

# 2015

## Access to Opportunity

METRO HARTFORD  
PROGRESS  
POINTS



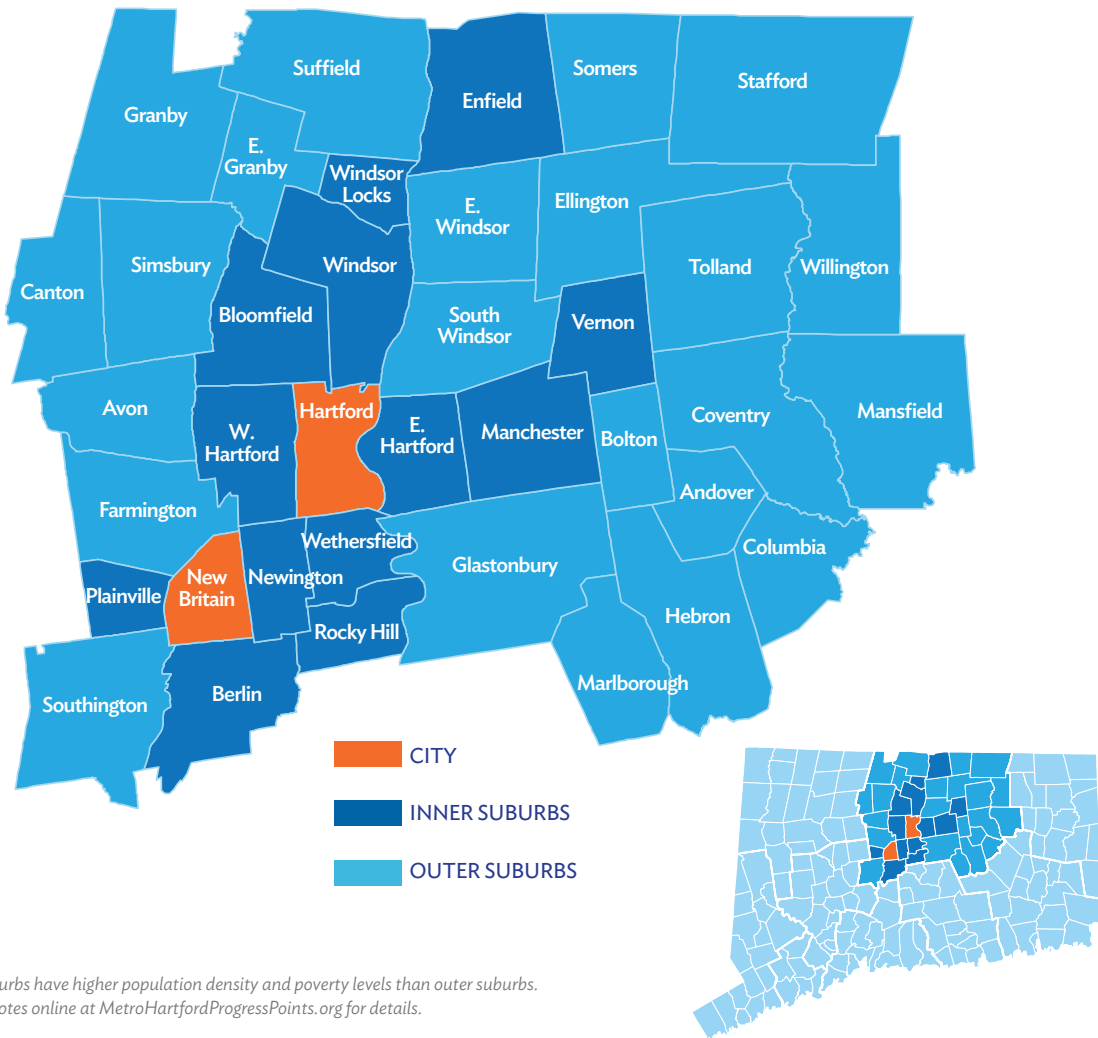
# Making progress, reaffirming priorities.

