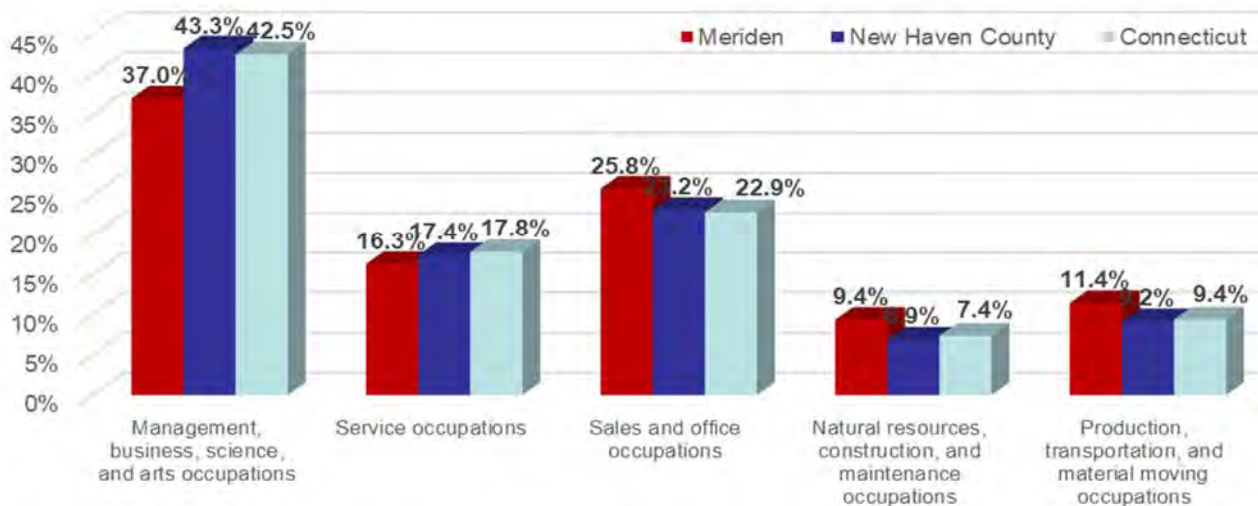
As seen in Figure 40, both Meriden and the State saw a decrease in employment between 2008 and 2010, which corresponds to the larger economic downturn of the Great Recession. Between 2010 and 2016, annual average employment in Meriden remained relatively stable, deviating by less than 2% from year to year. However, in 2017 the Connecticut Department of Labor Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages, the annual average employment in Meriden was 22,682, which is 5.2% greater than it was in 2016, an overall increase of 6.1% from 2010 to 2017 (Figure 40). In comparison, employment in Connecticut during the same period grew by only 4.8%. In Meriden, a large part of the labor force works in production and trades, at a rate higher than the New Haven LMA or the state (Figure 41).

**Figure 40. Annual Average Employment in 2010 - 2017**



Source: CTDOL QCEW, 2010-2017; \*CT numbers in units of 1,000 jobs (nonfarm).

**Figure 41. Occupational Shares 2017**



Source: US Census ACS, 2013-2017

**A. Resident Labor Force**

In 2018, the labor force generated by Meriden residents numbered 32,910 people. This compares to 22,682 persons employed within Meriden. In this period, Meriden’s resident labor force exceeded the number of jobs located in the City by 45%, meaning that Meriden produces 10,228 more workers than the City employs within its borders. The table below represents the most common places of residence of people who work in Meriden as well as where City residents are going to work.

**Table 10. Commutation Patterns for Regional Workforce**

Commutation for Jobs in Meriden		Commutation for Meriden Residents	
Meriden	28.8%	Meriden	20.7%
Wallingford	6.8%	Wallingford	11.8%
Waterbury	4.4%	New Haven	5.0%
Southington	4.1%	Middletown	4.2%
Middletown	4.0%	Hartford	3.8%
New Britain	3.7%	Cheshire	3.0%
Cheshire	2.6%	Waterbury	2.7%
Others	45.6%	Others	48.8%

Source: CERC, 2018

Meriden has the advantage of being centrally located in the region, providing residents with the ability to easily travel to surrounding communities for work. This makes Meriden a good place for families or couples to locate who may work in different areas of the state and are looking for a location that suits both of their needs. Other potential considerations regarding the resident workforce in Meriden include ways in which residential development is tied to Meriden as a job base. Increasing the number of people who are employed in the City and also live in the City will have positive implications for Meriden as it could contribute to the community’s vibrancy and bolster the tax base. Additional opportunities for residential development and infill in downtown Meriden could be promoted as a central, transit-accessible location for workers.

### 5.3. RECENT ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT TRENDS, ANALYSES, AND PLANS IN MERIDEN

Approximately 18% of Meriden’s building area and 9.4% of the City’s land area is devoted to commercial or industrial use. Enhancing its commercial base is critical to the future of economic development in Meriden. Meriden has significant retail development along East Main Street, Broad Street, and the Westfield mall, as well as the Research Parkway area and the Midstate Medical Center, and has invested in a set of economic development tools in recent years to continue to promote these critical areas as well as others. An assessment of economic development trends utilized multiple sources, including conversations with City staff and other stakeholders, a review of various studies, and a review of Tax Assessor Data. This chapter discusses recent economic development trends, including existing plans, analysis and designations designed to promote economic development in the City.

#### A. Recent Development Activity

According to Meriden’s Comprehensive Annual Financial Report for 2018, the City’s recent development points to a stable, slowly growing economy. The average annual growth rate for approved commercial/industrial site plan development was 140,057 square feet between 2015 and 2017. The table below shows recent approved development projects.

**Table 11: Residential Construction 2015-2017 (Permits Issued and Construction Starts)**

Type of Use	FY 2015 Building SF	FY2016 Units Building SF	FY2017 Building SF	Total Building SF
Office/Service	17,570	3,000	3,600	24,170
Retail	45,805	18,790	72,790	137,385
Industrial/Light Ind.	14,250	48,600	195,768	258,618
<b>Total Commercial/Industrial</b>	<b>77,625</b>	<b>70,390</b>	<b>272,158</b>	<b>420,173</b>

Source: City of Meriden Comprehensive Annual Financial Report for 2018

Recently, several industrial and commercial businesses have undertaken major expansion projects in Meriden. Highlights include the following:

- CVS (143 South Broad Street). New construction of a 14,000 sf retail pharmacy. Completed in 2016.
- Aperture Optical (170 Pond View Drive). Repurpose of a vacant 20,000 sf commercial facility into an office and manufacturing facility. Completed in 2016.
- Family Dollar (1326 E. Main Street). New construction of a 9,250 sf retail facility. Completed in 2016.
- 300 Research Parkway – Plimpton Hills. Repurpose of vacant 35,000 sf building into plumbing supply retail/office. Completed in 2018.
- 1388 E. Main Street. Repurpose vacant 8,500 sf former restaurant into a new restaurant. Completed in 2018.
- 1376 E. Main Street. New 4,500 sf restaurant to be completed in 2019

## 5.0: Economic Development

- Meriden Commons Phase 1 (161/177 State Street). New construction of 75-unit mixed-use development with 1,500 sf of commercial space. Completed in 2019.
- Meriden Commons Phase 2. New construction of 76-unit mixed-use building to be completed in 2019.
- 11 Crown Street/2 South Colony. New Construction of 81-unit mixed-use development.
- 30 Pomeroy Ave. Major renovation of former car dealership into retail plumbing supply. Completed in 2018.
- 518 Broad Street. New construction of 7,000 sf auto parts retail store.

A discussion of recent residential growth is discussed in Chapter 4: Housing. Approved residential development has increased recently with several mixed-use projects being completed or in progress. Constructed residential units between 2015 and 2017 are indicated below:

**Table 12: Residential Construction 2015-2017 (Permits Issued and Construction Starts)**

Type	FY 2015 Units	FY2016 Units	FY2017 Units	Total
<b>Multi-Family Residential</b>	71	75	0	146
<b>Single Family Residential</b>	5	4	9	18
<b>Total Residential</b>	76	79	9	164

Source: City of Meriden Comprehensive Annual Financial Report for 2018

### Meriden's Grand List

The need for Meriden to diversify its tax base is very evident from an analysis of the City's Grand List, which is the aggregate valuation of taxable property. According to the Grand List the total value for all properties is \$4,627,440,738. The City owns 332 properties with a total property value of \$440,868,000. There are a total of 608 exempt properties within the City.

Commercial real property accounted for 17.6% of properties the Grand List, while industrial real property only accounted for 1.7% of properties on the Grand List. In comparison, residential property makes up 56.8% of the City's total assessed property value. With such a high concentration of the City's real property value tied into residential properties, any increase in municipal expenditures for general government services and education is felt by the average homeowner in the form of property taxes.

According to Meriden's Tax Assessors Office, the Westfield Meriden mall (Meriden Square Partnership) is the largest taxpayer in Meriden by a significant margin. The mall has a net assessment of approximately \$74.3 million; the next largest taxpayer, TLS Group LLC, has a net assessment of \$40.4 million. Phoenix Realty Group LLC is next with a net assessment of \$27 million, followed by Meriden Square #3 LLC at \$26.8 million.

### **B. Recent Planning Initiatives**

#### ***Meriden TOD Study***

The Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) Market Study and Financial Feasibility Analysis was funded by a TOD Pilot grant to perform a market study and economic analysis of transit-oriented development adjacent to the Meriden Transit center within downtown Meriden.

The goals for the study included: (1) establishing the feasibility of TOD development and recommended market-ready mix uses for the TOD area; (2) Estimate costs and funding strategies for preparing key sites and parcels in the study area; (3) Provide a clear understanding of economic benefits resulting from development.

Study findings include that:

- The TOD area will be driven by two age cohorts currently living in the primary market area (PMA); young workers and graduates (age 25 to 34) and empty nesters (age 55 to 74).
- These age cohorts favor smaller, rental or homeownership units in urban areas with transportation, entertainment, amenities, and job access.
- The TOD area will serve as a point of origin for commuters who travel to jobs elsewhere along the New Haven Hartford Springfield rail corridor which would help the Meriden TOD capture demand.

Real Estate analysis suggests a development program for the Meriden TOD to include:

- 600 –1,000 multi-family residential units attractive to young workers, recent graduates and empty nesters;
- 20,000 SF of small-scale office space; and
- 28,000 SF of convenience and community-serving retail

The rest of the study recommends tools that would help attract people to new residential housing in the TOD study area by making public incentives and subsidies to introduce private investment.

Fiscal and economic impact analyses concluded that a conceptual mixed-use redevelopment scenario (959 residential units and 32,000 square feet of community-serving retail) would net fiscal gain and that a total of 1,107 full- and part-time jobs created during construction (2015-2017), \$160 million in total direct, indirect and induced economic output, and \$7.5 million in taxes.

#### ***South Mountain Road Site Feasibility Study***

A recent proposal for a market economic feasibility study of a 300-acre parcel study for a parcel at South Mountain Road was submitted by the Connecticut Economic Resource Center, Inc. A portion (37 acres) of the area was recently sold to a Meriden based heavy equipment training company. The other portion is owned by the City, available for development and accessible through a central road equipped with power and sewer lines.

The study identified several uses that could help promote the economic use of the site to benefit the community and the City of Meriden including Destination Recreation, Wind or Solar Power Generation, Technology or Health care Space, Light Manufacturing and Mixed-Use Development.



### **C. Designations Affecting Economic Development in Meriden**

Several economic development designations have the potential to affect the future economic development of the City of Meriden.

#### **Information Technology Zone**

Meriden's Information Technology Zone (ITZ) is designed to spur the development of information sector businesses in Meriden. This zone begins at the Wallingford-Meriden town line and runs north generally between South Broad Street/Broad Street and Old Colony Road/Cook Avenue through Downtown and up to the Britannia Street/Kensington Avenue area.

The ITZ provides real and personal property tax abatements for 45 different types of companies if these companies locate within the zone's boundaries and complete various dollar amounts of real property improvements. The designation has already led to the successful occupancy of space at 500 South Broad Street. However, the ITZ's target area substantially overlaps the boundaries of the City's Enterprise Zone area, which offers better tax incentives for businesses. This limits the impact of the ITZ, and a future strategy for the City should be to reevaluate the boundaries of the ITZ area. Incentives are particularly important in a community where a relatively small amount of land is designated for commercial and industrial uses.

#### **Enterprise Zone**

The City has designated parcels located in a zone straddling I-91, just east of Columbus Park as an Enterprise Zone. This designation is meant to encourage the location of manufacturers, warehousing and distribution companies and certain service businesses to locate in this area.<sup>9</sup> The Office of Economic Development determines eligibility to receive incentives based on State and City criteria, listed below.

#### ***State Incentives for Enterprise Zone***

- An 80% tax abatement for 5 years on the increased real property taxes resulting from new construction or expanded space. For companies that wish to lease the space, you must lease it for 5 years with an option to purchase or renew the lease for 5 more years. The landlord must pass any tax abatement to you in your lease. Renovations to a company's existing space in Meriden may qualify—but only under certain conditions.
- An 80% real property tax abatement for 5 years on the existing real estate taxes of a qualified vacant building. If you move into a vacant building/space, the entire tax burden could be eligible for the incentive.
- An 80% personal property tax abatement for 5 years on any personal property new to Meriden's Grand List.

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<sup>9</sup> For more information, visit: <http://www.meridenbiz.com/incentives/meriden-enterprise-zone-state-incentives/>

## 5.0: Economic Development

- A 25% or a 50% credit on the state corporate business tax of the eligible business.

### ***City Incentives for Enterprise Zone***

For businesses who do not qualify for the States Enterprise Zone program can still be eligible for Enterprise Zone incentives under the City of Meriden’s program:

- A seven-year real property tax break on any increase in real property taxes that comes as a result of your space being newly constructed or from being in a building rehabbed to fit your needs. This benefit could result in lower occupancy costs if you lease.
- A three-year personal property tax abatement. Your commercial business can receive this tax abatement when you move into rehabbed or newly built space in the EZ and the building qualifies for the incentive mentioned above.

In addition, companies located outside of the Enterprise Zone boundaries may still qualify for some of the same benefits through the *State of CT Urban Jobs Program*. Eligible manufacturing and warehousing or distribution companies located outside of the Enterprise Zone may qualify for State incentives listed above.

### **East Main Street Incentive Zone**

The East Main Street Incentive program was created to encourage private investment in underutilized and vacant properties, increase traffic to existing businesses, and improve the economic vitality of Meriden's east side. The five-year resolution was adopted in February 3, 2015. The City is planning to renew the program and considering expanding the area to include more properties that could become eligible for this incentive. Improvements can be made or at least one of the following: (1) Office use; (2) retail use; (3) manufacturing use; (4) warehouse, storage or distribution use; (5) information technology; (6) recreation facilities; or (7) transportation facilities.

### **Opportunity Zones**

The 2017 Federal Tax Act included a section aimed at encouraging investment in distressed communities across the country through the creation of “Opportunity Zones.” This has created a recently established Opportunity Zone Program to induce long-term investment in low-income communities. Three census tracts in the City of Meriden were designated: 1701, 1702 and 1709. These include several brownfield redevelopment sites, including 116 Cook Avenue, the former Factory H site, the Meriden Green, and the former hospital at 1 King Place. The Opportunity Zone designation should improve the feasibility of redeveloping these sites using private partners and private investment.

### **Manufacturing Assistance Program**

Meriden incentivizes manufacturers planning to expand their operations in the City by offering lower financing rates on loans for real estate acquisition or improvements when offered in conjunction with private financing. The objective of the program is to support the expansion and retention of the City’s manufacturing base. The program also offers a relocation incentive of up to \$15,000 per business for companies wishing to relocate to Meriden. So far, eight manufacturers have taken advantage of this program and seven of them have been paid back in full.

### Commercial Property Assessed Clean Energy

The State of Connecticut runs a clean energy program allowing commercial and industrial building owners to finance quality energy efficiency and clean energy improvements through a voluntary assessment on their property tax bill. Meriden has entered into an agreement with the Connecticut Energy Finance and Investment Authority to participate in the program, which two owners have joined to date.

## 5.4. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES IN MERIDEN

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Meriden has several properties/locations where additional substantial economic development could be realized. These sites and their future use are important to the City from an economic development standpoint since Meriden has few relatively large sites remaining for tax base development. To ensure the long-term economic health of Meriden, the City must explore areas within its borders for increasing economic development and expanding the tax base. Development potential was assessed for these areas, as well as the determination of the preferred long-term general land use for some opportunity sites. The findings of these special studies are described below.

### Infill Development Opportunities

#### *The Meriden Westfield Mall*

Recent closures of anchor stores such as Sears, Macy's, JC Penney and others have caused an uptick in mall vacancy rates across the country. The Meriden mall is the single largest tax-payer and a critical economic driver in Meriden. While privately owned, the City should consider ways in which it can provide ample flexibility for the mall to adapt to market conditions as brick and mortar retail, and malls, in particular, become more challenging to keep in business. Recent case studies demonstrate opportunities for adaptive reuse in the event that closures prevent the mall from continuing to operate. Some have included a broader mix of tenants, including uses as diverse as residential, healthcare, academic, and other institutions. In other cases, increasingly experience-oriented stores have become more prevalent. Landlords have experimented with other retail uses, such as grocery stores or off-price merchants. Meriden can help to ensure that the mall is in a good position to adapt to future change by creating a flexible regulatory environment with zoning that will not present a barrier to ongoing success.

#### *Commercial Corridors*

Meriden's main corridors along East and West Main Street, the Berlin Turnpike and Broad Street/Route 5 are important auto-oriented commercial opportunities. Under the current zoning, these lots are challenging to develop as a result of their shallow size. The City should examine opportunities to improve zoning regulations that provide property owners with a little more flexibility to adaptively reuse or redevelop buildings. For example, in some instances, it may be appropriate to make it easier for properties to consolidate to ensure areas can be developed to their highest and best use. Design guidelines should be refined to reduce traffic impacts, improve walkability, and enhance the overall aesthetics of the corridor.

These corridors represent an important opportunity for infill development in Meriden. Recently, the upper part of East Main Street has gotten a boost of commercial interest with the addition of Taino Prime and other businesses conveniently located off of the interstates. There are an additional two large vacant parcels on East Main Street that could be developed for commercial use such as a restaurant off of I-91. There has been less redevelopment activity on the west side of downtown and the Berlin Turnpike, but both areas have potential.

There are several potential barriers to infill development along these corridors, including some that could be resolved through zoning changes. As discussed in Chapter 3. Land Use, Zoning, and Community Character, several commercial corridors are located in the C-3 district. Some of the commercial corridors may require some zoning changes to allow for the reuse, redevelopment, and assemblage of properties. For example, the C-3 district does not allow mixed-use buildings (ground floor commercial with residential above) or sites, which may be appropriate

## 5.0: Economic Development

in certain locations. There may be opportunities to reinforce the corridor by encouraging the assemblage of some of the single-family homes. It is impossible to do this now because those commercial uses are not permitted in residential areas. For example, there may also be an opportunity along certain areas of East Main Street to extend commercial zoning on corner lots onto the residential side streets (i.e. a 100-foot depth), so long as commercial uses were contiguous. The intent would be to reinforce the commercial corridors while not unduly disturbing stable single-family neighborhoods. A detailed zoning study of these commercial areas is needed to determine the most appropriate approach.

### ***Downtown***

Recent redevelopment of the downtown has created new opportunities for Meriden to improve its identity and reorient its image in the region. However, the City must focus on attracting retail, in particular larger draws like restaurants, coffee shops and experiences to spaces in this area. A big hurdle is the need to retrofit or reconfigure spaces for retail tenants. Many spaces in the older buildings will require a gut-renovation at a high cost due to the historic nature of the properties and any remediation that may be needed (such as asbestos removal). Attracting new uses to this area could help fill vacancies and create an active, vibrant feeling downtown.

At the onset, commercial spaces should be fit for a variety of uses to maintain maximum flexibility for new tenants.

### ***Greenfield Opportunity Sites***

Other opportunities for economic development include a handful of greenfield opportunity sites in Meriden. These areas include large, underutilized parcels of land with development potential, though in most cases there are significant impediments, including environmental constraints such as topography and wetlands. Challenges to development could result in disruption to the natural environment and potential negative impacts such as additional traffic and noise.

Among these potential sites are the South Mountain Road Site (former NRG Site), located along the north-central edge of the City, comprises roughly 310 acres of land. The site is bound to the north by Berlin, to the west by Chamberlain Highway (Route 71), Sams Road and Kensington Avenue to the south, and City-owned open space and residential neighborhoods to the east. An easement for piping in cooling water from the Connecticut River exists from the plant boundary northward to Berlin bisecting the site. Two vehicular access points to the site exist, one off of the Chamberlain Highway and the other at the end of Sams Road. As of summer 2019, the NRG plant building and its accompanying 22.6 acres were recently purchased, but no plans have been drafted for approval by the City. The South Mountain Road Site has varying topography with steep slopes present.

In addition, the Hall Property is a 70-acre parcel located within the triangle formed by I-91, I-691/Route 66 and Preston Avenue. Its location provides excellent access to the regional transportation system. The site is adjacent to an existing corporate office space campus further north on Preston Avenue. The property is currently zoned “S-R – Suburban Residential”, and is across the street from a small age-restricted residential community. A zone change would be required to develop the property for commercial use. The western edge of this property abuts the north branch of Spoon Shop Brook and wetland areas. The topography of the site is fairly flat with the areas of greatest relief along the Route 66 eastbound off-ramp near the southern edge of the site.

The Saab site is a 50-acre property situated along the Meriden-Wallingford town line between I-91 and Murdock Avenue. The site is currently zoned “RDD – Regional Development District”, and has remained vacant for years. Its

## 5.0: Economic Development

existing industrial zone designation and its proximity to industrial development over the town line in Wallingford make the site a logical location for economic development.

While the above greenfield opportunity sites represent potential opportunities for development, each has several constraints and would require further study to determine the overall impact any development would have on the environment, natural resources and quality of life for the community.

### Brownfield Opportunity Sites

Meriden has several brownfield opportunity sites that represent important opportunities to reactivate, remediate and clean up areas that could provide more available land for housing and commercial development. Since 1992, the City has evaluated up to 23 brownfield sites totaling over 36 acres of land. There are 11 sites in the City that are ongoing or completed. The City has leveraged over \$30 million for assessment, cleanup and remediation activities at these sites.

### Marketing and Outreach

Meriden has focused on a marketing campaign to attract and retain businesses through electronic and print media, including online communications. The “Meriden 2020: Bringing It/Together” campaign was launched in 2015 to include media campaigns and the development of online communications such as meridenbiz.com and meriden2020.com, and to implement a marketing plan for the use of 2,000 hours/year of electronic billboard space. The City’s Economic Development office also contracts with CoStar Inc. to provide access to commercial property databases for the Meriden/New Haven region. The database enables staff to market “for lease” and “for sale” properties in the City to companies who may wish to relocate to Meriden.

The City is currently updating the Meriden2020.com and merging it with meridenbiz.com, as well as working with Civic Lift to create a community calendar as a tool that will provide and promote the City and privately sponsored or managed local events and businesses.

## 5.5. ISSUES, GOALS, AND OBJECTIVES

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In recent years, the City has made great strides toward revitalizing its downtown. With new passenger rail service at the Meriden Train Station improving access from New Haven to Springfield, Meriden has taken on significant redevelopment of its downtown core. The creation of Meriden Green at the HUB site, with 14-acres of park, flood-control infrastructure and mixed-use residential development, has the potential to become a turning point for the City's improved economic future. However, Meriden faces several challenges that the City can address through continued efforts toward creating an environment friendly to business and residents, while drawing in new activity.

The retail environment in Meriden has shifted over the past few years as internet sales alter the marketplace. As a result, many brick and mortar stores across the United States have experienced difficulty remaining in business. This brings into consideration new opportunities for Meriden's commercial areas, including the Meriden Westfield Mall, major retail corridors and downtown. Each of these areas provides a different type of retail opportunity, and similarly, faces different challenges. All contribute to the City's economic base and must be planned for.

Over the short-term, an achievable goal for the City would be to focus on identifying and marketing vacant or underutilized industrial and commercial properties. The City already has a very active Economic Development office, Chamber of Commerce, and multiple business organizations and commissions that aggressively pursue and promote reinvestment in Meriden. The City should continue to build upon this institutional and private market sector strength.

As a substantially built-out community, Meriden faces the difficulty of creating new areas for economic development and expansion, a significant hurdle for growing Meriden's economy and tax base. Continued infill development along established commercial corridors, where feasible, should be an on-going strategy for the City as well. The physical enhancement of industrial and commercial areas, via improved streetscapes, better and more attractive signage, proper access management and road maintenance should be pursued to show that the public sector is willing to make an investment in these areas that matches private reinvestment in properties. Continuing to assist businesses in expanding when needed, keeping such businesses in the City, and recruiting new ones to enter Meriden's economic mix will also be vital in maintaining Meriden's economic base.

It should be recognized that the older models and strategies for economic development are in the process of shifting and changing. It is often not enough for a community to simply try to lure businesses and jobs to locate within its borders. While this approach is still important to build the economic base, it is just as important to develop a supply of educated and highly skilled workers who, by their very presence in the community, will attract high-end businesses and industry. Meriden should make efforts to create such a workforce by attracting educated and skilled workers to the City by highlighting and marketing the many positive features of Meriden, and should also strive to produce highly-skilled students from within its school system. These students will constitute the future workforce of the City, and the skill sets that they acquire while in school will ultimately determine the types of businesses that will choose to locate in Meriden.

Finally, the City's approvals process could be streamlined to enhance Meriden's reputation as a City open for business. There are several ways that the approvals process might be improved to make the process more efficient, predictable and less expensive for applicants. These opportunities include streamlining the development process through a pre-application meeting for developers; combining agencies to reduce redundancy and limit

## 5.0: Economic Development

the number of meetings required for the approvals process; and creating a combined Planning and Zoning Commission to create a single major land use decision body and reduce political influences in the development process.

The following goals and objectives are designed to guide Meriden's economic development efforts over the next 10 years:

### ***Identify and market vacant or underutilized industrial and commercial properties.***

#### **Objectives:**

- Department of Economic Development should continue to work with individual property owners to identify and overcome land use or other issues that may impede the development of vacant parcels. Issues of focus should be those the City may impact through the changing of municipal policies or through the use of public programs and subsidies to spur development, such as the promotion of the Enterprise zone and other incentives within the City's control.
- Continue to investigate properties that may become available for development and explore any brownfields-related issues. If existing, the City should continue to use grant funding, such as EPA Assessment Grants, to assist owners and developers in using public programs for remediation.
- Assist developers in conducting site assemblage of smaller vacant and underutilized parcels to create larger, more marketable development sites in areas such as along East Main Street, South Broad Street, and the Berlin Turnpike.

