

City of Meriden
Plan of Conservation and Development

Date: July 16, 2019

Project Name: Meriden Plan of Conservation and Development (POCD)
Subject: POCD Steering Committee Meeting #4

Meeting Location: Meriden City Council Chambers
Meeting Date: July 11, 2019

Participants:

Planning Commission
Enrico Buccilli, Chair
Lenny Rich
Steven Iovanna
Kevin Curry
Laura Uhrig

EDHZ Committee
Dan Brunet
Sonya Jelks
Michael Cardona

City Staff
Renata Bertotti – Director, City Planning
Tim Coon, City Manager
Paul Dickson, City Planning
Joe Feest, Economic Development

Consultant Team
Frank Fish, Principal, BFJ Planning
Noah Levine, Senior Associate, BFJ Planning
Ariana Branchini, Planner, BFJ Planning

The purpose of this meeting was to discuss the status of the Plan of Conservation and Development and to review the public outreach effort to date. BFJ Planning met with members of the POCD Committee and shared a snapshot of preliminary results from the public survey and opportunities and challenges that have come up through focus group meetings. The Committee discussed priorities that have begun to emerge and a vision for Meriden in the next ten years.

1. Opening of the meeting

- Enrico Buccilli called the meeting to order.
- Renata Bertotti did a roll call.

2. Schedule Review

- Frank Fish, BFJ Planning discussed upcoming dates in September – a second workshop will include a presentation to the public of the draft plan.
- The draft will be sent to the regional planning agency (SCRCOG) for their review within 60 days. Frank and Renata have briefed the SCRCOG.

- The goal will be to set a committee meeting date in September prior to the workshop to discuss what will then be presented to the public.
- The plan chapters are currently being drafted. Drafts will be provided to the committee prior to the Committee meeting and public meeting in September.

3. Public Outreach Overview

- Noah Levine, BFJ Planning discussed public outreach to date, including takeaways from the public survey and initial focus group discussions.
- BFJ has conducted focus group meetings with ten or so groups, including stakeholders and staff in transportation, community facilities, land use and zoning, good governance, and others. There will also be a meeting with a group of developers to learn more about their perspective and where they see opportunities and issues in the city.
- The public survey has been up for a few weeks, and has over 800 responses. The survey will be open for another week or so, which is up for discussion. The plan is to send out a final e-blast to publicize the survey before closing it July 18, which would be one month.
- The survey was sent out via e-blast and was publicized on Facebook, in the newspaper, sent to committee members to connect to their constituents, was also shared on Peach Jar and there were hard copies located at the library, senior center, and Casa Boricua. This wasn't done by mailing.
 - o Question from the Committee: 800 people doesn't seem like a large enough sample size for a City of Meriden's size. Wouldn't a mailing be more effective? Could we have sent this out with the tax or water bill?
 - Most people take the survey online; it is an effective way of getting the word out. The numbers could be improved in the next week or so. BFJ views the survey as one of several ways to get word out. Universal mailers are expensive to do. This survey is more economical and efficient in terms of tabulating results. With a limited budget, survey monkey is an effective tool for the POCD.
- Noah Levine reviewed the results of the survey to date:
 - o Many people who took the survey lived in the southern portion of the City and have lived in Meriden for a long time.
 - o Discussion of priorities that emerged from the survey included – road maintenance, increasing the tax base, filling vacant spaces, making Meriden a destination, attract employers to create jobs, perception of safety, improve transit options, and others.
 - o There is a need for improved connectivity within the City and to the surrounding towns.
 - o Many results of the survey show how the City is perceived, even if they're not in line with analysis, it is important to keep in mind that this is how the public views Meriden and where the issues and opportunities lie.
 - o Respondents were more or less evenly split between engaged and not engaged. In order to promote more civic engagement, suggestions included increasing social media presence, creating a Meriden events webpage, hosting events at parks throughout the City, and publicizing meetings and outreach efforts further in advance. Many people are currently getting their information on Facebook, others through newspapers and Meriden's website.

