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# As Lamont's workforce council convenes, Metro Hartford visionaries roll out regional economic plan



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Gov. Ned Lamont delivers opening remarks at the inaugural meeting of the Governor's Workforce Council at Southern Connecticut State University in New Haven.

By Matt Pilon, Greg Bordonaro

The focus on workforce and talent development in Connecticut has been at full throttle this week.

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The CEO-packed Governor's Workforce Council, which Gov. Ned Lamont shook up and infused with new membership last month, met for the first time Thursday afternoon at Southern Connecticut State University in New Haven.



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which includes the CEOs or other top executives of companies like AQR, The Hartford, Indeed, Infosys, NBC by Black & Decker and Synchrony, will advise the governor on ways to improve the state's workforce-development system, including through increased coordination between the state's education and private sectors.



ncil members and ex-officio members were in attendance at Thursday's two-hour meeting, including some of the chief executives.

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Seated near Lamont toward the front of the room was Stanley Black & Decker CEO and President Jim Loree and Bigelow Tea



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ident Cindy Bigelow. mostly included introductory remarks and presentations from several members laying out the workforce d opportunities Connecticut faces.

for example, Chairperson Garrett Moran said 100 percent of the new jobs added in the last 10 years all required more than a high school diploma, stressing the importance of workforce training and continuing education, whether that includes a traditional four-year degree, certificate program or something else.

Department of Economic and Community Development Commissioner David Lehman said 40 percent of Connecticut's adult population has a bachelor's degree or higher vs. 33 percent nationwide. That shows Connecticut already has a well-educated workforce to draw from.

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However, two of the state's top industries -- manufacturing and finance/insurance -- have still not recovered from the Great Recession, down 3 percent and 10 percent respectively in jobs.

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Meantime, Lamont stressed the need to fill “tens of thousands” of jobs in Connecticut amid a global search for talent. He said the world and workforce are changing rapidly and the state and its education institutions need to catch up.

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Moran also shed more light on how the council will operate. It will include six committees and three industry groups (manufacturing, health care and white-collar jobs) that will do most of the work.

The end goal will be to present a report to the governor and legislature by Jan. 1, 2021, that makes strategic recommendations to improve the state's workforce system in a variety of areas, including better coordination, reducing barriers to training, strengthening the bridge from high school into post-secondary training and education, and emphasizing data-driven outcomes.

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**Regional plan**



Meanwhile, a trio of regional partners on Thursday rolled out their economic plan for Greater Hartford over the next five years.

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A major pillar of the so-called Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS), which HBJ first detailed over the **Most Popular**.



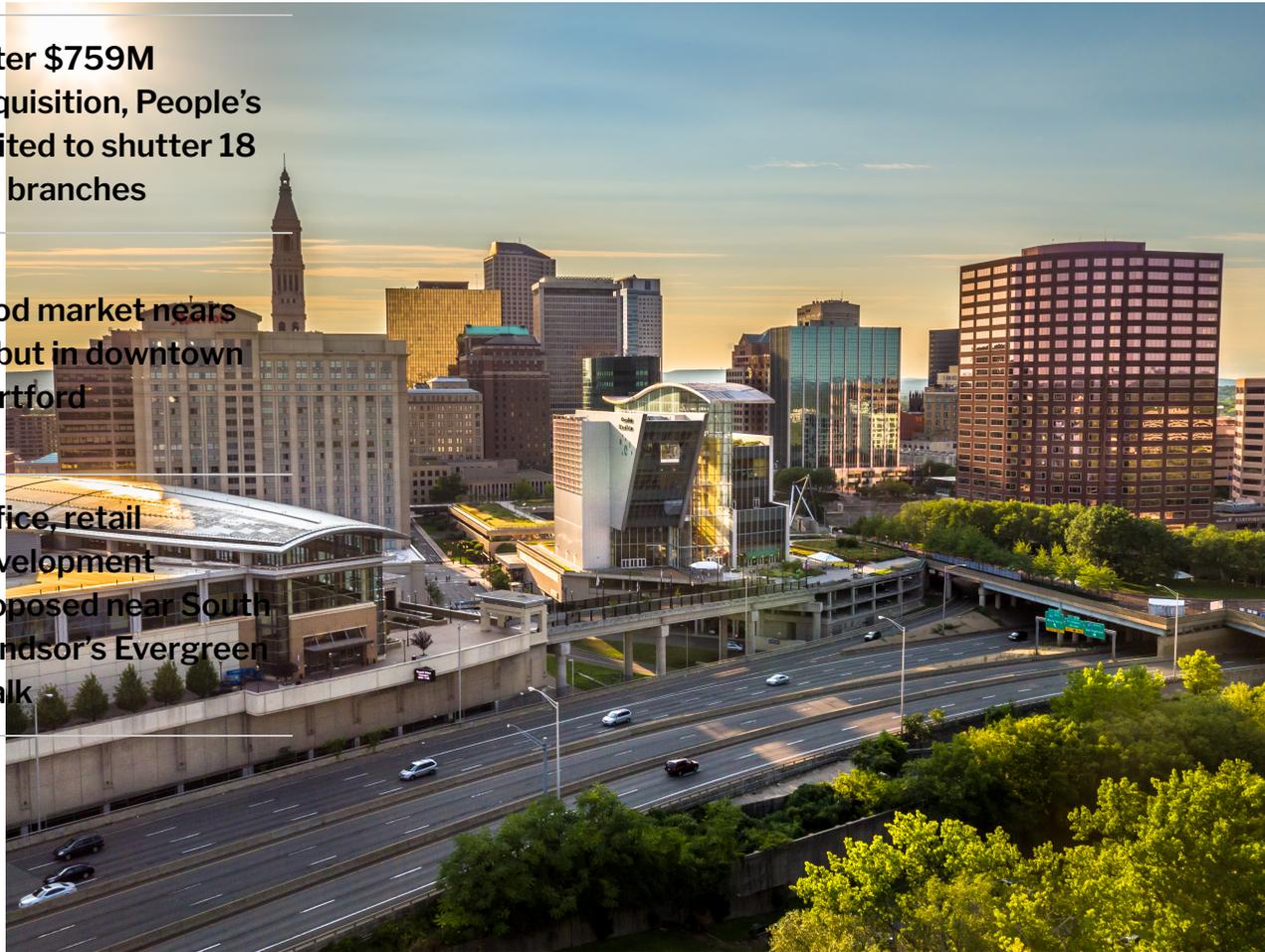
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Downtown Hartford skyline.

The three organizations that steered the recent plan include the MetroHartford Alliance, The Hartford Foundation for Public Giving and the Capitol Region Council of Governments (CRCOG). They have pledged to play active roles in working to achieve the plan's ambitious goals, which include creation of a workforce skills training fund with up to \$70 million in support, stronger

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industry-sector partnerships, and a "dual-track" training model providing a clearer path to living-wage careers for residents who don't pursue or attain a traditional college degree.

"The metropolitan region has an amazing asset base to build on to accelerate economic development for the region's one million residents," said CROCOG Executive Director Lyle Wray. "A key is having the talent available needed by firms to grow and create jobs in well-paying jobs."

Besides talent initiatives, the plan also calls for ramped-up communications with area companies to identify firms looking to expand, as well as common barriers to investment.

Each is expected to seek final approval from the U.S. Economic Development Administration, also includes a potentially controversial "regional funding district" that would raise tax revenue to pay for quality-of-life and infrastructure improvements in the region.



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in a district that would likely require an act of the state legislature.

Read the summary here or the full plan here.



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