### ***Encourage commercial infill development in established commercial corridors to create critical densities of economic development in these areas.***

#### **Objectives:**

- Corridors of particular focus should be East Main Street, West Main Street, Broad Street (North and South), and Berlin Turnpike.
- Build upon existing clusters of uses in specific areas (retail, office, hi-tech) when marketing the corridors and recruiting new businesses.
- Conduct a detailed zoning study to see where it may be appropriate to expand commercial zoning along commercial corridors. The City should examine opportunities to improve zoning regulations and update design guidelines to ensure that these areas can be developed to their highest and best use in a way that improves the streetscape, allows for better access and egress, and promotes good site design.
- Coordinate design and access management for infill development along commercial corridors. Ensure that quality development occurs in these areas.
- As a planning and zoning policy objective, prevent the fragmentation of existing commercial corridors by non-commercial uses to preserve as much land as possible for economic development.



***Streamline the development process to make Meriden an attractive place for future economic development.***

**Objectives:**

- Promote a streamlined process that encourages applicants to have pre-application meetings with staff and the City’s Land Use Boards and Commissions could afford applicants the opportunity to test concepts before spending significant amounts of money. The City should consider revising its land use regulations to allow for split or combined preliminary and detail plan of development approvals. This will reduce the level and the cost of risk to the developers.
- The City should seek to combine agencies or commissions where appropriate. One current example is the Flood Commission and the Inland Wetlands Commission, where areas of concern overlap. It is possible that they might function better as one agency, with one meeting. This could help make the approval process more efficient.
- Create a combined Planning and Zoning Commission (P&Z). Meriden currently has the City Council act as its Zoning Commission. This is a relatively important structure for the Zoning Commission in Connecticut. Most commissions are either independent of the Council or are combined with the Planning Commission to form a joint P&Z. Part of the thinking behind a joint P&Z is to put all major land use decisions in one body. If that body is appointed it will be insulated from the political pressure of election cycles, which adds a level of predictability to the decision outcomes. An appointed P&Z enables applicants to work with one commission during the approvals process reducing the time, (and the cost associated with the time added under separate jurisdictions), to get the development approval, including variances and site plan approval.

***Attract skilled workers to Meriden and produce future workers, via the Meriden school system, with the skill sets needed to flourish in the 21<sup>st</sup>-century global economy.***

**Objectives:**

- Improve awareness of existing skills and job training programs to address relatively high unemployment in Meriden, particularly downtown. According to the Choice Neighborhoods study, downtown residents were interested in “on the job” and classroom training, ESL and career counseling programs, but were not aware that these were already offered in their district.
- Encourage and expand current linkages between educational institutions and local businesses to tie students’ educational experience to real-world employment and economic situations, such as Middlesex Community College’s programming at Platt High School.
- Utilize Meriden’s relatively affordable housing stock, access to regional transportation networks, proximity to prestigious colleges and universities and central geographic location as salient points for marketing Meriden as an attractive place for hi-tech businesses.
- Continue to actively work with other cities and towns in south-central Connecticut to further strengthen a regional market for high-tech firms.

***Promote the “creative economy” in Meriden, which is centered around arts, culture, education, the non-profit sector, and entrepreneurship.***

**Objectives:**

- Promote the continued development and expansion of community assets such as Middlesex Community College programming at Platt High School.
- Support the organic growth of uses such as the Art Pop-Up at 5 Colony Street to develop an Arts Corridor to build to a structured organization.
- Encourage additional development of loft-style housing units, gallery space and studio space in Meriden, particularly in the Downtown, to promote the growth of the arts community and young business professionals.
- Work with local arts, music, cultural and philanthropic organizations to coordinate the existing assets and needs of the creative community to develop a framework for action for expanding the creative community and economy in Meriden.

***Continue to support reinvestment in the Downtown, which builds upon the recent public improvements such as the Train Station and Meriden Green.***

**Objectives:**

- Continue the revitalization of Meriden’s downtown by encouraging new businesses and residents to locate in the recently redeveloped mixed-use area around the Meriden Train Station and Meriden Green to strengthen the built environment as well as draw in residents, shoppers, visitors, and commuters.
- Improve the perception of downtown and create a distinct identity for the City to attract new businesses, residents, and visitors.
- Provide property owners with technical assistance and guidance for funding sources to encourage them to rehabilitate and maintain the physical appearance of buildings and sites.

***Create sustainable, high-quality commercial, and industrial spaces that will maximize tax revenue while being sensitive to surrounding neighborhoods and environmental assets.***

**Objectives:**

- Continue the process of redevelopment in the TOD District.
- Study potential changes to the zoning to encourage economic development through infill and amendments to regulations and approval procedures.
- Insist upon high-quality, innovative physical design in the economic development components of each of these sites that maximizes tax revenue, limits traffic impacts, protects and retains important natural features and blends harmoniously with the surrounding neighborhood.

***Strengthen efforts in the areas of business recruitment, business retention, and expansion of existing businesses in Meriden.***

**Objective:**

- Continue to provide the resources to the Making Meriden Business Center and others to maintain a vibrant economic development marketing and promotion effort via the Economic Development Office.

***Enhance the physical attractiveness of commercial and industrial areas.***

**Objectives:**

- Review existing applicable regulations, such as signage and landscaping requirements, to gauge their impact on the physical design and appearance of Meriden’s economic generation areas. Make appropriate changes to these regulations where necessary.
- Present an attractive and inviting physical environment for businesses and their employees. Highlight the fact that Meriden is a physically appealing place to do business with excellent regional transportation access.
- Develop design guidelines to address storefront improvements, signs, window and door types, approved siding materials, masonry repair, replacement or highlighting of trim, cornices, appropriate colors and other architectural details.
- Explore ways to effectively utilize CDBG funding programs to encourage property/business owners to improve the physical appearance of Downtown properties while spurring individual owners to invest in their respective properties.
- Encourage the conversion of vacant upper floor commercial space to market-rate residential uses, which can bring pedestrian activity, vitality, and buying power to the Downtown.
- Encourage pop-up arts and culture uses in the Downtown that will develop more visual interest for shoppers, pedestrians, and visitors to the area.

## Chapter 6. TRANSPORTATION AND CIRCULATION

### *Transportation Findings and Implications*

To ensure that the City of Meriden can continue to grow and prosper, it is essential to provide a safe, efficient and economically viable transportation system. This system, comprised of a surface transportation network of highways, streets, an airport, walkways, greenways, bikeways, and mass transit must provide for both inter-town and intra-town travel movements. The data and discussion presented in this chapter suggest several trends that are of importance for Meriden:

- Meriden is centrally located in the State of Connecticut, with Interstates I-91, 691 and Route 15/Wilbur Cross Parkway running through the City.
- Most traffic in Meriden travels along its east-west and north-south corridors, East/West Main Street and Route 5/Broad Street. These routes are also the sites of the highest density of motor vehicle crashes in Meriden.
- Meriden is served by CT rail service on the New Haven – Hartford – Springfield line at its newly renovated Meriden Transit Center.
- The railroad station serves as a transit hub and the center of recent Transit-Oriented Development work, including a recent rezoning, and new residential and mixed-use construction.
- Six bus routes serve the City, providing access to points within Meriden and surrounding towns, including New Haven, North Haven, and Wallingford.
- Meriden has a system of multi-purpose linear trails that provide opportunities for recreation and non-vehicular transit.

## 6.1. EXISTING CONDITIONS

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Meriden's link to the interstate highway system is among the best available in Connecticut. The City is the mid-point location between the cities of New Haven and Hartford. As a result, it has access to Interstate 91, Interstate 691 and Connecticut Routes 5 and 15. The path of the Quinnipiac River, the railroad right-of-way and the establishment and growth of the historic city center have all shaped Meriden's current roadway system (see Figure 42). The roadway system within Meriden is comprised of a series of interconnected corridors with varying levels of roadway functional classification. According to the Connecticut Department of Transportation, Meriden is served by 213.99 miles of public roads, 88% of which are City roads (187.40 miles) and the balance (26.59 miles) are State roads.

In addition to its central location along the state's network of road systems, Meriden is served by a transit system consisting of commuter rail, regional Amtrak service, and a bus system all centered at the recently redeveloped Meriden Transit Center in the City's downtown. This chapter discusses the network of transportation, transit, trails, bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure and service in Meriden, including relevant issues, opportunities, and recommendations.

### A. Road Network, Traffic, and Circulation

#### *Functional Classification of Roadways in the City of Meriden*

The highest functional classification is an expressway or grade-separated highway. In Meriden, these are the interstate highways and the Wilbur Cross Parkway. These are shown on Figure 43. The next level of road classification is arterial roadways which normally function as through roads connecting major centers to each other and to the expressway systems. In many instances, these are state roads with significant traffic volumes. Examples of arterial roads in Meriden are Route 5 and East and West Main Street. A third category of roads are collector roads which "gather" or collect traffic from local roads and distribute traffic to arterial roads or often collectors. Collector roads and local roads are not shown in Figure 43 as the map would not be easily read.

#### *Average Daily Traffic Volumes*

The following describes existing traffic conditions on State roadways within Meriden, using available traffic count data from the Connecticut Department of Transportation. The interstate highways in Meriden, I-91 and I-691, have the highest traffic volumes, both exceeding 70,000 average annual daily traffic (AADT) in 2018. Route 15, the Wilbur Cross Parkway, has the next highest volume at over 63,000 vehicles according to AADT data. Within the City, Route 5/South Broad Street has the highest recorded AADT at over 18,000 vehicles. East and West Main, the major east-west thoroughfare in Meriden, have volumes over 14,000 vehicles. Route 70/Meriden-Cheshire Highway in south Meriden had relatively low traffic volumes, at just over 4,000 vehicles. AADT data indicated that Route 71/Chamberlain Highway's traffic volumes hovered around 10,000 vehicles with slightly higher volumes of traffic north of I-691 near the Meriden Westfield Mall.

Other roadways not identified in the AADT figure have varying levels of traffic, all below 10,000 vehicles. In Meriden, traffic patterns are consistent with areas of greatest density and development, as well as the level of connectivity to the regional road network. The City's main north-south and east-west corridors, Route 5 and East/West Main Street handle large volumes of traffic while many of the surrounding roadways with less capacity generate less traffic. The traffic volumes for 2018 by location are depicted in Figure 44.

Figure 42. Meriden's Road System and the Region

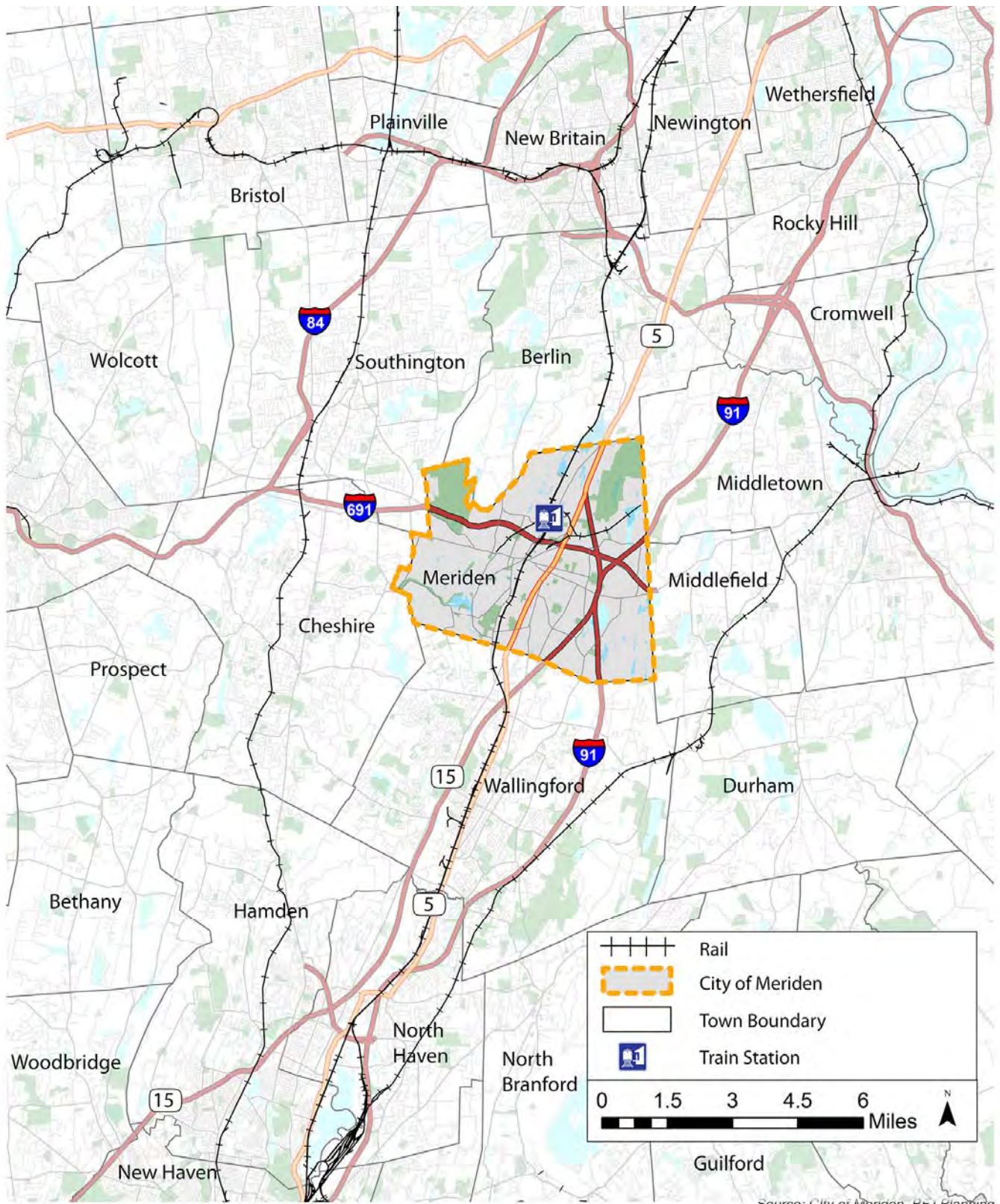


Figure 43. Functional Classification of Roadways in Meriden

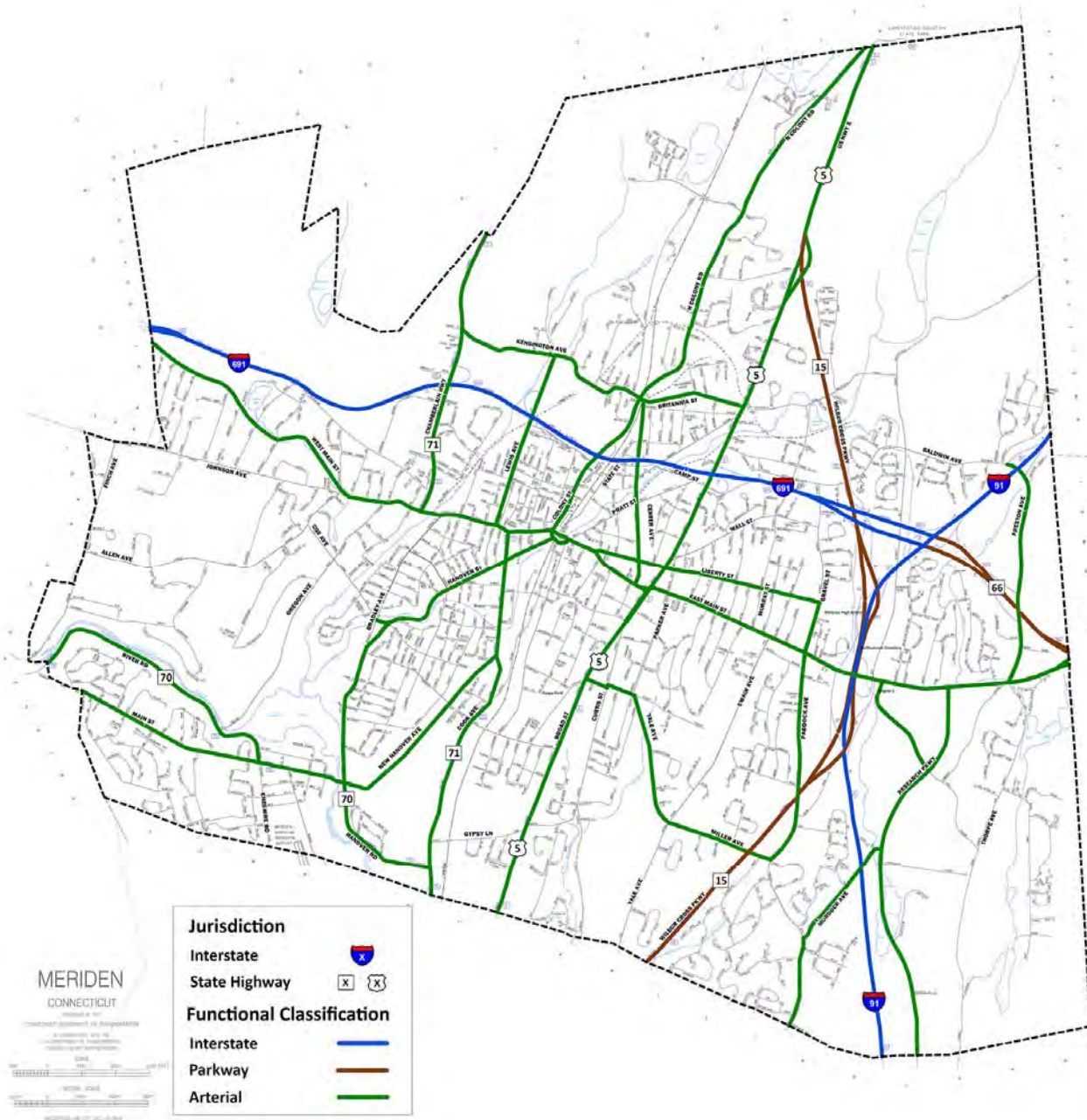
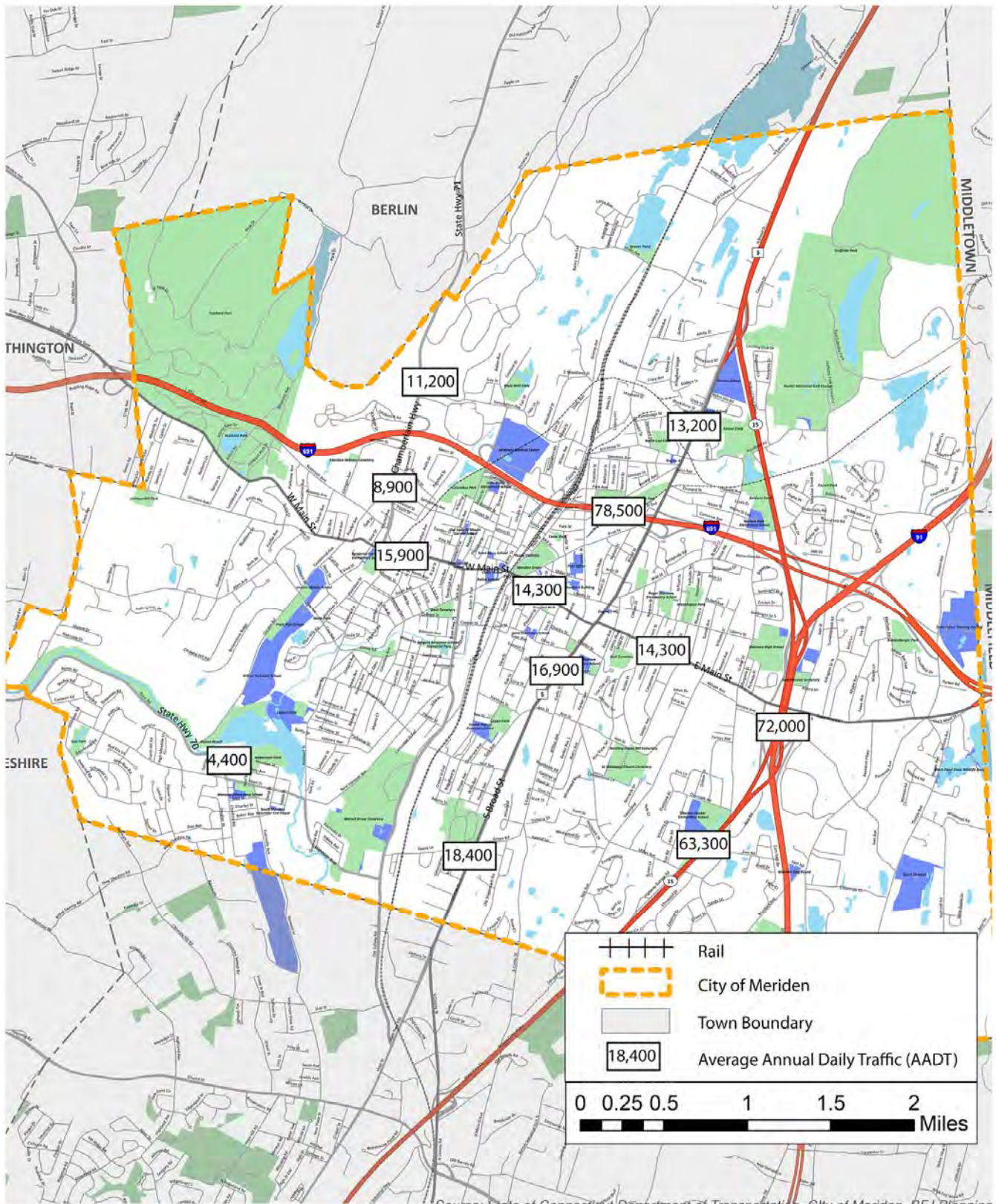


Figure 44. Average Annual Daily Traffic in Meriden (2018)





**Crash Data**

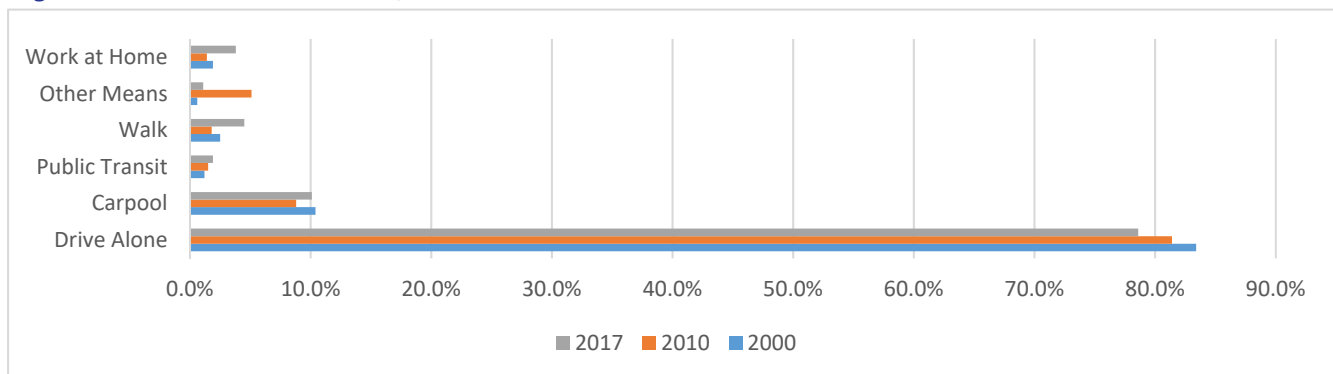
Figure 46 illustrates motor vehicle crashes by density and severity in Meriden from June 2016 through July 2019. This data identifies areas in the City that have been particularly prone to motor vehicle crashes, with the most crashes are generally centered in downtown Meriden along major east-west and north-south corridors. The intersection with the highest density of incidents between 2016 and 2019 was Route 5/Broad Street and East Main Street. The second highest crash intersection was the intersection of Colony Street and West Main Street in downtown Meriden adjacent to the Meriden Green. Other areas with high incidences of motor vehicle crashes were along East and West Main Street and Gravel Street/Paddock Avenue, near the I-91 interchange and at the intersection of West Main and Lewis Avenue. On the north-south corridor, Broad Street, clusters with high crash density are generally south of I-91, including the Camp/Pratt Street intersection, Ann Street, Hall Avenue, and Green Road/Gypsy Lane near the Wallingford border.

**Journey to Work Patterns**

The United States Census Bureau provides recent data for analyzing commuting patterns within and between local communities. This data is helpful in understanding general traffic flows into and out of a community through use of travel to workplace data. The City of Meriden has a labor force of an estimated 32,910 workers, of which 12,454 workers (37.8%) are employed within the City itself. The remaining 20,456 workers (62.2%) commute to jobs outside of Meriden. According to Census data, an estimated 10,228 workers commute into Meriden for employment, combined with the 12,454 workers mentioned previously who both reside and work in the City itself. Likely due to its geographically central location in the State and proximity to the confluence of major interstate highways and state routes, Meriden draws workers into its economy from all directions. Only about a quarter of workers coming from the surrounding municipalities of Wallingford, Waterbury, Southington, Middletown, New Britain, and Cheshire. Over 45% of the commuters into Meriden came from outside of the surrounding municipalities.