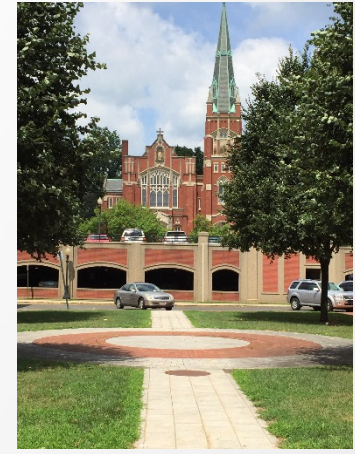
City of Meriden
Plan of Conservation and Development

- Renata Bertotti, City Planning discussed other public outreach efforts that will be going on over the summer: BFJ is preparing a packet for the City to disseminate at City events in order to get the word out as an additional outreach effort.
- Noah Levine discussed some of the key takeaways from public outreach efforts and analysis to date:
 - The Committee received a handout that reflects major priorities that should be laid out in the vision for the plan. The goals and opportunities that the Plan reflects should follow these bullet points as a roadmap.
 - Committee discussion:
 - Meriden’s billboard – public service announcements.
 - Looking at the corridors – E/W Main – adding an overlay zone to make the lot depth more accessible for businesses. These are key corridors that need to be utilized for economic development.
 - BFJ has discussed this potential recommendation in house and is meeting with the development community to understand the corridors from their perspective.
 - Research on mall re-usage – The future of Westfield mall was discussed regarding concern of any future closure. What have other communities done for mall re-use? What are some thoughts on what the City could do?
 - BFJ will discuss this issue and present potential case studies. Experiential retail could give new life to the mall. The zoning should accommodate this. Potentially look at medical, education, other uses that should be allowed in order to keep the mall in place and maintain their tax contribution to the City.
 - What if the mall becomes completely vacant, what can the City do with the space? This would not be experiential retail.
 - A potential case study could be in Cape Cod where the mall was converted to residential.
 - Malls have taken a weak anchor and replaced it with non-retail – e.g. a community college.
 - Question of whether helping the mall hurts the downtown. The City may want to think more about adaptive reuse and then think about ways to fill vacant spaces in the downtown, even altering a vacant church for example into something that would bring in tax dollars.
 - There is a major expense to environmental remediation and the cost of refurbishing.
 - Another strategy could be to support the artist community, encouraging work-live housing and co-working spaces.
 - Meriden needs to think about the mall, the downtown, and the corridors. These are all different market places and they’re all needed in terms of economic development.
 - Economic development chapter will address the mall and a need for flexibility, as well as issues in the corridors and downtown.

- Westfield has met with the city and is aggressively pursuing other potential uses. It is a concern for them and is a priority for the city.
- Meriden has highways that split the city into quadrants – the east and west sides need to be evaluated differently based on who can get to each area.
 - There are opportunities in each of the areas of Meriden
- The mall and hospital serve the region – highways also make Meriden well-located within the region to be “regionalized.”
- How do these priorities and goals become operationalized?
 - Each chapter will have goals and recommendations. These are just big picture priority items that will help focus recommendations. All of the recommendations will be summarized in the action agenda, including who is responsible and when they should be implemented.
 - The actionable part comes after the plan is finished. Regulations can be written, capital funding can be allocated, etc.

4. Next steps

- Close the public survey next week– the Committee thinks with additional outreach the survey can close July 18. Members of the Committee said they would share on Facebook, give the survey to State representatives who have newsletters that go out to all residents. We can also reopen the survey in the future if the committee is interested.
- Members of the Committee should communicate comments through Renata. No meeting will be held in August. Renata and Paul will review chapters and send them to the committee for their comments.
- Dates for next meetings:
 - September 5 at 6 pm – tentative date for a Committee meeting to review all draft chapters, discussion of issues prior to posting online. If members of the committee can’t be available for the 5th they should discuss any edits with Renata and Paul.
 - September 26 at 7pm – tentative public workshop date at BOE building.
- BFJ will further revise the draft plan following the workshop and then send the draft to the region.
- There will be a final public hearing following the region’s review and revisions to the draft. Then the plan can move towards adoption.



