

# Metropolitan Economic Strategy: How Urban Regions Innovate and Prosper in the Global Marketplace

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## POINT ONE

*America's future prosperity depends on the productivity and competitiveness of its metropolitan regions, the key centers of innovation and business activity, where over 90 percent of the nation's job growth is currently taking place, and where nearly 90 percent of the nation's Gross Domestic Product is now being generated.*

The nature and volume of investment, production, and trade in and through America's metropolitan regions is one of the basic structural building blocks of our country's macroeconomic growth and global competitiveness, and thus is at least as important as fiscal and monetary policy, international trade, education, and other economic issues regularly considered and debated by the executive, legislative, and judicial branches of the federal government, including the Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System.

**Metropolitan Economic Strategy is vital for national economic policy in the new global marketplace, both in the USA and in countries throughout the world.**

## POINT TWO

*Communities, both cities and suburbs, can only thrive as part of a larger metropolitan economic dynamic, with the entire region becoming a center of advanced innovation and technological excellence in the production and distribution of various goods and services.*

The competitive advantage of a metropolitan region comes from successfully mixing highly skilled and high-value specialization together with economic and social diversity, and by strategically investing in, improving, and sustainably utilizing the region's fundamental assets—its physical, financial, and human capital.

**Metropolitan Economic Strategy is vital for urban policy.**

## POINT THREE

*By emphasizing the interwoven economic destinies that bridge across families and communities within metropolitan regions, people begin to see themselves as "citizens of a metropolitan economy"—players on the economic "home team" competing with other metropolitan economic teams all over the world.*

The real "city" of today and tomorrow is the metropolis. Metropolitan regions are the most economically organic components of urban geography and demography affecting people's daily lives at the local level, and the main access



Beijing, China

points for individuals trying to thrive in the global economy. Yet the greatest barrier to regional coordination, cooperation, and collaboration is the lack of a common metropolitan consciousness and citizenship. Therefore, promoting "teamwork" is essential for individual and collective success, by encouraging households and families to begin reaching beyond local political boundaries in pursuit of their common interests and goals of increasing prosperity and enhancing quality of life.

**Metropolitan Economic Strategy is vital for regional identity.**

## POINT FOUR

*Metropolitan Economic Strategy is not the same as regional economic growth.*

Every metropolitan region experiences economic growth or decline, regardless of whether or not there are comprehensive plans or coordinated initiatives. Metropolitan regions function as fully integrated economies in terms of the production and distribution of goods and services, and they will function as such with or without a coherent economic strategy. A critical determinant of their success is the decision-making process of private sector executives, investors, entrepreneurs, and consultants making facility location commitments in the global marketplace, especially regarding the synergy and attractiveness of metropolitan regions as centers of innovation that can provide businesses with a competitive advantage.

Unfortunately, regional economic growth often occurs in an uncoordinated and haphazard fashion, and conse-

quently may be missing opportunities to produce greater investment, higher incomes, and more equitable distribution of the benefits of prosperity among people and places. Most regions do not have any viable mechanisms for promoting metropolitan economic development, in terms of either developing a common vision, formulating a collective strategy, or jointly cooperating to implement such plans. Most of the contemporary debate centers on the impacts of regional economic growth, including whether growth is too fast or too slow, the problem of disparities and inequities, along with harmful effects on the environment. This discourse is primarily about analyzing trends and reforming policies.

**Metropolitan Economic Strategy, on the other hand, is a proactive organizing principle that depends on regional teamwork and citizenship.** It is explicitly designed to bring together the public and private sectors across the entire region to formulate and carry out a coordinated set of targeted investments in people and places, consciously designed to enable businesses to thrive, jobs to expand, and quality of life to improve. Each of the major constituencies—business, government, and community leadership, must closely collaborate for the metropolis to thrive economically, socially, physically, and politically. In just the same way that communities, cities, counties, and states use economic development plans to guide their actions, so also must the communities that constitute the metropolitan region farsightedly engage in such comprehensive planning and united action if they are to compete effectively and win in the global economy.

