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# THE METROHARTFORD MILLENNIUM PROJECT

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### ***The MetroHartford Millennium Project is One of Firsts***

- *It is the first time that inclusiveness -- of MetroHartford's cities and suburbs, its businesses, educational, governmental, and cultural diversity -- has been a guiding principle.*
- *It is the first comprehensive economic development plan to ever develop core strategies for the entire MetroHartford region.*
- *It is the first economic development plan for MetroHartford that includes specific Action Steps to implement the core strategies.*
- *It is the first economic development plan for MetroHartford that taps existing public, private, and nonprofit organizations to sign Memoranda of Understanding to implement the specific Action Steps.*
- *It is the first economic development plan that will be acted upon rather than gather dust on the region's shelves. Funding for the Action Steps is included in Strategic Agenda.*

The project is spearheaded by Karl Krapek, president of Pratt & Whitney. He and 28 corporate, business, and civic leaders form the MetroHartford Millennium Steering Committee. Robert Santy of the Connecticut Capitol Region Growth Council, Inc., serves as project manager. The consultant on the project is Mt. Auburn Associates, Inc., an economic development firm with extensive experience. MetroHartford Millennium has been funded by a grant from the U.S. Department of Commerce, Economic Development Administration, and by matching grants from the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving, the Hartford Downtown Council, the Greater Hartford Chamber of Commerce and the Growth Council.

The Steering Committee identified several key clusters on which to focus: financial services, information technology, health services and management, distribution, precision manufacturing, and arts and tourism. Five Millennium task forces and two cluster working groups, again, comprised of people from public, private, and nonprofit arenas, have addressed a broad spectrum of issues that are critical to the region's future: workforce development; fiscal issues and public policy; land use, transportation, and infrastructure; small business and entrepreneurship; urban neighborhoods; arts and tourism; and precision machining.

## Overview

The cities and towns in MetroHartford are not entities unto themselves. Each relies on others for certain basics -- employment sources and employee bases -- in short, for a degree of economic strength. The infrastructure in place allows people and goods to flow from one town to another to support those economies. At the same time, each city and town in the region is unique. Each has its own form of government, political parties, and tax structure.

The first goal of the MetroHartford Millennium Project is to develop an inclusive economic plan that affects not simply specific cities and towns, but each and every municipality in the region, and all the neighborhoods and the people in them. The plan must be creative enough and inclusive enough to cause the municipalities to start to feel ownership in regional outcomes and in the regional economic synergy those outcomes will create. The second goal of the Millennium Project is to develop a Strategic Action Agenda complete with specific Action Steps to achieve those goals while at the same time protecting the uniqueness of the cities and towns it aims to include.

Extensive research and outreach determined four elements that form the basis of the MetroHartford Millennium plan:

- **Vision** -- where the region wants to go;
- **Imperative** -- why we have to act now;
- **Principles** -- the thinking that underlies the strategic directions; and



- *Barriers and opportunities* -- the competitive strengths and weaknesses that formed the basis for the strategic initiatives.

From these four elements came the five strategic directions of MetroHartford Millennium:

1. Support and strengthen a renewed civic infrastructure to create and sustain economic development at the neighborhood, city, and regional levels.
2. Forge a globally competitive regional economic base that generates quality jobs for all residents.
3. Challenge the region to build a world-class workforce and educational system -- one that prepares all of its residents with the skills needed to succeed in the global economy.
4. Create a vibrant and culturally rich city -- with a vital downtown that serves as a regional arts and entertainment center and strong neighborhoods that provide residents with an improved quality of life.
5. Support regional land use and infrastructure policies and efficient uses of regional resources by promoting cooperative service delivery and reduced reliance on the property tax.

## ***A Commitment to Action***

The major shortfall of all the economic development plans that preceded the MetroHartford Millennium Project was that they made no provision for their implementation. One of the main tenets of the Millennium Project is that implementation needed to begin immediately, even before the strategic planning process was completed. To achieve this end, several steps were taken.

*The entire Millennium Project was organized around implementation from the start.*

- *Detailed actions plans with clear responsibilities and accountability in the form of Memoranda of Understanding are being developed.*

- *Some implementation activities were started during the planning process.*

By reaching early consensus on certain key initiatives, implementation has already begun on these activities:

- *assisting in the design of the Downtown Higher Education Center;*
- *designing and organizing entry-level training programs to meet the needs of the region's precision-manufacturing firms;*
- *reorganizing the economic development capacity within the City of Hartford;*
- *organizing an oversight group and developing a request for proposals (RFP) for a downtown urban design plan;*
- *helping to improve the state's efforts to market economic-development resources to the small-business community; and*
- *developing principles and guidelines for improving the operation of the region's welfare-reform efforts.*

## ***Underlying Principles***

The following principles will define our own image of MetroHartford in the future, and guide the development of the Strategic Action Agenda and the work of the Steering Committee:

- *An individual municipality cannot compete successfully for economic activity in a global environment built upon economic regions.*
- *The economic well-being of residents of any community is ultimately linked to the ability of the private sector in that region to thrive and compete successfully in a global arena.*
- *Any regional economic development effort in Connecticut must conform to and adapt to an environment in which each individual municipality retains its unique character and its powers to shape its own development future.*