City of Meriden Plan of Conservation and Development

**POCD Steering Committee
Meeting
July 11, 2019**

AGENDA

1. Review Schedule
2. Process for Draft POCD Chapter Review
3. Recap of Public Outreach
4. Next steps

SCHEDULE

		2019											2020
Description		February	March	April	May	June	July	August	September	October	November	December	January
Task 1	Project Management and Community Engagement	[Blue bar spanning February to January]											
1.1	Plan Oversight Committee Meetings (8)	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
1.2	Public Workshops (2)			■					■				
1.3	Stakeholder Meetings			[Blue bar from April to July]									
1.5	Plan Website & Plan Survey	[Blue bar from February to March]			[Blue bar from May to June]								
Task 2	Data Collection and Technical Analysis	[Blue bar spanning February to January]											
1.1	Project Kick-Off and Identification of Major Trends	●											
1.2	Data Review	[Blue bar from February to March]											
a.	Review of existing planning and related documents	[Blue bar from February to March]											
b.	GIS and statistical data review	[Blue bar from February to March]											
Task 3	Draft Plan Chapters	[Blue bar spanning February to August]											
3.1	Chapter 1: Introduction, Planning Process and Regional Context		[Blue bar from March to April]										
3.2	Chapter 2: Demographics		[Blue bar from March to April]										
3.3	Chapter 3: Land Use and Zoning			[Blue bar from April to May]									
3.4	Chapter 4: Housing			[Blue bar from April to May]									
3.5	Chapter 5: Economic Development				[Blue bar from May to June]								
3.6	Chapter 6: Transportation and Circulation				[Blue bar from May to June]								
3.7	Chapter 7: Parks, Recreation and Open Space					[Blue bar from June to July]							
3.8	Chapter 8: Environment and Sustainability					[Blue bar from June to July]							
3.9	Chapter 9: Community Facilities and Infrastructure						[Blue bar from July to September]						
3.10	Chapter 10: Future Land Use Plan						[Blue bar from July to September]						
Task 4	Final Plan	[Blue bar spanning February to January]											
4.1	Executive Summary and Action Agenda								[Blue bar from September to October]				
4.2	Draft POCD								[Blue bar from September to October]				
4.3	Public Hearing											▲	
4.4	Revise/ Finalize POCD for Plan Adoption												[Blue bar from December to January]

PROCESS FOR DRAFT POCD CHAPTER REVIEW

- Group 1 (July):
Introduction, Demographics, Land Use & Zoning, Housing, Economic Development (Ch. 1-5)
- Group 2 (August):
Transportation & Circulation, Parks/Recreation/Open Space, Environment & Sustainability, Community Facilities & Infrastructure (Ch. 6-9)
- Group 3 (September) :
Future Land Use Plan and Action Agenda (Ch. 10)

