

Central Connecticut Corridor  
Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy  
ANNUAL UPDATE  
Covering the Period ending June 30, 2008  
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 FY2007-2008.

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 Phases I and II were completed in 2008. The first lot is under contract with other companies exploring construction.

Also in BRISTOL, the first portion of the North Main Streetscape in downtown was completed in 2005, and the City is 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 17 acre former BRISTOL Mall Site. The mall was demolished in the spring of 2008. A solicitation of private development has been issued and responses will be evaluated during the summer and fall of 2008.

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 Nine companies, but twenty five new companies either started up or moved to NEW BRITAIN from another location. The result has been the creation and retention of 147 jobs. Portions of the City of NEW BRITAIN are designated HUB Zones.

Work on Smart Park I is now essentially complete with 14 acres being sold to Celebration Foods last summer for the construction of a 150,000 square foot food processing plant that will bring 300 new jobs to the City. Work on the facility is nearing completion and office portions are partially permitted for occupancy. Equipment is now being moved in and they are expected to become fully operational early this summer.

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. Syracuse Moving and Storage occupies one of the parcels and they are fully operational. This move allowed their former location, an industrially-zoned 70,000 square foot facility at 600 East Street, to be marketed and sold to a development partnership with plans to be renovate the building for potential business incubator space. Plans for development on the other two Smart Park II parcels are being finalized.

The former site for the Department of Motor Vehicles location at 1165 Main Street has been approved to move forward to become Big Sky Fitness Center. Since the last update the site has been cleared, and all building permits are now in place, ready for construction to begin.

Another project that is viewed as important to future economic progress in the region is the Arete Development proposal that arose as an offshoot to City's recent the Downtown Study. This includes a comprehensively planned, transit supportive development plan that will involve up to 8 sites, incorporating modern urban design standards and utilizing mixed use, high density, residential development with as many as 1500 to 2000dwelling units proposed.

The Hartford-New Britain Busway is also seen as being a significant contributor to the economic development of the region. Busway plans are progressing towards a 2011 target date to ne fully operational, and the site for the downtown station, the former "greenfields" property on Main Street, was recently acquired by the State Department of Transportation. The City is additionally seeking planning monies from the State of Connecticut Office of Policy and Management for the development of a plan and drafting of zoning amendments to create "Incentive Housing Zones" that would place transit supportive development, consisting of mixed-use, higher density residential uses in close proximity to the City's three busway stations.

### C. *PLYMOUTH*

Development activity in the PLYMOUTH Business Park has picked up considerably during the past year. Prestwick Properties has completed construction of the first of two incubator buildings. Elm Press, ES Metals, and Uniprise have completed approved additions for each of their respective structures. Finally, three other manufacturers are in the planning stage for additions.

The town was awarded a total of \$700,000 from DECD for construction of a water booster pump station at Swicklas Court in Phase III of the park. The construction was awarded to Pete & Steve Contractors of Terryville, and the facility will be operational as of September 2008. 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 all structures on town owned land. 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 has met the criteria for Certified Local Government Program status through the creation of a Historic Property (the waterwheel) Commission. Through its membership in the Brownfields Partnership, environmental studies are ongoing regarding 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 third 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.

Finally, it should be mentioned that two schools in the town will soon be vacant due to the construction of a new high school. The Main Street and Prospect Street schools will no longer house students and have the potential to be offered to developers for rehabilitation and reuse in early 2009. These are valuable sites for development given the range of possible uses and flexible zoning.

#### 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.

Downtown PLAINVILLE continues to struggle economically. Phase I of the Downtown Beautification Program is scheduled for completion by June of 2008 and the Phase II bid process should begin at approximately the same time. The Downtown Beautification Program will address needed improvements to paving and sidewalks, but is not expected to provide only a portion of the spark needed to improve the economic outlook of the downtown area. The recent loss of The Bantam Bread Company was particularly discouraging. The vacancy rates are exacerbated where building owners have not made property improvements. Real or perceived parking issues continue to be a complaint among area merchants and property owners.

According to Labor Statistics reported by the Connecticut Department of Labor, the unemployment rate in PLAINVILLE rose from 4.3% to 4.6% while the Hartford region went from 4.4% to 4.7% for the average annual reporting periods of 2006 and 2007. 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, KB Toys. The space vacated by Levitz Furniture last year is now occupied by Marshalls and Sleepy's Mattress Stores is moving into the space vacated by KB Toys. Work is underway to complete a new "First & Last Tavern" in the vicinity of Connecticut Commons. Activity continues within the Contiguous Municipality Zone where the State of Connecticut provides a reimbursement to the Town for local taxes for businesses located there. Limestone Business Park completed the construction of two 15,000 square foot multi-tenant buildings. New buildings continue to be constructed on the remaining land in the Strawberry Fields Industrial Park, also a Contiguous Municipality Zone. The Town estimates that the currently subdivided area within the Park will be full by summer of 2009.

New residential housing completions for the year rose from 13 units in FY06 to 14 units for FY07. New condominium completions for the year rose from 13 units in FY06 to 23 units for FY07. Construction has begun on 116 single family units at Samuel's Crossing (formerly High Meadow) insuring a steady supply of market rate single family housing in the short term .

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. Open Projects :

a) Southeast BRISTOL Business Park - infrastructure construction should be complete by summer of 2008.