Last year, we introduced Metro Hartford Progress Points in order to identify and better understand the critical education, income and opportunity gaps that exist in our region. This year, we’re continuing the discussion, looking for ways to improve access to better schools, better jobs and stronger neighborhoods for everyone in the region. For more, visit [MetroHartfordProgressPoints.org](https://MetroHartfordProgressPoints.org).



## What is Metro Hartford?

The Metro Hartford region consists of 1 million people living in Hartford, New Britain and the surrounding towns and communities. While there is no perfect definition for “Metro Hartford,” the Capitol Region Council of Governments brings together municipal leaders from these 38 towns to coordinate on shared issues and planning for the region.



## How are we doing?

Things are not changing rapidly — in fact, Metro Hartford has had one of the nation's 5 slowest recoveries from the Great Recession. But things *are* changing. Here's a snapshot of some key indicators over the last 5 years.



### POPULATION GROWTH

This translates to about 20,000 people, or 4,000 families.



CHANGE in the percentage of kindergartners in the region with pre-K experience — remaining at 78%, same as the state.



MORE THIRD-GRADERS are READING at or above grade-level goals. This is better than the state increase of 1.3%.



### REGIONAL JOB GROWTH

over the last 5 years is on par with the state, but still 8,000 jobs below pre-recession levels.



units of AFFORDABLE HOUSING added — leaving the percentage of affordable housing virtually unchanged.



reduction in CRIME RATE, faster than state (~16%) and national (~11%) trends.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, State Department of Education, Department of Labor, Department of Housing, Department of Public Safety.

## Where are the opportunities?

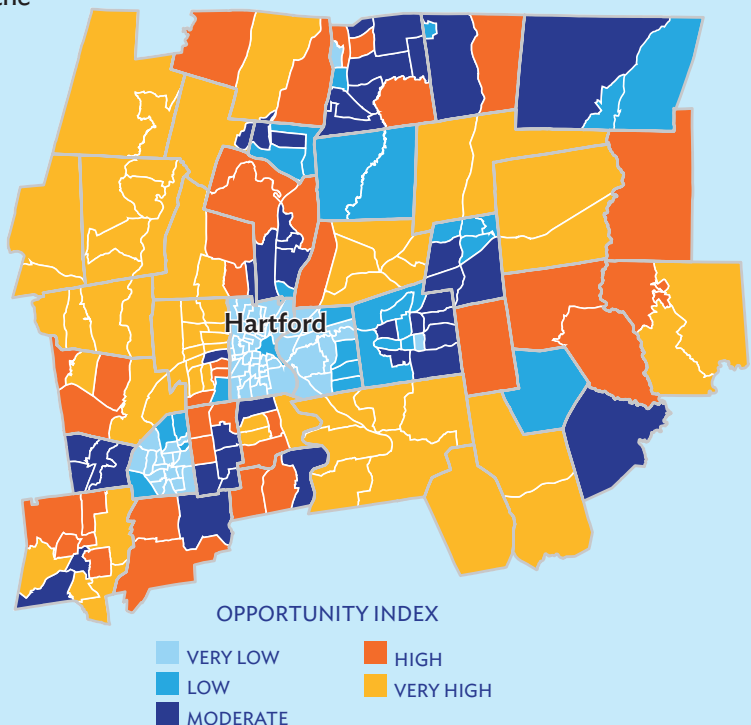
We have an imbalance as a region: both high and low opportunity areas coexist. How do we continue to build on our strengths and fully utilize the assets that the region already has? Can we reduce the imbalances in a way that provides access to opportunity for all?

The map below shows Opportunity Index levels in our region. The Index is a composite measure of the three priority areas — schools, jobs and neighborhoods.