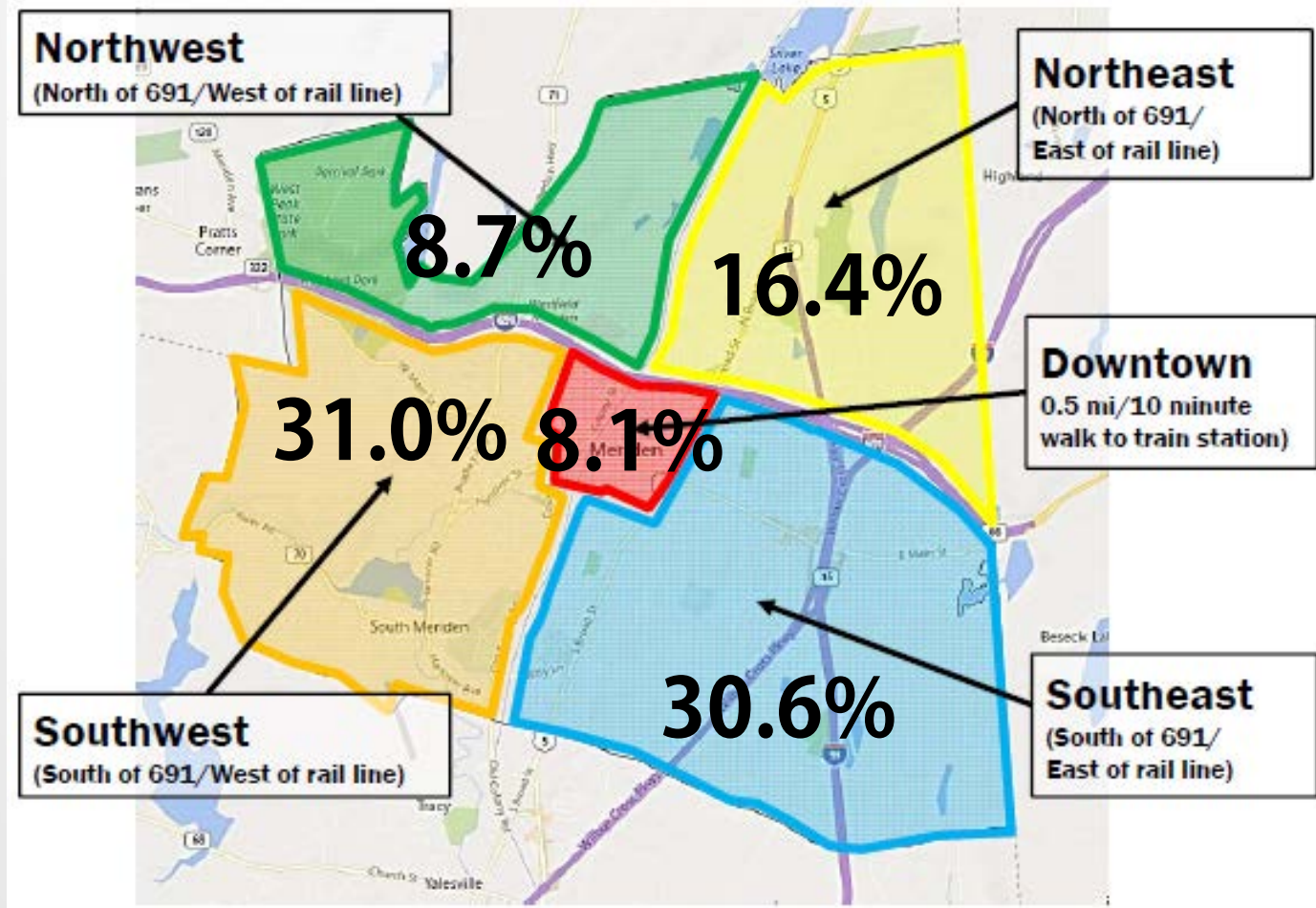
STAKEHOLDER OUTREACH

- Focus Group / Stakeholder List:
 - Traffic and Safety
 - Utilities and Public Works/Engineering
 - Land Use and Zoning
 - Parks & Open Space
 - Neighborhood & Cultural Resources
 - Good Governance
 - Economic Development
 - Health and Human Services
 - SCRCOG

 - Developers (upcoming)

PUBLIC SURVEY – PRELIMINARY RESULTS

Q1: Where do you Live?



2.2%
Elsewhere,
New Haven
County

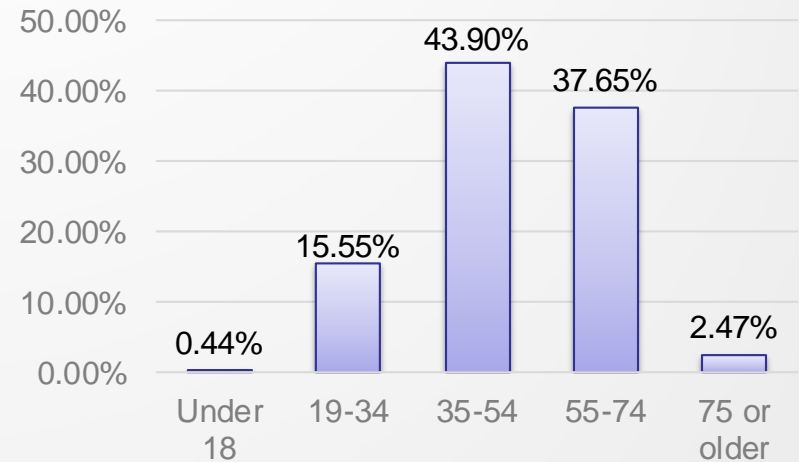
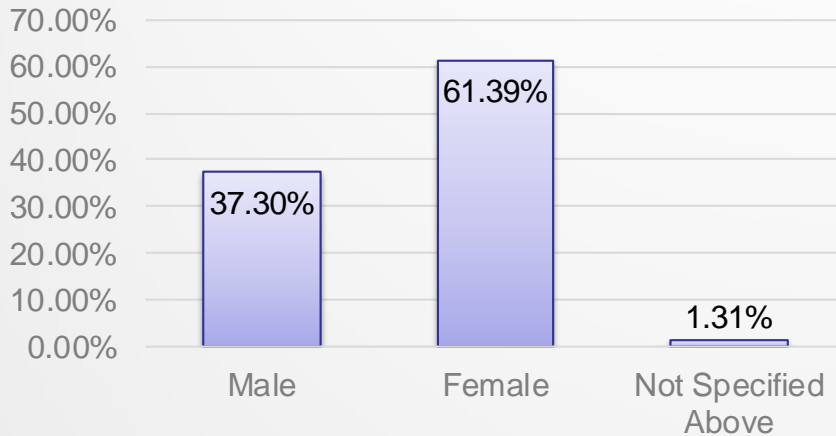
3.1%
Elsewhere

Q2: Where do you work?

