



The Research Bureau

(2007-2008)

Annual Report





nationalgrid

"National Grid is proud to support The Worcester Regional Research Bureau in its efforts to research public policy issues and educate the citizens of the area to produce informed decisions for the future. We are similar in many ways, sharing commitments to leading on policy development and finding solutions in the best interest of everyone in the Greater Worcester region - including our customers and employees. The power of action aligns our efforts to create a stronger, better future for generations to come."

*Tom King
Executive Director, National Grid*



Photograph by David Fox

A Message from the Chairman of the Board

Each year, every year for the past twenty-three years, The Research Bureau has enlivened our local marketplace of ideas. Forums have been presented that are meant to educate, illuminate or provoke. Reports have been researched and drafted that aim to cogently explain issues which are or should be on the radar screens of our reigning Zeitgeist. The Research Bureau satisfies its mission when controversy is sparked, debate follows, and public policy is examined or re-examined by those who govern.

The secret of The Research Bureau's success is its ability to forge relationships with diverse constituencies and to collaborate with others who share common goals of revitalizing and restoring prosperity to the Worcester region. Working with city and town officials at all levels, neighborhood associations, public and private agencies, associations and institutes, The Research Bureau is a respected resource for financially challenged local governments seeking public policy guidance. Wrongly perceived by its critics as a scold, The Research Bureau has also been the messenger of good news.

This past December, The Research Bureau sponsored a forum titled "Life Sciences in the Worcester Community: A Vision for the Future." Superbly moderated by Dennis Berkey, President of WPI, it brought together distinguished academic and biotech executives from WPI, UMass Medical School, Charles River Laboratories and Abbott Bioresearch. All agreed that Worcester had well-positioned itself for present and future success in this labor-intensive, talent-attracting, dynamic industry. Few present will forget the riveting summation of Dr. John Sullivan, Vice Chancellor for Research at UMass Medical School, who heralded the unique spirit of cooperation occurring among competitors and disciplines in the Worcester community and who predicted a promising future.

A *Telegram & Gazette* editorial observed the next day: "The Research Bureau forum yesterday, billed as a look at the future of biotechnology and the life sciences in Central Massachusetts, offered a tantalizing glimpse of a sector that is both expanding and moving into the forefront of sophistication in the field The future looks promising for life sciences, but make no mistake: The sector already is a force to be reckoned with in the Central Massachusetts economy." A Worcester success story no longer hiding in plain view.

The Research Bureau seeks to help and doesn't aim to please. Would you want it any other way?

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Brian J. Buckley". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Brian J. Buckley, Esq.
Chairman of the Board

President's Message

I am pleased to report that during the past year, The Research Bureau has been able to expand our audience thanks to several community partners. In keeping with our mission to promote informed public debate and decision-making, we are now making regularly scheduled appearances on radio and television and writing columns for regional publications. This outreach has provided new venues for informing the region's citizens of important public policy issues.

First, I engage in a weekly discussion of public policy issues with Hank Stolz on the "Hank Stolz Experience" on WCRN 830 AM on Mondays at 4:20 p.m. These conversations cover not only our latest reports and forums but also a broad range of public policy issues in that week's news. The show takes calls from the listening audience, giving us the opportunity to interact with the public.

Second, I am one of four regular panelists on "Central Mass Chronicles," hosted by Ben Dobson, during which we discuss three different issues at each bi-monthly taping aired on Charter Communications Channel 3. Sometimes, the topics discussed are ones we have written about sometime in our 23-year history; frequently they are not. Even in the latter cases, we believe that The Research Bureau has maintained its reputation on the show for bringing the facts to the discussion.

Third, I am writing two regular columns including one for the "Buzz," the *Telegram & Gazette's* monthly business magazine that is edited by Rod Lee, published on the last Wednesday of each month, and distributed to 45,000 households and businesses. The other is for the Worcester Regional Chamber of Commerce quarterly newsletter, published under the leadership of Richard Kennedy, the Chamber's President and CEO, and distributed to about 5,000 member businesses and public officials. Given the primary audience of these publications, I try in my columns to show the relevance of the public policy issues discussed to the well-being of the business community.