**47%** of the region's labor force live in **high or very high opportunity neighborhoods**.

**31%** of children under age 5 in our region live in **very low opportunity neighborhoods**, more than in any other type of community.

**53%** of people of color in our region live in **very low opportunity neighborhoods**.



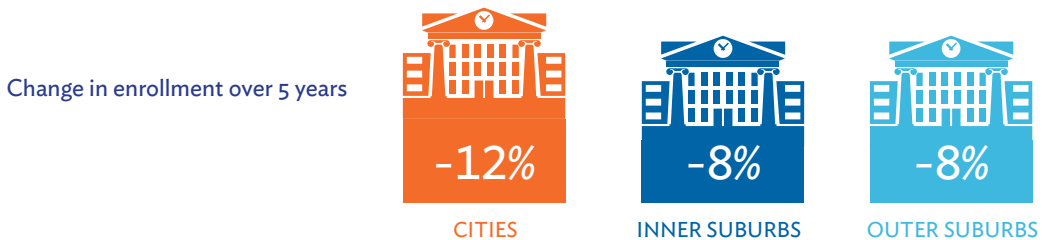
Source: Open Communities Alliance, Connecticut Fair Housing Center, Kirwan Institute.

### Declining enrollment leads to long-term economic challenges.

Regional prosperity relies on ensuring that everyone has access to a good education. Some towns have responded to declining school enrollment by shuttering and consolidating schools and decreasing municipal workforces. While this results in short-term savings, if the trend continues it could have long-term negative impact on the region. By providing access to the high-performing schools for everyone in our region, we can keep these schools open while ensuring that we have a better-educated workforce for the future.

### Every town in our region has had declining enrollment for district schools over the last 5 years.

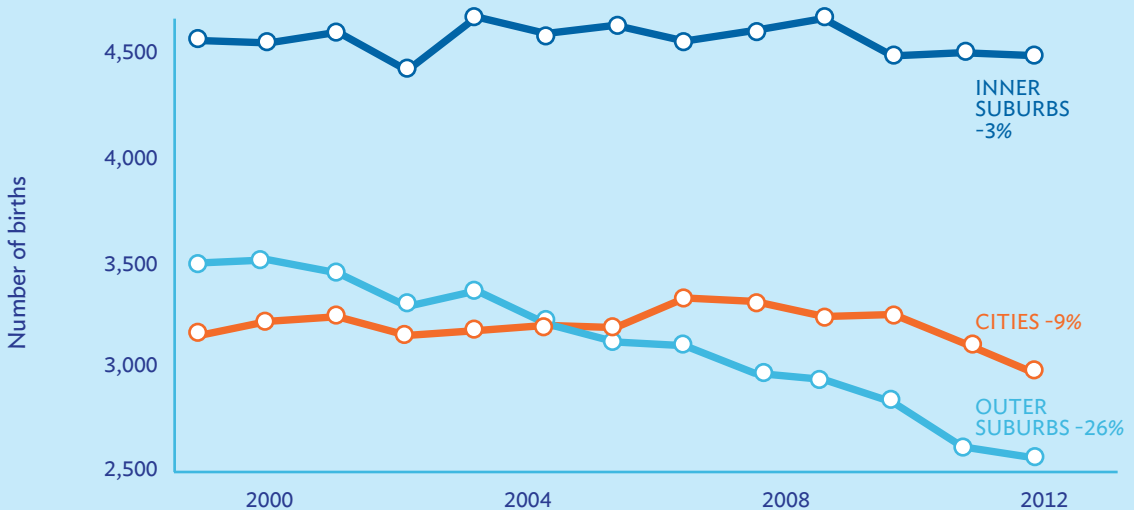
That's a total of 12,600 fewer students attending district schools in our region.



Source: State Department of Education. District schools refer to public schools open only to residents of that town.

### Declining birth rates are a key factor in outer suburbs.

Enrollment is declining fastest in the same towns where births are declining. These are often the towns that have the best-performing schools in the region.