### POINT FIVE

*Formulating and implementing an effective Metropolitan Economic Strategy requires focusing on two key elements:*

**1) Investing in the fundamental assets and activities that will help fuel productivity and innovation.**

Among these are:

- transportation and infrastructure
- education and workforce development
- research and technology
- venture capital and other forms of business financing
- services and amenities
- economic development incentives
- trade promotion and market expansion
- business and employment attraction and retention
- entrepreneurial culture and business-friendly institutions
- regional coordination and civic leadership
- taxation and regulatory policy
- environmental preservation and restoration
- community and family development
- amenities and quality of life

**2) Promoting modern and dynamic industry networks that accelerate the pace of innovation and growth.** These broad-based groups of interconnected firms and organizations, also called clusters, are best able to fully capitalize on the mix of specialization and diversity in the

region's firms and assets, and to foster a climate of technological innovation in design and production of goods and services that can compete globally and generate substantial growth in jobs and incomes.

### POINT SIX

*Metropolitan Economic Strategy must be home-grown and tailor-made in order to succeed.*

The fundamental assets and the key dynamic industry networks will vary from region to region. Polymer science and engineering is a winner for Akron and northeast Ohio, but not necessarily for Austin, Texas, where computer hardware and software are the leading edge, or Atlanta, Georgia, where telecommunications and transportation are the fastest-growing economic engines.

At the US Department of Housing and Urban Development in 1996, we identified 18 key industry networks nationwide that in different combinations play major roles as export-based economic generators in 114 metropolitan regions across the country, with wide variations from one region to the next:

- Business and Professional Services
- Health Services



Cesky Krumlov, Czech Republic



Cape Town, South Africa

- Entertainment and Tourism
- Financial Services
- Housing and Construction
- Medical Products
- Transportation and Trade Services
- Industrial Supplies
- Printing and Publishing
- Electronics and Communications
- Transportation Equipment
- Materials Supplies
- Aerospace and Defense
- Agriculture and Food Processing
- Natural Resources
- Industrial Machinery
- Consumer Goods
- Apparel and Textiles

In the 1998 Strategic Economic Development Plan for Washington, DC, we identified six key industry networks for the city and the metropolitan region:

- Business/Professional/Financial/Association Services
- Hospitality/Entertainment/Tourism/Specialty Retail
- Universities/Educational/Research Institutions
- Biomedical Research/Health Services
- Media/Publications
- Information Technology/Telecommunications

In the 1999 Baltimore Economic Growth Strategy, we identified four key industry networks for the city and the metropolitan region:

- Business, Professional, Financial, Non-Profit, and Information Services and Products
- Biomedical Research, Medical Products, and Health Services
- Hospitality, Entertainment, Tourism, and Specialty Retail
- Transportation and Trade Services and Equipment

One size definitely does not fit all. Each metropolitan region must find the right mix and most important assets that work best for generating innovation and prosperity.

### POINT SEVEN

*Comprehensive and effective Metropolitan Economic Strategy necessarily involves central cities, by maximizing the urban contribution to regional prosperity, and by spreading the benefits of metropolitan wealth creation to increase incomes and quality of life for the people who live and work in and near cities.*

Industry networks operate across regions and always include significant business operations located in cities. The smooth functioning of metropolitan economies, with their highly interrelated business activities involving thousands of private firms and public sector organizations, requires healthy central cities to serve as focal points for regional identity in the global marketplace, and to engage in many key aspects of the production and distribution of goods and services. Cities remain a major source of creativity and innovation, and they will continue to play a vital role in ensuring that regional businesses and job opportunities can compete in international markets.