I want to express my profound thanks to Hank Stolz and WCRN, Ben Dobson and Channel 3, Rod Lee and the *Telegram's Buzz*, and Richard Kennedy of the Chamber for giving The Research Bureau these opportunities to educate and inform the public. But we would not have been able to conduct our research and gather the facts in the first place without the generous financial support provided to The Research Bureau, in many cases for over two decades, by the many corporations, foundations and individuals (listed at the end of this report), and to whom we are extremely grateful. For setting the Bureau's research agenda and providing countless "non-billable hours," my sincerest appreciation goes to The Research Bureau's Board of Directors, and especially our dedicated Executive Committee. And it goes without saying that an organization is only as good as its staff, and The Research Bureau's staff, although small, has a boundless enthusiasm and capacity for hard work for which I thank and commend them heartily.



Roberta Rubel Schaefer, Ph.D.
President & CEO



Research

Business and Residential Climate

The Research Bureau published several reports related to the business and residential climate of Worcester and the region.

Economic Development

The Research Bureau, for the seventh year, tracked seven measures of Worcester's economic well-being and found a mixed picture.

Findings

- While Worcester's tax base grew by 75% between FY03 and FY07, most of that growth was in the residential sector.
- The City's dual tax rate, where businesses pay more than double the rate of home owners, puts Worcester at a competitive disadvantage compared to nearby communities, including those along the I-495 corridor.
- Private investment in Worcester's economy in FY07 grew by 13% in the commercial/industrial sector and declined by 9% in the residential sector.
- The number of jobs grew by 1,300 during the last year, but that does not offset the loss of 3,000 jobs earlier in the decade.

Bottom line

- One barrier to attracting more businesses to Worcester is the unfavorable tax rate that shifts the burden to the commercial/industrial sector. The City Manager intends to recommend a shift to a single tax rate.
- Regular commercial air service at Worcester Regional Airport could attract businesses.
- Jobs in the health care industry are expected to continue to grow and the high skill level required could be met by the higher education resources in the greater Worcester region.

“The Research Bureau continues to be a beacon that sheds light on public policy issues and ideas that will educate citizens and strengthen Worcester and surrounding communities.”

*Eric H. Schultz
President & CEO,
Fallon Community Health Plan*

"Saint-Gobain wholeheartedly supports the Bureau's approach of non-partisan research and analysis. With so many issues affecting our communities and the business sector, it's reassuring to know that there is an independent voice willing to take a stand on important policy matters."

Tim Feagans, Deputy General Counsel - Saint-Gobain Corporation

Casino Gambling in Worcester

Because the Worcester City Council asked voters whether they supported the siting of legalized gambling within the City, The Research Bureau studied the pros and cons of the subject.

Findings

- Gambling diverts dollars formerly spent in area businesses and other entertainment venues.
- Much of the money generated by casino revenues, unlike that generated by more conventional business activity, goes to regions outside the local community, rather than being recycled within it.
- Casino revenue growth tends to stagnate after several years.
- A casino in Worcester faces competition from those in Connecticut and others that have been proposed in Massachusetts, thereby reducing the revenue each one would produce.
- Crime rates increase in the vicinity of casinos, increasing the need for more law enforcement officers.
- The number of compulsive gamblers, suicide rates, and divorce rates, all increase in the vicinity of casinos, resulting in an increased need for social services.
- Low-income individuals spend a greater proportion of their income on gambling than those in higher income brackets, which worsens the financial situation of the former. (In 2006, 31.7% of Worcester's households had an annual income of less than \$25,000.)
- Casinos impact the quality of life in a fifty-mile radius from the facility.

Bottom Line

- Since the social and economic costs far outweigh the benefits, a casino should not be sited in Worcester.
- The State Legislature rejected the Governor's proposal to legalize casino gambling in the Commonwealth.

Bidding on public construction projects

There have been a number of occasions during the last decade when the City has requested bids on public construction projects and received very few responses with projected costs far in excess of estimates. The Research Bureau undertook an investigation of the reasons.

Findings

- Worcester adds more regulations to bidding than are found in state law.
- The one local requirement that was consistently cited by both companies and public officials as a deterrence to bidding was Worcester's Responsible Employer Ordinance (REO).
- Specifically, it is the section which requires that all bidders participate in a state-approved apprenticeship-training program for each trade and occupation from their firm engaged in a particular project, which restricts competition.
- This requirement has the likely effect of reducing the supply of bidders and increasing the cost of the project.

