

Central Connecticut Corridor
Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy
ANNUAL UPDATE
Covering the Period ending June 30, 2007
Prepared by the Central Connecticut Regional Planning Agency
for submittal to the
United States Economic Development Administration

The following information recaps those major accomplishments which were achieved in the Corridor regarding the implementation of the Central Connecticut Corridor's Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy which was first approved on May 17, 2004, and reports on changes to the CEDS approved during FY2006-2007.

I. Economic Progress in the Corridor Since Last Year

A. BRISTOL

Since our FY2005-2006 Update various Corridor economic development efforts have progressed. In the City of BRISTOL, Phases I and II of the Southeast BRISTOL Business (industrial) Park were awarded permits from the Inland Wetlands Commission and also given permission to subdivide by the BRISTOL Planning Commission pending completion of engineering design modifications by the Public Works Department. The CT State Traffic Commission also reviewed the project and directed that Route 229 be widened for left turn lanes at the new traffic signal. Construction on Phase II will begin in May 2007.

Also in BRISTOL, the first portion of the North Main Streetscape in downtown has been substantially completed, and the City will be designing improvements for other areas in downtown for similar improvement projects. The City has also been taking steps to move forward with execution of work on the former BRISTOL Mall Site. As of May 1, 2006, only two tenants remained in the former mall site; one of which is scheduled to move on or about July 1, 2006.

Portions of the City of BRISTOL are designated HUB Zones.

B. NEW BRITAIN

The City of NEW BRITAIN reports that during the FY2006-2007 the City saw the departure of eleven companies, but sixteen new companies either started up or moved to NEW BRITAIN from another location. The result has been the creation of 91 new jobs and retention of another 154.

Portions of the City of NEW BRITAIN are designated HUB Zones. For SMART Park I, Myrtle Street, has been completed.

For SMART Park II, off of South Street, the new road - Commerce Circle - was completed and was accepted as a new street by the City. Development is underway on one of the three parcels, a 50,000 square foot office and warehouse facility for Siracusa Moving and Storage. Plans for development on the other two parcels are being finalized, with the potential for the second piece- the DATTCO parcel - to possibly begin construction before the end of the calendar year.

The old site for the Department of Motor Vehicles has been approved to move forward to become Big Sky, an exercise center.

C. PLYMOUTH

Development activity in the PLYMOUTH Business Park has picked up considerably during the past year. Prestwick Properties is constructing the first of two incubator buildings and Elm Press broke ground in late 2006 for its addition. ES Metals, Uniprise and Prestwick have all received Economic Development Commission and Planning & Zoning Commission approvals for their structures. Finally, three other manufacturers are in the planning stage for additions. Bottom line: 19,200 sq. ft. under construction; 22,800 sq. ft. approved for construction; and, 20,100 sq. ft. in pre-plan stage.

The town has been awarded grants totally \$700,000 from DECD for construction of a water booster pump station at Swicklas Court in Phase III of the park. The project is expected to be put to bid for the 2007 construction season. Phase IV of the park has been purchased by a developer whose plans are dependent upon the completion of the water pump station.

The Waterwheel Park project continues to progress. The town now controls four properties allowing for the demolition of the structure on the corner of Emmett and Main Streets. A \$350,000 grant for the park has been received from the CT Commission on Culture and Tourism. In a somewhat related matter, the town looks forward to meeting the criteria for Certified Local Government Program status through the creation of a Historic Property (the waterwheel) Commission during the summer months. Through its membership in the Brownfields Partnership, Plymouth has been approved for environmental studies of other properties not yet owned by the town.

In other activity areas, the town continues to market its Phase III park properties; participated in the second annual Chamber of Commerce Manufacturing Expo; completed the installation of new water service to the Fall Mountain area; and, initiated a study of town-wide community facilities. Additionally, the Public Works Department has re-submitted plans for intersection realignment/improvements for North St/Main Street/Agney Ave. These plans are consistent with the town's Plan of Conservation and Development. The plan also envisions comprehensive infrastructure improvements along Main St./Rt. 6 in support of the recently designated Village District zone.