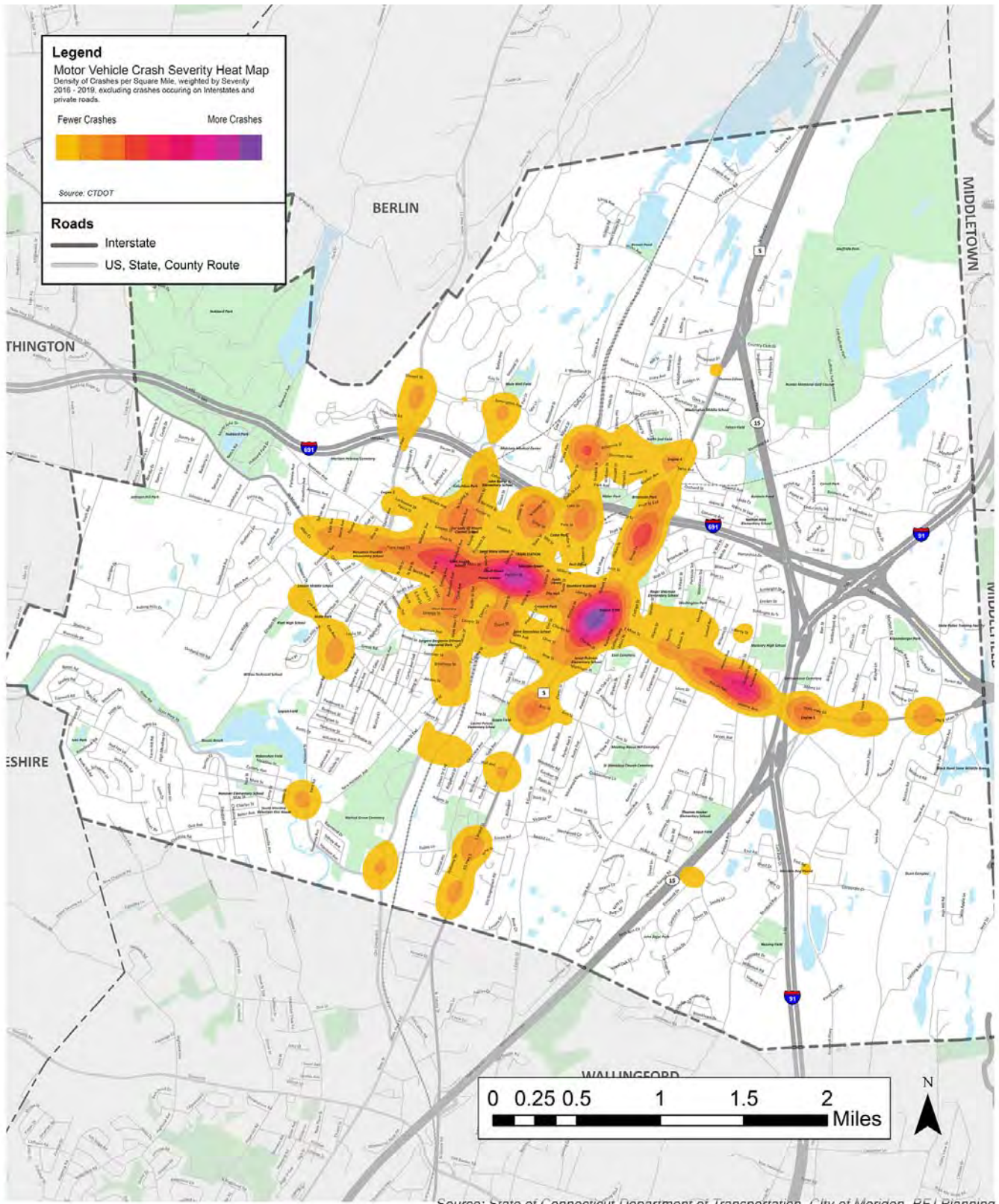
The mean travel time to work for Meriden residents was 22.8 minutes in 2017, slightly shorter than New Haven County’s mean travel time of 24.9 minutes. As shown in Figure 45, in 2017, the vast majority of Meriden residents drove alone to work (78.6%) while 10.1% carpoolled and fewer than 2% took public transit. The percentage of residents walking to work was 4.5% in 2017, an increase from previous years (2.5% in 2000 and 1.8% in 2010). A similar increase was seen in the number of residents working from home (3.8% in 2017, up from 1.9% in 2000 and 1.4% in 2010). As a share of the total, driving alone has decreased by approximately 5% since 2000.

**Figure 45. Travel Mode to Work, Meriden 2017**



Source: US Census Bureau American Community Survey 2017

Figure 46. Motor Vehicle Crash Data



## B. Public Transportation

Transit options in Meriden include the commuter rail service and a network of local and regional buses centered around the newly renovated Meriden Transit Center and its downtown transportation hub. In 2015 Meriden completed a study and redesign of its downtown, catalyzed by the reconstruction of its train station as a new Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) hub. As of June 2018, the newly renovated Meriden Transit Center provides rail service to points north and south, and is the pick-up and drop off location for the majority of bus lines available within the City. Figure 49 illustrates CT rail service as it connects to Meriden and other areas throughout the State. Figure 48 and Figure 49 follow to describe the available bus service in the City.

### Meriden Train Station

Meriden’s train station is located at 60 State Street in the center of the City’s downtown. The train station was rebuilt between 2014 and 2017 and opened for CT rail commuter service between New Haven and Springfield starting in June 2018. Amtrak also provides service via its Northeast Regional and Vermonter lines. Connection to MetroNorth and Shoreline East is available at New Haven. Approximately 17 trains each day depart from Meriden toward New Haven and Hartford on weekdays, with about 12 stops on weekends. Commuter trains depart from Meriden roughly every 30 minutes during peak commuting times. Figure 47 shows a map of the CT rail Hartford Line and connecting services.

Recent improvements to the Meriden Train Station included two new passenger platforms, an “up and over” pedestrian walkway enabling passengers to cross the railroad tracks from the rail platforms to the remainder of the Meriden Green site; parking facilities for approximately 200 vehicles; and a multimodal transportation center. The improved train station serves as an “anchor” for Downtown Meriden, particularly the Meriden Green site, as the transportation center for the entire City.

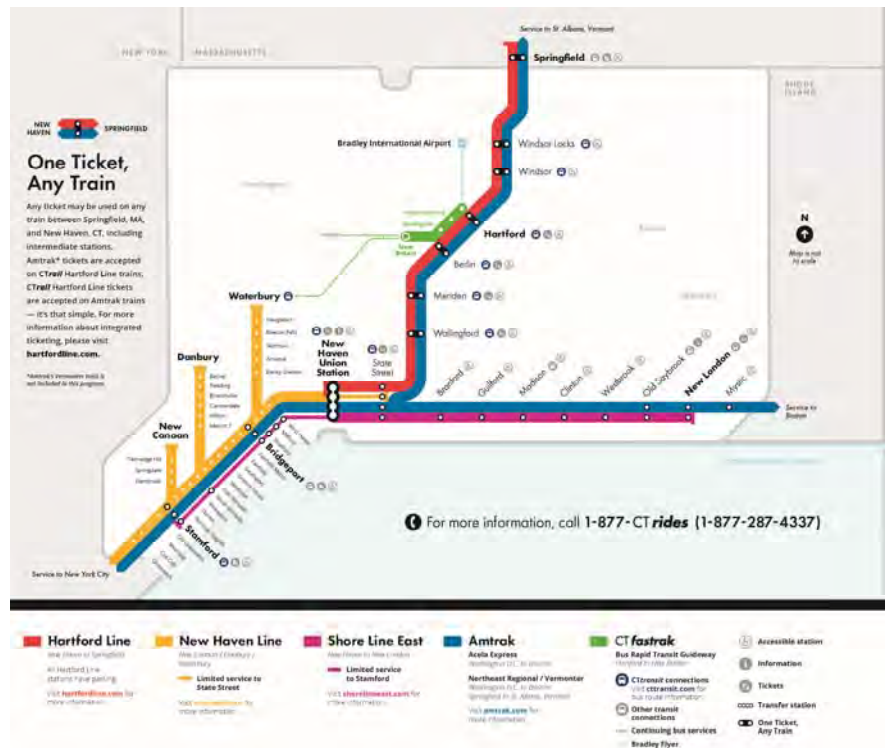


Figure 47. CT rail Hartford Line and Connecting Services Map

The Connecticut Department of Transportation reports that ridership has averaged about 50,000 passengers per month or an approximate average of 180 passengers per day at each of the nine stations. These additional commuters and the increased number of trains passing through Meriden every day

## 6.0: Transportation and Circulation

provides some opportunities for existing downtown businesses as well as any new commercial space developed as part of the Meriden Green site redevelopment.

### Bus Network

Owned and operated by ConnDOT, Connecticut Transit operates six bus routes (see Table 13) that connect Meriden to the bus system serving the Greater New Haven/South Central Connecticut area. The frequency of service varies between bus routes but is generally once or twice per hour. The Yale Acres (563), South Meriden (564), West Main (565), East Main (566) and Westfield Meriden (561) lines operate on a loop that begins and ends at the Meriden Transit Center. The Meriden rail station, located on State Street, serves as the “hub” for all of these bus routes, while the New Haven/Wallingford/Meriden (215) line starts at the New Haven train station and ends at the Meriden Transit Center. This route also includes supplemental express service between downtown New Haven and the Amazon fulfillment center in North Haven. None of the local buses operate on Sundays in Meriden, and Saturday service is available only on lines 561, 565 and 566.

**Table 13. Bus Routes Serving Meriden**

Bus Route	Description	Schedule
<b>215</b>	New Haven/Wallingford/Meriden	Weekdays 5:20 am – 6:30 pm – every 20-30 mins Saturdays 7:30 am – 5:30 pm – every 30-45 mins Sundays two buses – 10:18 am and 11:18 am
<b>561</b>	Transit Center – Westfield Meriden – Transit Center	Weekdays 7:00 am – 5:30 pm – every 30 mins Saturdays 9:40 am – 5:20 pm – every 40 mins
<b>563</b>	Transit Center - Yale Acres – Transit Center	Weekdays 6:30 am – 4:30 pm – every hour
<b>564</b>	Transit Center - South Meriden – Transit Center	Weekdays 7:00 am – 5:00 pm – every hour
<b>565</b>	Transit Center - West Main Street – Transit Center	Weekdays 8:00 am – 5:00 pm – every hour Saturdays 9:40 am – 4:45 pm – every 1.5 hours
<b>566</b>	Transit Center - East Main Street – Transit Center	Weekdays 6:30 am - 5:30 pm – every 1.25 hours Saturdays 10:20 am – 5:20 pm – every 1.5 hours

Source: CT Transit

In addition to bus routes operating in Meriden, the neighboring City of Middletown has improved its transit system in recent years to include access to the Meriden Transit Center. Middletown Area Transit has increased regularity of the “M Link” service, which travels in a loop from Downtown Middletown to Wesleyan University and Meriden Transit Center. The revised route to the Meriden Transit Center provides a more direct route between Meriden and Middletown and has reduced headways from two hours to 30 minutes (see Figure 48).

**Figure 48. Middletown Area Transit "M Link"**

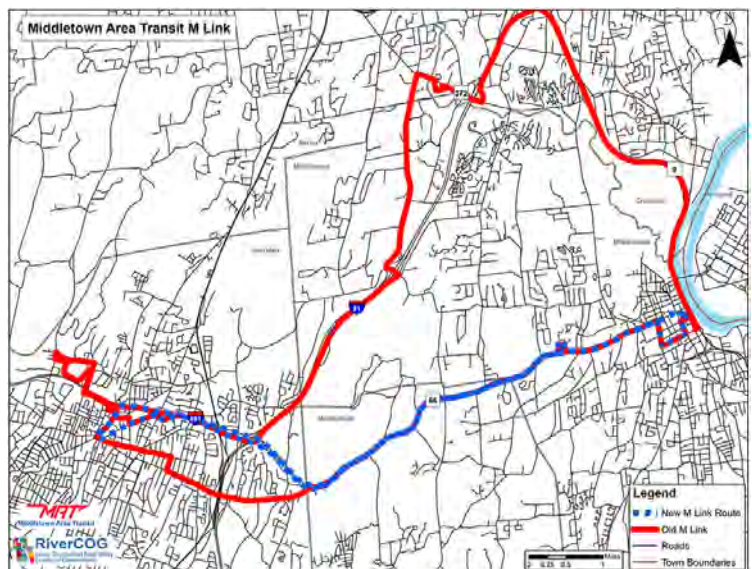
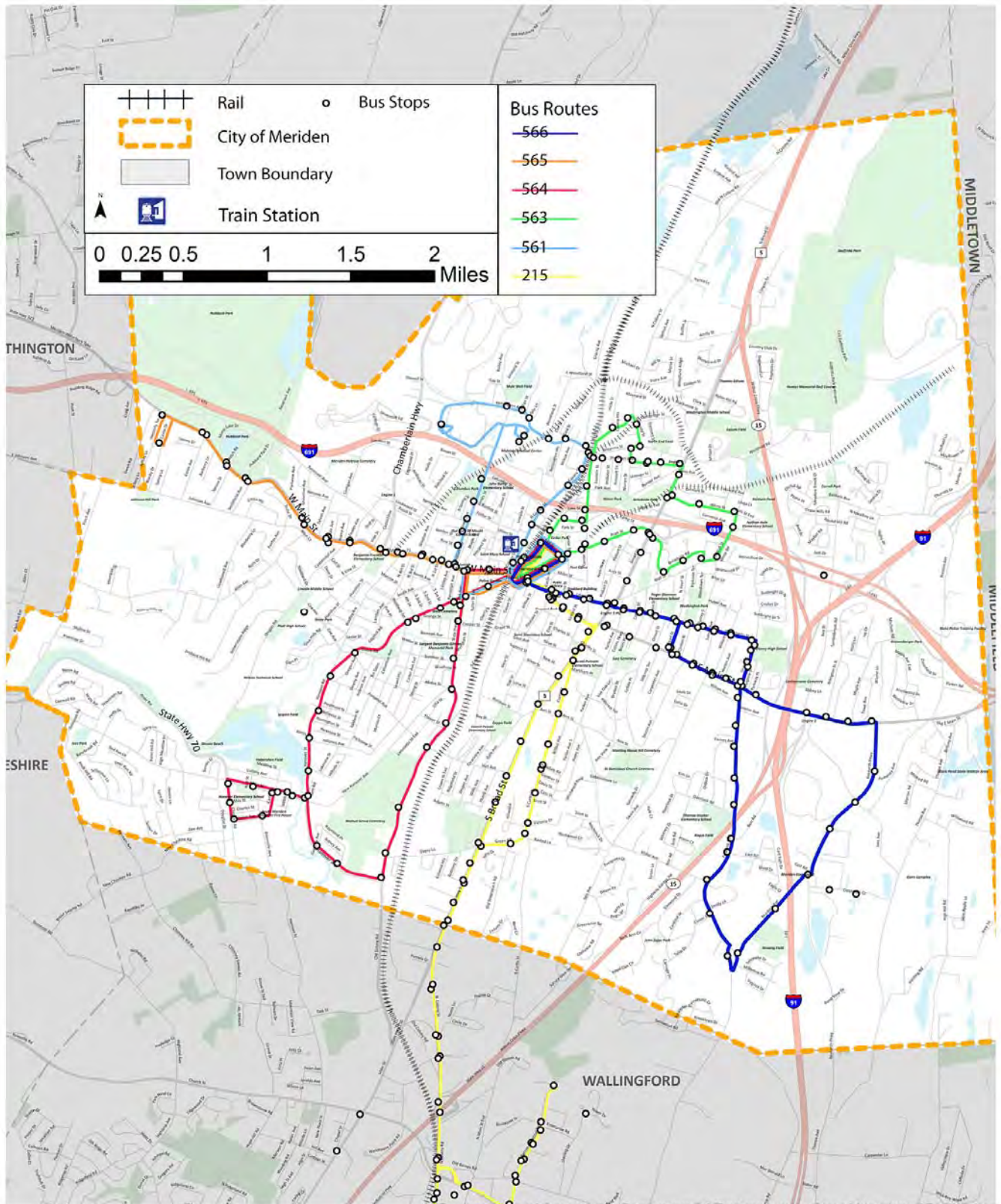


Figure 49. Meriden's Transit Network



Source: State of Connecticut Department of Transportation, City of Meriden, BFI Planning

## 6.0: Transportation and Circulation

As described in the journey to work data above, transit usage, including bus ridership, is low. Bus service has the potential to provide a low-cost option to help people get to the places they need to go without needing to drive or have access to a car. In a community such as Meriden with a relatively low median household income and an increasing median age, transit options are particularly valuable. However, presently bus infrastructure and services are limited.

In August 2016 the City in collaboration with the SCRCOG completed a bus transit study identifying connectivity gaps and providing recommendations for infrastructure and service opportunities to facilitate access and maximize usage. Among key recommendations were improving ADA accessibility, increasing the frequency and extending the schedules of routes that operate in Meriden to make bus ridership a more viable option for people who live and/or work in Meriden.

### C. *Pedestrian and Bicycle Network*

#### Trail Systems in Meriden

The City of Meriden has a network of multi-purpose, non-motorized linear trails. The City completed a Linear Trails Study in 2012, documenting the four routes that run through the City and identifying a conceptual plan for future improvements. The Metacomet/Mattabesett Trail, also known as the Blue Trail, passes through three City-owned locations in Meriden: Hubbard Park; the South Mountain Road site; and Giuffrida Park. The Blue Trail is one of the longest trail systems in Connecticut, running from the Massachusetts-Connecticut state line in Suffield south to northern Guilford, and northeast through Durham, Haddam and Middletown to the Connecticut River.

In addition to the Blue Trail, both Hubbard Park and Giuffrida Park have their own interior circulation trails for hiking and passive recreation that also link up with the Blue Trail at several points. Finally, the southwestern corner of Meriden is home to the Quinnipiac Gorge Trail that runs alongside the Quinnipiac River from Hanover Pond west to the Cheshire town line. The next phase of the Quinnipiac River Trail extends the trail north from Dossin Beach to West Main Street, generally along the west side of Sodom Brook opened in October 2013. Further extensions and improvements to the Quinnipiac Linear Trail and Harbor Brook Trail are outlined in the 2018 South Central Region Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan Update (2018).

In 2015 the City completed the downtown linear trail as part of the Meriden Green Project in the Transit-Oriented Development area. This trail, associated with the construction of the flood control retention area and park in the Meriden Green, is located along Hanover Street and within the Meriden Green in downtown Meriden (see the annotated map of Meriden's linear trail system in Chapter 9. Parks and Open Space). Future plans for the Meriden Linear Trail system were outlined in the April 2012 Linear Trails Master Plan, and include the goal of connecting the linear trails in Meriden to businesses, schools, neighborhoods, and parks. Collectively, these facilities provide a solid foundation toward achieving an interconnected and accessible greenways and trail system in the City. The City is working on the implementation of a Research Parkway trail within the next two to three years. The addition of this trail would tie the existing Research Parkway corridor to nearby commercial areas, enabling those working in the area to access East Main Street.

### **Bicycle and Pedestrian Networks**

As illustrated in the annotated map in Chapter 9. Parks and Open Space, Meriden plans to expand its on-road bicycle network along key corridors connecting through the downtown, in coordination with the multiuse linear trail system. Forging these connections to make cycling a favorable and safer way of getting around will enable more people to access downtown and connect to the City's valuable parks and recreation resources.

### **D. Meriden-Markham Airport**

Meriden-Markham Airport is a full-service airport located on Evansville Avenue, straddling the Meriden-Wallingford town line. The airport is owned and operated by the City through the nonprofit entity Meriden Aviation Services, Inc. The airport has a single 3,100-foot runway with an all-night remote lighting system. The taxiway for the runway is also lighted and the airport has a rotating beacon light to identify its location at night. The airport complex also includes the main terminal, hangars and a maintenance facility. Meriden-Markham Airport offers a wide variety of services, including aircraft rental and maintenance services, flight and ground training and instruction, charter flights, pilot supplies and computer services including weather mapping and laptop hook-ups. Future improvements to the airport include new "T"- hangars for aircraft owners who store their planes on the premises year-round.

### **E. Recent Transportation Initiatives**

The City, region, and state have been involved in recent initiatives related to the transportation network in Meriden with a focus on traffic safety, access management, pedestrian improvements, and traffic.

#### ***South Central Regional Council of Governments (SCRCOG) - Transportation Initiatives***

SCRCOG's *Regional Plan of Conservation and Development 2018-2028* called for promoting transit options in the region, identifying the new New Haven Hartford Springfield Rail line as an opportunity along the north-south Interstate 91 corridor.

SCRCOG's *South Central Regional Long Range Transportation Plan 2019-2045* recommends or identifies several transportation improvement projects within the City of Meriden that are part of the long-range plan. The Long Range Transportation Plan states the following:

*I-91/Rt. 15/I-691 Interchange Improvements* – The intersection of Route 15, I-91 and I-691 has a high crash rate due to lane changes and congestion issues. Where 691, 91 and Route 15 merge, cars entering the on-ramp must cross a few lanes of traffic, resulting in crashes and backups.

*I-691 Interchange – Meriden* - Chamberlain Highway SCRCOG identifies previously studied improvements to the Chamberlain Highway interchange to increase the efficiency of the local highway network. A SCRCOG sponsored study reviewed recommended improvements to interchanges 5, 6 and 7 and circulation on adjacent highways that have not been implemented as a result of fiscal constraints but are a current priority of State DOT.

## 6.0: Transportation and Circulation

*Route 5 Corridor Study* – There is a study in process to look at access management, safety improvements and sidewalks of a five-mile stretch along Route 5 in Meriden and Wallingford. The City hopes to have study results by February 2020 and implement it as funding becomes available.

### ***Other Transportation Initiatives***

Other projects and studies recently completed or underway include:

*City of Meriden East Main Street Study (ongoing)*: This study reviews current conditions of East Main Street from I-91 to Paddock Avenue.

As part of the on-going *Regional Pedestrian and Bicycle Plan (2016)*, SCRCOG has identified several improvement projects areas in the City of Meriden for pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure enhancements. In 2016, Meriden was one of four communities who requested and received a Road Safety Audit (RSA) of the Camp Street corridor from Colony Street to Pratt Street. The audit identified key recommendations including striping improvements; sidewalk and crosswalk repairs; replacing existing traffic signals and improving ADA accessibility; and, in the long term, implementing an access management plan and realigning sidewalks and fixing broken sidewalk sections with consistent materials.

*Meriden Transit Center: First Mile Last Mile Study (2016)*: This study identified connectivity gaps and outlined recommendations to provide infrastructure and service recommendations to facilitate access and maximize usage of the new \$20 million Meriden Transit Station that was completed in 2018. The plan surveyed riders and major employers, identifying opportunities to partner with employers on commuting programs and incentives to improve the transportation system as a whole in Meriden. Riders who participated in the study identified bus stop amenities, such as bus shelters, as a priority for improvement along with frequency, reliability, safety, and cost. The plan recommends developing comprehensive demand management policies that support multimodal transportation and transit oriented development.

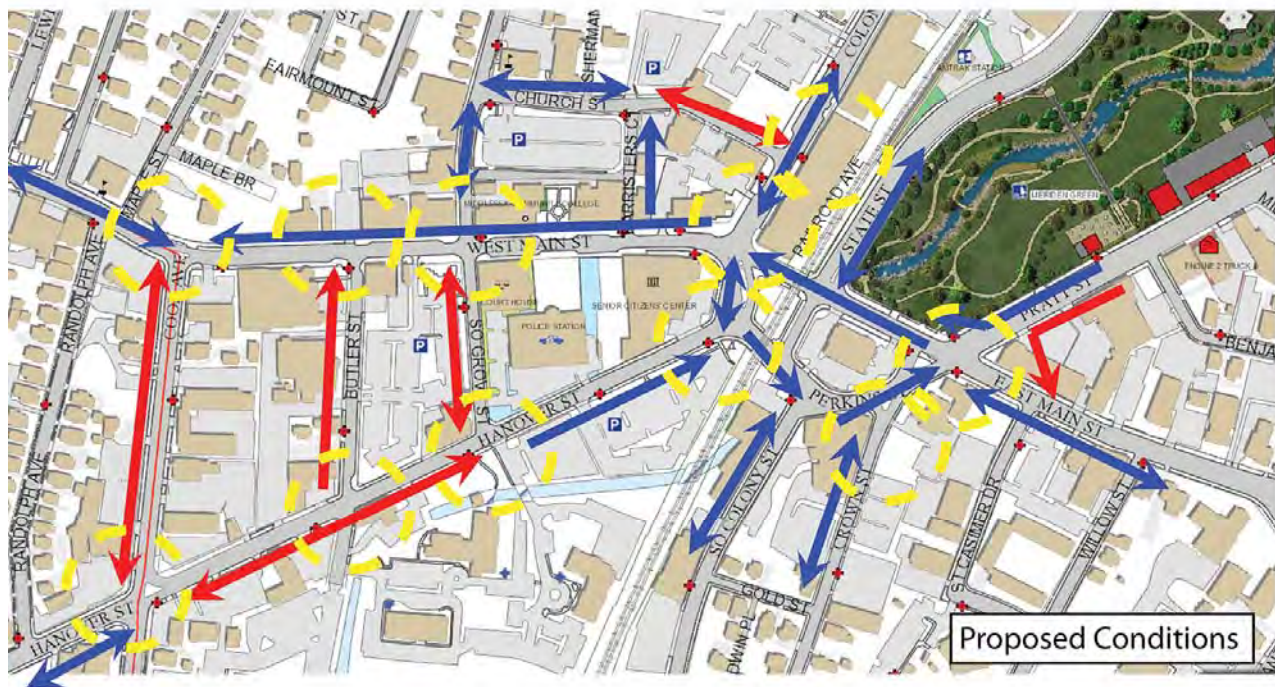
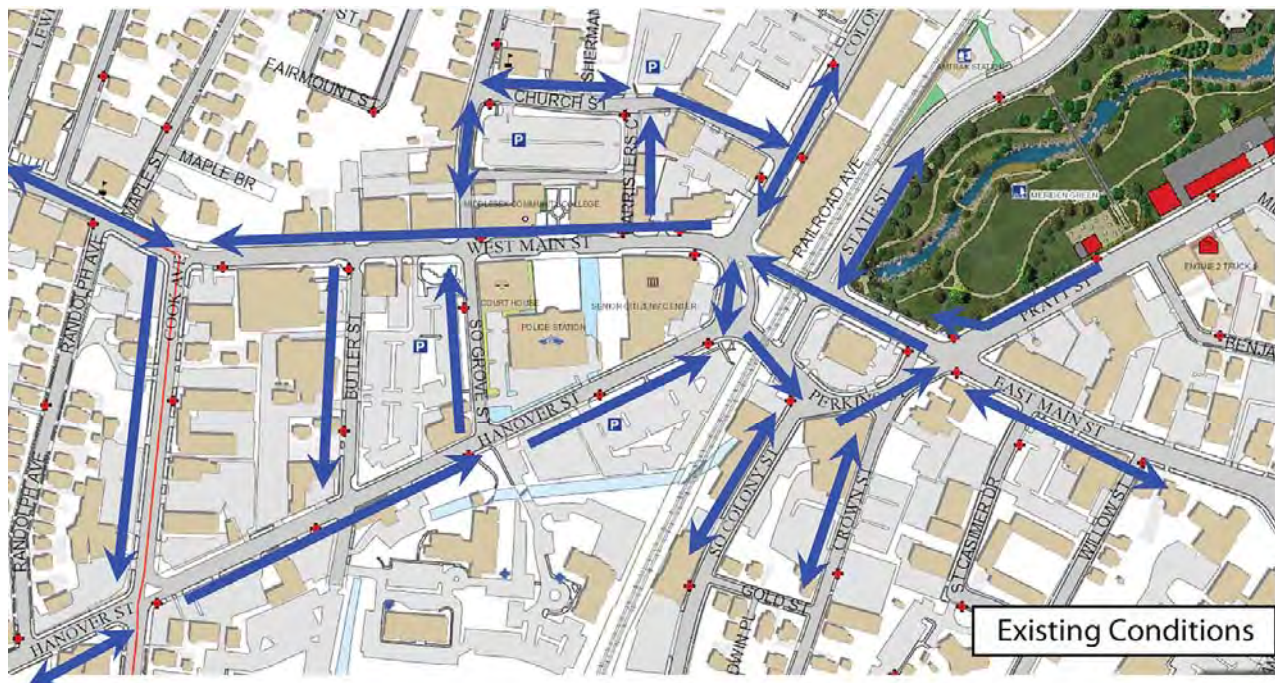





## 6.2. ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES

### *Road Network Issues and Opportunities*

1. According to feedback through public workshops and the public survey, members of the community have identified the maintenance of roadways throughout the City as a top priority for future planning efforts in Meriden. This priority reflects the data provided in Table 4 which indicates that approximately 90% of people use the automobile as their mode of travel.
2. Access management, congestion, and pedestrian infrastructure on Route 5 are problematic and should be addressed to promote this area for the potential development of higher intensity uses. The current access management and congestion on this roadway pose obstacles to potential development. This is being studied.
3. East/West Main Street – As part of the City’s efforts to improve traffic management in the Transit-Oriented Development District, Meriden has begun to study improvements to the East and West Main Street corridor downtown to improve circulation through downtown and better managing access to businesses and services. Meriden received a Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ) Grant in 2016 to look at 13 signals nearing the end of their useful life in the downtown. At the center of the City’s downtown, the current traffic pattern is designed as a one-way system along part of East Street and West Main Street, Cook Avenue, Butler Street, Hanover Street and Perkins Street, allowing little flexibility and contributing to a sense of confusion and inaccessibility. Planning for revisions to traffic patterns and improved signalization will enhance vehicular and pedestrian safety while leveraging other work that has been done downtown.
4. As illustrated in Figure 50, Meriden has proposed reorienting the direction of Butler Street and altering currently one-way streets to two-way, including Church Street, Cook Avenue, a section of Hanover Street and South Grove Street. Signal upgrades would occur at key intersections.
5. I-691 route 66 – ConnDOT is looking at several signage and lighting enhancements on 691 and a portion of 66 to improve safety.
6. Congestion at the intersection of Interstates 691, 91 and Route 15 results from the merging of the three major roads at a point where vehicles must cross a few lanes of traffic, which has resulted in several crashes. ConnDOT is currently studying this issue and preparing documents to identify feasible alternatives. The City has the following concerns with the existing interchange:
  - I-91 southbound to I-691 – the ramp brings drivers to an exit only condition.
  - I-91 southbound to East Main Street and Route 15 southbound – queuing is extensive at particular times of the day, often extending to the I-91 southbound/I-691 westbound interchange.
  - I-691 westbound left-hand exit to I-91 southbound – the ramp brings drivers to East Main Street exit only lane.
  - East Main Street onto mainline – major weaving as drivers position themselves for Route 15 northbound, I-91 northbound or I-691 within a short distance.