Bottom Line

- In order to increase competition and reduce price, the Worcester City Council should rescind the Responsible Employer Ordinance.
- If the City Council is unwilling to rescind the REO in the near future, then the next time there is a bid opening at which only one or two bids are received, or the lowest bidders are missing a DAT form (Division of Apprenticeship Training, which demonstrates compliance with the apprenticeship requirement), the City should suspend the REO for that one project and repeat the bidding process. Receiving more bids and a lower winning bid price will provide evidence of the impact of the REO.



"The Research Bureau has consistently been a clear and reliable voice in the community with a bias toward presenting carefully researched facts and conclusions to assist public officials in the difficult task of delivering essential services with limited resources."

*J. Christopher Collins
Senior Vice President & General Counsel , Unum US*

Effective Management of Resources

The Research Bureau continued to publish its performance measurement reports, analyzing data and tracing trends in the areas of public safety, municipal and neighborhood services, and public education. Our work in Worcester led to two new contracts related to government performance measurement.

New England States Performance Measurement Project

The New England States Government Finance Officers Association (NESGFOA) has contracted with us to implement and manage the New England States Performance Measurement Project, a 3-year pilot program. We will be working with ten communities in each of five New England states to expand the adoption of performance-measurement practices at the local level by regularly collecting and reporting timely data, so as to assist policymakers, managers, and citizens in determining whether a particular service is efficient and effective. The project aims to improve service delivery and make government more responsive to its citizens as well as provide a forum in which the identification and implementation of effective practices is fostered. The regional nature of the project will allow municipal leaders to network and will provide them with an opportunity to assess what is working well in other communities and identify innovations that could enhance service delivery in their own community.

New England States Project - Participating Communities

Augusta, Maine

Lewiston, Maine

Biddeford, Maine

Mansfield, Connecticut

Freeport, Maine

Newport, Rhode Island

Grafton, Massachusetts

Saco, Maine

Holden, Massachusetts

South Burlington, Vermont



New England States Performance Measurement Project

Measure, Share, Improve



"There are numerous organizations within the City that provide quality health care, superb educational opportunities and a wide range of cultural experiences. There is however only one organization that provides truly independent, non-partisan research and guidance to our citizens in general and to our City Council in particular. Fletcher, Tilton and Whipple feels this is a vital need and hence we are happy to sponsor the activities of The Research Bureau."

*Summer B. Tilton, Jr.,
Director, Fletcher, Tilton
& Whipple*



Middle Cities Project

Also as a result of The Research Bureau's government performance measurement project in Worcester, the Pioneer Institute has contracted with us to work with older industrial cities in Massachusetts to develop performance measures for improving local governance, so as to help revitalize them, attract new businesses, and retain older ones. The Research Bureau will work with citizen advisory committees in each of eight cities to develop measures for each of four service areas which the cities will benchmark: public education, fiscal management, economic development, and public safety. The CEO's of the cities involved and the service area professionals will meet on a regular basis to assess data and learn what works so as to share best practices and make operational changes accordingly.

This project is open to fourteen Massachusetts Middle Cities

<i>Brockton</i>	<i>Holyoke</i>	<i>Lynn</i>	<i>Springfield</i>
<i>Chicopee</i>	<i>Lawrence</i>	<i>New Bedford</i>	<i>Taunton</i>
<i>Fall River</i>	<i>Leominster</i>	<i>Pittsfield</i>	<i>Worcester</i>
<i>Fitchburg</i>	<i>Lowell</i>		

“The Research Bureau is a powerful force for constructive change in municipal fiscal and tax policy, delivery of governmental services and public education in Worcester and throughout Central Massachusetts.”

*George W. Tetler, III
Partner, Bowditch & Dewey, LLP*



Economy of Operations

Worcester's FY08 Budget: Continuing the Reform Agenda

Findings

- The City's revenues are expected to increase by 3.2%, down from the 4% growth rate common during the past decade.
- Because of revenue shortfalls at the state level, local aid, which constitutes 51% of the City's revenues will be level-funded except for a modest increase in education aid.
- Local receipts from fees and charges will decrease marginally.
- Because of the recent appellate tax board decision, which allows the City to tax telecommunications companies' equipment, the value of new growth will increase by almost \$2 million in FY09.