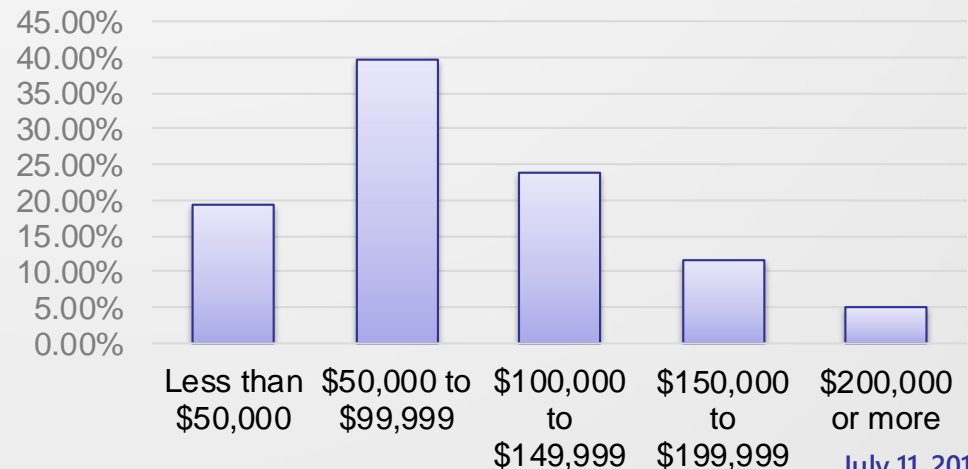
- **30% - Meriden**
- **23% - Elsewhere in Ct**
- **18% - I do not work/retired**
- **17% - New Haven County**

PUBLIC SURVEY – PRELIMINARY RESULTS

Profile of Respondents

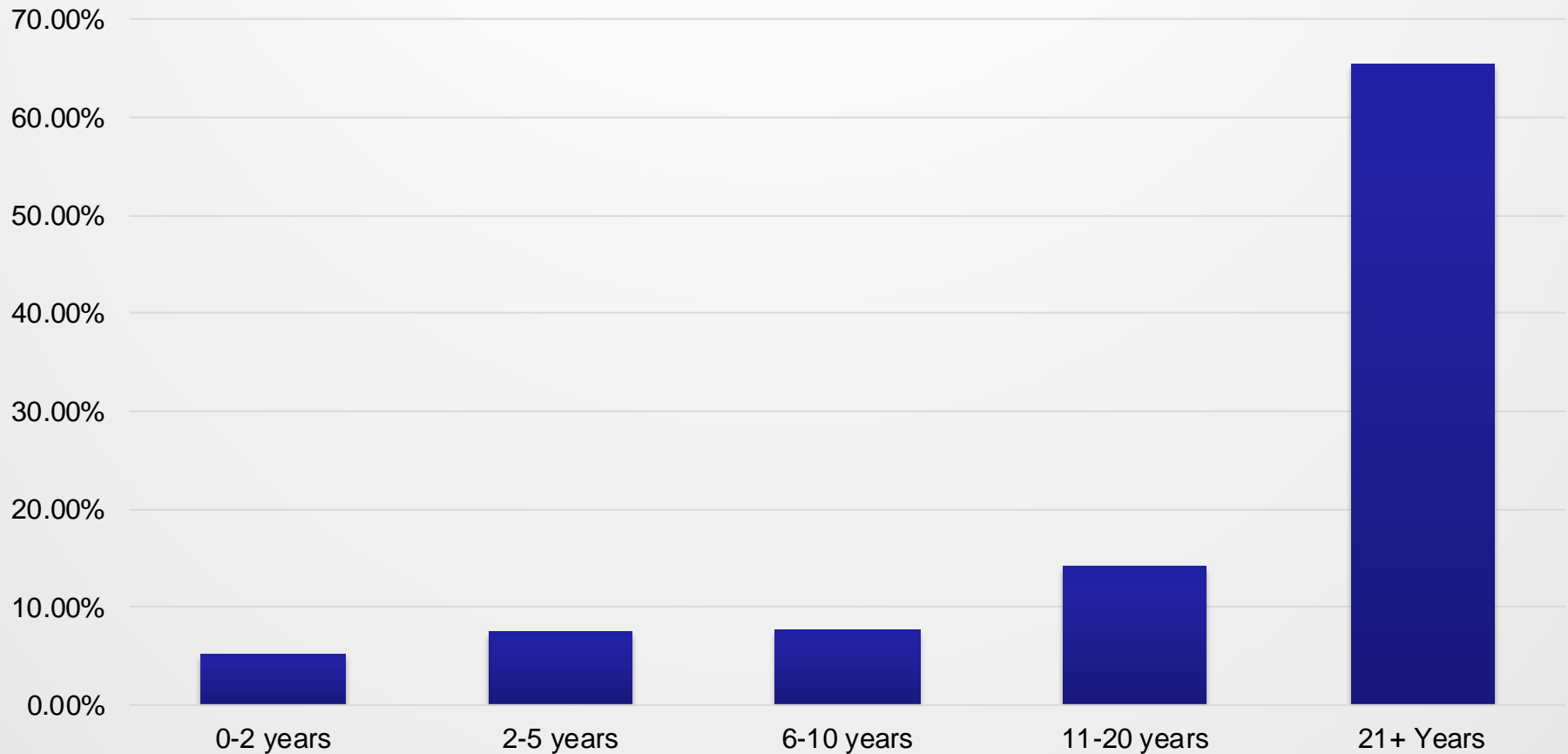


65% Employed full time
10% working part time
17% retired



PUBLIC SURVEY – PRELIMINARY RESULTS

Q26: If you are a resident, how long have you lived here?