D. PLAINVILLE

The Town of PLAINVILLE continues to enjoy a diverse economic base, which includes small, mid-size, and large manufacturers

consisting of General Electric, Carlingswitch (an electrical component maker), and Mott Corporation, an industrial air filter manufacturer. PLAINVILLE is also home to a number of medium and large sized construction firms, among them Walker Crane, Atlantic Pipe Corporation, National Eastern, Aiudi & Sons, LLC, and Tilcon CT, Inc., which continues to operate quarries and ancillary facilities in PLAINVILLE.

The unemployment rate in PLAINVILLE dropped from 5.6% to 4.3% while the Hartford region went from 5.7% to 4.3% for the same period from June 2005 to June 2006. Unemployment is expected to remain stable in the near term as the Town's commercial and industrial tax base expands.

During the past year, PLAINVILLE saw Connecticut Commons lose one tenant, Levitz Furniture. Taco Bell and Long John Silver restaurants were completed during the year, as was Connecticut Self Storage, a 75,000 square foot high-end self-storage facility. Tim Horton's coffee shop was completed, and the long-standing landmark restaurant, J. Timothy's, was renovated. Activity also continued in the Enterprise Zone where the State of Connecticut provides a reimbursement to the Town for local taxes for businesses located there. Limestone Business Park started construction of two 15,000 square foot buildings.

New residential housing completions for the year dropped from 24 units in FY05 to 13 units for FY06. New condominium completions for the year rose from 8 units in FY05 to 13 units for FY06. Construction is planned to start on 116 single family units at High Meadow.

II. Past Year's Economic Development Activities Related to Identified Needs and Objectives - Adjustments to the CEDS to Take Advantage of Unforeseen Opportunities/Address Unexpected Problems

A. BRISTOL

1. Current Projects - Southeast BRISTOL Business Park - infrastructure construction should begin this summer when those costs will be invoiced against its US EDA grant.
2. New Projects - no new projects submitted for this Update.

B. NEW BRITAIN

1. Current Projects
 - a. Smart Park I, Myrtle Street - received approximately \$1.5 million from the State, \$1.2 million from EPA, and some US EDA funds which assisted in the demolition work that was required. This project has since been completed.
 - b. Smart Park II off of South Street - is completed (Commerce Street) and the first tax abatement award of \$50,000 was recently granted in relation to it for a development.

- c. Pinnacle Heights Redevelopment - this project is moving forward and all the tenants have relocated; the City has obtained ownership of the property and demolition is expected to take place in the summer of 2007. The City has asked for a zone change to commercial/technology park, rather than residential.
 - d. Assisted Living Care Facility - because the Jerome Home is going to build an assisted care facility which should meet the need for this type of housing for the time being, this project is dropped from the CEDS.
 - e. Broad Street is starting reconstruction this year.
 - f. St. Claire and Lester Street project will also be under construction this year.
2. New Projects
- a. Downtown Transit Supportive Development - This project entails early phase planning for transit supportive development in the downtown area, north of the Main Street bridge over Route 72. This project derives from the NEW BRITAIN Busway Station Area Planning Study, in which two alternative concept plans were presented for the NewBrite Plaza area, a short distance north of the Busway terminus in downtown.

One concept envisions construction of a 6,000 to 10,000 seat arena for use by CCSU athletics programs and for various entertainment and other special events. The proposed arena construction would entail redevelopment of an aging shopping plaza and would be designed to better integrate the site into the urban framework. The arena concept would also incorporate commercial retail space at the street frontages and would be likely to include a parking garage, reconfiguration Clark and Winter Streets, with a through street to East Main, and the possibility of moderate-density infill residential construction.

The second alternative, if the arena project does not go forward, would entail a mixed-use housing and commercial development. This is envisioned as a mix of multi-story commercial and residential buildings on the Main and East Main Street frontages with townhouses and more moderate density development on the secondary streets of Lafayette Street and Winter Street.

The new developments would replace a substantial amount of vacant and significantly underutilized retail and office space, and create new, modern, more desirable space. Redevelopment of this area would provide an increased economic base and serve to generate retail activity near the downtown. Both projects would incorporate design elements that would serve to connect and integrate this general vicinity into the downtown center. The developments would involve public- private partnerships, leveraging private money for some portion of the development. Investment in this type of transit supportive

development would help significantly to ensure the success of the NEW BRITAIN – Hartford Busway and optimize the return on investment for state and federal monies put into the busway project .