Bottom line

- Were it not for a number of reforms, especially in the area of municipal employee health insurance, which have already yielded millions of dollars in savings, Worcester would be facing massive lay-offs and reductions in services in FY09.
- The City Manager should negotiate an additional change in public employee health insurance so that the City pays 75% of the least expensive plan. That change would save the City about \$22 million in FY09.
- The City Manager should negotiate a change in police and fire contracts so that paid time off benefits for those employees are the same as for other employees. That change would save the City approximately \$3.5 million in FY09.
- The City Manager and the School Superintendent should contract out City and school custodial services. Estimated saving are approximately \$2.6 million in FY09.

“The Research Bureau is a unique resource which we value highly. The Research Bureau consistently produces reports of high quality with precise topical significance. We at Berkeley have relied on the reports in our own work, and have frequently shared them with our partners to assist them in making informed investment decisions.”

*Barbara Smith-Bacon
Vice President, Project Manager,
Berkeley Investments*





Events

Forums

In addition to its thought-provoking, often ground-breaking research, The Research Bureau organizes a number of public forums on a variety of topics that bring together diverse points of view to educate citizens and decision-makers. These events are part of The Research Bureau's Francis A. Harrington Forums, and generously supported by Bank of America.

During this year, The Research Bureau sponsored forums on the following topics:

- **School Autonomy: Can It Improve Student Achievement?**
Co-presented with the Rennie Center for Education Research & Policy and sponsored by Coghlin Electrical Contractors, it took place at Becker College on October 26, 2007.
- **Life Sciences in the Worcester Community: A Vision for the Future**
Sponsored by Abbott BioResearch, it took place at WPI's Life Sciences Building at Gateway Park on December 11, 2007.
- **Balancing the FY09 Budget: Rolling the Dice with your Tax Dollars**
Sponsored by TD Banknorth, it took place at the Beechwood Hotel on March 13, 2008.
- **Worcester's Next Superintendent of Schools: Addressing the Challenges**
Sponsored by Worcester Credit Union, it took place at Worcester State College on April 10, 2008.

These educational forums, which are free and open to the public, are often attended by public officials, business and community leaders, educators and concerned citizens. These events are videotaped by the Worcester Government Channel, under the direction of Judy Warren, and rebroadcast throughout the region. They will soon be available to download from The Research Bureau's website.

Annual Meeting

Each year The Research Bureau invites a prominent public official or an expert on a particular policy to be the featured speaker at its annual meeting. The 2007 guest speaker was Dr. Thomas Payzant, former Superintendent of the Boston Public Schools and Senior Lecturer at Harvard University, who gave an overview of a recently-released report, *Tough Choices or Tough Times* which calls for a radical restructuring of pre-K through 12 public education in the United States. Dr. Payzant was a member of the New Commission on the Skills of the American Workforce, a national commission of distinguished leaders from across the nation, which produced the report. The report argues that unless such a restructuring occurs in our educational system, the United States will not be able to compete globally in the 21st century. Among the recommendations are: recruiting the top third of college graduates into teaching, developing one teachers' contract for the entire state, and giving each school complete discretion over the way its funds are spent, the staffing schedule, organization and management of the school, and the schools' schedule and its program, as long as it provides the curriculum and meets the testing and other accountability requirements imposed by the State.

The annual meeting, attended by approximately 350 community, business and academic leaders from the region, as well as interested citizens, marked the completion of Eric Schultz's 3-year term as volunteer President of the organization. Mr. Schultz is President & CEO of the Fallon Community Health Plan. Dr. Roberta Schaefer presented Mr. Schultz with an "official Research Bureau chair," thanking him for his service not only as President, but as mentor to her and the Bureau's staff. She also welcomed Brian Buckley, Director at Fletcher, Tilton & Whipple, as the organization's 11th president. Also elected were Vice President, Sandra Dunn, DCU Center; Vice President for Finance, James Paulhus, UniBank; Treasurer Agnes Kull, Greenberg, Rosenblatt, Kull & Bitsoli; and Clerk, D.M. Moschos, Mirick O'Connell.