Figure 50. Existing and Proposed Conditions - Downtown Meriden Traffic Improvements



-  Proposed Signal Changes
-  Changes to roadway direction
-  Current roadway direction

Source: City of Meriden, BFJ Planning

### *Traffic Issues and Opportunities*

1. There is a traffic flow issue on West Main in the afternoon and early evening from West Main to Cook Avenue and West Main to Chamberlain. The volume and number of signal lights (four) along this four block span of roadway causes delays between approximately 3:00 pm and 5:30 pm. There is a need to study the light sequencing in this area.
2. Route 5 – ConnDOT is undertaking a project to address necessary signalization and safety improvements along Route 5/Broad Street in Meriden. This study, among other objectives, will address the intersection of East Main Street and Route 5, which currently causes delays at certain hours.

### *Transit Issues and Opportunities*

1. There is a lack of connectivity with other bus systems in the region. Coordinating with other municipalities would enhance bus service for the region as a whole, making the system a better option for those who live and work in Meriden and the surrounding towns.
2. Bus service is too infrequent and does not run late enough to be a reasonable option for those who wish to use the bus to commute to and from work. Meriden's First Mile Last Mile Study identified major issues for riders, including bus stop amenities such as bus shelters, frequency, reliability, safety, and cost.
3. Bus lines are not properly aligned to the greatest potential generators of bus ridership. For example, a direct bus line to Waterbury and back is needed. Peter Pan goes from Waterbury to Meriden but not the other way.
4. The introduction of CT rail service through the newly reconstructed Meriden Transit Center has the potential to generate new foot traffic and interest in new living opportunities downtown. Together, this could help reactivate downtown Meriden, making the City a more attractive place for people to relocate, work and live.

### *Pedestrian and Bicycle Issues and Opportunities*

1. Improvements are needed for pedestrians and cyclists to make the downtown more accessible to surrounding neighborhoods and to improve safety. Connections to downtown are particularly important and there is a need to identify if there are missing links.
2. Not all areas of Meriden are appropriate for sidewalks or pedestrian improvements given the challenges of steep topography in parts of the City. However, improving sidewalk conditions and safety for pedestrians and cyclists is a priority to create a healthier, more walkable community. The City could focus on creating a sidewalk masterplan for the whole city as there is a need to know where there are and are not sidewalks and where they should be. Meriden's linear trail system presents an opportunity to bring people into the downtown, and serve as an attractive recreation opportunity and a potential alternative to car travel. The City is also pursuing additional on- and off-road improvements to connect its bike network to the network of linear trails.
3. While ADA accessible transportation options are available, the efforts to provide them are fragmented and they can be difficult to track down. ADA accessible van service makes approximately 15 trips per day in Meriden and the Meriden Senior Center provides transportation for its users.

### 6.3. GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The following identifies a comprehensive program of transportation improvements recommended to mitigate traffic congestion, improve traffic circulation, reduce traffic accidents and encourage multi-modal travel.

#### ***Continue to maintain and reinvest in City-maintained roadways.***

**Objectives:**

- Maintain adequate funding and staffing levels at the Public Works Department to ensure that resources are in place for periodic and systematic assessments of Meriden’s roadway network.
- Continue exploring opportunities to increase funding for road preservation, and explore ways to improve funding for paving and road improvements.
- Conduct a road and sidewalk master plan to guide redevelopment and investment in City streets, including an inventory of the condition of streets and sidewalks utilizing GIS.

#### ***Improve the City’s bus system to improve multi-modal transportation and mobility in Meriden.***

**Objectives:**

- Create a local task force on public transportation and work with CT Transit and bus service providers to improve ridership, scheduling, and frequency of buses. The discussion should include a reassessment of ways to improve bus routes based on where ridership generators are in Meriden.
- Consider potential ADA improvements for the bus system and coordinate efforts of local nonprofit organizations currently providing transportation options for local seniors, such as the Meriden Senior Center.
- Continue to implement the recommendations of the First Mile Last Mile Study that was completed in 2016, including policy initiatives such as transportation demand management (TDM), adopting a citywide Complete Streets policy, promoting universally accessible design, encouraging coordination between transit agency policies and local jurisdiction policies, and strategically managing parking in pedestrian and TOD areas.

#### ***Address the current need of critical roadway corridors and plan for future impacts from development to make sure roadways do not become overburdened.***

**Objectives:**

- Continue to work with SCRCOG and CONNDOT on improvements to implement recommendations of the ongoing Route 5 study, possibly including strategies to reduce the number of motor vehicle accidents, identifying appropriate development to minimize curb cuts and ingress/egress points, and revise pavement markings to improve traffic flow and driver comprehension.

## 6.0: Transportation and Circulation

- Continue to investigate the potential for realigning and reconfiguring the East Main Street/Broad Street intersection to improve traffic flow and reduce confusion.
- Interstate 91, Interstate 691, Route 15 and Route 66 will continue to serve the important role of connecting Meriden with the region, the State and the national transportation network. While the City has little direct control over the development and utilization of these roadways, it should continue to be active in working with State and federal departments and officials to ensure that Meriden is adequately and properly served by these roadways.
- As part of the City's work to promote downtown Meriden as a place to live, work and do business, pursue strategies to better and more directly connect I-691 with the Downtown area.
- Continue to work with SCRCOG and CONNDOT to coordinate incident management and traffic advisory services, proposed construction projects and enhancements, and basic maintenance activities.
- The City should investigate opportunities for improving east-west and north-south roadway connectivity wherever feasible.
- Implement a comprehensive strategy to reduce accidents, which should include traffic calming and access management techniques, along with other site-specific measures.

***Identify ways to improve key intersections and facilitate traffic flow to help simplify the process of moving around the City.***

### Objectives:

- Investigate possible opportunities to improve the Camp Street corridor and implement recommendations of RSA.
- Address traffic safety concerns and study pedestrian improvements Hanover Avenue at Coe Avenue.

***Promote trail networks for pedestrians and bicyclists as an alternative means of transportation and recreation for residents.***

### Objectives:

- Continue to pursue the development of a cross-City linear trail and implement recommendations of the 2012 Linear Trails Master Plan.
- Create a City-wide sidewalk master plan to identify locations where sidewalks and linkages to downtown are needed.
- Identify areas that require mapping for existing and future linkages for bikes, pedestrian and other transportation systems.

## Chapter 7. PARKS, RECREATION, AND OPEN SPACE

### *Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Findings and Implications*

The quality, quantity, and variety of parks and open spaces are important attributes that help define the character of a community. The strength of Meriden’s community character lies in its stable residential neighborhoods and the parks and recreational facilities that serve these neighborhoods. In addition, the natural “passive” open spaces add to the character and provide a respite from the otherwise urbanized landscape. The benefits of parks and open space are multifaceted in that they provide opportunities for social interaction and healthful activities, help preserve natural features and environments, help improve air and water quality and lower noise pollution, enhance community character, positively affecting property values and the marketability of communities.

The data and discussion presented in this chapter suggest several findings and implications that are of importance for Meriden:

- Meriden’s parks and recreation resources are a major quality-of-life amenity, as expressed by residents in the public outreach process. Meriden has approximately 1 acre of land per 25 residents, which is significantly more than the standard of 1 acre of land per 100 residents. Parks and open spaces are well distributed geographically, and diverse in the types of uses accommodated.
- In looking to the future, the City should continue to focus efforts on maintaining these resources, to ensure that they are clean, accessible, and will continue to serve the recreation needs of the city. The City can also improve the usage of parks by ensuring that there are safe links, including sidewalks and crossings from neighborhoods to parks.
- The City should consider developing an Open Space and Recreation Plan to prioritize maintenance improvements and identify potential enhancements at existing facilities in collaboration with the public. The Plan would also identify opportunities within the City to focus future open space protection efforts so as to protect the landscape and unique natural features.
- In 2011, the City prepared a Linear Trails Study to develop conceptual improvement recommendations and strategies that would address identified needs and deficiencies of the current trail system. In the last 10 years, the City has made significant progress in developing a trail network that is planned to transect the City diagonally from the southwest to the northeast.
- In addition to connecting open spaces within the City, Meriden should focus on linking to other protected open space in the region. This approach transcends municipal boundaries and looks more broadly at the regional open space network and tries to find ways to become a part of it.
- In 2016, the City developed Meriden Green a new 14-acre park, open space, flood control and economic development project located in the heart of downtown. A continued effort will be needed to expand activities at the park which will bring more activity to downtown.
- There was an expressed need by the public for improved efforts to promote park and open space resources. This could include improved wayfinding signage and developing a centralized information repository for parks, recreation, and other cultural events in the City. Signage should provide guidance to parking areas, trail access points, and boat launch areas (i.e. for kayaks).

## 7.1. EXISTING PARKS AND OPEN SPACE

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The City of Meriden has long been cognizant of the unique natural resources that help define the landscape of the community. From the traprock ridgelines of Hubbard and Giuffrida Parks to the scenic gorge along the Quinnipiac River, Meriden has a history of protecting its unique natural resources by preserving open space. While the specific interests range from the protection of unique habitats to the need for active recreation facilities exist, the common theme is the importance of open space to the quality of life for Meriden residents.

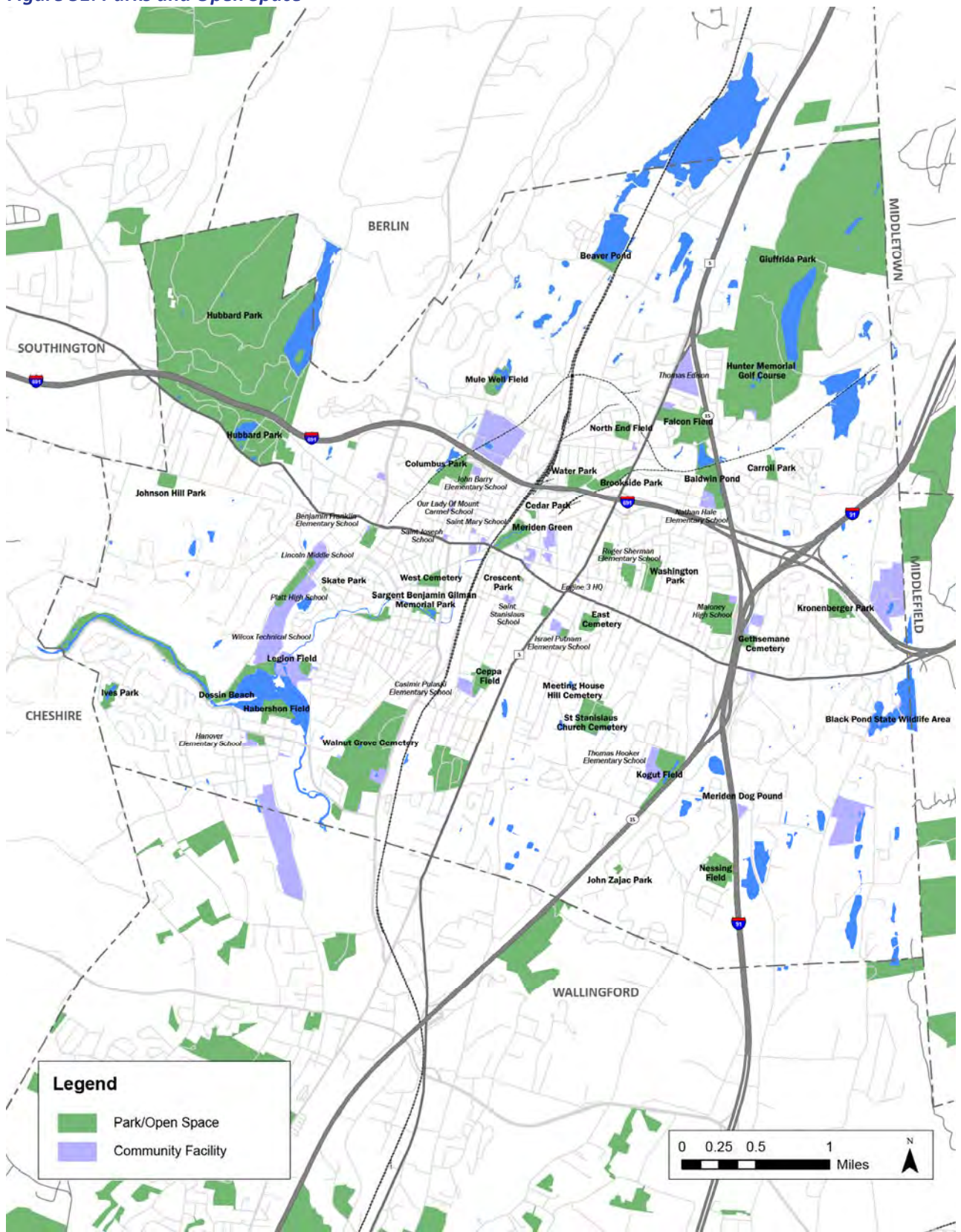
The inventory compiled in this report was based on a broad definition of open space to include: city and state parks, natural areas; flood control lands, recreational facilities associated with schools, conservation easements, Public Act 490 lands, and private open space. While the latter two categories may not be open to the public and are not permanently protected open space, their presence affects the visual open space appearance of the community and their loss would represent an erosion of Meriden's community character. Figure 1 illustrates the location of open space and recreation facilities in the community. Table 1 provides a summary of open space lands by active and passive use and ownership category. Meriden's current inventory of open space and recreation areas is 2,322 acres, which represents approximately 15% of Meriden's 24 square miles. Please note that this inventory includes open space associated with schools and private organizations such as the YMCA.

### Parks Management

The Parks Division is responsible for the maintenance and improvement of 25 parks and their facilities. The division maintains 74 municipal areas, including City Hall, the Augusta Curtis Cultural Center and the Broad Street "Veterans Memorial Boulevard", as well as 76 municipal building lots.

The Parks division and Tree Warden are responsible for City-owned trees on municipal land and right-of-ways. Applications for tree removal and trimming can be obtained by visiting or contacting the Parks and Recreation office on Liberty Street.

Figure 51: Parks and Open Space





## 7.0: Parks, Recreation, and Open Space

**Table 14: Parks and Open Space Inventory**

Active Open Space		Passive Open Space	
<u>Public Parks</u>	Acres	<u>Public Ownership</u>	Acres
Carroll Park	5.5	Bailey Ave Open Space Area	51.2
Cedar Park	1.7	Baldwin Pond	18.7
Ceppa Field	8.6	Beaver Pond	14.2
Columbus Park	13.8	Brookside Park	11.2
Crescent Park	0.8	Dossin Beach	11
Falcon Field	26.9	Gilman Park	5.1
Habershon Park	17.6	Giuffrida Park	485.4
Hubbard Park Active Area <sup>(2)</sup>	49.2	Hubbard Park Passive Area <sup>(2)</sup>	824.4
Hunter Golf Course	198.4	Ives Park	8.4
Kogut Memorial Field	3.5	Meriden Green	14
Giannetti Park	2.7	Quinnipiac Park	31.4
John Zajac Park	1.4	Unnamed Open Space (3)	248.9
Kronenberger Park	14.1	New Dam / Black Pond (State of CT)	21.6
Nessing Field	11.8	Subtotal:	1,745.5
North End Field	6		
Washington Park	11.3		
Dunn Sports Complex	44.8	<u>Conservation Easements</u>	
Subtotal:	373.3	<i>Conservation Easements</i> <sup>(4)</sup>	36
		<u>Private Ownership</u>	
		Meriden Land Trust	5.6
		Nature Conservancy	15.7
<u>Public School</u> <sup>(1)</sup>		Misc. Private Open Space (5)	32.1
Hanover School	2.7	Subtotal:	53.4
John Barry School	1.2		
Lincoln School	3.4		
Maloney School	13.3		
Nathan Hale School	2.8		
Platt School	12.6		
Putnam School	2.5		
Thomas Edison School	4.8		
Thomas Hooker School	5.3		
Wilcox Tech. School	8.3		
Subtotal:	56.9		
<u>Private Ownership</u>			
Legion Field	5.5		
MidState Soccer Fields	6.5		
YMCA	40.9		
St. John's Park	3.9		
Subtotal:	56.8		
<b>Active Total Acres</b>	<b>487</b>	<b>Passive Total Acres</b>	<b>1,834.9</b>
<b>Grand Total: 2,321.9 Acres</b>			

(1) Acreage represents area used for recreational purposes only.

(2) Inclusive of area only within Meriden an additional 930 acres is located outside of Meriden.

(3) Unnamed open space includes un-named natural areas and passive open space such as flood control.

(4) Not included in the tabulation of open space since the land covered by the conservation easement may be privately held.

(5) Deed restricted private open space from subdivisions.

### A. *Active Recreational Facilities Overview*

Active recreational facilities are defined as areas that accommodate organized sporting activities such as baseball, basketball, soccer, lacrosse or tennis. These facilities may also provide playscapes for younger children. For the purposes of this inventory, active recreational facilities have been further categorized by whether they are associated with a school facility.

Meriden's diverse array of active recreational facilities is an asset to the City and its residents. The parks, school facilities, and open spaces included in the following inventory represent a broad spectrum of active uses, including a BMX track, public golf course, baseball fields, soccer fields, basketball courts, and playscapes. These parks, schools, and open spaces in total comprise over 487 acres for public active recreational use. Of that land, 76.6% of which is publicly owned, 11.6% are school associated recreational facilities, and 11.6% are privately owned but available to the public. Table 15 provides a summary matrix of Meriden's freestanding parks, open space, and recreational facilities.

In addition to the numerous recreation facilities and open spaces owned and maintained by the City of Meriden, a few privately-held facilities such as the Midstate soccer fields and Legion ballfields also are open to the public. Meriden Public Schools properties provide playing fields and open space in addition to that found in the City parks system. The three high schools have expansive areas for football, baseball, softball, and track and field, while the elementary schools provide smaller ballfields and playgrounds for young children. The Thomas Edison Middle Magnet School also provides excellent baseball, softball and soccer facilities. Although the City exercises no direct control over the use of these facilities, the properties are integral parts of the overall recreation and open space fabric in Meriden. Thus, these properties should be factored into parks policy and planning, as their existence and use are acknowledged in the City's parks system.

#### Recreation Trends

Recreation activity has evolved over the years. While organized sports and formal recreation programs are the focus of adolescent active recreation, participation has slightly waned in recent years. Athletic participation for kids is down nationwide, due to the high costs, sport specialization, and an increase in online gaming. Participation in certain sports like football has decreased, while other sports such as lacrosse has increased. It is important that the City develop facilities that are flexible enough to accommodate shifting demand.

In addition, providing opportunities for informal recreation activities (i.e. walking, jogging, hiking, biking) is also important to meet the growing needs of the community. Greenways or linear trails, such as the Metacomet Trail, Mattabesett Trail, and Quinnipiac Gorge Trail, help provide this opportunity. When properly planned, greenways can link existing parks and open space areas with neighborhoods and community facilities, including schools, and provide an interconnected network serving City residents. Greenway planning is an example of this approach to open space planning that has been embraced by the State in the formation of the Connecticut Greenways Council, a part of the Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP). This approach not only provides a regional open space network but also improves the communities' natural infrastructure by providing close-to-home recreational opportunities.

**Table 15: Matrix of Meriden's Free Standing Parks, Open Space, & Recreational Facilities**

Facility Name	Acreage	Amenities
<b>Publicly Owned Facilities</b>		
<b>Bailey Ave Open Space</b>	51.2	Undeveloped Open Space
<b>Baldwin Pond</b>	18.7	Playscape, Soccer Field, Open Space
<b>Beaver Pond</b>	14.2	Playscape, Open Space
<b>Brookside Park</b>	11.2	Open Space
<b>Carroll Park</b>	5.5	Playscape, Basketball Court, Open Space
<b>Ceppa Field</b>	16.3	Playscape, Basketball Court, Baseball Field, Football Field, Restrooms
<b>Columbus Park</b>	13.8	Playscape, Picnic Area Benches, Softball Fields, Tennis Courts Soccer Field, Open Space, Restrooms
<b>Crescent Park</b>	0.8	Playscape
<b>Falcon Field</b>	26.9	Soccer Field, Football Field, BMX Track, Open Space, Restrooms
<b>Gilman Park</b>	5.1	Playscape, Open Space
<b>Giuffrida Park</b>	485.4	Picnic Area Benches, Trails, Open Space, Outdoor Pool
<b>Habershon Park</b>	17.6	Playscape, Pavilion, Picnic Area Benches, Tennis Courts, Basketball Court, Baseball Field, Little League/ T-Ball, Restrooms
<b>Hubbard Park</b>	864.4	Playscape, Pavilion, Picnic Area Benches, Tennis Courts, Trails, Open Space, Restrooms
<b>Hunter Golf Course</b>	198.4	Golf Course
<b>Ives Park</b>	8.4	Playscape, Soccer Field, Open Space, Little League/ T-Ball
<b>Kogut Memorial Field</b>	3.9	Little League/ T-Ball
<b>Giannetti Park</b>	2.7	Basketball Court, Open Space
<b>John Zajac Park</b>	1.4	Playscape, Basketball Court
<b>Kronenberger Park</b>	14.1	Open Space, Restrooms
<b>Legion Field</b>	5.5	Baseball Field, Soccer Fields
<b>Meriden Green</b>	14	Open Space, Pavilion, Restrooms
<b>Midstate Soccer Fields</b>	6.4	Soccer Fields, Restrooms
<b>Nessing Field</b>	11.8	Open Space, Restrooms
<b>North End Field</b>	6	Basketball Court, Little League/ T-Ball, Softball Field, Restrooms
<b>Quinnipiac Park</b>	31.4	Picnic Area Benches, Trails, Open Space
<b>Thorpe Avenue(Dunn) Sports Complex</b>	44.8	Little League/ T-Ball, Softball Field, Restrooms
<b>Washington Park</b>	11.3	Playscape, Tennis Courts, Basketball Court, Softball Field, Football Field
<b>School District Owned Facilities</b>		
<b>Hanover School</b>	2.7	Playscape,
<b>John Barry School</b>	1.2	Playscape, Soccer Field
<b>Lincoln School</b>	3.4	Softball Field
<b>Maloney School</b>	13.3	Tennis Courts, Baseball Field, Football Field, Track & Field, Restrooms/ Field House
<b>Nathan Hale School</b>	2.8	Playscape, Soccer Field
<b>Platt School</b>	12.6	Tennis Courts, Baseball Field, Softball Field, Football Field, Track & Field, Restrooms/ Field House
<b>Putnam School</b>	2.5	Playscape
<b>Thomas Edison School</b>	4.8	Softball Field, Soccer Field
<b>Thomas Hooker School</b>	5.3	Playscape, Baseball Field, ittle League / T- Ball
<b>Wilcox School</b>	8.3	Tennis Courts, Softball Field

Source: HMA Survey

### **B. *Passive Recreation and Open Space***

Passive recreational facilities are areas that provide low -impact recreation such as hiking or picnicking with minimal development or improvements. If improvements have been made they typically include little more than park benches or picnic areas. Some areas included in this inventory function as natural conservation areas and are generally left as natural, undeveloped open space.

Hubbard Park is located in the Northwest corner of the City and is divided into two distinct sections by Interstate 691. The highway separates the natural area from the developed recreation area. The park is one of the area's greatest resources and is a regional destination for year-round use. One of the unique features of the park is the "Hanging Hills" or East/West Peak, which are part of the Metacomet Ridge. The "Hanging Hills" is considered the highest mountain within 25 miles of the coastline from parts of Maine to Florida. Castle Craig sits atop East Peak and offers spectacular views of the Greater Meriden area.

The developed area of the park contains Mirror Lake, tennis courts, pavilion, picnic areas, playscapes, ample parking, and other amenities. Mirror Lake is the centerpiece of the south side of Hubbard Park with a man-made waterfall and fountains. The area north of the highway has numerous hiking trails traversing the varied topography and terrain. The most notable trail is the Metacomet Trail, which is part of the statewide blue trail system.

The "Meriden Green", is a 14-acre park, open space, flood control and economic development project located in the heart of downtown. The project, which was completed in 2016 transformed an underutilized City brownfield property in the City Center into a flood control area that will detain 53 acre-feet of water in high storm conditions and allow the use of the property as a central park and green space in normal conditions. The park features amenities such as performance amphitheater, public plazas, a lawn area, a pedestrian bridge and areas planned for future development. The \$14 million project leveraged an unprecedented amount of private, local, state, and federal investment in the areas of flood control infrastructure, brownfield remediation, transportation, and housing.

Giuffrida Park is located adjacent to the Hunter Memorial Golf Course in the northeastern corner of the City. This large natural area is a popular destination for hikers and nature lovers. The Mattabesett trail section of the Blue Trail and several local trails skirt around Crescent Lake and ascend Mount Lamentation and Chauncey Peak. The trails have easy terrain particularly around the lake, with much steeper areas along the trap rock ridges approaching Chauncey Peak.

The Meriden Land Trust owns and maintains a small number of properties as open space throughout the City. Several other properties in Meriden are owned by other private entities such as the Nature Conservancy.

It is important to note that the land included in the inventory of passive recreation and open space is not necessarily land that is protected in perpetuity. While it is reasonable to expect that land owned and maintained by the City of Meriden will remain as open space well into the future, non-governmental agencies have demonstrated a propensity to divest themselves of excess lands.