Conclusion: Goals 2 and 3 would be met.

- b. Downtown Police Headquarters/Commercial Development - The City's current Police Headquarters building is aging and deficient in a number of ways relating to asbestos, an aged and inadequate ventilation system, and space and structural deficiencies. Numerous studies over the years have led to the conclusion that it would not be cost-effective to repair or reconstruct the existing structure. To that end a new, state of the art facility is seen as the best, most cost- effective means of meeting the department's current and future needs. After a long search and study of available locations a decision was made to plan for construction of a facility in the heart of downtown on the corner of Main and Chestnut Streets.

Aside from meeting the Police Department's needs for a modern, up-to date facility, this project gives the City several key benefits. First, it removes two unattractive, underutilized commercial buildings and replaces them with a new, high-quality, multi-story building that would enhance the appearance of the downtown. Secondly, the lower floor would be designed to accommodate quality commercial floor space, at ground floor level. This would be valuable in generating added downtown retail activity and pedestrian shopper traffic. The location is adjacent to an underutilized City parking garage, which gives the potential for a sky walk bridging the garage through the building to Main Street, increasing the value and usefulness of the garage for the entire downtown business community. Additionally, it is expected that having the Police presence directly on Main Street will have a benefit in battling the problem of perceived crime that is sometimes cited in relation to the City's downtown business climate. The multi-story facility would make efficient use of the land, and open up the former headquarters site for private sector redevelopment, for other office, and/or commercial uses, that would enhance and complement the downtown core, and add to the City's tax base.

By creating new retail floor area, and by excessing the former Police headquarters for private development, this project will serve to leverage private investment in the downtown, which is a designated Enterprise Zone. Also this select location helps to optimize the return on the previous public investments in the City's parking garage and in streetscape improvements on Main Street and the general downtown area.

Plans for the new police headquarters are included in the new downtown study which is currently in its draft form. In addition to the new police headquarters, included in the study is the potential for street

renovation, bus station relocation, a new 400,000 sq. ft. residential and commercial space, as well as a recommendation to move Charter Oak College from Central to the downtown area.

Conclusion: Goal 2 would be met.

C. PLAINVILLE

1. Current Projects

- a. Downtown Redevelopment - subject of a CERC report which outlines nearly \$1.46 million dollars of improvements to downtown infrastructure.
- b. Water Pollution - the town's wastewater treatment plant requires upgrading and, until that work is completed, treatment plant capacity will limit the town's growth and economic development.
- c. White Oak Property - This property comprises 12.6 acres within the central commercial area of PLAINVILLE with frontage on West Main Street (CT Route 372). Until recently the property has been used as a construction business and yard, with heavy equipment used in bridge-building and other large construction projects operating from the property. The property borders the Pequabuck River, a tributary to the Farmington River, and is currently for sale. Situated close to the heart of PLAINVILLE's central commercial district, the property offers significant opportunities for redevelopment as a mixed use center featuring retail and other consumer-oriented businesses, higher density housing, and recreation. With PLAINVILLE struggling to "reinvent" and revitalize its commercial core, this property offers the potential to serve as a catalyst for such revitalization. Its frontage on both West Main Street and the Pequabuck River presents a unique opportunity to connect these underutilized and untapped resources and shape this area into a modern "lifestyle center" in PLAINVILLE's historic downtown.
- d. New Britain Avenue "Chun" property - Owned by the Chung Family Realty Partnership LLC, this 9.55 acre parcel contains several vacant commercial buildings in deteriorating condition. Several of the buildings were used until recently for automotive services such as transmission repair, body work, etc. The property is known to have soil contamination, and Phase I and II assessments have been completed. The property is situated on the north side of New Britain Avenue (CT Route 372) from the Connecticut Commons shopping center. It is zoned general commercial. It offers the potential for retail and consumer-oriented redevelopment that creates a synergistic relationship with Connecticut Commons and other retail businesses on New Britain Avenue.