2. New Projects :

a) Downtown North Industrial Park – Remediation, environmental demolition of petroleum storage tank farm and associated infrastructure. Project cost is \$4.5 million.

b) Downtown Infrastructure – Underground utilities. 1000 feet are necessary. Cost is \$1000/foot therefore a total of \$1 million.

c) Riverside Avenue – this is a main route to the downtown area and various access improvements must be made. Mainly site line and underground utilities are necessary. Site line improvements would amount to \$1.5 million and the utility improvements will amount to \$4.5 million.

d) Route 229 Corridor Study - The industrial park area in the City of Bristol is located along Route 229. Route 229 connects with I-84 and the new Route 72 which is currently under construction. There is great potential of the industrial park area to be expanded and as a result creating an important transportation corridor in the region. The impact must be studied to be able to project Route 229's potential significance and impact on economic vitality of the city and the region as a whole. This project will amount to \$300,000.

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. As previously discussed, work on Smart Park I, Myrtle Street, is essentially complete, with Celebration Foods expected to be fully operational by early summer.

b) Smart Park II off of South Street - is largely completed. Commerce Circle was accepted as a city street and Siracusa moving and storage has completed and fully occupied their 53,000 square foot building. The City continues to work with the other two buyers to finalize their plans for the remaining acreage.

c) Pinnacle Heights Redevelopment - this project is moving forward and all buildings have been vacated. The City took title to the property last year and adopted zoning changes to facilitate commercial, office and technology park development on the site. Demolition has begun, some of which was completed last year, and now bidding is taking place to be able to complete the remainder of the demolition on the 62 acre site. The City has an application still pending at the EDA for \$1.5 million in for this work. With the zoning changes and initial demolition work done thus far, developer interest in this property has been growing.

d) Broad Street, reconstruction, project Phase II has been underway over the past year. This \$6 million street and utility upgrade encompasses the section of Broad Street from Washington to Horace Street along with the adjoining portions of Washington and High Streets that serve and provide access for one of the city's prime business areas.

e) St. Claire and Lester Street project was completed, over the last year at a cost of approximately \$1.5 million, providing enhanced utility service and access to the 18 to 20 business properties in this small industrial zone.

f) Downtown Police Headquarters/Commercial Development, described in detail in last year's update, this project is seen as a cornerstone to revitalizing the downtown and is included as a key component of the city's recent downtown study. Over the course of the past year, the city has been successful in finally acquiring this important corner property.

As detailed in last year's CEDS update, this project will give the City several key benefits, aside from meeting the Police Department's need for a modern, up-to-date facility. 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 will 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. 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 as described in the downtown study, 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.

Conclusion: Goal 2 would be met.

## 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.

The original concept for a 6,000 to 10,000 seat arena as mentioned in previous updates remains intact, but the location for that project has changed. Now the idea is to possibly place the arena over Route 72 on Main Street on the other side of the highway across from the planned busway. This will not only serve as an economic stimulus on its own, but it will also help to create linkages to the downtown.

The shopping plaza for the original site of the arena has since been purchased and now contains a casual clothing store, with plans for a new restaurant, and many other improvements are being made. While this was not the original planned use, its new use has contributed much to the economy.

An 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. Aiding this vision is downtown study and the potential Incentive Housing Zone as to be identified with an upcoming study pending funding from OPM.

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 related projects – There are many projects that are just beginning that are pertinent to the development of the downtown. Those worth including are the Rao Building, 57 Court Street, the Royal Bride Building, and the Alder house, which is complete and has tenants. These projects are consistent with plans for the city and will contribute to the enhancement of economic development in New Britain.

c) Friendship Center which will be transitional housing

d) Trinity on Main is a church that is currently being renovated and will become a performing arts center.

e) Ellis Street

## 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 “Chung” 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. This property is currently under contract, but tied up in litigation.

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 water system pump station booster that was mentioned in previous updates is due for completion in September 2008 and will be turned over to the CT Water Company.

b) Terryville Business District - the town acquired a dilapidated structure and will be demolishing that structure at 268 Main Street for the waterwheel park project. The town was awarded \$300,000 in STEAP grants for sidewalk and infrastructure improvements along Main Street to coincide with the demolition to improve the area. Despite the funding received, the town plans to apply for more given that the need for more improvements is far greater than what can be accomplished with the original award. This project will create an atmosphere and sense of place by increasing pedestrian traffic and encouraging further economic development.



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 had been advised of the owner's (SPX Corp) intentions to demolish all structures during the summer of 2007. As a result of the public hearing process for planned activity in a flood plain, local developer interest surfaced for this site which has been vacant for over six years. Currently, the sale to local owners is being negotiated. Once the sale is complete, partial demolition will be necessary. This property holds great opportunity for reuse in the business sector and could be eligible for state and/or federal funding. This would be helpful in ensuring that the new developers take full advantage of all economic opportunities.

2. New Projects

a) Town Hall expansion to include Senior Center

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 completed.

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 FY2008-2009.

<p>Identify key sites for development</p>	<p>CCRPA will prepare a 3-fold brochure highlighting the corridor's most prime available commercial/industrial sites. Brochure will ready for publication in mid FY2007-2008.</p>
<p>Enhance economic development opportunities along the New Britain-Hartford busway and encourage redevelopment and adaptive reuse of brownfields and grayfields sites.</p>	<p>The CCRPA is co-sponsor with CRCOG of a grant application to design transportation oriented development along the corridor for the busway.</p>