PUBLIC SURVEY – PRELIMINARY RESULTS

Q3: What words come to mind when you think about Meriden?

- Good Schools
- Potential
- Recovering
- Working class community
- Diverse
- Low-income
- Inner city
- Run down
- Dangerous
- High taxes

PUBLIC SURVEY – PRELIMINARY RESULTS

Q4: What is your biggest priority for Meriden in the next 10 years?

- Increase tax base.
- More diverse cultural and entrepreneurial growth.
- Vibrant downtown, increase in property value, positive image.
- Complete walking trails.
- Clean it up, fill vacant buildings without building new.
- Less crime.
- Make Meriden a spot for business and tourism. Get people from other cities and towns to come here instead of taking business to Wallingford or Hartford.
- Need retail growth.
- Road maintenance.

Q5: Which housing/community character goals should be prioritized by Meriden in the next 10 years?

Top 3 Responses:

1. Make the downtown a destination to live and shop
2. Encourage reuse/redevelopment of vacant properties
3. Expand programs that encourage owners to reinvest in their property

Other Public Comments:

- Economic development that doesn't involve low income housing.
- Encourage reuse/redevelopment and improve blight enforcement
- Take vacant houses down.

Q6: Are there cultural amenities that are needed or should be expanded in Meriden?

Common Responses:

- More amenities for all ages, not only elderly and middle aged adults. Movie theater, something for families/ Roller skating, movies, other entertainment for the youth.
- Make the library a safer place to visit. Library is too out of sight.
- Meriden has no major restaurants or major attractions everything is in Wallingford it seems.
- Repurposing blighted properties could result in more of space for our community.
- Love the addition of the green - should be used more.

Q7: What is the most significant quality-of-life issue that you face?

1. Maintenance of roadways - 29%
2. Safety/crime - 27%
3. Properties in disrepair/blight - 17%

Other Public Comments:

- Taxes
- Loitering
- Litter
- Community pride

Q8: Which economic development goals should be prioritized by Meriden in the next 10 years?

Top 3 Responses

1. Attract major employers to facilitate job creation
2. Support redevelopment and reinvestment in Downtown
3. Support small businesses, start-ups and artists industry

Q9: What improvements in the downtown area would make you more likely to visit?

Top 3 Responses

1. More dining/food opportunities
2. Easier access to parking
3. Better public transportation service

Other Public Comments:

- Condition of West Main Street.
- More street activities to interest people to visit.
- Reduce crime, make it feel safer.
- A brewery with street art would be huge for downtown.
- Nobody likes parking garages.
- More experiential type retail.

Q10: Which community facility goals should be prioritized by Meriden in the next 10 years?

Top 3 Responses

1. Provide the highest level of educational services to students
2. Improve and enhance emergency services (police and fire) and expand community policing initiatives
3. Improve protections against flooding

Other Public Comments:

- Protect, enhance and promote our signature parks and natural resources
- Invite a secondary trade training facility to town (i.e. training for plumbers, carpenters, electricians.)
- Add neighborhood policing.
- High priority on health needs but we have plenty of social service already.

Q11: Which park and open space goals should be prioritized by Meriden in the next 10 years?

Top 3 Responses

1. Protect Meriden's landscape and unique topography
2. Maintain existing facilities
3. Provide a system of linkages (i.e. trails and sidewalks) connecting open space to neighborhoods

Other Public Comments:

- Install garbage cans at Hubbard park
- Take care of what we already have rather than new investment in open space.
- Partnerships with other agencies to assist with running quality programs.
- Promote native species and removing invasive plant species.
- Give people reasons / events to visit Hubbard, Center Green, Giuffurida.

Q12: Which transportation/mobility goals should be prioritized by Meriden in the next 10 years?