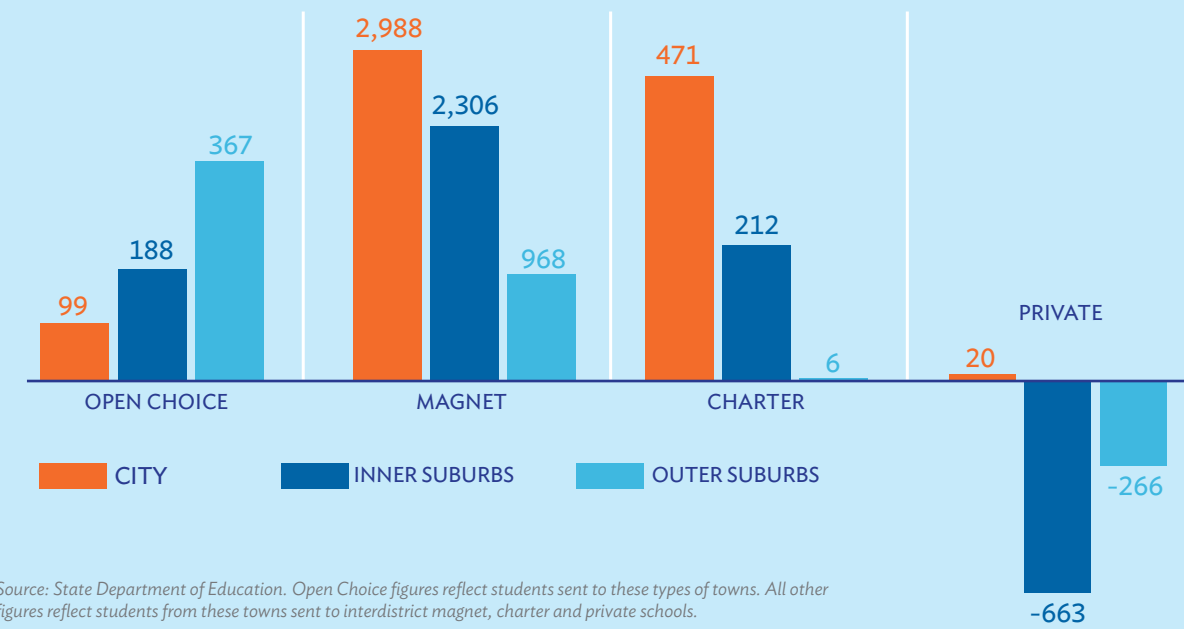


Source: Department of Public Health.



Where are students going?

Good schools are an asset for the Hartford region. Over the past 5 years, Open Choice has given 700 more students access to better schools; 7,000 more students have chosen magnet and charter schools; and 900 fewer students are enrolled in private schools.

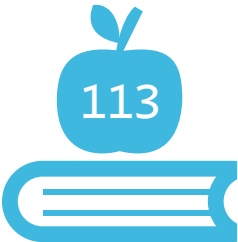


Increased choice drives the decline in inner suburbs and cities.

Families move to towns with higher-performing schools, or look for alternatives if local schools are struggling. However, overall enrollment is still declining in many towns with high-performing schools.

FOR EVERY 100 CHILDREN BORN IN:

OUTER SUBURBS  
such as Glastonbury



enroll in local public  
school 5 years later.

