

Brownfields Success Story

Meriden Green

Meriden, CT

A 14-acre park in the City of Meriden that was once home to a variety of industrial operations has both revived a central part of the downtown and ensured it is no longer threatened by flooding. Meriden made this possible by integrating the cleanup of the once-blighted area with climate adaptation infrastructure that will improve the ability of this city of 60,000 residents to deal with future climate-related flooding and storms.

Meriden was a vibrant manufacturing center due to the availability of water power and the railroad constructed in the 1800s. Unfortunately, by the mid-1900s the rising cost of business and increased competition caused a dramatic decline in the city's manufacturing base, leaving behind old, underutilized, and often contaminated buildings.

Priming the Property for Redevelopment

The site that for decades was known as the Meriden Hub has been renamed Meriden Green and encompasses an area that was formerly the center of Meriden's industrial and commercial activity. In the past, this area was used for metal products manufacturing, glass-cutting, lumber yards, automotive sales and service, gasoline dispensing, dry cleaners, plumbing and pipe fitting, and a machine shop. After the decline of these businesses, the region's first mall was built on the site in the 1970s. Because Harbor Brook flowed through the site, flooding was a concern and, in fact, flooding in the 1990s caused about \$26 million in damage that led to the mall's closure.

In 2002, Meriden formed the Blight and Brownfields Committee to address the problem of abandoned and contaminated properties in the city. The committee was made up of about two dozen stakeholders, including EPA, businesses, community organizations, universities and city and state government agencies. In 2004, the city received \$200,000 from EPA to assess the area. This grant allowed the committee to inventory the vacant and underutilized sites, consider potential uses, and assess any environmental challenges.



Meriden Green completed in 2016 (photo credit: Paul Testa).

EPA Grant Recipient:
City of Meriden

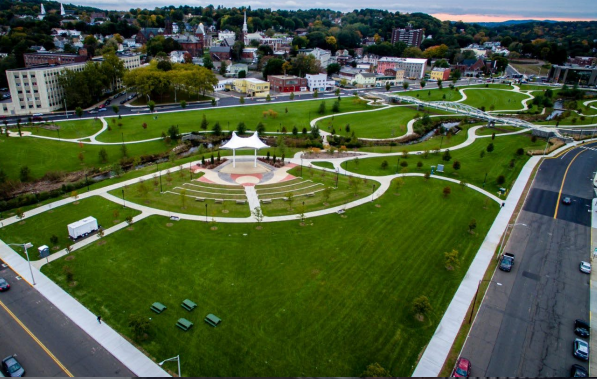
Grant Types:
Assessment Grant
Cleanup Grant

Current Use:
Public Park

Former Uses:
Industrial
Commercial



During the demolition and debris removal phase of the project (photo credit: Paul Testa).



Meriden Green from above shows the extent of the project and the significant effect revitalizing this site has had on the city (photo credit: Paul Testa).

“The Green is an integral part of the overall Flood Control effort. The Green has already reduced the impact of several large rainstorms that previously would have resulted in property damage.”

Tim Coons
Town Manager

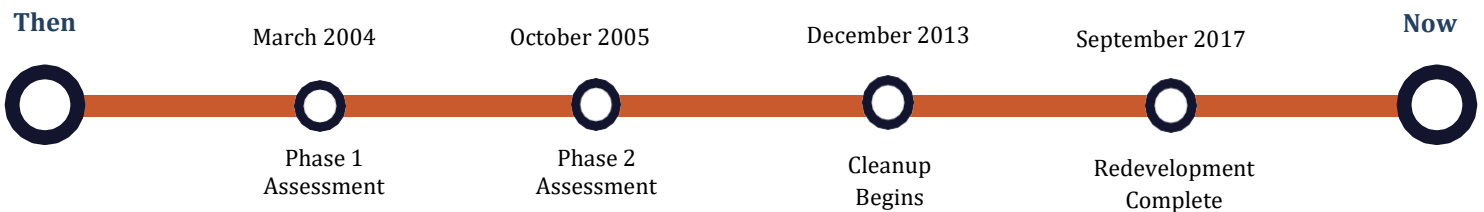
Assessments in 2005 found petroleum, asbestos, polychlorinated biphenyls, volatile organic compounds, polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons, lead, and other metals. In 2007, EPA awarded the city \$200,000 for cleanup, and with subsequent funding from the state, the city began a demolition and cleanup totaling \$2 million. In 2013, EPA awarded the city an additional \$200,000 cleanup grant for one remaining parcel. Contaminants for this parcel included semi-volatile organic compounds, volatile organic compounds, and lead. Soil was excavated and disposed of and then the area was backfilled.

The City of Meriden received over \$14 million in state and federal funds to put in place flood controls at the site. Eliminating flooding in the Harbor Brook floodplain was essential to developing Meriden’s HUB site and downtown. To reduce flooding downtown, bridges were redesigned and replaced, channels were improved, and floodplain property was acquired for storage during floods.

Today

From charrettes to workshops, community involvement was pivotal to the success of the project. With support from federal, state, and local partners, demolition and cleanup activities successfully reduced environmental impacts to the community and enabled the redevelopment to take place. The final cost of the overall project was \$14 million. In addition to the funds from EPA, the city received \$4 million in Urban Act, Brownfields Pilot, and other funds from the State of Connecticut Department of Economic and Community Development and \$8.8 million from the Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection. The city provided local funds for construction administration and flood control engineering services.

Meriden Green now includes access to open space and other public amenities such as a farmer’s market, which provides residents with fresh and healthy foods. A new public park offers gathering places and links to the regional greenway system. Adjacent to Meriden Green, a new transit center and private development are being built.



For more information:

Visit the EPA Brownfields website at www.epa.gov/brownfields or contact William Lariviere at 617-918-1231 or Lariviere.william@epa.gov