Top 3 Responses

1. Maintain and reinvest in City-owned roadways
2. Make it easier/safer to walk
3. Provide a system of linkages (i.e. additional stops, routes, and sidewalks) connecting public transit to neighborhoods

Other Public Comments:

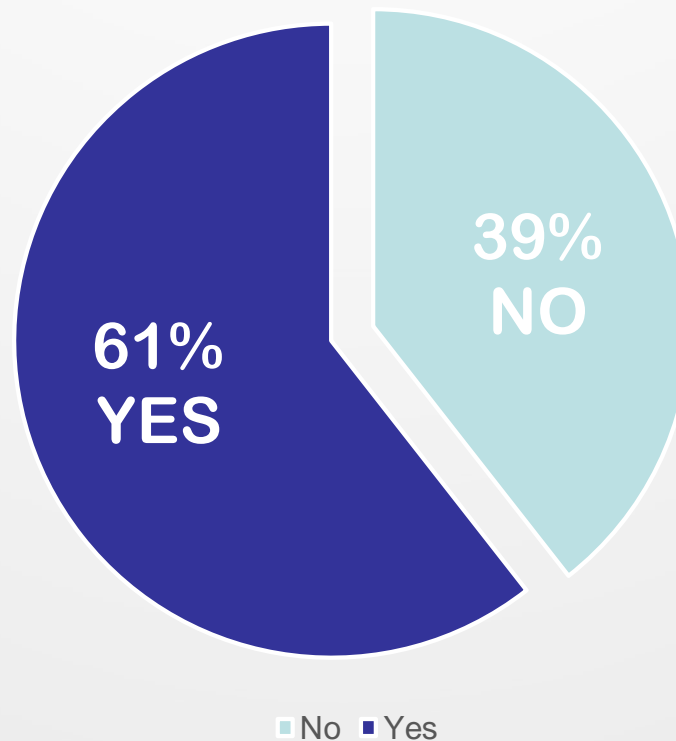
- More transportation options. Consider trolley system
- Discourage left turns on East Main Street
- Make it easier/safer to bike
- Improve road condition condition.
- Coordinate lights downtown

Q13: Where do you think pedestrian safety is an issue and can be improved?

- East Main St from Broad to City Hall
- Colony and W Main
- West Main Street to Hubbard Park
- Crosswalk timings downtown (i.e. Hanover to West Main intersection).
- Hanover Road
- Need sidewalks at the end of Oregon Road near red bridge trail, as well as River Rd. It would be much safer for kids walking to school or anyone looking to walk/bike from Main St in South Meriden to the more commercial areas and the schools.
- In front of all schools