CITIES/ INNER SUBURBS  
such as Bloomfield



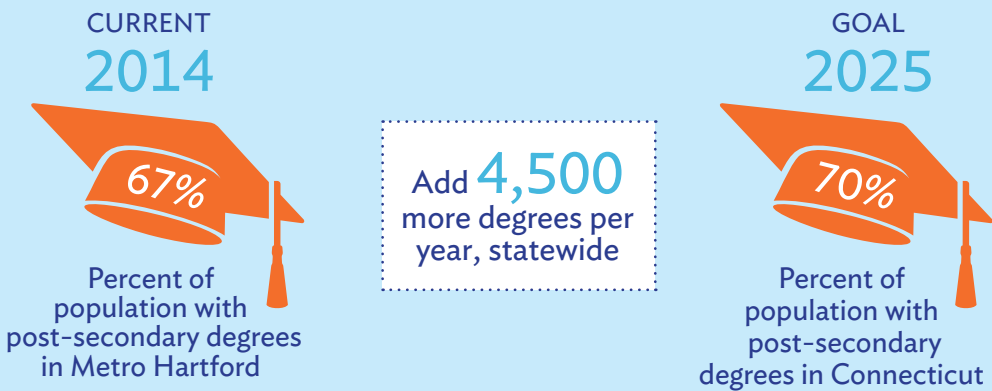
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school 5 years later.

## Strengthening workforce skills.

With high demand projected for skilled workers, the Metro Hartford region needs to do a better job of providing workers access to training, skill-building and educational opportunities. We cannot improve the economy without strengthening the labor force, which will require improving the links between employers, training programs and the educational system.

## Raising the bar in college degrees.

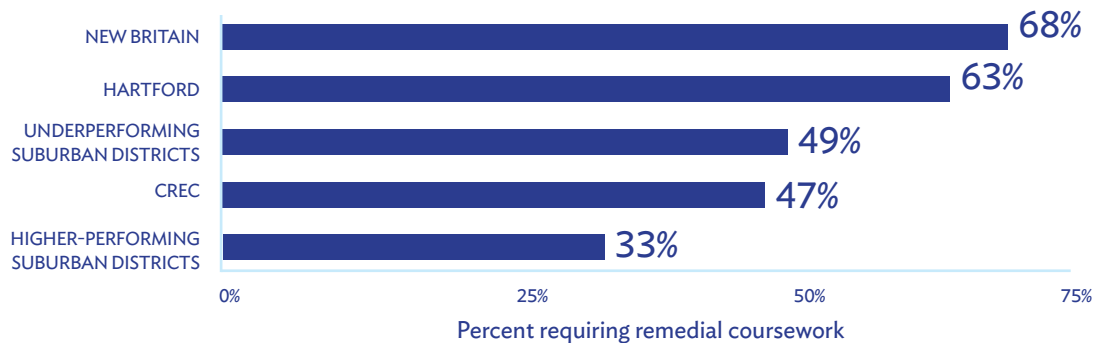
Seventy percent of jobs in Connecticut are projected to require a post-secondary education. To reach that goal, we will need 4,500 more people to earn degrees statewide per year.



Source: Strategic Master Plan for Higher Education in Connecticut, Planning Commission for Higher Education, 2015.

## Half of high school graduates need help when they start a community college or a state university.

Recent data shows almost 50% of all students entering community colleges or Connecticut state universities require remedial coursework and training, even those from high-performing districts. This means paying for additional courses, which only increases student debt.

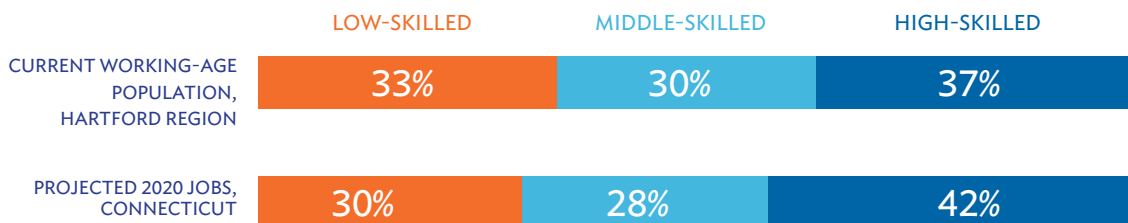


Source: P20-WIN, State Department of Education.

