

2020 Metro Hartford Future Annual Update

Introduction

The Capitol Region Council of Governments (CRCOG), the Metro Hartford Alliance (MHA), and the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving (HFPG) developed the Metro Hartford Future Project in 2019. It laid out a vision of accelerating shared and sustained economic growth.

To achieve this vision of inclusive growth, it established three goals:

- **Talent:** Educate, train and retain talent - with a focus on underserved and underrepresented populations - to better meet the needs of the region's employers and to create jobs paying a family living wage
- **Invest:** Enhance the quality of place amenities throughout our region to retain and attract talent
- **Brand:** Strengthen collaboration to support and promote the region

Progress on Metro Hartford Future

Talent

There were three main strategies for the talent goal in the CEDS. Significant progress was made on all three goals in 2020. The three strategies are:

Create a world-class talent system, using comprehensive labor-market analysis, a workforce skills training fund and empowered industry-sector partnerships

Significant progress has been made in creating a world-class talent system. In late 2019, Governor Lamont established a revamped Governor's Workforce Council (GWC), which quickly began pursuing new and innovative initiatives. Also in 2019 and 2020, the Connecticut Economic Resource Center was transformed into AdvanceCT and began working closely with the GWC and the Department of Economic and Community Development (DECD). Together, these changes to the state's economic development infrastructure helped launch a number of new initiatives and placed a greater emphasis on workforce and talent development that directly relate to Metro Hartford Future. While many elements are a work in progress, here are a few highlights to date:

- **Labor Market Analysis Tools.** AdvanceCT Acquired a license of Gartner TalentNeuron. After evaluating different labor-market analysis solutions, AdvanceCT acquired a license of Gartner TalentNeuron and shared it with its economic development partners.
- **Manufacturing Supply and Demand Analysis.** Capital workforce partners spearheaded manufacturing supply/demand analysis. In 2019, as part of the Capital

Area Pipeline Partnership, Capital Workforce Partners commissioned a study of supply and demand for manufacturing workforce training. This analysis, conducted using labor-market data, training program completion data, and in-depth interviews, demonstrated a significant undersupply of trained workers for manufacturing.

- **Next Generation Industry Sector Partnerships.** In the Fall of 2020, the Governor’s Workforce Council partnered with the Institute for Connected Communities to bring the Next Generation Industry Sector Partnership model to Connecticut. For the Metro Hartford region, the effort is being organized by Capital Workforce Partners. This model was specifically called out in the Metro Hartford Future CEDS as a recommended best practice.

Significantly increase the supply of talent for high-opportunity industries using a dual-track training model that provides work-based learning, aligned classroom learning, and valuable credentials/credit for students

In early 2019, Capital Workforce Partners (CWP) established the Capital Area Pipeline Partnership (CAPP) in response to the state’s Apprenticeship Connecticut Initiative (ACI). In an introductory e-mail to CAPP, CWP states: “This regional pipeline skills training initiative will coordinate the efforts of a broad array of partners across North Central Connecticut to provide an employer-responsive mix of customized work-based learning, dual-track, pre-apprentice, apprenticeship and certificate-focused skills training and support services to targeted young adults and high school students.”

As part of this initiative, CWP was awarded \$2.3 million in funding from the CT Department of Labor. The funding will be used to Pre-Apprenticeship and industry credential-based training over the next four years in the North Central region for 474 individuals in the Manufacturing, Healthcare, and Construction sectors. 150 in-school youth and 140 adults will be trained in the Manufacturing sector, 124 adults will be trained in the Healthcare sector, and 60 adults will be trained in the Construction sector. Training will be provided by a number of educational partners, including Goodwin University, CT Community Colleges, and high schools.

Some recent progress included:

- Launched several youth ACI cohorts where young people are receiving manufacturing pre-apprenticeships
- About 80 participants including 30 Opportunity Youth engaged in ACI training to date
- About 150 adults are starting pre-apprenticeship and credential-based training through ACI in early 2021
- The CT community college system and others including AI Prince, CWP Jobs Funnel, and Goodwin are supporting adult training in the Manufacturing, Healthcare, and Construction sectors

Retain talent by connecting college graduates to employers

Retaining college-educated talent was a major goal of the CEDS as the region, and the state, tend to lag behind other states in this important metric. For a variety of reasons, the state has

had a difficult time holding on to the talent it produces at its world-class higher education institutions. The CEDS identified the Campus Philly model as a promising best practice.