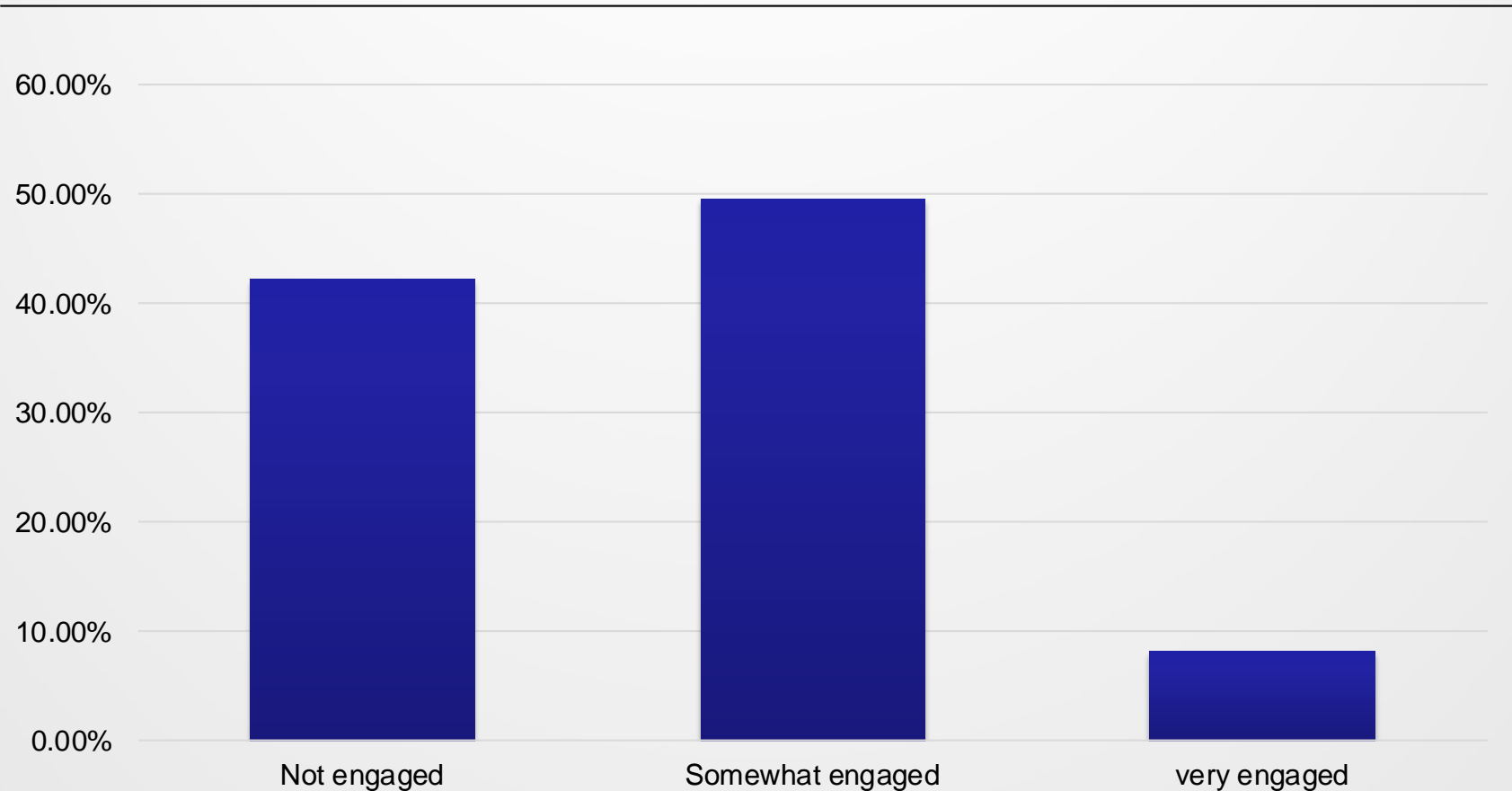
PUBLIC SURVEY – PRELIMINARY RESULTS

Q14: Should the City encourage more bicycling in Meriden?



PUBLIC SURVEY – PRELIMINARY RESULTS

Q15: Do you feel like you are engaged with city sponsored activities?



Q16: What should the City do to promote more civic engagement?

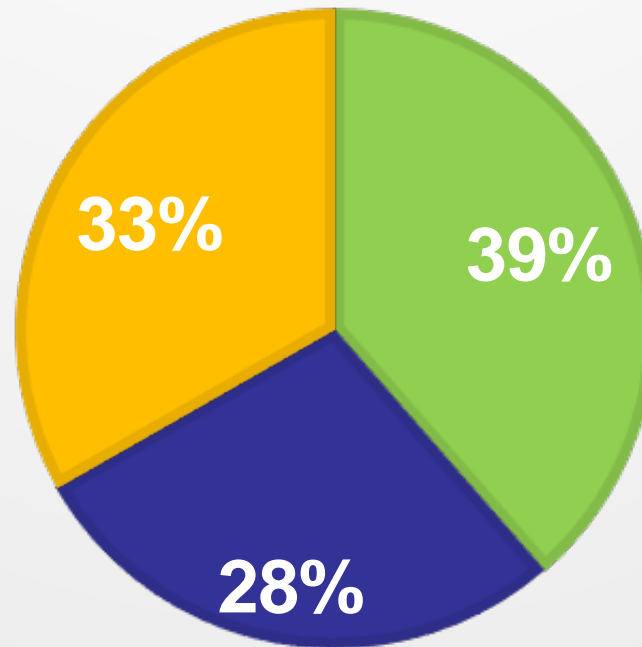
Responses

- Work with local businesses and organizations, use library, connect through social media, connect with school systems.
- Host events at different parks throughout the city.
- Send emails to residents and suggestion box.
Pick 1 a month discuss it at a city council meeting.
- Encourage our LatinX community to become involved.
- Diversify representation on committees and boards.
- Publicize more and well in advance. Promote events visually with signs in addition to web and social media.
- Open air meetings on the green in early evenings.
- A “Meriden Events” webpage.

PUBLIC SURVEY – PRELIMINARY RESULTS

Q17: Do you think the City should devote additional staff/resources to market and promote cultural programs community and cultural events?

■ Yes ■ No ■ Don't know/need more information



Q18: Which is your most reliable source of information about community events in Meriden?

Top 3 Responses

1. Facebook - 53%
2. News (The Record Journal, Patch.com, etc.) - 24%
3. Meriden's website - 8%

Q19: How would you prefer to receive information about community events in Meriden?

Top Responses

1. Facebook - 35.60%
2. E-mail updates/newsletter from the City - 27.35%
3. News (The Record Journal, Patch.com, etc.) - 14.47%
4. Meriden's website - 10.56%

POP UP MEETINGS

- Concert series on the green
- Hubbard Park August 4 & 6

PUBLIC OUTREACH – PRELIMINARY VISION

- **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 for the Betterment of all of Meriden's Residents**

PUBLIC OUTREACH – PRELIMINARY VISION

- **Maximize the value and use of 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.**

NEXT STEPS

- Schedule next POCD meeting
- Set date for 2nd Public Workshop