## WHERE ARE THE OPPORTUNITIES TO FIND WORK AT LIVING WAGES?

### The need for high skilled workers will continue to grow.

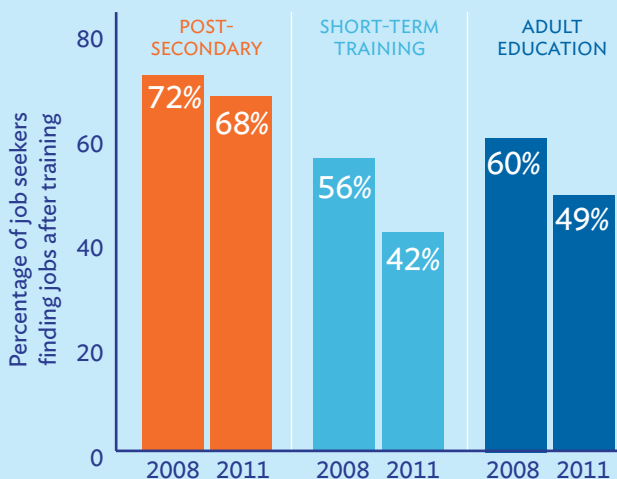
Connecticut's economy relies on a skilled workforce. With a projected rise in the number of high-skill jobs by 2020, we will need to work to ensure that we are able to meet industry demand for skilled workers.



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Georgetown Center on Education and the Workforce.

### Job training works when there are jobs.

The slow post-recession recovery has made placement from job training and adult education programs challenging. Growing the number of jobs helps businesses and helps these programs provide a better return on investment.



Source: Connecticut Employment and Training Commission, 2013 Report Card.

#### Go Back to Get Ahead

has brought over 1,400 Connecticut residents back to school to complete college degrees. The program has helped those with some college credits to complete their degree at Connecticut state universities, community colleges and Charter Oak, enabling them to find better-paying jobs in the future.

### Poverty is increasing in cities and suburbs.

Hartford has more people living in high-poverty neighborhoods than other metro areas in the state. In addition, suburban communities have seen a major increase in the population living in low- to mid-poverty neighborhoods. If these trends continue, we will face more severe challenges in our cities and new challenges in suburban towns. Poverty is a regional, not an urban, problem. Addressing poverty requires improved coordination among towns to better connect transportation and other services to increase access to opportunity.

### Metro Hartford had the largest increase in poverty in the state.



**14,000** more people experience poverty in Hartford neighborhoods with **concentrated poverty** than 10 years ago.



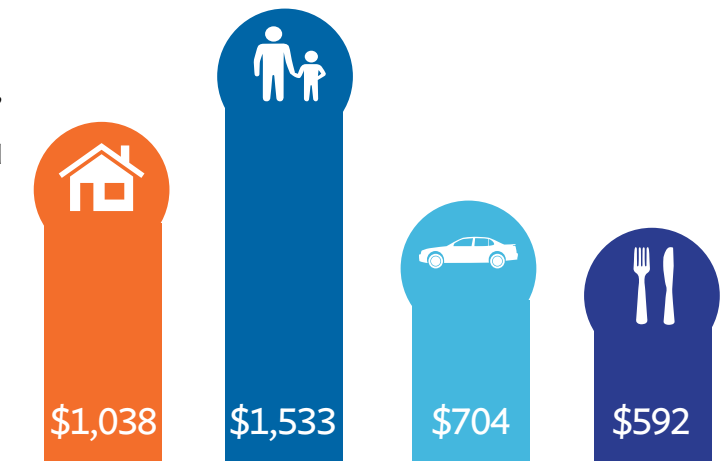
**20,000** more people experience poverty in **low- to mid-poverty neighborhoods** in suburban towns than 10 years ago.

Source: Brookings Institution analysis of U.S. Census data.

### Housing and childcare are the largest monthly expenses for a family of four.

According to the ALICE Report, housing, childcare, transportation and food make up almost 75% of the monthly household budget for families in the region.