**The six key roles for central cities in the metropolitan economy are:**

- centers of innovation and advanced services
- centers of culture, sports, entertainment, conventions, and tourism
- centers of education, research, and health care
- centers of transportation and trade
- market centers
- workforce centers

**The best way for cities and older inner-ring suburbs to succeed is by working collaboratively with their regional neighbors, organizing coordinated public-private partnerships to develop and carry out a Metropolitan Economic Strategy**

### POINT EIGHT

*Metropolitan Economic Strategy is the best way for cities and their residents to prosper in the new global marketplace.*

In today's global economic context, cities simply cannot survive in isolation from their regional surroundings. Urban economies increasingly extend far beyond the traditional city boundaries. Central cities, even the largest and fastest-growing ones, are physically constrained by artificial boundaries

that divide them from the rest of their natural economic growth area, and they can only revive or continue to thrive by directly linking their future direction to the overall prosperity and competitiveness of the surrounding metropolis. The best way for cities and older inner-ring suburbs to succeed is by working collaboratively with their regional neighbors, organizing coordinated public-private partnerships to develop and carry out a Metropolitan Economic Strategy that includes three major elements:

**1) Build on the city's strengths in the context of metropolitan economic growth.**

Growing the city's key industry networks also inherently involves strengthening the region's economic vitality. Cities both currently possess and can create major assets to increase their competitiveness. By doing so they expand the overall metropolitan economic pie, even as they work to capture a larger share of that pie for city-oriented business activities that utilize to best advantage the existing transportation and communications infrastructure, accessibility of the central location, the urban-oriented lifestyle attractions, the diversity and depth of experts and specialists, and the quality of major knowledge-based institutions.

**2) Reinvest and repopulate downtown and neighborhoods.**

This must be based on marketing the city's potential appeal to businesses and residents from throughout the region and around the world, with coordinated public and private investments, and concentrated efforts to create or bring back commerce and jobs, high quality stores and services, safe streets and good schools, better housing and attractive amenities.

**3) Connect urban residents to regional jobs.**

Such initiatives necessarily include targeted training, placement, transportation, child care, and other incentives and services that eliminate barriers to the smooth functioning of the metropolitan job market and help fill suburban job shortages by expanding employment opportunities for the low-skilled, low-income population living in and near central cities.

**POINT NINE**

*Preserving and enhancing a good physical environment and quality of life is essential to the long-term success of a Metropolitan Economic Strategy.*

No region can compete globally and sustain itself as a center of innovation without attracting and retaining talented people. These highly skilled professionals are increasingly lifestyle-oriented and will only live and work in places that offer a very high quality of life. Today's environmentalism and related movements for smart growth, sustainable development, and new urbanism are more than just compatible with economic growth. Environmental protection and restoration are fundamentally necessary for generating prosperity in the new global economy. Preserving and enhanc-

ing the physical and natural environment of cities and metropolitan regions includes cleaning up and redeveloping brownfield sites; renovating historic structures; improving clean air and water; maintaining the beauty of natural landscapes, the accessibility of pathways and open space, and the availability of agricultural land; curbing sprawl and traffic congestion, reinvesting in older urban and suburban centers; expanding transit and other pedestrian and transportation alternatives; and generally strengthening community planning and design of cities and suburbs.

**POINT TEN**

*Finding the right mechanisms for governance is critical to the success of Metropolitan Economic Strategy.*

Each region must make its own way, navigating the complicated challenges of bridging across many levels of separate jurisdictions and governing units, including communities, cities, counties, special districts, public authorities, states, and even nations. This challenge is made even more complex because the role of the private sector is absolutely critical. Forming the right kind of partnerships, establishing the



Budapest, Hungary

right type of leadership, creating the right form of cooperative governance structures—these and many other issues must be resolved for Metropolitan Economic Strategy to make a visible and long-term difference. There is not one best solution, and again, one answer certainly does not cover every situation. •

*Dr. Marc A. Weiss is a Public Policy Scholar at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars in Washington, DC. He is author of *The Rise of the Community Builders*, and *The Economic Resurgence of Washington, DC*, and coauthor of *Charter of the New Urbanism*, and *Real Estate Development Principles and Process*.*

## Recent Wilson Center National Conference on Metropolitan Economic Strategy, and Upcoming International Conference on Metropolitan Quality of Life

KENT H. HUGHES

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More than 100 senior practitioners and distinguished experts from across the nation gathered at the Woodrow Wilson International Center on September 20th through September 23rd. They focused on creating new policies and partnerships that enable America's metropolitan regions to implement coordinated public and private investment strategies designed to enhance technological innovation, productivity, and competitiveness.