### **C. *Trail System***

The City has a large network of trails providing most residents with relatively easy access to these amenities. In recognition of the City's "outstanding" efforts in the development, maintenance and protection of trail systems, the Connecticut Forest and Park Association designated the City as "Connecticut Trail Town."

## 7.0: Parks, Recreation, and Open Space

Three city parks, Hubbard, Giuffrida, and Quinnipiac River, offer the most extensive trail networks in the City. The Metacomet and Mattabeset Trails pass through Hubbard and Giuffrida Park and are part of the statewide Blue Trails system. The Connecticut Forest and Parks Association with the aid of volunteers maintain these trails. The Blue Trails system currently has over 700 miles of trails with the majority of the trails located on private land and exist only through a cooperative effort with the landowners. They offer some of the State's best ridge top hiking with views extending from Long Island Sound to Hartford. The Quinnipiac Gorge Trail begins near the historic Red Bridge and parallels the former rail bed westward along the river. The major trails coupled with other local trails and sidewalks provide a solid foundation for achieving an interconnected and accessible greenway and trail system.

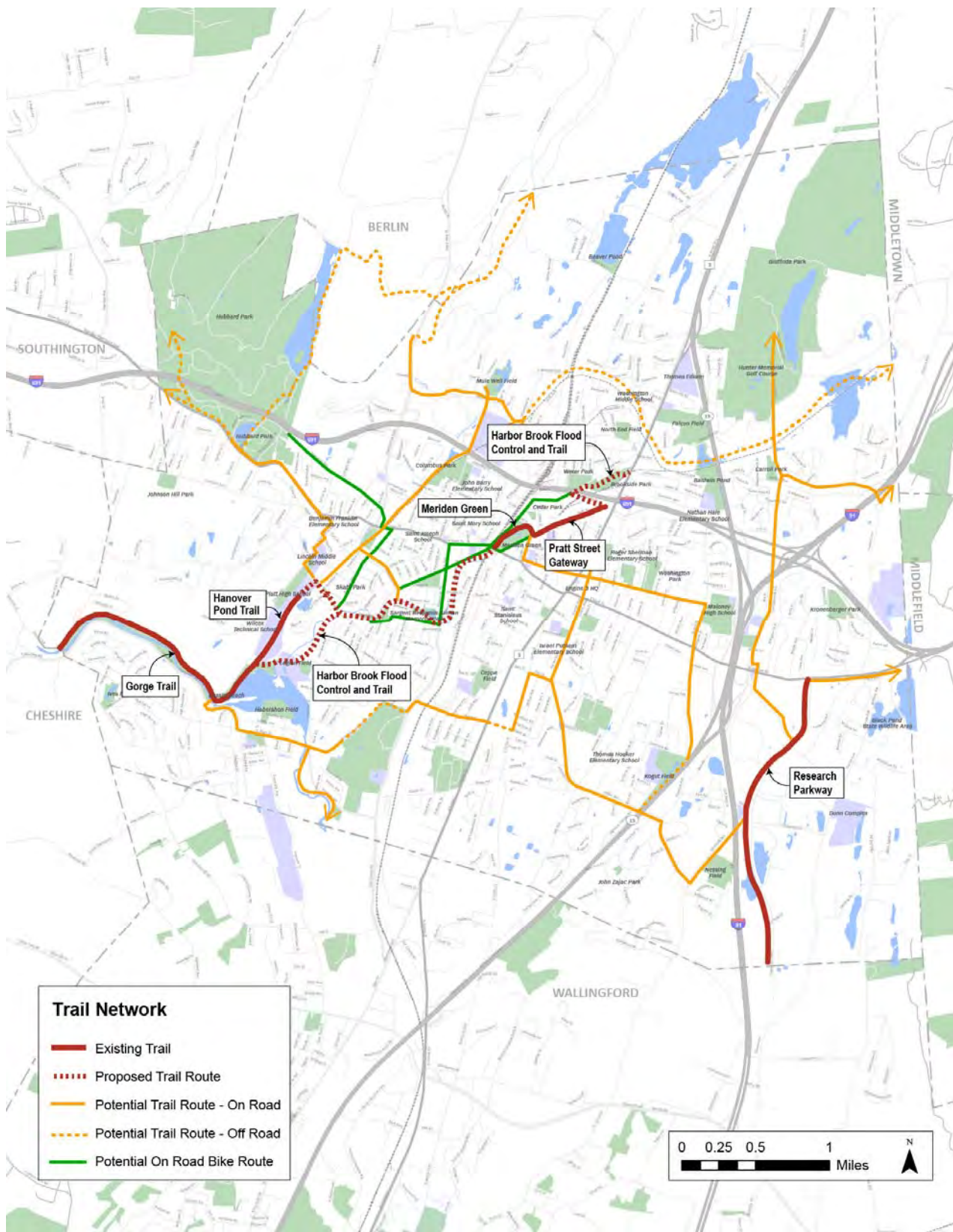
When properly planned, greenways can link existing parks and open space areas with neighborhoods and community facilities such as schools, and provide a pedestrian-friendly environment to serve residents. In 2011, the City prepared a Linear Trails Study to develop conceptual improvement recommendations and strategies that would address identified needs and deficiencies of the current trail system. The study effort and its recommendations were primarily focused on a review of the current trail status in Meriden; the development of a comprehensive trail system that will provide interconnections between City neighborhoods, parks, schools, and business districts; and consistency with City and Regional goals and plans. Recommendations for trail routing and identification of reasonable trail segments as well as details and typical cross-sections were finalized and incorporated into a Preferred Master Plan, which provided the City and SCRCOG with a framework upon which to base future trail work. Planning for the trail network has also been aided by the Meriden Linear Trail Advisory Committee, who advises the City in identifying opportunities for trail expansion. Existing trails, planned trails, and potential trails (as identified in the 2011 Linear Trails Study) are shown in Figure 2.

In the last 10 years, the City has made significant progress in developing a trail network that is planned to transect the City diagonally from the southwest to the northeast. In November 2007, the City opened a nature walk/bike recreation trail that traverses from the Quinnipiac River Linear Trail toward the Central Business District ("CBD"). This greenway is heavily utilized and considered to be one of the best riparian environment based trails in the state. Phase II of the trail system, completed in 2013, includes an approximate one-mile extension that provides pedestrian and bicycle access to Platt High School. The City is in the final design for Phase III. Said trail will eventually extend to the northeast corner of the City. This is a regional project that will connect with an existing bikeway.

This planned trail will also intersect with the trail developed as part of the Harbor Brook Flood Control and Linear Trail Project. The flood control components of this project are discussed in Section 8. This project includes a trail network along Harbor Brook and through Meriden Green, which was designed to store floodwaters and prevent flooding in the immediate downtown area. Combining that central green space with the linear trail system designed alongside the Harbor Brook channel provides a recreation link and green space diagonally across the city from the Cheshire border to Middletown.

The City is also in the design stage of a proposed 2.7-mile off-road trail that runs along Research Parkway and services the many businesses and industries along this section in Meriden. This segment will establish a connection from East Main Street and the Wallingford town line. Meriden should work with the Town of Wallingford to continue the off-road path along the commercial corridor south of the City until Route 68.

Figure 52: Long Term Concept for Citywide Network of Linear Trails



### **D. Potential Parks and Open Space Improvements**

Meriden's parks and recreation resources are a major quality-of-life amenity, as expressed by residents in the public outreach process. Meriden has approximately 1 acre of land per 25 residents, which is significantly more than the standard of 1 acre of land per 100 residents. The City should continue to focus efforts on maintaining these resources, to ensure that they are clean, accessible, and will continue to serve the recreation needs of the city. The City can also improve the usage of parks by ensuring that there are safe links, including sidewalks and crossings from neighborhoods to parks.

During the public outreach process, there were general requests for park improvements include building bathroom facilities, playground upgrades, incorporating stormwater drainage elements, expanding parking, improving accessibility for all users, and increased programming. The City should consider developing an Open Space and Recreation Plan to prioritize maintenance improvements and identify potential enhancements at existing facilities in collaboration with the public.

The City should continue to identify opportunities within the City to focus future open space protection efforts so as to protect the landscape and unique natural features. The following is a list of criteria that can be utilized when considering open space protection efforts:

- Link existing parks and open spaces together to form interconnected greenways within the city or on a larger regional open space network.
- Adjacent to and complementary to existing parks and/or open space owned by the City of Meriden, neighboring municipalities, the State of Connecticut or a private entity.
- Preserves natural drainage areas including waterways and surrounding wetlands and floodplains.
- Protects existing and potential public drinking water supplies, including groundwater supplies.
- Protects unique and significant natural features including critical or threatened habitats.
- Preserves agricultural land.
- Preserves and protects ridgelines.
- Has multiple recreational or open space values (i.e., can be used for several different passive and/or active recreational uses).
- Minimizes financial burden to taxpayers.

It is difficult to predict when a property will become available for incorporation into the City's inventory of open space. Anticipation and preparation is key to the City's ability to respond quickly when a property possessing the characteristics identified as important for protection or acquisition becomes available for sale. Identifying implementation tools can help prepare a city to become more proactive in open space protection efforts.

Implementation tools commonly used to protect open space can be divided into two general categories: regulatory and non-regulatory. Regulatory tools are land use regulations established to control what activities a landowner can conduct on their property. The City of Meriden has an opportunity during the development process to implement regulatory controls to protect natural features or to establish open space. Examples of regulatory tools include inland wetland regulations, zoning regulations, and subdivision regulations. Non-regulatory tools used to protect open space usually involve some type of ownership status. Examples of some of the more common

## 7.0: Parks, Recreation, and Open Space

techniques include fee simple purchase, Purchase of Development Rights (PDR), or Transfer of Development Rights (TDR), creation of easements, and land trusts.



## 7.2. POLICY, GOALS, AND STRATEGIES

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***Focus on maintenance, enhancement, and improving accessibility to existing parks, recreational facilities, and open space resources to maximize their value and utility.***

### Objectives:

- Continue the efficient utilization of existing parks and recreation facilities, including extended hours and creative scheduling;
- Develop an Open Space and Recreation Plan to evaluate the condition of parks and to prioritize improvements in existing parks.
- Study opportunities to improve accessibility to all open space resources, including those that are city-owned by are not easily accessible by the public.
- Strengthen the existing cooperative relationship between the Parks Department and the Board of Education to maximize the use of all school associated recreational resources to the benefit of Meriden’s residents;
- Evaluate opportunities to develop additional recreation amenities such as a skate park.
- Restore Hanover Pond and mirror lake as recreational amenities. More clean-up events could be organized to engage the public. Neighborhood associations and the Board of Education could be partners in this effort.
- Review the existing zoning of environmentally-sensitive lands to ensure that the zone designations for such parcels do not promote unnecessarily intensive development;

***Provide a system of linking public and private open space throughout Meriden and the region. Open space should provide passive and active recreation opportunities and preserve environmentally sensitive areas.***

### Objectives:

- Continue to advance cross-City linear trail system could connect to existing trails in the City of Middletown, as well as connecting to Hubbard Park;
- Wherever possible, existing parks and open space should be linked together to form interconnected greenways. Greenways should also link neighborhoods, public facilities and employment areas to existing open space areas as a focus for recreational activity;
- Encourage new development to include trails where they can logically connect to the City’s existing or planned trail and sidewalk network;
- Work with adjacent Municipalities, the County, State, and other agencies to improve regional connectivity and connect to other linear trails in surrounding cities, such as Cheshire and Middletown.

***Improve communication and outreach process for parks and recreation activities to promote the use of Meriden's extensive open space/recreation system.***

**Objectives:**

- Develop centralized information repository for parks, recreation, and other cultural events in the City. The City can help to coordinate a central information repository, potentially on the City's website, which people can use to access a calendar of events, field reservations, information on field closures, sign-up dates, sports and programs offered, etc.
- Expand programming at the Meriden Green, and effectively promote events to bring more activity to the downtown area.
- Increase advertising and outreach for parks and recreation leagues. Collaborate with schools and the Board of Education to spread information.
- Improve signage for parks to help create awareness of these resources for residents as well as visitors. Signage should be provided that marks parks, trailheads, and boat launch areas (i.e. at the Quinnipiac River)
- Market Meriden's open space system and recreation programs as a major quality of life amenity;

## Chapter 8. ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAINABILITY

### *Environment and Sustainability Findings and Implications*

The quality of life in a community is largely determined by the quality, quantity and distribution of its environment and natural resources. Therefore, the protection of these resources is key in ensuring that the quality of life in Meriden is preserved. Quantifying the impact of natural resources is difficult due to the intangible nature of its benefits. Some tangible public benefits include the enhancement of real estate values and economic growth due to the residents' proximity to open space, which makes Meriden a desirable community in which to live and work.

- In the past 10 years, the City has advanced several projects to reduce the flood risk for properties within the 100-year floodplain. The most significant ongoing effort has been the implementation of the Harbor Brook Flood Control and Linear Trail projects. Major actions have included the construction of water detention projects at Falcon Field and at Meriden Green. Implementation of the Flood Control Plan will open up properties to development by reducing the number of properties wholly or partially within the 100-year floodplain from over 300 properties down to 50 properties and reducing acres wholly or partially within the 100-year floodplain from 225 acres to 95 acres.
- In 2009, to minimize the potential for contamination of the public drinking water supply wells, the City established 28 regulated activities within the City's four Aquifer Protection Areas.
- In the past 10 years, the City has made progress on several sustainability initiatives. For example, the City has implemented several programs to promote the reduction of household waste and recycling of waste materials derived from non-renewable, non-degradable resources. The city has also completed numerous energy efficiency projects, such as the upgrading of facilities to use efficient energy-saving LED lights. The City has also replaced over 4,200 sodium bulb streetlights with LED streetlights resulting in significant energy and cost savings.

## 8.1. NATURAL RESOURCES

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### A. Geology

Meriden's geologic landscape is characterized in part by the hills and ridgelines. The Hanging Hills, collectively known as West Peak, East Peak, and South Mountain are such formations that are focal points of the landscape. The Hanging Hills are approximately 1,000 foot high broken escarpments of traprock that are part of the Metacomet Ridge that extends northward to Massachusetts.

The bedrock geology in Meriden is made up primarily of brownstone, also referred to by geologists as Arkose. This sedimentary rock most likely originated from the deposits of the many streams that flowed from the Eastern and Western Uplands of Connecticut millions of years ago. Associated with brownstone are bodies of basalt (traprock), which appear as igneous intrusions in the sedimentary rocks. The largest of these traprock features are East Peak, West Peak, and South Mountain. These ridgelines are a dominant physical feature of Meriden and are recognized and protected by the State and City through its Ridgeline Protection Ordinance.

### B. Soils

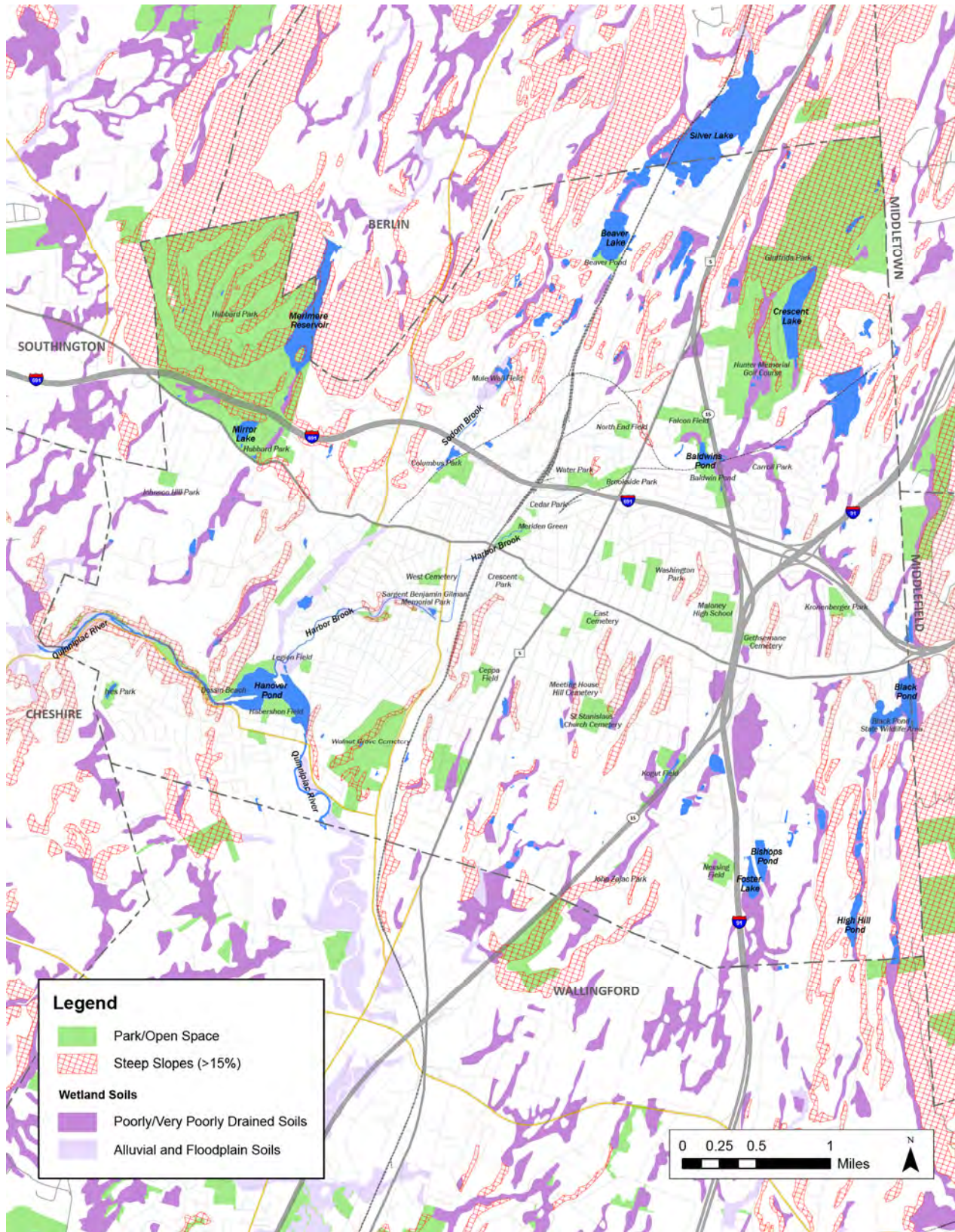
Wetlands are defined by many distinguishing features, the most notable of which are the presence of standing water for a period of time during the growing season, saturated soil conditions, and organisms, especially vegetation that is adapted to or tolerant of saturated soils. Wetlands are not easily defined and definitions are variable between regulatory agencies. In Connecticut, wetlands are defined by soil type, specifically saturated or hydric soils, which are classified by the NRCS as either Poorly Drained, Very Poorly Drained, Alluvial/Floodplain or any combination of these. These are considered wetland soils and are protected under the City's inland wetland regulations.

Wetlands are important for a variety of reasons including:

- Wetlands are among the most biologically productive natural ecosystems in the world;
- Wetlands provide habitat that is critical to a variety of plant and animal species, including threatened and endangered species;
- Wetlands often function like natural sponges, storing water (floodwater or surface water) and slowly releasing it thus reducing the likelihood of flood damage to personal property or agriculture by controlling the rate and volume of runoff;
- Wetlands help improve water quality by intercepting surface runoff and removing or retaining its nutrients, processing organic wastes and reducing sediment before it reaches open water;
- Wetlands provide outdoor recreational opportunities (i.e., wildlife viewing/photography, nature study).

Unique wetland types are those found on alluvial and floodplain soils. Due to the excessive permeability of the soil, these areas are very susceptible to rapid infiltration of pollutants. Pollution infiltration can have devastating effects on groundwater drinking supplies. In Meriden, 1,085 acres or 7% of its land consists of wetland-designated soils. The locations of wetland soils are illustrated on the map titled *Environmentally Sensitive Soils*.

Figure 53: Environmentally Sensitive Soils.



### Steep Slope Soils

Areas of steep slopes are important to identify primarily due to their effect on development. While the stability of a slope is dependent on many variables, including vegetative cover and the underlying geology, as a general rule it can be expected that slopes greater than 15% pose significant constraints to development due to the difficulty building foundations and siting septic systems. In addition, these areas pose additional hazards such as increased erosion, surface runoff, siltation and flooding of watercourses. Therefore, identifying areas of steep slopes is an important component of the natural resource inventory. The areas identified as steep slope soils cover 1,875 acres and account for 12% of the city's land. These areas are illustrated on the map titled *Environmentally Sensitive Soils*.

### **C. Water Resources**

Water resources include watercourses, water bodies, watersheds, and aquifers. Hanover Pond, Merimere Reservoir, Bradley Hubbard Reservoir, Beaver Pond, Silver Lake, Baldwin's Pond, Mirror Lake, Bishops Pond, and High Hill Pond are major water bodies within in the city. Quinnipiac River, Harbor Brook, Sodom Brook, Willow Brook, and Spoon Shop Brook are significant watercourses flowing through Meriden. These water features are fed by a network of tributaries and are best defined by the watersheds that supply them.

### Subregional Watersheds

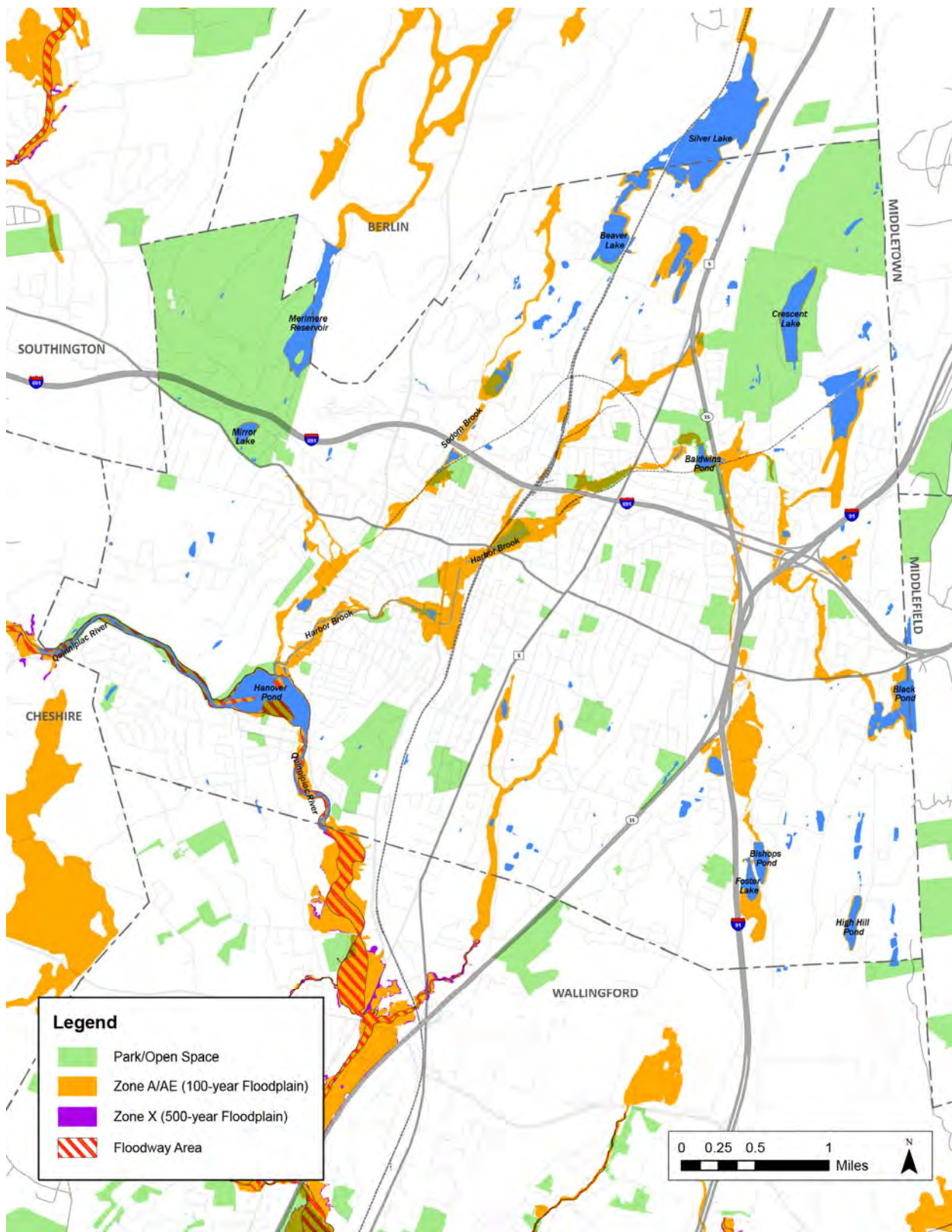
A watershed is defined as all the land and waterways that drain into the same body of water. All the surface water that drains Meriden's 24 square miles begins its flow at the highest point of one of six subregional watersheds. Watersheds define the natural drainage systems in Meriden. Rivers, streams, lakes, ponds, wetlands, and floodplains are the components of the watershed that contain the attributes to support a variety of plant and animal life and attenuate flood conditions. Managing these watersheds in a sustainable manner is critical to ensure that the attributes they contain and the benefits they provide will be around for years to come. Of the eleven subregional watersheds within the city, three drain 13,629 acres or 89% of the city's land area: the Quinnipiac River, Harbor Brook, and Sodom Brook.

### Floodplains

A floodplain is a broad and relatively flat area of a river or stream valley to either side of the main watercourse. This floodplain is formed by a series of flood events, which spill over the riverbanks and work and rework the sediment. A 100-year flood is a flood that has a one percent probability of occurring in a given year, or is likely to occur once every hundred years.

Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) has determined areas within floodplains and their boundaries. Floodways are those areas within the floodplains that convey the floodwaters. The floodways are subject to water being carried at relatively high velocities and forces. The floodway fringe are those areas of the floodplain outside of the floodway which are subject to inundation but do not convey the floodwaters. Floodplains are delineated on the map titled *FEMA Flood Zones*. Actions the City has taken to reduce the risk of stormwater inundation are discussed in section 1.3: Sustainability.

Figure 54: FEMA Flood Zones



### Stormwater Flooding

In the past 10 years, the City has advanced several projects to reduce the flood risk for properties within the 100-year floodplain. The most significant ongoing effort has been the implementation of the Harbor Brook Flood Control and Linear Trail projects. This critical flood control project will protect most of the City through detention, improvement and creation of floodway, removal of obstructions and redirecting portions of the brook. Implementation of the Flood Control Plan will open up properties to development by reducing the number of properties wholly or partially within the 100-year floodplain from over 300 properties down to 50 properties and reducing acres wholly or partially within the 100-year floodplain from 225 acres to 95 acres. Many of these properties are in the downtown area, which will help to promote reinvestment and revitalization of that area.