"For 23 years, The Research Bureau has consistently provided reliable, thought-provoking reports on governmental issues of great public interest. The Telegram & Gazette is proud to be a sponsor of the Bureau in the belief that an informed citizenry is the key to any community's efforts to build a brighter future for all of its residents."

*Bruce Gaultney
Publisher, Telegram & Gazette*



Research Bureau Annual Meeting Speakers (1986-2008)

2008	John W. Rowe, Chairman, President, and Chief Executive Officer, Exelon Corporation	1998	Myron Magnet, Editor, City Journal
2007	Dr. Thomas Payzant, former Superintendent of the Boston Public Schools and Senior Lecturer at the Harvard Graduate School of Education	1997	Thomas Birmingham, Senate President, Commonwealth of Massachusetts
2006	Dr. David Driscoll, Commissioner of Education, Commonwealth of Massachusetts	1996	Glenn C. Loury, Professor of Economics, Boston University
2005	Tamar Jacoby, Author and Senior Fellow at the Manhattan Institute	1995	Peter Harkness, Editor and Publisher of Governing
2004	John Gannon, Staff Director, U.S. House of Representatives, Select Committee on Homeland Security	1994	James Q. Wilson, Author and Professor of Political Science, UCLA
2003	Governor Mitt Romney, Commonwealth of Massachusetts	1993	Robert Poole, President, Reason Foundation
2002	Fred Siegel, Professor of History, The Cooper Union for the Advancement of Science and Art, New York City, and Senior Fellow, Progressive Policy Institute	1992	William Hudnut, former Mayor of Indianapolis
2001	Heather MacDonald, Senior Fellow, The Manhattan Institute	1991	David P. Forsberg, Secretary, Executive Office of Health and Human Services, Commonwealth of Massachusetts
2000	Rev. Dr. Floyd H Flake, Senior Pastor, Allen African Methodist Episcopal Church and former U.S. Representative to Congress	1990	Bruce Carnes, Director of Planning and Budget, Office of National Drug Control Policy
1999	Howard Husock, Director of Case Studies in Public Policy and Management, Kennedy School, Harvard University	1989	Edward J. Logue, CEO, Logue Boston, former Director of the Boston Redevelopment Authority
		1988	Raymond Flynn, Mayor of Boston
		1987	William Bulger, Senate President, Commonwealth of Massachusetts
		1986	Ira Jackson, Commissioner, Department of Revenue, Commonwealth of Massachusetts

Thomas S. Green Public Service Awards

Each year, The Research Bureau recognizes the “unsung heroes” in City Government who work day in and day out to make Worcester a better place to live and work. In 2007, to mark the 20th anniversary of this event, the Bureau expanded the process to include the towns contiguous to Worcester. The pool of nominees, both from the City of Worcester and the surrounding towns was most impressive and the recipients were:

- *Peter Crafts*, Worcester Public Schools
- *Kimberly Holstrom*, Worcester Police Department
- *Patricia John*, Worcester Assessor’s Office
- *Nancy Lucier*, Town of West Boylston



“NSTAR is proud to support The Research Bureau for its leadership, accomplishments and attention to quality of life, education and business stability.”

JoAnne O’Leary

Community Relations & Economic Development Specialist, NSTAR



Reports

22nd Annual Report

May 30, 2007

Downtown Worcester Office Occupancy: 2007 Survey

September 2007

Casino Gambling in Worcester: The Case for and Against

October 18, 2007

Benchmarking Economic Development in Worcester: 2007

October 2007

Benchmarking Public Safety in Worcester: 2007

October 2007

Benchmarking Municipal & Neighborhood Services in Worcester: 2007

December 2007

Where Have All the Bidders Gone?: The Impact of "Responsibility" on Public Construction

February 25, 2008

Benchmarking Public Education in Worcester: 2008

March 2008

Worcester's FY09 Budget: Continuing the Reform Agenda

May 8, 2008

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the accuracy of these lists. If we have made
an error, please let us know.*

Thank you.

*We would like to thank
our 2008 Annual Meeting sponsors.*

nationalgrid



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Mission Statement:

The Research Bureau serves the public interest of the Greater Worcester region by conducting independent, non-partisan research and analysis of public-policy issues to promote informed public debate and decision-making.



The Research Bureau



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