Progress toward bringing that model to Connecticut included:

- **Next Generation Workforce – Increasing Retention of College Graduates in Connecticut forum:** In February of 2020, CRCOG organized a forum at the legislative office building on the topic of college student retention. The forum was attended by legislators as well as practitioners from economic development, workforce training, and higher education. It featured speakers from the New England Board of Higher Education, local higher educational institutions, and a keynote presentation by a representative of Campus Philly.
- **Campus Philly-led Focus Groups:** Subsequent to the forum organized by CRCOG, AdvanceCT partnered with the Governor’s Workforce Council to hire Campus Philly to lead a series of focus groups in Connecticut. The result of this work was a memorandum outlining recommendations for establishing a similar program in Connecticut. AdvanceCT is working to secure funding for a potential start in Summer/Fall of 2021 for a statewide initiative.

Invest

The invest goal of the CEDS had one primary strategy and three long-term strategies. Progress is listed below.

Create a regional investment fund to drive investment in quality of place assets

While this was listed as the main strategy for the “Invest” goal, no significant progress was made during 2020. Due to uncertainties with state funding as well as financial pressures caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, pursuing this strategy was deferred.

Increase connectivity within and outside of the metropolitan region

Progress toward this strategy was made on two fronts during 2020.

- **CRCOG initiated an economic impact study of a Boston rail connection:** The Massachusetts Department of Transportation began studying the feasibility of establishing higher-quality passenger rail service between Pittsfield, Springfield, Worcester, and Boston in 2018. The study did not include a complete economic impact assessment as one of its tasks. In 2020, CRCOG initiated an economic impact study of the proposed connection, looking at far-ranging impacts job creation and real estate development throughout the corridor. The EIS is scheduled to be completed in January 2021, with results released to the public in February 2021. The Boston Rail study is expected to show a very strong return on investment for investing to fill this missing transportation link.
- **CRCOG initiated a Capital Region Transit Priority Corridors Implementation Strategy Study:** This study builds upon the Comprehensive Transit Route Analysis conducted by CRCOG in 2015. It builds on that study’s recommendations to establish six transit priority corridors with enhanced amenities and more frequent service. The study will develop an implementation plan for the six corridors providing

much more detailed recommendations regarding scheduling, stop spacing, and other logistical issues. The study will be initiated in 2021 and completed in 2023.

Support investments in the metropolitan region's downtowns

While many studies on Transit-Oriented Development had previously been completed in the metropolitan area, CRCOG identified one gap and initiated a study to fill that gap:

- **TOD Roles, Visioning, Viability, and Tools Analysis Study:** CRCOG is in the process of initiating a more fine-grained look at advancing TOD in the region. The primary task in the study is to identify sites in each of the towns that may be ready to development, then look at their financial viability. The study will look at existing zoning and visions for the site, then perform a market feasibility analysis to determine how realistic that development is. A real estate analysis firm will be brought in to make this determination and developers will be consulted to determine market appetite.

Continue making sites ready for development

Within this strategy, two recommendations were made. One was to continue pursuing funding for brownfields assessment and remediation. The other was to pursue funding for infrastructure projects that will make sites more attractive for development. Two notable examples of progress include:

- **2020 Regional Brownfields Assessment Grant:** In 2020 CRCOG was awarded a \$300,000 grant from the EPA to fund brownfields assessments in the region. As of January 2021, CRCOG was in the process of selecting a consultant to assist with this project. The funding will assist towns with assessing properties and planning for redevelopment.
- **East Hartford/Goodwin University Drainage Improvements:** In 2020 the Town of East Hartford prepared a grant application for funding from the EDA to improve drainage along Main Street. The area is slated for redevelopment as part of Goodwin University's Campus Master Plan. This development is currently prevented by flooding issues in the area. The grant application is scheduled to be submitted in early 2021.

Brand

The Brand goal of the CEDS focused on increasing awareness of Hartford as a prime location to relocate businesses, as well as a location to start new ones.

Create a coordinated, regional approach to business retention, expansion, and attraction.