Implementation of the Harbor Brook Flood Control Project involved cooperation between City, State, and Federal agencies. In 2012, the City was awarded permits from the State Department of Energy and Environmental Protection, and the Army Corps of Engineers for the entire Harbor Brook flood control plan. The State of Connecticut completed work on the Cook Avenue Bridge and the installation of the Columbus Avenue Relief Culvert. The City completed construction of detention projects at Westfield Road (Falcon Field) and at the Meriden Green. The Meriden Green project transformed an underutilized brownfield property in the downtown area into a flood control area that will detain 53 acre feet of water in high storm conditions. This project is discussed further in Chapter 7. The City has already improved some bridges and culverts in the last couple of years, and is implementing plans for the remaining necessary work. Additional work in progress includes the Amtrak Railroad Bridge Bypass Culvert, channel improvements between Bradley/Coe Avenues and Cooper Street, Cooper Street bridge replacement and the Center Street Bridge project.



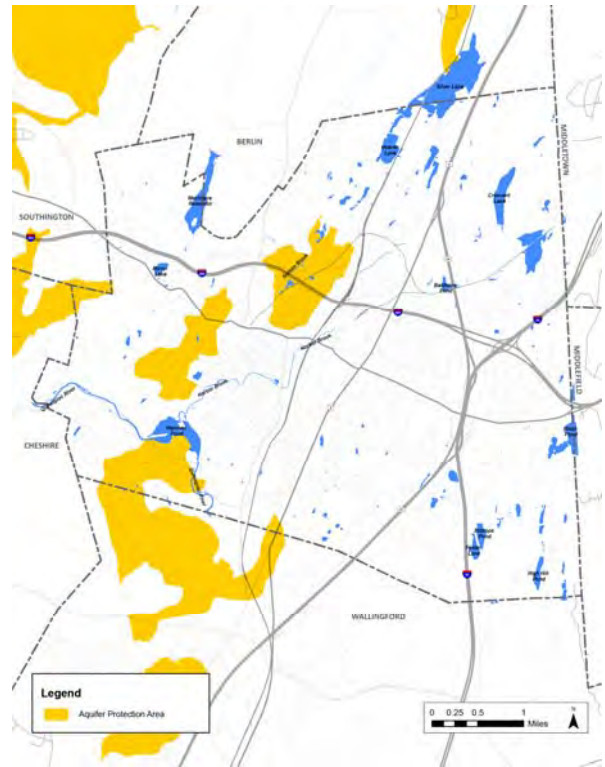
## Aquifers

While groundwater can be defined simply as water lying below the surface of the ground, an aquifer is more specifically defined as “any geologic formation that allows for the withdrawal of a useable amount of water.”<sup>10</sup> In most cases, the use of this water involves potable water supply, but not always. Groundwater flow in aquifers is dictated by the characteristics of the local bedrock, geology and in part to the properties of the overlying surficial materials.

In Meriden, the Evansville (East/West), Mule, Platt, Lincoln, and Columbus Park well fields are examples of aquifers that have been developed into active water supplies.

### Aquifer Protection Areas

Many aquifers across the state are threatened by contamination due to potentially contaminating land uses. To address this problem, Connecticut has established the Aquifer Protection Program to identify critical water supply areas and protect them from pollution by managing land use. There are 4 Aquifer Protection Areas in Meriden. In 2009, to minimize the potential for contamination of the public drinking water supply wells, the City established 28 regulated activities that apply to any part, wholly or partially, of land found in any one of the four Aquifer Protection Area to protect these areas. The Regulations restrict the development of certain new land use activities that use, store, handle or dispose of hazardous materials and require existing regulated land uses to register and follow best management practices. Any person may apply for a permit to add a regulated activity or expand an existing regulated activity to a facility where a registered regulated activity occurs.



**Figure 55: Aquifer Protection Areas**

<sup>10</sup> Understanding Groundwater, Protecting a Natural Resource, Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection, 1998.

## **D. *Significant Habitats and State Listed Species***

At first glance, Meriden may not seem like the kind of place that would have an abundant diversity of plant and animal life. Based on the population density of the city alone, it would appear to those unfamiliar with Meriden that the city is primarily a developed urban city. While this description may fit some parts of Meriden, other parts support a wide variety of plant and animal habitats. The combination of varied topography, forested tracts, and numerous rivers, streams, lakes, and ponds provides exceptional habitat for a variety of plants and animals. The following describes some of the specialized habitats that warrant special attention.

### **Talus, Ledge & Rock Outcropping**

Talus slopes generally form underneath ledge or rock outcropping from the fragments of rock that dislodge from these geologic formations. The small crevices between the rocks provide refuge for a variety of animals. In addition, crevices between the rock tend to create a cooler environment which, combined with the rich soils found in these areas, can provide favorable growing conditions for a variety of plant species.

Good examples of this habitat type include the trap rock ridges in Meriden. East Peak, West Peak, South Mountain, as well as portions of Chauncey Peak contain talus, ledge and rock outcrop habitats. Smaller rock outcrops, though locally important, were not specifically identified. These areas are too numerous to mention and are prevalent in Meriden, particularly along the northeastern and northwestern borders where the topographic relief is the greatest.

### **Tree Preservation and Maintenance**

Mature trees are an important part of Meriden's neighborhood-oriented character, provide habitat areas for a variety of wildlife and also play a critical role in stormwater management. In many ways, they can be considered natural green infrastructure. All natural or open space areas in the City, including large parks and smaller pocket parks and undeveloped passive areas, can be considered part of the City's network of green infrastructure. The reduction or impairment of natural green infrastructure may exacerbate issues of flooding, which are already known to occur in areas along the Harbor Brook.

Numerous concerns were raised during the public outreach process for this Plan about the preservation and maintenance of trees. Currently, the City has a Tree Warden who is empowered to regulate the planting, trimming or removal of trees and similar vegetation on City-owned property, in accordance with the Connecticut State Statutes. The Tree Warden is also empowered to remove trees in public lands or along public right-of-ways that present a public hazard or are diseased or dead. Given recent experience with major storms such as Hurricane Irene and Superstorm Sandy, the City should continue to be vigilant about tree maintenance and removal where trees create a public hazard. The removals of trees should be accompanied by replacement with a focus on the right place and right species to prevent future utility conflicts. The city should inventory its current tree resources and identify areas of particular concern for maintenance, replanting, and expansion of the urban canopy.

The Town should consider strengthening its land use regulations pertaining to tree preservation, at a minimum for actions such as subdivision and site plan approval. The site plan provisions could be modified to support the retention of trees and other significant vegetation. The Subdivision Regulations should be revised to require preservation of large trees (over 10 inches in caliper) throughout the lot, and to increase the number of trees of at least 2 inches in diameter that must be retained on the lot.

### Endangered, Threatened and Special Concern Species

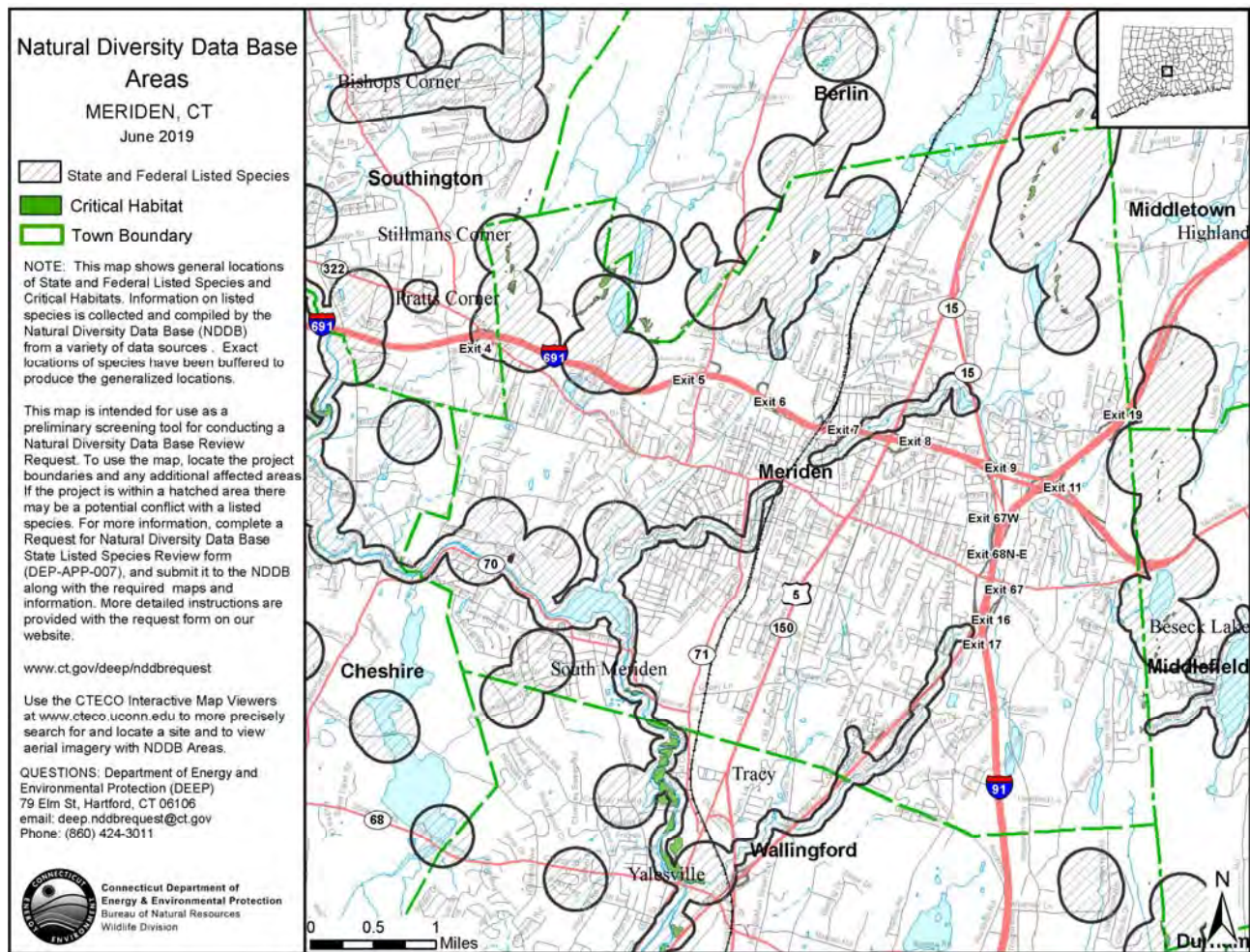
In Connecticut, the protection of unique biological communities is held to a high standard. In support of this, the Connecticut DEP has inventoried sites across the state that contain habitats of endangered, threatened, and special concern species. These habitat areas are perceived as unique and receive special protection status from the state. The state has identified these sites in a special survey called The Connecticut Natural Diversity Database, which is a centralized inventory of these unique habitat locations and represents the findings of years-worth of biological surveys.

Information from the state's database was transcribed onto maps, represented by circles of a half-mile in radius. These sites, commonly referred to as "blobs," are represented ambiguously because of the many threats they face. These threats include collection, because of their beauty, uniqueness or purported medical or economic values. Even well-intended observers and photographers have been known to accidentally destroy sites.

The location of sites within the city identified by the Connecticut Natural Diversity Database are illustrated in Figure 56. In addition to generalizing the exact location of these sites, the category in which the sites are located has also been removed. This is to further ensure the protection of these unique resources.

The City adopted a policy of delayed mowing at Meriden landfill to prolong the use of that habitat in a more natural state. The City should continue similar efforts in other environmentally sensitive areas. The City can also educate homeowners about ecologically sensitive lawn care/mowing practices.

Figure 56: Natural Diversity Database



### Riparian Corridors

Riparian corridors, or riparian buffers, are undisturbed, naturally vegetated areas contiguous with and parallel to rivers and streams. The benefits of riparian buffers are well-documented. To summarize, riparian buffers protect water resources by improving water quality through filtering pollutants and sediments, stabilizing stream banks and river beds, and improving wildlife habitat by providing travel corridors and improving aquatic habitat.

The recommended buffer width of riparian corridors varies depending on what the goal of the buffer is. There is no single generic buffer width that will keep the water clean, stabilize the bank, protect fish and wildlife habitat, and satisfy human demands on the land. The minimum acceptable width is one that provides acceptable levels of all needed benefits at an acceptable cost. In Meriden, a 100 foot buffer is recommended along watercourses where riparian corridor efforts should be considered.

## 8.2. SUSTAINABILITY

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In the years since the 2009 POCD, interest in sustainability planning has taken a more prominent stage in Meriden, as it has across the region and the world. This reflects several factors, including more development pressure on a diminishing supply of land; greater awareness of the environmental impacts of human activities; and broader issues such as water quality, flood impacts, and global warming. Sustainability concepts such as renewable energy, public transit, resource conservation, and water quality were all identified as important focus areas for the Comprehensive Plan.

Although associated most closely with the environment, sustainability is a far broader concept. As defined by the American Planning Association, sustainable development “maintains or enhances economic opportunity and community well-being while protecting and restoring the natural environment upon which people and economies depend.” Sustainability should be achieved with an integrated approach to planning for land use, transportation, the environment, housing, economic development, and infrastructure. Some of the recent sustainability initiatives completed by the City are discussed below.

### Recycling and Reduction of Waste

The City of Meriden has made it a priority to promote the reduction of household waste and recycling of waste materials derived from non-renewable, non-degradable resources.

The City Public Works Department has undertaken public education, including a "What's In, What's Out" session with a DEEP representative in May 2019. The city also offers a free E-waste collection event in October. The City of Meriden webpage has links to HazWaste central and RecycleCT websites and offer no-charge disposal of mattresses, e-waste, and Universal Waste (batteries, fluorescent lights, etc.) at the transfer station. The City is a member of HazWaste Central, which allows residents to dispose of household hazardous waste free of charge every Saturday from May through October in New Haven, and offered a local collection event in September. The City has been expanding its outreach to the public to reduce the generation of household waste. This outreach included a free “Compost 101” presentation from the UCONN Master Composter Program. In conjunction, the city also offers subsidized household compost bins for residents to purchase at a reduced cost.

Meriden has also shared its experience with promoting and educating others about recycling in July during a webinar hosted by DEEP in July. Along with education, the city has also implemented an enforcement campaign sending over 1,600 notices and issuing 35 fines related to contamination in the residential recycling stream.

### Energy Efficiency

The City of Meriden, in partnership with Eversource Energy, recently upgraded lighting at three fire stations, four municipal buildings, and the municipal airport from 2016-2018. This upgrade to efficient energy saving LED lights with motion occupancy sensors reduces the carbon footprint of government operations along with providing significant savings. In 2016, the city has also replaced over 4,200 sodium bulb streetlights with LED streetlights resulting in significant energy and cost savings. The city has also completed additional energy efficiency projects, including capping the existing landfill space on Evansville Avenue and installing a 3,672 solar panel array in 2015.

### 8.3. GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

***Protect Meriden’s landscape and unique topography while still permitting future development. Identify priority areas for conservation and preservation actions, as well as areas that should be designated as prime development areas. Priority areas for conservation should be those undeveloped areas that have a high ecological value, will guard against flooding, soil erosion, and stream sedimentation, and/or can connect to a comprehensive park and open space network.***

#### Objectives

- The Conservation Commission, in conjunction with the City and cooperating conservation organizations, should identify priority conservation areas and develop a strategy for the conservation and preservation of undeveloped land as it becomes available. Open space acquisitions should be ones that enable the City to connect the existing parks and open space assets into a cohesive system should be given high priority.
- Continue to review and further City policies to promote the good stewardship of natural resources.
- Identify priority areas and individual parcels for conservation and preservation actions, as well as areas that should be designated as prime development areas.
- Support actions that protect floodplains and limit the development of flood-prone areas.
- Create a list of Open Space Criteria with weighted factors to serve as a base for decision-making in terms of future open space acquisitions. Coordinate with SCRCOG which has an open space inventory list.
- Develop a natural resource inventory that lists open space, passive recreation sites, trails, and access points.
- Develop an inventory of trees to adequately plan for tree maintenance and planting. Coordinate with SCRCOG which is currently conducting a regional tree canopy study.
- Strengthen land use regulations pertaining to tree preservation.
- Develop regulations that protect areas containing slopes that exceed 15%.
- Enforce proper soil conservation practices to guard against soil erosion and stream sedimentation resulting from future land development activities.

***Reduce the risk of stormwater inundation, particularly for those properties in the 100-year floodplain.***

- Continue to implement projects identified in the Harbor Brook Flood Control and Linear Trail Plan
- Consolidate the Inland Wetland and Watercourse Commission and the Flood Control Implementation Agency to better coordinate and implement flood control projects and mitigate stormwater impacts of future development.

***Promote energy-efficient and sustainable patterns of development.***

Sustainable development means protecting the resources and systems that support us today so that they will be accessible to future generations. In order to do this, the City should adopt and enforce land use policies that reduce sprawl, preserve open space, and improve walkability, thus reducing automobile use. The City should also encourage sustainable development policies that minimize waste and energy use.

- **Encourage attention to environmental (green) standards for development and infrastructure.** The following sustainability best practices should be considered as part of subdivision and site plan review
  - **Solar panels and other forms of renewable energy:** Ensure that zoning and building codes incorporate best practices for the incorporation of solar panel roofs.
  - **Green Roofs:** Incorporation of green roofs where appropriate
  - **Electric Vehicles:** Infrastructure for charging electric vehicles
  - **Ride Sharing:** Allow for a parking requirement discount if some spaces are allocated for ride sharing vehicles (i.e. ZipCar)
  - **Green Building:** Encourage new development and redevelopment to be compatible with U.S. Green Building Council (USGBC) principles.
- **Revise Zoning:** Standards should limit development in environmentally sensitive areas (steep slopes, wetlands, etc.) and promote environmental quality through site design, landscaping, irrigation and maintenance.
- **Make recycling and reduction of waste a high priority for the City.** Continuing to identify new opportunities for recycling education and services.
- **Energy Efficiency:** Make energy efficiency a high priority for municipally-owned infrastructure. Continue to explore opportunities for energy reduction and cost savings.
- **Electric Vehicles:** Support infrastructure for electric vehicles city-wide

## Chapter 9. COMMUNITY FACILITIES AND INFRASTRUCTURE

### *Community Facilities and Infrastructure Findings and Implications*

An important component of Meriden’s Plan of Conservation and Development is reviewing the distribution, availability, condition and capacity of the City’s community facilities and municipal infrastructure to meet the current and projected needs of the city.

- Municipal services, community organizations, and cultural institutions all play a critical role in the lives of Meriden’s residents.
- Collectively, these public agencies, non-profit organizations, health care institutions, and other local resources have a daily impact on the City, providing public resources and social services to local residents.
- The City provides a range of services and resources that contribute to Meriden’s quality-of-life. The breadth of the City’s historic, cultural, and municipal resources is instrumental in establishing its character and attractiveness for residents.
- The City should identify and promote areas eligible for the Historic tax credit program that provides a State-administered resource for Meriden residents who have historic homes.
- The School District projects an overall decline in enrollment. No new school or land set asides for schools should be necessary.
- The goal of this section of the plan is to outline the role that these resources play in the City and identify opportunities to improve municipal facilities and expand the benefits of local institutions.



## 9.1. INFRASTRUCTURE

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### *Public Water Supply*

The City's Water Division of Public Utilities is responsible for obtaining, treating, and delivering public water to 99.9% of the residents of Meriden, as well as small portions of the communities of Berlin, Cheshire, Middletown, Southington and Wallingford. The City's average daily demand for water is between 6 and 7 million gallons per day (mgd), and there are approximately 17,200 water service accounts in the Meriden Water Division system. The City of Meriden is projected to have an adequate water supply for the foreseeable future.

Current sources of the City's water supply include six reservoirs and six wells:

- Broad Brook Reservoir
- Merimere Reservoir
- Hallmere Reservoir
- Kenmere Reservoir
- Elmere Reservoir
- Bradley/Hubbard Reservoir
- Evansville East Well
- Evansville West Well
- Mule Well
- Columbus Park Well
- Platt Well
- Lincoln Well

Water from the reservoirs is subjected to physical (filtration) and chemical treatment, while well water is subjected to only chemical treatment. The Meriden public water system has a storage capacity of 12.65 million gallons spread among 6 storage facilities. The distribution system for Meriden's water supply consists of approximately 215 miles pipe, four major pumping stations, and two secondary pumping stations. The Broad Brook Water Filtration Plant and Pump underwent rehabilitation in 2015. Additional rehabilitation of storage tanks will be needed in the coming years. The Elmere Filtration Plan, the City's second-largest, will be evaluated for necessary upgrades in the near future.

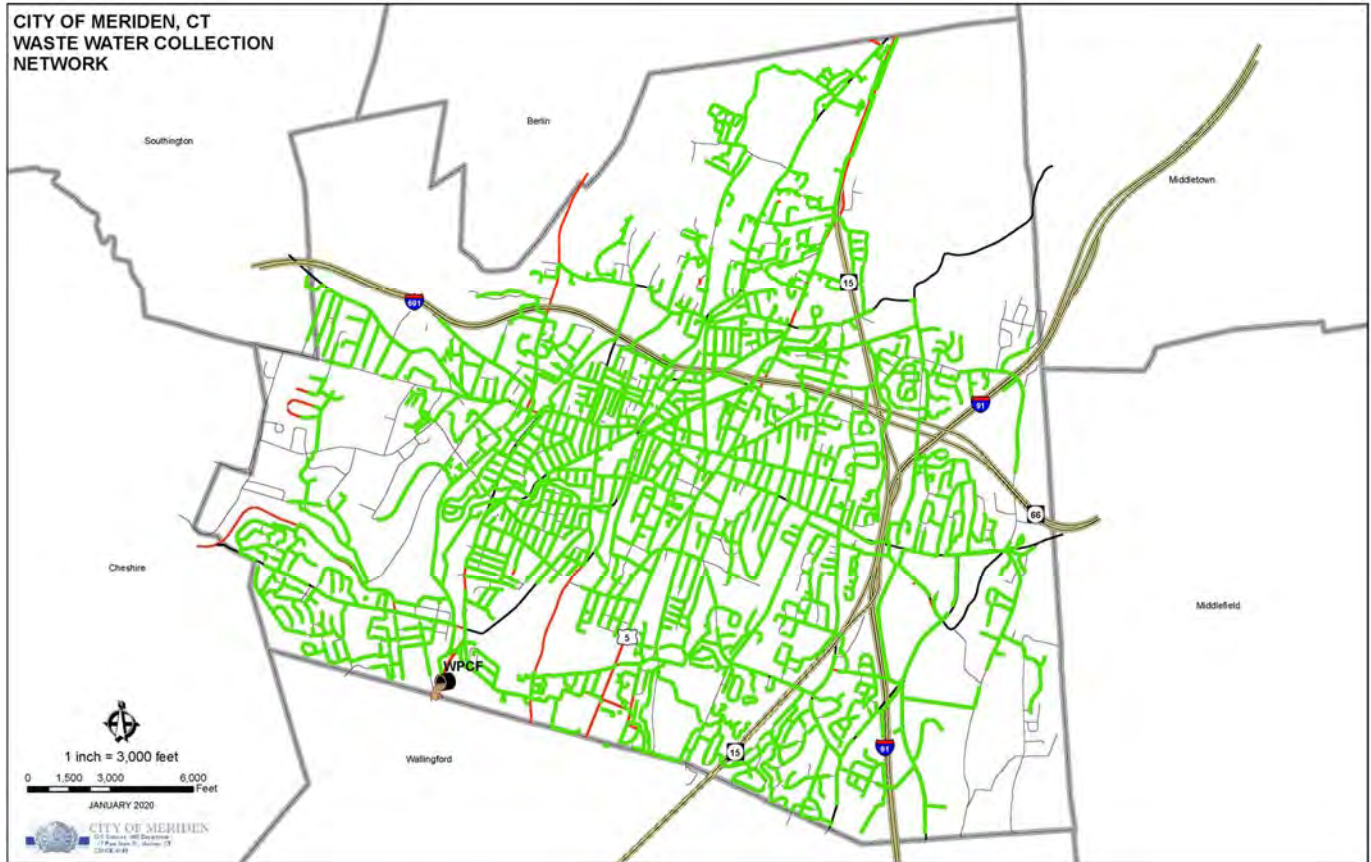
### *Sanitary Sewer System*

The Water Pollution Control Facility (WPCF), a division of the Department of Public Utilities is responsible for the operation and maintenance of the Meriden sanitary sewer system which consists of approximately 190 miles of piping, three pumping stations, over 15,000 individual sewer connections, and an advanced wastewater treatment plant. The Engineering Division has the responsibility of sewer system design, design review, and inspection of new construction, with the cost of these services being shared with the WPCF. Figure 57 shows Meriden's waste water collection network.

The wastewater treatment facility, located at 226 Evansville Avenue, employs an activated sludge system for the removal of ammonia and biological oxygen demand (BOD). BOD is a method used to measure the organic pollutants present in wastewater.

Since 2010 approximately 10 miles of sanitary sewer has been lined and over 200 manholes have been built. The City is currently in phase two of an infill and infiltration study. In general, the sanitary sewer system has some rehabilitation needs as is normal problems associated with a sewer system of its size. Additional work to address laterals on private property with infill and infiltration issues is necessary for the coming years. In some cases, these

laterals are privately owned and maintained, and owners may require assistance in paying for this work where there are infiltration issues that must be addressed.



**Figure 57. Waste Water Collection Network**

### Public Works

Meriden’s Department of Public Works (DPW) is responsible for the maintenance, management and operation of the City’s roads, bridges, storm drainage systems, road and traffic signals, fleet management solid waste and recycling. DPW is made up of four primary divisions: Engineering, Traffic/Fire Alarms, Highway and Fleet Management.

DPW’s Fleet Management, which operates out of Meriden’s Central Maintenance Facility, is comprised of three attached buildings located at 55 Michael Drive. The large vehicle repair building is a 9,600 square foot facility with six vehicle bays and three vehicle lifts for repairing and maintaining the larger vehicles in the City of Meriden’s fleet. It also includes a welding shop and a bay for washing vehicles. The small vehicle repair building is n 1,800 square foot facility also containing six vehicle bays and three vehicle lifts for small municipal vehicles. The third structure in the complex contains administrative offices and the parts storage area. The building contains 2,160 square feet of space.

The Central Maintenance Facility site also serves as the fueling center for the City of Meriden’s vehicles, with two fuel pumping stations for a 10,000 gallon unleaded gasoline tank and two fuel pumping stations for a 10,000 gallon

## 9.0: COMMUNITY FACILITIES AND INFRASTRUCTURE

diesel fuel tank. The City recently installed an all-natural gas fueling station and removed underground fuel storage tanks, converting these to above-ground fuel storage.

### *Solid Waste Disposal*

The City provides weekly solid waste collection for residences with four or fewer dwelling units within the Inner Tax District. All commercial property owners, inner-city properties with five units or more, and residents located in the Outer Tax District are required to secure their own solid waste removal. Recycling is collected on a bi-weekly basis for the same area. Residential solid wastes are disposed of at the Wallingford Resource Recovery Facility located on South Cherry Street in the Town of Wallingford. The Wallingford facility provides waste management for four other communities in the region, including Cheshire, Hamden, North Haven and Wallingford.