Raising household earnings — through access to better jobs — is one way to reduce the burden on low-income households. Lowering household expenses, particularly the costs of transportation and housing, can help reverse this trend.



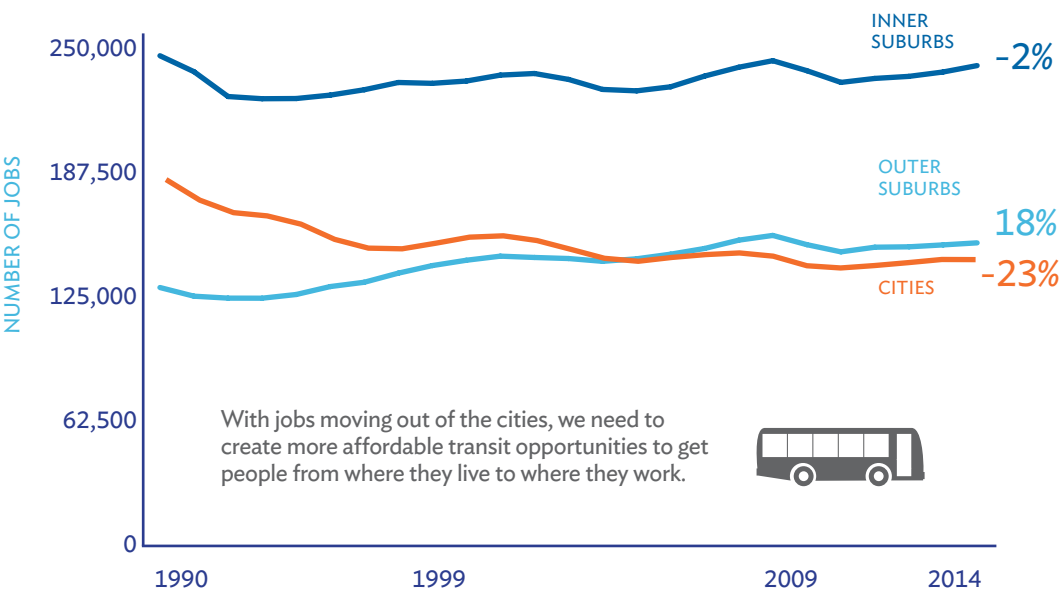
MONTHLY "HOUSEHOLD SURVIVAL BUDGET"  
AMOUNTS FOR A FAMILY OF FOUR

Source: United Way of Connecticut, statistics for Hartford County. ALICE means Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed, a shorthand for "working poor." [alice.ctunitedway.org](http://alice.ctunitedway.org)



## Transportation connects urban neighborhoods to jobs that have shifted to the suburbs.

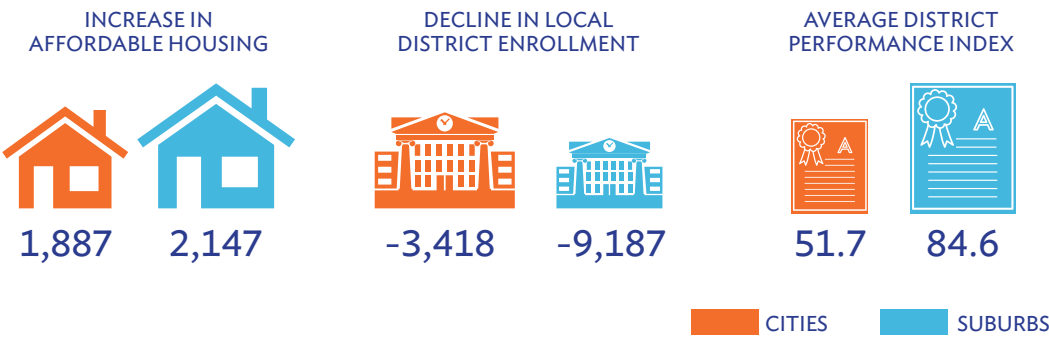
Over the past two decades, jobs in the region have shifted from Hartford to the suburbs. Getting to work now requires better access to transportation, including evenings and weekends. Paying for transportation is currently the third most costly component of a household budget.