In 2019 and 2020, the MetroHartford Alliance began a renewed push to market the region and attract investment. In part funded by a \$1 million DECD grant for 2020 and 2021, the Alliance is undertaking the following activities:

- Developing a talent attraction website
- Developing a branding and marketing campaign
- Sponsoring events such as the Insurance Capital Summit
- Staffing trade show booths
- Paid advertising

- Lead generation
- Others

This work has had a measurable impact in 2020. A few highlights include:

- \$58 million in total capital investment
- 1,360 new jobs in the metropolitan region
- Eight recruitment “wins”. Three were international, three from other states, and two from other parts of Connecticut
- 14 additional “projects” that are on-hold due to the COVID-19 pandemic

Scale efforts to support high-opportunity sectors through entrepreneurship.

This strategy relies on the existing successes the region has experienced with sector-based entrepreneurial support systems. Existing business accelerators in high-opportunity sectors are showing successes. These include Stanley + Techstars and Hartford InsurTech. Coworking spaces and incubators include reSET and Upward Hartford. Addition progress includes:

- Digital Health CT launched in November 2019 (partnership between Hartford HealthCare, Trinity, and UConn). This provides support for healthcare startups.
- Launc[H] (innovation places) received \$2.8 million in year 3 funding from the state.

One disappointing development was the discontinuation of the Hartford InsurTech Hub, run in partnership with Startupbootcamp. After three years in existence, the funders of the program decided to hold off on the fourth year due to uncertainty caused by COVID-19. A big effort for 2021 will be to revive this endeavor.

Next Steps for Metro Hartford Future

Despite the many disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, a significant amount of work was initiated. In fact, significant progress was made on most of the primary strategies in the CEDS.

In addition to continuing with the studies and initiatives described above, staff recommends the following:

- Convene a task force to consider pivoting the Metro Hartford Future CEDS to respond to the economic crisis caused by COVID-19 shutdowns.
- Commission a study that will identify five potential initiatives with high likelihood of accelerating inclusive economic growth and recovery in the state.
- Work with United Way to develop an action plan to lift “ALICE” (Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed) families into family-living wage jobs. In the 2020 ALICE report it was noted that of Connecticut’s 1,378,091 households, 146,552 earned below the federal poverty level (11%) in 2018, and another 367,175 (27%) were ALICE.
- Commission a study of flexible workforce development funding sources in other states with a focus on middle skill jobs. The goal would be to determine best practices that may lead to the development of such a fund in Connecticut in order to fill critical job vacancies much more quickly.

- Work with legislators to continue allocating funds to support accelerators and incubators.
- Work with stakeholders to secure funding to restart the Hartford InsureTech Hub.

Indicators¹

	2016 Value	2019 Value	5-year Goal (%)	5-year Goal (Value based on 2016)	Progress toward goal
Population	1,206,800	1,204,877	3% - 4%	1,243,000 - 1,255,100	-0.15% population change
GDP	98.6 billion	105.1 billion	5% or more	\$94.5 billion or more	6.6% GDP growth
Disparity – Median Household Income	White, Non-Hispanic: \$80,800 Black: \$45,800 Hispanic: \$37,600	White, Non-Hispanic: \$88,112 Black: \$50,673 Hispanic: \$43,802	> 33% decrease in disparity	Black: \$57,500 Hispanic: \$52,000	Black: 7% increase in disparity Hispanic: 3% increase in disparity
Disparity – Poverty	White, Non-Hispanic: 5.7% Black: 19.3% Hispanic: 28.2%	White, Non-Hispanic: 5.6% Black: 16.3% Hispanic: 25.4%	> 33% decrease in disparity	Black: 14.8% Hispanic: 20.7%	Black: 21% decrease in disparity Hispanic: 12% decrease in disparity
Disparity – Employment Rate	White, Non-Hispanic: 62.7% Black: 59.1% Hispanic: 57.5%	White, Non-Hispanic: 62.5% Black: 60.7% Hispanic: 60.2%	> 33% decrease in disparity	Black: 60.3% Hispanic: 59.3%	Black: 50% decrease in disparity Hispanic: 56% decrease in disparity

¹ Indicators are collected at the Metropolitan Statistical Area level