The City operates a municipal transfer station located on Evansville Avenue near the airport and the sewage treatment facility. The transfer station is permitted by the DEP Waste Management Bureau to handle up to 100 tons of waste per day.

## 9.2. COMMUNITY FACILITIES AND SERVICES

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### *General Government Facilities*

In addition to police, fire, education, social service and public works facilities described herein, the City of Meriden has a small number of other governmental facilities. The primary building for City government and service functions is City Hall, a 50,000 square foot facility located at 142 East Main Street. This building houses most of the general government administration offices for the City. The 40,000 square foot Stoddard Building, located at 165 Miller Street, houses the Meriden Health Division as well as a clinic and the State traffic court. The Augusta Curtis Cultural Center at 175 East Main Street has 20,000 square feet of space available for cultural events. The Board of Education offices are housed at 22 Liberty Street, which was built in 1885 and contains 22,628 square feet of space. In addition, the Parks and Recreation Department has numerous small storage buildings located in various City parks. Future improvements to these facilities include the refurbishment of City Hall, scheduled to begin in 2021.

### *Public Library System*

The Curtis Memorial Public Library is located at 105 Miller Street adjacent to the Board of Education building in the City's civic block. Opened in 1903, the library serves as a center for information, community activities, independent learning and family literacy in Meriden. The Library provides free access to books, audio and visual recordings, educational programs, and digital information. The library also offers Internet access for the public as well as computer classes for adults to assist with basic computer skills and job search activities. The 48,000 square foot library facility also contains the Meriden Local History Room, which collects, preserves and makes accessible books and materials pertaining to the history of Meriden. In addition to its onsite services, the library operates a popular Bookmobile service to senior centers and other locations.

The library is a popular location for community meetings, with four community meeting rooms on-site, and coordinates public programs with outside organizations; the Community Services department coordinates these activities.

In 2016 the city appointed a committee to review the current and future planned use of the library. In the fall of 2017, the library board of trustees hired the consulting firm Library Development Solution and surveyed the community to draft a plan for the future. The plan included updates to the facilities including an updated children's area, improved teen area, updated public restrooms, updated family rooms, better lighting, more parking, improvements to the study and meeting space, and creation of a technology/maker space.

In 2019 architectural firm TSKP Studio was hired to develop preliminary plans for the repair, renovation, and upgrade to the library. The City has recently approved funds for an expansion of the library.

### *Fire Protection Services*

Fire protection services in the City of Meriden are provided by the Meriden Fire Department and the South Meriden Volunteer Fire Department. The Meriden Fire Department is composed of 103 firefighters operating out of five stations with five engine companies and one truck company. In 2018, the City merged the South Meriden Volunteer Fire Department, founded in 1908, into the career fire department to provide better response and reduce costs. All stations are listed in Table 16. The Fire Department operates the Fire Marshall's office, the Public

Safety Dispatch Office, and the department Training Division. In addition to fire suppression functions, the Meriden Fire Department provides technical rescue for the City and a First Responder Program.

**Table 16. Meriden Fire Department Stations and Service Areas**

Unit Designation	Location	Area Served
Engine Company 1	168 Capitol Avenue	South Meriden/West Side
Engine Company 2, Truck Company 1	61 Pratt Street	Downtown/City-wide rescue & support
Engine Company 3, Fire Department HQ	561 Broad Street	Uptown/South East
Engine Company 4	260 Sherman Avenue	North End/North East
Engine Company 5	1075 East Main Street	East Side/Hazardous Materials Team/Fire Investigations Unit
South Meriden Volunteer Dept – 31	Camp Street	South Meriden

**Police Protection Services**

The Meriden Police Department is staffed by 120 full-time sworn officers and numerous support staff. The police headquarters is located at 50 West Main Street. The Police Department has three divisions: Police Operations Division, Detective Divisions, and Administrative Services Division.

With the assistance of federal funding, the Police Department has partnered with the Meriden Council of Neighborhoods to encourage all residents to take an active part in their community to maintain safety and quality of life. The Police Department’s Neighborhood Initiative Unit is the departmental subdivision that addresses community policing and quality-of-life issues in the City’s central neighborhoods. Begun in 2004, the unit has recently expanded its focus area into the northern end of the City, as well as increasing its focus on the Downtown area. The Unit works extensively with the 28 neighborhood associations in the City to identify neighborhood-level, quality-of-life concerns before they erupt into larger problems.

**Senior Affairs**

Senior Affairs functions as the main resource center for programs, activities, and services for elderly residents. In addition, the department oversees the operation of the Meriden Senior Community Center, a 32,000 square foot air-conditioned and handicap-accessible building located in the heart of Meriden’s Downtown. The Senior Center is the hub for activities and services for older people and a visible symbol of Meriden’s concern for its older residents. As a multipurpose senior center, it is a community facility in which older people can meet with one another to fulfill many of their social, physical, emotional and intellectual needs.

There has been discussion of building a new Senior Center at 1 Kings Place. The City’s existing Senior Center is large but its layout does not suit its needs. The Senior Center has suggested that staff be trained as counselors to assist seniors in the community. Many residents who don’t frequent the Senior Center aren’t aware that people of Medicare age need to register and that there are penalties if you don’t. The Senior Center guides eligible Medicare beneficiaries on options for prescriptions and how to choose a pharmacy. More people have come to the organization with Medicare questions, following this training. In addition, there are individuals who aren’t aware of the options for paying for transportation to medical appointments. There are people who can’t afford their rent because they are paying for their transportation to Yale for cancer treatments.

**Health and Human Services**

The mission of the Meriden Health and Human Services Department is to protect and promote the physical and environmental well-being of the citizens of Meriden through direct services, wellness promotion and active support of community efforts. The Health Division operates out of the 40,000 square foot Stoddard Municipal Building located at 165 Miller Street. The Health Division is required by law to enforce both City and state public health codes. This municipal public health agency concerns itself primarily with the health and well-being of citizens through comprehensive program planning and implementation of programs supporting both disease prevention and health promotion.

**Youth Services**

The Meriden Youth Services Division is designated by the City of Meriden to provide for the planning, evaluation, coordination, and implementation of a coordinated network of resources and positive opportunities for all Meriden children and youth ages 0-18 and their families.

Youth Services receives funding from the City of Meriden, the State Department of Education, Workforce Alliance, Inc. The organization runs a Juvenile Assistance and Diversion Board program designed to reduce the number of young people involved in the criminal justice system while also providing counseling services. The department also organizes community service events through partners requesting student volunteers.

**Public School System**

The Meriden Public School system consists of eight elementary schools, two middle schools, and two high schools. In addition, Meriden sends students to the Thomas Edison Magnet Middle School, which is operated by ACES. The 13 school facilities are listed in Table 17.

**Table 17. Meriden Enrollment by School, October 2018**

School	Location	Grades	Enrollment
<b>John Barry Elementary School</b>	124 Columbia Street	PK-5	514
<b>Benjamin Franklin Elementary School</b>	426 West Main Street	PK-5	380
<b>Nathan Hale Elementary School</b>	277 Atkins Street Ext.	K-5	594
<b>Hanover Elementary School</b>	208 Main Street	PK-5	583
<b>Thomas Hooker Elementary School</b>	70 Overlook Drive	K-5	401
<b>Casimir Pulaski Elementary School</b>	100 Clearview Avenue	K-5	580
<b>Israel Putnam Elementary School</b>	133 Parker Avenue	K-5	495
<b>Roger Sherman Elementary School</b>	64 North Pearl Street	PK-5	486
<b>Lincoln Middle School</b>	164 Centennial Avenue	6-8	775
<b>Washington Middle School</b>	1225 North Broad Street	6-8	805
<b>Thomas Edison Middle School*</b>	1355 North Broad Street	6-8	520
<b>Maloney High School</b>	121 Gravel Street	9-12	1,184
<b>Platt High School</b>	220 Coe Avenue	9-12	976
<b>Success/Venture – Special Education</b>			106

*\*Regional magnet school operated by ACES.  
Source: Meriden Public Schools, October 2018 Enrollment Report, Research Dept*

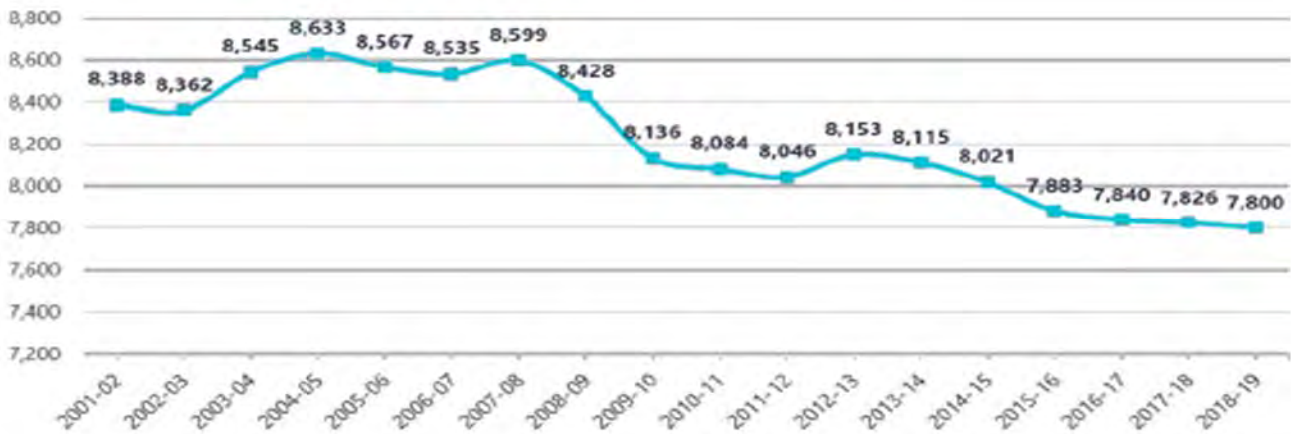
In addition to public and magnet schools, HC Wilcox Tech is a regional vocational high school located at 298 Oregon Avenue. Meriden is home to one remaining K-8 parochial school, Our Lady of Mount Carmel, located at 115 Lewis Avenue. Between 2015 and 2017, three other parochial schools in Meriden closed, including St. Joseph, St. Mary, and St. Stanislaus.

**Enrollment Trends and Projections**

As of October 2018, enrollment in Meriden’s public schools was 7,880 students. Elementary enrollment (K-5) was 4,033, middle school enrollment (6-8) is 1,581 and high school enrollment (9-12) is 2,160. Enrollment in the Meriden school system has been slowly decreasing since 2007-2008 (see Figure 58). Since 2015, enrollment in the Meriden school system has declined overall by 179 students. Enrollment is projected to increase in the 2019-2020 school year, but to remain below the 2015-2016 enrollment levels.

Total K-12 enrollment has decreased 2.8% over the past five years and 4.1% over the past 10. Elementary school enrollment (K-5) has decreased at a rate of 5.8% over the past five years. At the same time, middle school (6-8) enrollment has steadily increased by over 8% since the 2015-2016 historic low. The closure of parochial schools most likely influenced the schools’ ability to retain students at the middle school level. High school enrollment (9-12) remained relatively stable over the past four years but has decreased by about 4% since 2015-2016.

**Figure 58. Meriden Public School K-12 Total Enrollment**



Birth trends and projections are used to plan for school enrollment. As discussed in Chapter 2, the resident population in Meriden has declined slightly in the past 10 years. According to CT DOT and the Connecticut State Data Center at UCONN, population growth is anticipated to increase through 2040. The projections may be high as they were done before recent census data showing significant population decline in many Connecticut municipalities. Birth projections through 2023 help Meriden’s school district prepare ten-year enrollment projections. According to the Connecticut Department of Public Health, total annual births in Meriden have declined over 20% since the historic peak in 2008, with a historic low occurring in 2016 and a slight rebound by 2017. Low birthrates have occurred across the country, and births are not expected to increase substantially in Meriden over the next five years.

According to a recent study done by the school district. Meriden’s school enrollment is projected to decline over the next ten years (see

Figure 59). The projected enrollment in 2028-29 ranges between 7,069 and 7,292 students, at least 500 fewer than were enrolled during the 2018-19 school year. This represents a decrease of at least 6% from current enrollment.

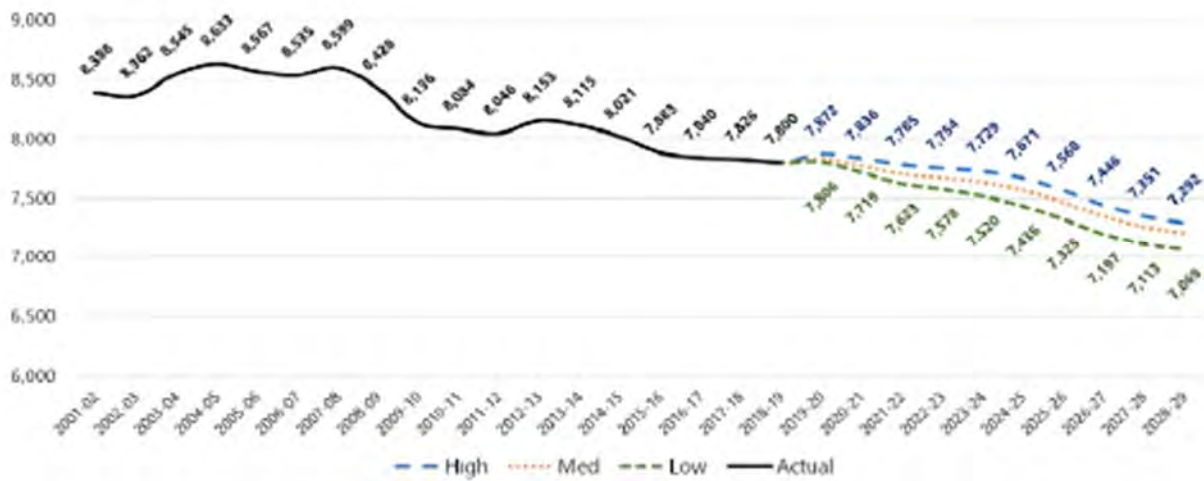
## 9.0: COMMUNITY FACILITIES AND INFRASTRUCTURE

The grade breakdown of this projected enrollment change is identified in Table 18. Projections for 2028-29 would indicate 3,564 elementary school students, 1,371 middle school students, 2,268 high school students. As compared to the 2017-18 enrollment levels, 2028-29 elementary school enrollment is projected to decrease by 9.9% and middle school enrollment is projected to decrease by 13.1%, while the high school enrollment is expected to remain the same.

**Table 18. Projected Change in Enrollment by Grade Grouping**

Change		PK-12 Total	K-12 Total	K-5 Total	6-8 Total	9-12 Total
<b>Five Years</b>	#	-165	-165	-392	-77	304
	%	-2.1%	-2.1%	-9.9%	-4.9%	13.4%
<b>Ten Years</b>	#	-597	-597	-390	-206	-1
	%	-7.5%	-7.7%	-9.9%	-13.1%	0.0%

**Figure 59. Meriden K - 12 Actual and Projected Enrollments, 2001-02 - 2028-29**



### Future Public School Facility Plans and Considerations

In 2012, the City of Meriden expanded Hanover School to accommodate a full-day kindergarten. During the 2018-2019 school year, Hanover also began housing the district's Pre-K program, which serves approximately 120 students annually. In addition, Hanover now houses the district's bilingual program and two special education programs.

Meriden's enrollment projections for the coming years show an overall decrease in enrollment projected. Given this projection, no new schools or land set-asides for schools should be necessary.

### Churches and Cemeteries

Meriden has several churches that provide visual character to the City as well as worship opportunities for a wide variety of faiths and denominations.

These churches include Congregational, Episcopal, Baptist, Methodist, Lutheran, Roman Catholic, Pentecostal and Evangelical Christian, Christian Scientist, Seventh Day Adventist, and Orthodox Christian denominations as well as



## 9.0: COMMUNITY FACILITIES AND INFRASTRUCTURE

Unitarian, Jehovah's Witnesses and Jewish congregations. The architectural styles represented by these churches are varied and provide a distinct identity to their surrounding neighborhood. Not only providing visual variety and often historic character to the various parts of Meriden where they are located, the churches serve as pivot points in the community around which much of the history and built form of Meriden revolves.

Meriden also has roughly a dozen cemeteries located throughout the City that range from large cemeteries serving the greater Meriden region to smaller historic cemeteries associated with individual churches. The burial grounds are a source of both historical information and visual character for the surrounding neighborhoods. The history enshrined in these cemeteries helps anchor a sense of community and neighborhood identity to a specific geographic place.

### 9.3. HISTORIC RESOURCES

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#### *Historic Buildings and National Historic District*

As a community with over three centuries of history, Meriden has over 300 significant historic structures and neighborhoods. In addition, several buildings are listed on the National Register of Historic Places, as well as one National Historic District. The buildings listed are the Moses Andrews Homestead at 424 West Main Street; the Charter Oak Firehouse at 105 Hanover Street; the Curtis Memorial Library at 175 East Main Street; the Solomon Goffe House at 677 Colony Street; the Meriden Curtain Fixture Company Factory at 122 Charles Street; and the U.S. Post Office-Meriden Main at 39 Colony Street. Listed on the Register along with these buildings are Hubbard Park and the Red Bridge over the Quinnipiac River, near Oregon Road.

The Colony Street-West Main Street National Historic District includes roughly 1,000 feet of West Main Street stretching from Colony Street to Cook Avenue (Route 71), approximately 600 feet of Colony Street from West Main Street to Washington Street, and the building at 55 Grove Street. The district was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1987 and includes a mix of office, retail and institutional properties including the state courthouse and the Meriden senior center.

The Planning Division maintains a listing and inventory of 315 places of local significance that spans two centuries of Meriden's architectural history. To avoid losing additional City history, this inventory of historic resources should be consulted as part of future development and redevelopment efforts to identify potential impacts on such resources and the potential for preservation or need for mitigating actions.

Meriden Historical Society operates out of two buildings in Meriden, the Bernice C. Morehouse Research Center at 1090 Hanover Avenue in South Meriden and the Andrew's Homestead, one of the City's oldest homes, which is leased from the City. The Historical Society's research center houses the City's catalogs and other information, including the City's directory for historical research. The Historical Society is currently seeking a new home closer to the center of the City to be a resource as well as a museum that will attract visitors.

There are opportunities in Meriden to continue to preserve the City's historic character while providing new capacity for improvements through grant funding. The State Register of Historic Places is responsible for administering a range of federal and state programs that identify, register and protect historic resources throughout the state. Grant initiatives are an important opportunity for funding historic preservation initiatives. These include tax credit opportunities, including the Historic Homes Rehabilitation Tax Credit, which homeowners can apply for to receive a 30% return of up to \$30,000 on the rehabilitation of their historic home listed on the State or National Register. Creating a State recognized historic district would enable homeowners in Meriden to take advantage of this opportunity. The City should investigate pursuing this state designation, particularly in areas such as Wilcox Avenue, which is already a local district; the Hill behind Colony Road; and Reservoir Road. Further study is required to determine which areas are best suited for this opportunity.

## 9.4. GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

For a community of approximately 60,000 people, the City of Meriden provides an extensive range of municipal services. Public and non-profit community facilities provide for the convenience, health and welfare of residents and constitute a significant component of the City's quality of life. Maintaining an adequate array of community facilities in good condition to meet changing needs is an important aspect of local government.

Based on the information presented and discussed, the following goals and objectives for the provision of community facilities and services have been developed.

***Continue to improve and enhance police and fire services to maintain a high level of fire suppression and rescue service, as well as expanding effective community policing initiatives.***

### Objectives:

- Budget for capital and programmatic improvements for police and fire services in the most cost-effective manner.
- In addition to expanding the Neighborhood Initiative Unit target area into the northern end of the City, examine whether other areas of Meriden could benefit from inclusion in the Unit's target area.
- Build upon the success of the Neighborhood Initiative Unit by securing funding for additional police officer positions within the Unit.

***Continue to meet the health and social service needs of Meriden residents in a coordinated and efficient manner.***

### Objectives

- In the future, focus additional resources on enhancing the Senior Affairs department's ability to provide home-delivered meals, transportation and in-home assessments for elderly residents.
- Expand efforts to reduce school truancy among Meriden youth.
- Continue to update the public library facilities to meet the future planned use of the facility.

***Provide the highest level of educational services to the children of Meriden.***

### Objectives:

- Comprehensively evaluate the physical and programmatic needs of each of Meriden's school facilities, identify pertinent issues to be addressed, and develop a plan for addressing identified needs through renovations and programmatic changes over the long-term.
- Continually evaluate the need for additional school system programs such as new curriculum programs so that emerging education needs can be addressed quickly and effectively.

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- Provided more opportunities for students to gain experiences outside the school system. This may include opportunities to involve students in civic planning (i.e. through the student council) and to provide internship programs with local businesses or the City.

***Provide enhanced waste disposal, sewage treatment, and other public works infrastructure to ensure that the City of Meriden can meet both its current and future waste disposal needs.***

### **Objectives:**

- Continue to pursue the upgrading of the sewage treatment system and implement needed improvements to the Inflow and Infiltration (I&I) removal project.
- Complete necessary repairs and upgrades to the Public Works Complex.
- Study the drainage patterns of the minor brooks and streams within the City of Meriden to identify any potential future flooding problems before they occur.

***Goal: Maintain and enhance the contributions of historic resources to Meriden's community character.***

### **Objectives:**

- Identify potential locations and consider creating a State-recognized historic district to ensure that historic sites in Meriden are eligible for State and Federal grant opportunities, such as Historic Restoration Fund Grants, Historic Rehabilitation Tax Credits and Federal Historic Preservation Tax Incentives.
- As the historic inventory of Meriden is a key element in defining the character of the City, a study should be made with follow up steps taken to maintain, enhance and promote the historic assets of the community. This should expand upon the 2014 inventory which was already conducted.
- New development should be consistent with and sensitive to the historic nature of the community, particularly in the Downtown and other neighborhood centers. Emphasis on quality physical design and site planning that is in keeping with the nature of the surrounding environment should be a high priority.

## Chapter 10. FUTURE LAND USE PLAN AND ACTION AGENDA

### 10.1. INTRODUCTION

The Generalized Future Land Use Plan (Figure 60 and Figure 61) illustrates the proposed pattern of conservation and development for the City of Meriden. It recommends the most appropriate locations for major land uses, including residential development; commercial development; industrial development; mixed-use development; special area districts; areas for community facilities and areas for conservation and open space. The Generalized Future Land Use Plan is both a narrative and graphic presentation of the City's vision for the future. The Generalized Future Land Use Plan map provides a broad illustration of desired development patterns based largely on existing land use and development patterns, environmental and natural features, physical features, current and potential zoning designations and planning analysis conducted as part of the overall drafting of the Plan of Conservation and Development. As public meetings and workshops are conducted, the desires and vision of citizens and community stakeholders will be incorporated as the Planning Commission deems appropriate.

Due to the generalized nature of the Generalized Future Land Use Plan, there may be individual properties within a given area with a land use that differs from the Plan's land use designation. As described above, the purpose of the Generalized Future Land Use Plan is to illustrate broad proposed land use patterns and relationships between uses. Figure 61 illustrates areas within the Future Land Use Plan that are within the Special Flood Hazard Area (100-Year floodplain). This map (which is considered to be part of the Future Land Use Plan) is provided as a separate figure to more clearly show these vulnerable areas that should receive particular attention, especially when considering future uses.

### 10.2. MERIDEN'S GENERALIZED FUTURE LAND USE PLAN

As a mature community that has been largely developed, the majority of Meriden's land not designated as open space or containing environmentally sensitive areas has already been developed. There are a few exceptions to this fact, notably the former 320 acre South Mountain Road site. However, development of the remaining vacant land, infill development at strategic locations, and the redevelopment of several key sites, can significantly impact the City's future development pattern. In order to support and protect the quality of life envisioned as part of Meriden's future, a balance between development, the conservation of open space and natural resources, and the preservation of the City's historical and cultural resources is necessary. Protection of environmentally sensitive areas and the conservation of open space have been a major focus in the development of this Plan update.

It is recognized that commercial investment and certain forms of residential development are necessary to expand Meriden's tax base and improve the financial well-being of both the City and its residents. Striking a balance between conservation, preservation and development should be a central goal in any Plan of Conservation and Development, and should form the basis of a community's future land use goals and policies. The achievement of a balance between these policy objectives can occur with the development and implementation of both broad policies and specific goals and objectives. These policies, goals and objectives must guide Meriden's development and revitalization over the next decade and beyond.