Source: Department of Labor, Quarterly Census of Earnings and Wages.

## Affordable housing is still being created — in low-opportunity areas.

Of the 4,000 affordable housing units added to the region over the past 5 years, 47% have been in Hartford and New Britain — almost as many as were added in all other 36 towns in the region combined. Those same 36 towns have lost over 9,000 students in local schools, despite having school districts that perform more than 30 points higher than those in Hartford and New Britain.



Source: Department of Housing, State Department of Education. Affordable housing based on designation in Department of Housing appeals list, which includes subsidized housing, elderly housing and supportive housing.

### Regional prosperity takes regional cooperation.

Access to better jobs builds stronger neighborhoods. Stronger neighborhoods help to connect families to better schools. And better education ensures that workers are ready to take on those jobs — increasing prosperity, growth and quality of life for all.

### All residents need access to better schools, jobs and neighborhoods.

From a renewed commitment to improving access to good schools, to changing our thinking about the kinds of jobs we want in our communities, there is a need to inspire ourselves, and one another, as we work together to improve our region.



### What is working to move the region ahead?

**High-performing districts**, like Farmington and Simsbury, are opening pre-K slots to Open Choice students from under-performing districts.

The **Hartford Campaign for Grade Level Reading** was cited as a Pacesetter nationally for progress reducing absenteeism. The Campaign is a partnership of eight organizations that are working together to help children read by the end of third grade.

The recently announced expansion of the **CT Fastrak** bus rapid transit line gives riders access to 150,000 jobs within a mile of the New Britain to Manchester Fastrak corridor.

The **Jobs Funnel** graduates over 200 Connecticut residents a year. This program helps individuals gain specific work competencies and certifications, which can build self-sustaining and rewarding careers in construction and related trades.

Imagine if we:



## *Give*

more children access to good schools and help towns address the challenges of declining school enrollment. Low-cost housing in high-opportunity areas and coordination across town lines on shared education services and choice programs provide access to opportunity for our region's current residents. But can we change the trajectory for the region without growing our population and attracting new residents?



## *Build*

better connections among public schools, higher education and job training programs to ensure that training and education programs are driven by employers' needs. Focusing on jobs that Connecticut will need ensures we remain competitive.



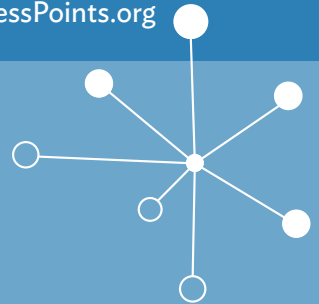
## *Forge*

a transportation network that connects people to jobs, education and training programs, and family needs like childcare, and that reduces the strain on infrastructure and alleviates congestion. Transportation investments can better link people, towns and the region to improve the quality of life for everyone.



## *Work*

together as a region to create efficiencies, acting in collaboration rather than in competition, across municipal lines to increase access to opportunity for all. While examples of cooperation exist, we must make it the rule, not the exception.



## About Progress Points

Progress Points represents a collective effort to address the root causes of our region's challenges, toward a vision of more vibrant and prosperous communities for all. As information is gathered, we, the institutional partners behind Progress Points, will use that momentum to work with groups and individuals across Metro Hartford — state and local government, academic institutions, businesses, nonprofits, faith- and community-based organizations, advocacy organizations and institutions — to make real progress on the issues illustrated by this report.

Please visit [MetroHartfordProgressPoints.org](http://MetroHartfordProgressPoints.org) to learn more.



Center for  
Urban and Global Studies  
at Trinity College



United Way of Central  
and Northeastern Connecticut