"The conference—*Metropolitan Economic Strategy: How Communities, Cities, Counties, and Regions Innovate and Prosper in the New Global Marketplace*—facilitated in-depth discussion among national policymakers to generate fresh and creative approaches for expanding prosperity and improving quality of life in metropolitan regions," said Marc Weiss, Public Policy Scholar at the Wilson Center and conference coordinator.

The main conference themes are drawn from a book entitled *Teamwork*, that Marc Weiss is co-authoring with Henry Cisneros, former Secretary, US Department of Housing and Urban Development. "Our book," stated Henry Cisneros, "is exploring and promoting the best ways that public, private, civic, and community leaders can work together to ensure that cities and suburbs will thrive in the fast-changing international economy of the 21st century."

Featured speakers included Philip Angelides, Treasurer, State of California; Earl Blumenauer, Member, US Congress, from the City of Portland (Oregon), and Co-Chairman, Livable Communities Task Force; Henry Cisneros, Chairman, American CityVista, former Secretary, US Department of Housing and Urban Development, and former Mayor, City of San Antonio (Texas); Brent Coles, Mayor, City of Boise (Idaho), and President, US Conference of Mayors; Lee Cooke, Chairman, Habitek International, and former Mayor, City of Austin (Texas); Richard Erickson, President, Regional Business Council of Northeast Ohio, and former President, Akron Regional Development Board; Parris Glendening, Governor, State of Maryland, and President, National Governors' Association; Stephen Goldsmith, Domestic Policy Adviser, Bush-Cheney 2000, and former Mayor, City of Indianapolis (Indiana); Javier Gonzales, Commissioner, Santa Fe County (New Mexico), and President-elect, National Association of Counties; Lee Hamilton, Director, Woodrow Wilson International Center;

Kevin Hanna, President, Atlanta Development Authority; Alice Rivlin, Chairman, District of Columbia Control Board, and former Director, White House Office of Management and Budget; Gene Sperling, Director, White House National Economic Council; Susan Wachter, Assistant Secretary, US Department of Housing and Urban Development; Marc Weiss, Public Policy Scholar, Woodrow Wilson International Center; and Anthony Williams, Mayor, City of Washington, DC.

The conference participants spent many hours each day in breakout discussion groups developing recommendations for new policies, programs, and research efforts. The results of this conference will be summarized in a 32-page conference report to be published and widely disseminated by the Wilson Center. The *Metropolitan Economic Strategy* conference received financial support from the US Federal Conference Fund, and the Fannie Mae Foundation.

"We had a full agenda and tackled some very tough issues, such as workforce development, smart growth, and urban reinvestment," said Marc Weiss. "It is so important that we focused on this fundamental challenge, because America's and the world's future prosperity—the success and vitality of our nation's families and communities—depends on creating a state-of-the-art metropolitan policy agenda."

The Wilson Center will be holding a follow-up international conference—*Metropolitan Quality of Life: How Communities, Cities, Counties, Regions, and States Sustain and Improve Transportation and Infrastructure, Housing and Services, Land-Use and Environment, and Urban Amenities*—to be held on September 12-15, 2001 in Washington, DC. This conference is also being coordinated by Marc Weiss.

For additional information on the conference and to receive copies of the conference overview materials and summary report, please contact Marc Weiss by phone at (202) 691-4229, by fax at (202) 691-4001, or by email at [weissma@wwic.si.edu](mailto:weissma@wwic.si.edu). •

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**“METROPOLITAN ECONOMIC STRATEGY:  
How Communities, Cities, Counties and Regions Innovate and Prosper  
in the New Global Marketplace”**  
**Woodrow Wilson Center**  
**September 20 - 23, 2000**

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