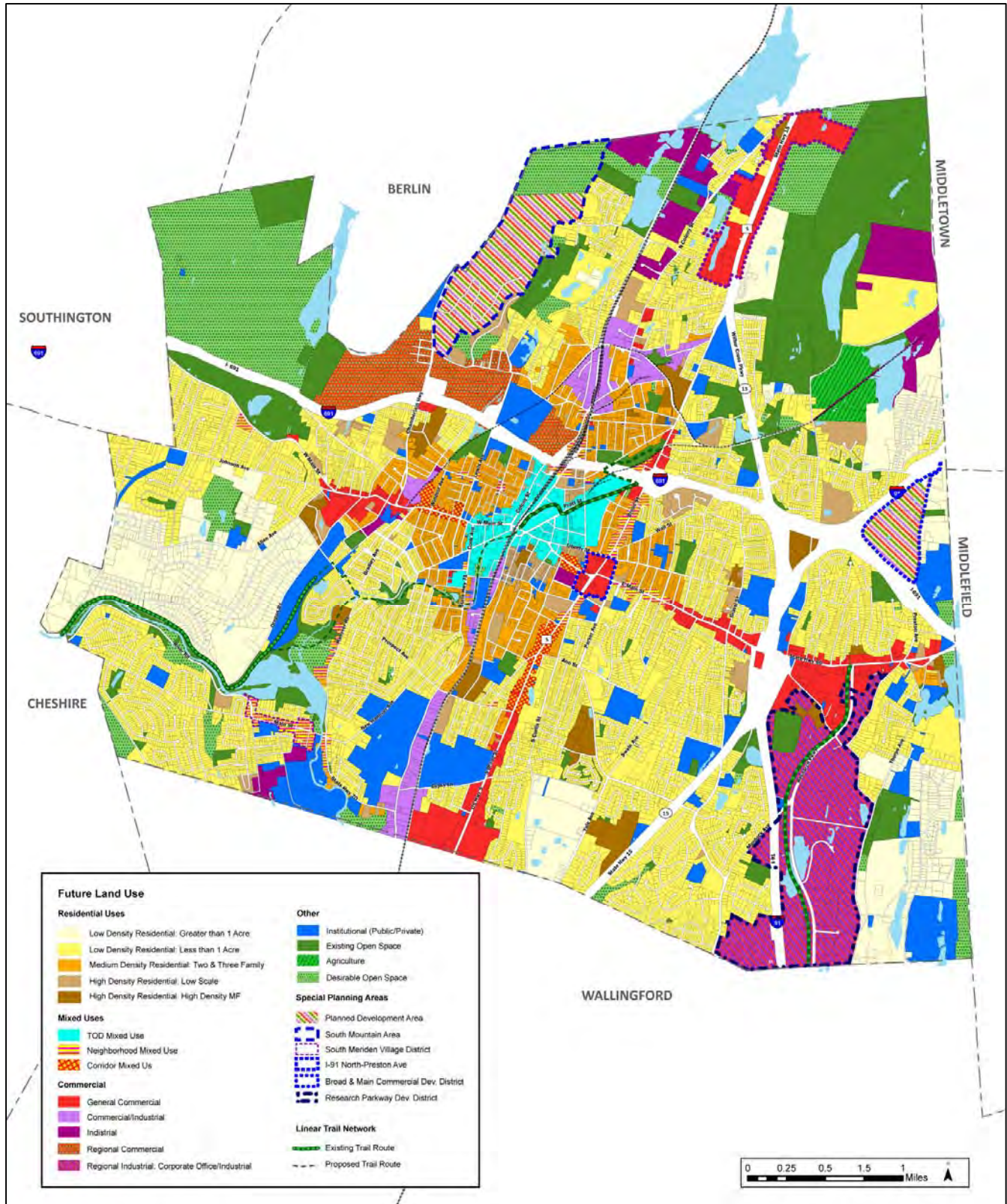


Figure 60. Generalized Future Land Use Plan

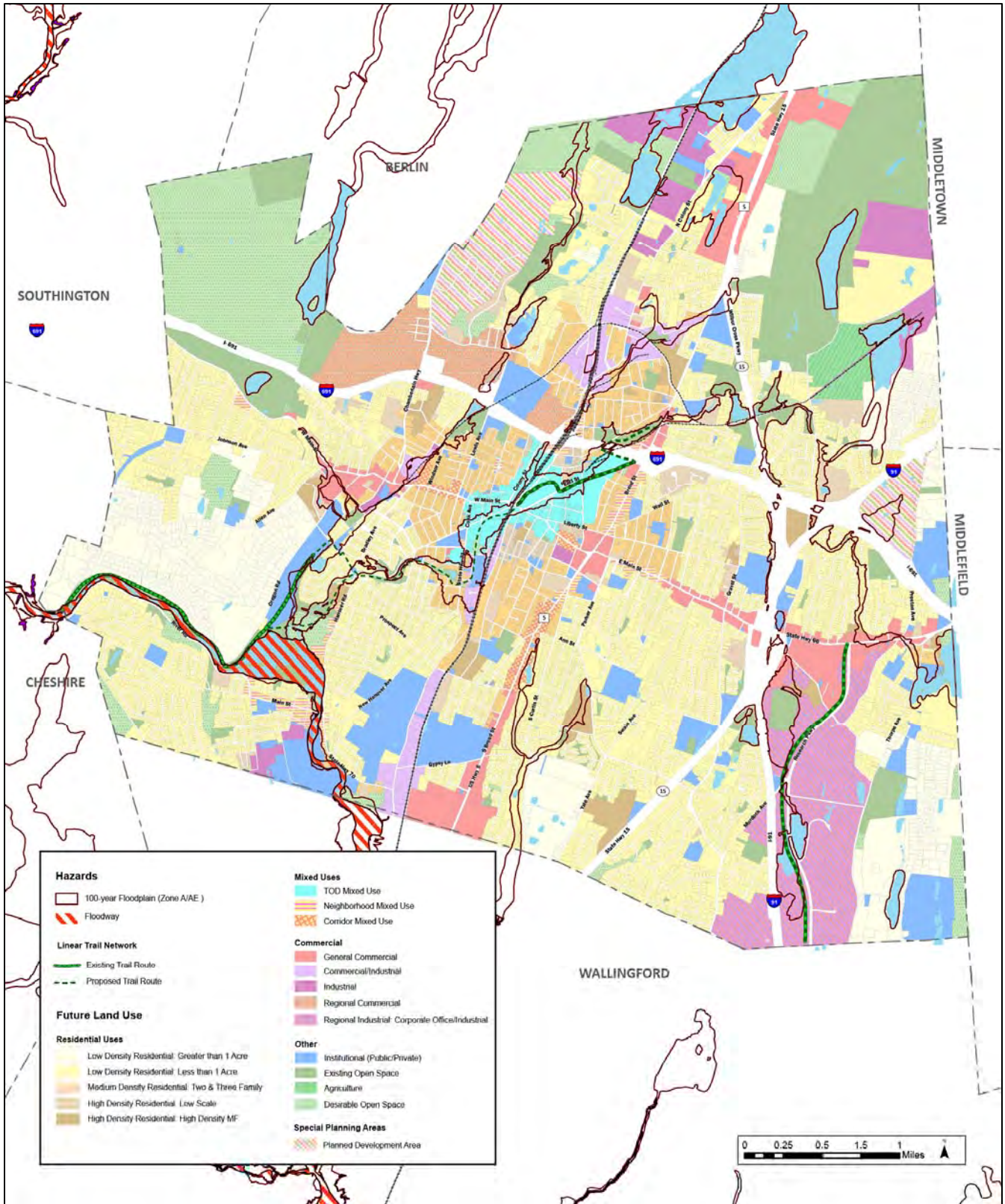


Figure 61. Generalized Future Land Use Plan

### 10.3. MAJOR PLAN GOALS

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The Generalized Future Land Use Plan, although comprised of numerous land use categories, recognizes the interdependence of uses and areas. There are several broad principles that guide this Plan. These include:

- Respect for the natural resource system of rivers, streams, brooks and wetlands that exist in Meriden. Emphasis on these areas is particularly important due to Meriden's history of flooding problems. While a variety of land uses fall within these focus areas, all future development should be reviewed with respect to the impact on this natural resource system.
- Respect for the existing built environment of the numerous residential neighborhoods that comprise the core of Meriden's community character. The Generalized Future Land Use Plan recommends a range of residential densities that are consistent with the current character of Meriden's neighborhoods. Density, type and characteristic standards for new residential development need to be well-defined to promote compatibility, presence of homeownership, quality of the living environment and fiscal sustainability. Proper implementation of the Plan requires zoning changes to guide and balance housing and to better control multifamily development to ensure development is high in quality.
- Respect for the infrastructure capacity and future development capacity of the City. By identifying selected areas and sites that can support additional development in a manner that is consistent with both currently available infrastructure and the physical constraints of each area or site, the Generalized Future Land Use Plan does not propose a level of development that is inappropriate or unsustainable.
- Respect for the need for continued investment in economic development to sustain the tax base. The Generalized Future Land Use Plan focuses on the economic development land uses in a manner similar to the 2009 Plan. This includes such areas as Research Parkway, Downtown, East Main Street, West Main Street, Broad Street, South Broad Street and the area around the Westfield Meriden Mall. Other important economic development areas include the Berlin Turnpike, North Colony Street, the former NRG site and Old Colony Road. Within these areas, mixed-use land use designations will allow development to occur that is compatible with natural resources, existing infrastructure, adjacent residential neighborhoods and the community character of the City of Meriden. Along Broad Street (Route 5) and East Main Street, the City should explore expanding the depth of the commercial zoning to facilitate the redevelopment and consolidation of parcels where appropriate.

The Generalized Future Land Use Plan contains a variety of land use categories that address location, density and current conditions. These categories and their general locations are described in more detail in the following section. It should be noted that there are individual properties that have a land use different than the category on the map. This is unavoidable in a built-out community with small parcels. The intent of the Generalized Future Land Use Plan is to present desirable land use patterns to guide future change. Existing land uses are not affected by the map.



## 10.4. FUTURE LAND USE DESCRIPTIONS

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### Residential Land Use Categories

#### ***Low Density Residential – Single Family***

Low Density Residential areas are divided into two subcategories: Low Density-1 and Low Density-2 single-family residential areas. The Low Density-1 single-family areas with lots of 40,000 square feet or greater generally follow the boundaries of the City’s R-R “Rural Residential” zones, where the minimum lot size allowed is 40,000 square feet. These areas are generally located in the western end and southeastern corner of the City, as well as the area around the Exit 19 interchange off I-91. The Low Density-2 single-family areas with lots less than 40,000 square feet in area generally follow the boundaries of the S-R “Suburban Residential” and R-1 “Single Family Residential” zones, where minimum allowed lot sizes mostly range from 11,250 square feet to 34,000 square feet. These areas comprise a large percentage of the land in Meriden that is devoted to residential uses, and they are found in a large ring surrounding the central core of the City. The purpose of both types of Low Density Residential – Single Family uses is to preserve the established neighborhood residential character of a large portion of the City of Meriden, a characteristic of the City which provides stability and support for civic life in Meriden and for other types of land uses.

#### ***Medium Density Residential – One, Two and Three Family***

Medium Density Residential areas are comprised of older housing on lots of varying size, generally in one-family, two-family and three-family typologies. These areas also include portions of Meriden that provide Planned Elderly Housing, a continuum of care including detached and attached residential units, with convalescent homes and assisted living with nursing supervision (intermediate care facility) or chronic and convalescent nursing home (skilled nursing facility) as licensed by the State of Connecticut. Medium Density Residential areas are found in the areas immediately surrounding, and within walking distance of the Downtown Area. Pockets of medium density residential area also found in various locations around the City. This category generally encompasses much of the R-2 “Two- and Three-Family Residential” zones in Meriden.

#### ***High Density Residential – Multi-Family***

High Density Residential areas are divided into two subcategories: Limited High Density areas and High Density Multi-Family residential areas. High Density Residential areas in the Generalized Future Land Use Plan generally reflect existing higher density housing such as that found in several Planned Residential Development Districts scattered throughout Meriden, as well as land located in the R-3 “Multiple-Family Residential” and R-4 “Multiple-Family Residential” zones that are currently primarily multifamily or are appropriate to be redeveloped as such. Limited High Density reflects development not exceeding three stories or eight units in a structure. Besides existing areas at or near full development at higher density, other identified higher density areas are within walking distance to a wide range of necessary services.

## Mixed Use Land Use Categories

### *Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) Mixed Use*

This designation contains the uses and areas that define the center of Meriden. The core of this designation is the stretch of East Main Street and West Main Street from the City Hall/Meriden Public Library/Board of Education offices “municipal complex” west to Meriden Green and the railroad station, and turning southwest to encompass the “Factory H” property. These features define the area’s development and circulation patterns.

TOD Mixed Use District is envisioned as a transit-oriented area, centered on the Meriden Green and an enhanced multi-modal transit center at the current railroad station. Future land uses in the Downtown District should include ground-floor retail and office space coupled with high-quality residential units on upper floors. Development should be done at a scale appropriate for the built environment of Downtown Meriden, with buildings being held to six stories or fewer, with green space and adequate additional parking provided by any residential developers. Improving linkages to surrounding neighborhoods and enhancing the physical environment of Downtown through landscaping, urban design elements, façade improvements, and improvements to the traffic circulation system should be emphasized. The investment being made in this area, coupled with the density and mix of uses, makes a stronger review of development in this area very important.

Areas within this category have been rezoned to the Transit-Oriented Development (“TOD”) District, which was adopted in 2013. The purpose of the district is to ensure that new development is of high quality and blends with the existing historic character. The purpose of the TOD District is to support a viable mixture of uses and implement the Smart Growth principles set forth in the 2009 POCD and 2012 Meriden TOD Master Plan. The regulations provide flexibility in terms of use while establishing design criteria, flexible adaptive reuse guidelines and a streamlined permitting process. The TOD District is made up of five sub-districts, including the Historic – Commercial Sub-District (TOD-HC), Park Sub-District (TOD-P), Hanover Sub-District (TOD-H), Civic Sub-District (TOD-C), and the Gateway Sub-District (TOD-G).

### *Neighborhood Mixed Use*

This land use designation relates to areas where medium density residential uses (maximum of three units) combined with ground floor retail or small offices are appropriate. This land use category is a new category from the City’s prior POCD. The category largely includes parcels previously designated as Mixed Use: Office/Residential. The new mixed-use designation is intended to promote small-scale commercial establishments that service the residential neighborhoods immediately surrounding them. These areas are either small nodes or short (3-4 blocks) corridors surrounded by the single-family neighborhoods they generally serve. This category supports improvements to sidewalk infrastructure and other pedestrian-oriented amenities. The existing scale of the neighborhood commercial areas should be maintained.

Examples include intersections along Springdale Avenue, Newton Street/Liberty Street intersection; the Hall Avenue/Gale Avenue intersection; the Spruce Street/West Main Street intersection; Grove Street between Foster Street and Washington Street; East Main between Parker Avenue and Dexter Avenue. Neighborhood commercial districts play an important role in providing goods and services to neighborhood residents without the need for vehicular transportation. A maximum of three residential units may be compatible on larger parcels.

### ***Corridor Mixed Use***

This land use category is a new category from the City's prior POCD. The category largely includes parcels previously designated as Mixed Use: Office/Commercial/Residential. This type of mixed-use land use pattern envisions medium density residential uses combined with, or interspersed among, a mixture of retail, office and other types of light commercial uses. Areas for this type of mixed-use development include Broad Street between Hall Avenue and Silver Street; West Main Street between Cook Avenue and Bradley Avenue; and East Main between Norwood Street and High Street.

These areas should also place an emphasis on sidewalk installation/improvements, enhancements to building design and aesthetics, and lighting and landscaping. It is envisioned, however, that areas along as local business corridor will continue to be served by drivers and should be planned accordingly, with adequate parking and driveway access.

### **Commercial and Industrial Land Use Categories**

#### ***City Shopping Centers and General Commercial***

The purpose of this category is to encourage retail and service commercial activities along Meriden's major arterial corridors. The General Commercial districts encompass the areas of Meriden that provide general commercial, retail, office and service sector space. This land use district includes the other large commercial shopping areas used by the residents of Meriden and partially by surrounding communities. It includes the Townline Plaza area, the Centennial Plaza area and the Meriden Parkade area. These are also important property tax-generating areas. Maintaining and expanding high rateable commercial uses in shopping center areas can be promoted by clarifying preferred commercial uses and discouraging further residential uses and parcel fragmentation. Other key issues in these districts will be mitigating conflicts between commercial uses and adjacent residential neighborhoods, providing adequate pedestrian access, addressing traffic and circulation issues and encouraging reinvestment in the building stock.

#### ***Regional Commercial***

This land use district is anchored by the regional shopping mall Westfield Meriden Shoppingtown. It also includes the Undercliff property, MidState Hospital, and numerous other properties along Chamberlain Highway and Kensington Avenue. These areas are either currently, or envisioned as being, the highest property tax-generating areas in the City. Focus is needed on maintaining and expanding high-ratable commercial development. Given current market conditions, the City should consider ways in which it can provide ample flexibility for the mall to adapt to market conditions as brick and mortar retail, and malls, in particular, become more challenging to keep in business. Recent case studies demonstrate opportunities for adaptive reuse in the event that closures prevent the mall from continuing to operate. Some have included a broader mix of tenants, including uses as diverse as residential, healthcare, academic and other institutions. In other cases, increasingly experience-oriented stores have become more prevalent. Landlords have experimented with other retail uses, such as grocery stores or off-price merchants. Meriden can help to ensure that the mall is in a good position to adapt to future change by creating a flexible regulatory environment with zoning that will not present a barrier to ongoing success.

### ***Commercial/Industrial***

This form of mixed-use would encompass several different commercial and industrial uses either in combination or on separate properties, including light manufacturing; warehousing and storage; automotive businesses; construction contractors and related services; and wholesale/distribution establishments. Areas of Meriden that are given this land use designation include Old Colony Road from Prospect Avenue to the Wallingford town line; the neighborhood around Colony Road, Cooper Street and the railroad line; around the Exit 8 interchange off I-691; and the Colony Street/Gracey Avenue neighborhood north of I-691. At the present time, these areas are predominantly zoned M-3 “Industrial” and C-3 “Highway Commercial”.

### ***Industrial***

The Industrial land use designation is intended for parts of Meriden where a variety of manufacturing, fabrication, distribution and warehousing uses are appropriate. This designation generally reflects the current manufacturing usage of the land in Meriden. Designated industrial areas include the area around Chamberlain Highway and Pasco Street; Charles Street between Elm Street and High Street; Vine Street between Johnson Avenue and Carl Street; properties along North Colony Road; properties along Old Colony Road, the area around the sewage treatment plant and Meriden-Markham Airport.

### ***Regional Industrial: Corporate Office/Industrial***

This category encompasses Meriden’s large-scale office, manufacturing, and corporate campus complexes, which are concentrated along Research Parkway. This category is mapped for the Research Parkway area, which has a large cluster of corporate office and light manufacturing uses on large parcels. This category identifies this area as a unique regional employment center, and it should continue to be an area for office/research facilities that will enhance the City’s tax base and provide additional employment opportunities. This district should not include heavy commercial uses such as vehicle or heavy equipment storage, sales and maintenance. Additional Details are discussed in recommendations for the Research Parkway Development District.

## **Special Land Use Areas and Designations**

### ***Planned Development Area***

This land use designation is given to large contiguous properties that may be appropriate for site-specific “smart growth” mixed-use development. The category promotes development which would have a greater degree of flexibility in terms of layout, design, and construction of planned development than is found in conventional zoning classifications. It will permit planned mixed-use communities comprising residential, commercial, office and service uses, with an emphasis on open space preservation where applicable. The two areas this category is mapped are the South Mountain Road area and at the triangle between North I-91 and Preston Avenue.

### ***Research Parkway Development District***

Uses in the Corporate Office/Manufacturing land use category are traditionally large-scale office or manufacturing, with ancillary uses such as hotels. These areas are major employment centers for the region but have seen significant vacancies in recent years. This Land Use Plan recommends that the Corporate Office/Manufacturing designation

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retain the primary uses of office and manufacturing, but allow for a range of supporting and/or complementary uses to be permitted, such as indoor recreation/entertainment, hotels, fitness, daycare, and assisted-living facilities.

A key area of focus for this district is improved pedestrian and bicycle connectivity, both within campus areas and to the adjacent residential neighborhoods and business districts via the proposed path along Research Parkway.

### ***Broad Street/East Main Street Commercial Development District***

This designation encompasses the area around the intersection of Broad Street and East Main Street, anchored by the Stop & Shop plaza. The area is bounded by Charles Street to the south, High Street and Center Street to the west, Liberty Street to the north and Parker Avenue to the east. This area is envisioned as a center for retail and other commercial uses with a high level of design and construction. As this area is a central focal point in the City of Meriden, as well as a gateway into Downtown, emphasis should be placed on good building and site design coupled with traffic and streetscape improvements. Current land uses in this area include retail, offices, two-family residences, multifamily housing, institutional uses and industrial uses. At present, the zoning in this area is primarily C-1 “Central Commercial” with a small area of R-4 “Multifamily Residential” in the northwest corner of the area.

The intent of this District should be to expand the mass of commercial uses in this area with an additional design emphasis.

### ***South Meriden Village District***

This future land use designation envisions the highlighted portion of South Meriden receiving a “Village District” designation per Section 8-2j of the Connecticut General Statutes. This designation by the Zoning Commission would allow for greater control over design elements such as building placement, protection of public views, landscaping, and protection of the historic community character of the South Meriden area. The designation is centered around Main Street (South Meriden) from Hanover Avenue to Cheshire Road, along with a portion of Hanover Avenue south of Main Street (South Meriden) and a small portion of River Road near Cutlery Avenue. It also extends south of Main Street (South Meriden) to encompass properties along Camp Street, Webb Street and Milk Street. At present, this area has a wide variety of land uses, including single-family and multifamily residential, retail businesses, private institution uses, and educational uses. This area is currently zoned NCDD “Neighborhood Commercial Design District”, C-2 “General Commercial” and R-1 “Single Family Residential”.

### ***South Mountain Road Area***

This special use designation envisions a mixture of uses that will generate economic benefits for the City of Meriden along with residential development of an appropriate scale in a development pattern that maximizes the retention of undisturbed open space and protects natural resources. The former NRG site, with the exception of the electric generation plant parcel itself, is the area of Meriden designated for this type of mixed-use. As of summer 2019, the NRG plant building and its accompanying 22.6 acres were recently purchased, but no plans have been drafted for approval by the City.

If this property were ever to be developed, the City should ensure that high natural values of the site are conserved and that a significant portion of natural undisturbed lands should be dedicated as open space prior to lease, sale or further development of any part of the site. The areas that should be protected are generally exterior areas to include ridgeline/ridgeline setback areas, forested boundary areas with high visibility, and habitat and trail

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corridors; also to include riparian wetland and floodplain corridor areas that extend to the interior. An open space map should be prepared to delineate specific areas for conservation.

To ensure that high natural values of the site are comprehensively conserved, the following guidelines for protected open space are provided:

- Generally, exterior site areas with substantial corridors (at least 250 feet in width) that will promote habitat viability.
- Habitat and trail corridors along the northern and western boundaries of the site.
- Riparian corridors and an enlarged area north/south/west of the vernal pool.
- A northern corridor open space would allow for trail linkage to open spaces located adjacently in Berlin, and to the Boys Club and the western portion of the City-owned former Westvaco site.
- A western corridor open space would maintain natural linkage to the regional “blue” Metacomet trail and link to the other described projected open spaces on the site.
- Generally, areas on the south side of South Mountain Road.
- Approximately 144.5 acres (50%) of land should be part of developed taxpaying projects.

Any development will be strictly regulated per design standards to be adopted by the City Council. These standards are to ensure the preservation of the natural environment and to ensure compatibility and minimize visual impacts. Such standards will include restrictions on height and the requirement of locating structures in areas that due to elevation, ground cover, fauna is not visible off-site. If the visibility of any proposed development is ever an issue, techniques such as visual simulation or other modeling of a proposed building could be utilized. Generally, development areas should be located within the interior of the site. Areas on the north side of South Mountain Road and within the center of the site are envisioned for industrial/office flex building space, and residential development is envisioned for the northeastern development part of the site.

### ***North I-91 Preston Avenue Area***

The area’s excellent access to the interstate highway system and other state and local transportation routes make it a sensible site for regionally-oriented mixed-use development. This area is presently zoned S-R “Suburban Residential” and PEOD “Planned Executive Office District”. There may be potential for generating some economic development based on the proximity to I-691 through zoning some of this area Interstate Development District (IDD) or some other special zoning district.

### ***Berlin Turnpike***

This classification encompasses properties along both sides of the Berlin Turnpike from the Route 5/Route 15 merge to the Berlin town line. At the present time, the Berlin Turnpike area is a mix of retail, office, automotive, food service, and general commercial uses, as well as industrial properties and several residential properties. This area has changed and developed in a piecemeal manner over an extended period of time. The intention of this future land use designation is to encourage the City to apply for a grant to study and plan for development that is cohesive, well-designed and economically beneficial to the City of Meriden.

### Other Uses

#### *Institutional (Public and Private)*

This land use category includes City-owned facilities such as schools, fire stations, and other municipal facilities, state facilities and land holdings, libraries, senior centers, the historical society and public infrastructure such as the sewage treatment plant. It also includes private institutional uses such as cemeteries, churches, fraternal organizations, nonprofits, community-based organizations, and other and other private institutional properties and holdings.

#### *Desirable Open Space*

This land use designation is assigned to properties identified in the draft Plan of Conservation and Development's "Parks, Open Space and Recreation" section as logical extensions of existing open space assets and/or provide unique opportunities to preserve and protect important natural features within the City of Meriden, or will enhance the City's ability to control flooding. The City should not encourage more than very low-density residential development in such areas that are privately-owned.

#### *Existing Trails and Proposed Linear Trails*

These designations illustrate the locations of current trail systems within the City, as well as proposed trails recommended for creation in the future.

### Environmental Focus Areas

#### *Ridgeline Protection Area*

This designation highlights the areas of Meriden where specific zoning regulations have already been adopted to protect the basalt (traprock) ridgelines within the City. These areas include Beseck Mountain, Lamentation Mountain, Cathole Mountain, South Mountain, East Peak and West Peak.

#### *Aquifer Protection Area*

This designation identifies critical water supply areas requiring protection from pollution by managing land use. The State of Connecticut DEP has drafted regulations that limit the types of land uses that can be sited in a protection area that coincides with a well recharge area of an aquifer.

#### *Watercourse Focus Areas*

Watercourse Focus Areas are delineated by a 100 foot buffer radius around all watercourses in the City of Meriden, not including intermittent watercourses. Within these areas, development along waterways should be regulated to ensure the protection of groundwater and surface water resources in addition to and in conjunction with protection provided through the Inland Wetlands Regulations. As opportunities arise, efforts should be undertaken to provide open space corridors and/or linkages to existing open space areas. Designation of property within these Watercourse Focus Areas does not indicate an intent to acquire or to provide public access on private property as part of a greenway. A variety of approaches to natural resource protection and open space enhancement

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should be used to meet overall conservation goals. It should be further noted that the underlying land use designation determines the use of the property. Inclusion in a Watercourse Focus Area provides guidance to municipal boards, commissions and agencies in the review of proposals for properties within these areas to achieve the natural resource protection goals of the Plan of Conservation and Development.



## 10.5. ACTION AGENDA

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This POCD represents not only a product of much time and effort, but also the beginning of a process which involves changing existing conditions, regulations, and procedures in the City. Some of these changes will require further, more detailed studies and plans. Sustained public involvement is necessary to bring the items in this plan to fruition.

In order to implement the various recommendations contained in this Plan of Conservation and Development, the POCD Steering Committee shall develop an Action Agenda as a policy implementation tool. The Action Agenda shall identify goals, action items, and other policies. Each action item, shall be a specific task with an identifiable responsible party (the “lead agency”) and proposed timeframe.

The lead agency is the agency which, by the nature of its mission and authority, is the logical party to spearhead the implementation of a particular proposal. Many proposals will of course involve multiple agencies. The nature of activity required of a lead agency will vary depending on the type of recommendation. Some activities involve budget commitments and capital expenses and some require advocacy and promotion, while others call for administrative action.

Priorities shall be classified as ongoing, short term (1-3 years), mid-term (4-6 years) and long-term (7-10 years). Many of the short-term items may already be scheduled into the City’s Capital Improvement Program or may be activities and policies that are in place and need to be continued. Some short-term recommendations may have evolved as part of the planning process and need to be inserted into the Capital Improvement Program.

Mid-term and Long-term priorities are activities which are considered important, but placed “down the road” in recognition of the fact that limited resources are available both in terms of time and money to implement the Plan. Mid-term and long-term capital projects may also require some intermediate planning and design activity before project implementation can take place.

The implementation schedule shall be presented in the form of a “To Do” list. This form will make it easy for the Planning Commission to review and report on implementation progress as a component of their annual report. The Director of Development and Enforcement shall prepare annually by September 30th a report that will be submitted to the Mayor, City Manager, City Council, and the Planning Commission summarizing the implementation status of the Action Agenda of the adopted Plan of Conservation and Development. The report shall discuss the status of each of the Action Items and recommend actions that need to be taken to assure implementation of the Plan of Conservation and Development.