2. New Project - Robertson Airport - Home to one of the busiest corporate and private aircraft facilities in central Connecticut - Robertson Airport - Plainville retains the advantage of providing air service to many of the surrounding communities. Robertson Airport, run by Interstate Aviation Inc., maintains a 3,612-foot asphalt, lighted runway and a 30-by-30-foot helipad for private and commercial usage. Averaging 162 daily flights, as well as providing aircraft storage and repair services, Robertson plays a vital role in central Connecticut's

growing economy. The Town of Plainville has contracted with a consultant to study the feasibility of purchasing this facility.

Conclusion: Goals 1, 2, 3, and 4 would be met.

D. PLYMOUTH

1. Current Projects

- a. Plymouth Business Park - Phase IV - this 8.2 acre parcel has been conveyed to a developer whose plans are pending. The town has received a signed grant agreement for \$500,000 toward the water system pump station booster. An additional \$200,000 is in process from DECD. The Maguire Group has completed 95% of the design for 2007 construction.
- b. Terryville Business District - the town acquired a dilapidated structure at 262 Main Street which it demolished for the waterwheel park project. The town is considering filing an application for Small Cities funds for infrastructure improvements and neighborhood amenities for that portion of the Village District eligible per the 2000 Census.
- c. 33 South Main Street - still privately held, there has been virtually no activity at this site during the past year. The town's interests in facilitating re-use remain unchanged.
- d. 4 Williams Street – another site of interest to the town. However, it too is privately held with no activity despite some developer inquiries.
- e. 100 South Riverside Avenue – the town has been advised of the owner's (SPX Corp) intentions to demolish all structures during the Summer of 2007. A cleared site may open up new opportunities for economic development activity. This remains an important site in the future of Plymouth.

2. New Projects – PLYMOUTH does not have any new projects to submit at this time for the FY 07-08 update; however, the Community Facilities Study, which is currently underway, is expected to recommend projects for which funding assistance will be necessary.

III. Evaluation of Effectiveness of Meeting Goals

The CEDS includes the following annual “qualitative and quantitative benchmarks, for each of the goals, with their associated objectives, [which] can be used to determine how well outcomes are achieved to indicate how successfully the Corridor is achieving its economic goals, and to provide guidance for making adjustments, if necessary:

- A. “Create and submit a Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy to EDA - meet the required date of 6/30, each year, for submission of a CEDS Update to EDA.” - we are meeting that goal thus far into the program which it is understood will require the submission of a completely new CEDS after the five years of our current CEDS has run its course in June of 2009.
- B. “Attendance and participation at CEDS meetings is an important part of the CEDS process so the measurable indicator is

Average Attendance.” Although attendance of our full membership has been a challenge, the average attendance of our various represented interest groups is “satisfactory” in that it has been above 75%.

- C. “Submission of Data & Information from CEDS members is an important part of the process. ... indicators are [for an] ‘excellent’ [rating] submission within 1 week of request.” We are meeting that goal at an “excellent” level.
- D. “Individual community support is important. [The] measurable indicator [for] excellent [is that] all 4 communities adopt the CEDS.” We will be submitting the FY2007-2008 Update to the four communities for approval during the summer/fall of 2007 and expect the four towns to adopt the document.
- E. “A majority of the Chambers of Commerce are considering adopting the CEDS as a part of their economic development plans/program” is a requirement for an “excellent rating on this factor and has been achieved in the past. The FY2007-2008 Update will be submitted to the Chambers for their adoption during the summer/fall of 2007.

IV. Achievable Goals for the Coming Year

The following table includes those goals which were a part of the original CEDS and which remain to be competed.

Organize a bus trip to successful downtown programs for Corridor downtown merchants, bankers, and Realtors [e.g. West Hartford, New London, Watertown, Niantic, Manchester, New Haven Town Green] .	The Alliance will sponsor this event during FY2007-2008.
Work to assure that the NEW BRITAIN-Hartford busway will be constructed.	This on-going effort continues with the coordination of the CCRPA.
Work to assure that the Route 72 Extension will be constructed.	The construction bids for this project were opened in April, 2007; and commencement of construction is expected prior to the end of the calendar year.
Enhance economic development opportunities along the New Britain-Hartford busway and encourage redevelopment and adaptive reuse of brownfields and grayfields sites.	The CCRPA is co-sponsor with CRCOG of a grant application to design transportation oriented development along the corridor for the busway.