



THE CASE FOR A REGIONAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ALLIANCE IN THE GREATER WORCESTER AREA

**Report No. 02-04
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Executive Summary

After reviewing the work of several economic development alliances in the Commonwealth and the existing network of public and private regional organizations in Central Massachusetts, the Research Bureau recommends the development of a private sector-initiated organization in the southern part of Worcester County to be called the Worcester Regional Economic Development Alliance (WREDA). The purpose of the Alliance would be to promote a more favorable business climate in order to facilitate economic development in this region.

- Such an alliance would offer a number of services: coordinate inquiries from prospective businesses; maintain an inventory of and disseminate information about available financial resources and workforce development opportunities; coordinate a website that lists available resources to help businesses in this region; assist businesses in accessing technical and financing programs.
- The membership of the Alliance would include representatives of organizations, both public and private, that address issues of planning, transportation, business development, workforce development, brownfields redevelopment, marketing, and tourism.
- The work of the Alliance would be complemented by MORE (Municipalities Organized for Regional Effectiveness). This organization is a collaboration of the chief executive officers of the City of Worcester and many area towns to address issues and services that cut across traditional political boundaries. These individuals are responsible for implementing regional public policies.
- Both the Alliance and MORE should work with an assembly of elected officials from the region including the mayor of Worcester, the chairmen of Boards of Selectmen, and state legislative and congressional delegations from Worcester and the neighboring communities, all of which play an important role in developing regional policies and lobbying the state on regional issues of common interest.
- Forming an economic development alliance that coordinates its work with public officials, both appointed and elected, would allow the greater Worcester area to better capitalize on the region's assets and to compete more successfully for economic development opportunities. The benefits should include an expanded tax base, job growth, and improvements in the quality of life in the region.

I. Introduction

The purpose of this report is to propose the formation of a regional economic development alliance in the southern part of Worcester County that would promote a more favorable business climate to facilitate economic development in this region. The Alliance would include representatives of organizations, both public and private, that address issues of transportation, business development, workforce development, brownfields redevelopment, marketing, and tourism. Such an organization would be beneficial for a number of reasons.

■ **Growing Interdependence of City and Suburbs**

In its 1995 report on proposals for regional governance (#95-2), the Research Bureau cited a substantial body of research indicating that central cities and their surrounding suburbs form a single regional economy, so that the economic fortunes of a region's central city and neighboring towns are intertwined. More specifically, the rates of growth in population and per capita income in the city appear to be strongly related to rates of growth in the surrounding suburbs.¹

■ **Increasing Competition Among Regions**

Economic competition increasingly takes place *among* rather than *within* regions, so today's challenge is to make the interconnected economies of all communities in a metropolitan area competitive in the global marketplace.² Based on these findings, the Research Bureau made the case for the development of an informal "governance network" in the greater Worcester area to promote economic development using existing regional structures such as special-purpose authorities and land-use or planning commissions, as well as new partnerships and interlocal agreements to enable or require these agencies to act as if they were part of a unified regional government. The aim is to tie together problem-solving mechanisms such as regional planning authorities, which focus on designing strategies for addressing intercommunity issues, and service delivery agencies, which focus on implementing such strategies.³ While Worcester and a number of the surrounding communities have established MORE, a regional collaborative that has developed procedures for the joint purchase of goods and services, it has not involved other regional agencies in its deliberations or attempted to establish the kind of governance network proposed here.

■ **Formation of Other Regional Alliances**

Elsewhere in Massachusetts and in the nation, there has been a broader appreciation of the need for public-private partnerships to advance economic development on a regional basis. This movement has been termed the "new regionalism."

¹ Richard Voith, "City and Suburban Growth: Substitutes or Complements?" Federal Reserve of Philadelphia *Business Review*, September-October 1992, p. 30. See also Worcester Municipal Research Bureau Report No. 95-2, April 3, 1995, pp. 3-5.

² William Dodge, "Strategic Intercommunity Governance Networks." *National Civic Review* 81:4, Fall-Winter 1992, p. 405. See also Worcester Municipal Research Bureau Report No. 95-2, April 3, 1995, pp. 5-6.

³ David Rusk, "Thinking Regionally: Stretching Central Cities." In Robert McNulty, ed., *The State of the American Community: Empowerment for Local Action* (Washington DC: Partners for Livable Communities, 1994), pp. 48-49. See also Worcester Municipal Research Bureau, Report No. 95-2, April 3, 1995, p.10.

While the private sector usually takes the initiative in advancing regionalism, there must be public sector leaders who are receptive to partnering with the private sector to promote economic development and employment, and they must be in a position to affect public policy:

“[Their collaboration] efforts may include a decision-making process on regional issues, brokering a cooperative arrangement among governments in the region, and inducing state legislation, when necessary, to implement a regional solution. In contrast to previous approaches to regional governance, new regionalism does not involve restructuring government boundaries or altering authority relationships among local municipal governments. There is strong involvement by the private sector, which...includes civic agencies that are involved in regional activity and dependent upon the private sector or private foundations for financial and leadership resources.”⁴

In recent years, several regions of the Commonwealth, including the Pioneer Valley, the Merrimack Valley, and the Fall River/New Bedford area have developed private-public regional organizations to encourage economic development and marketing, while the Worcester area has not. The need for such a regional alliance in the Worcester area is stronger than ever for several reasons: the Worcester area labor force is growing; transportation to and within Central Massachusetts is expanding; and the value of homes has surged. These factors indicate that there are significant opportunities for economic growth in the area, and a regional alliance could promote a more favorable business climate to facilitate this growth.

- **Disadvantages of the Lack of a Regional Organization**

At the same time, recent studies confirm that the lack of an adequate regional organization hampers proper development in the Worcester region. In its recent report entitled *A Guide to Regional Organizations in the Greater Worcester Area*, the Research Bureau found that there were no fewer than five incomplete websites about the opportunities in the region and at least 49 regional organizations, a number of which seem to duplicate functions. The final draft of a forthcoming report from the Commonwealth’s Department of Economic Development and the University of Massachusetts’s Donahue Institute titled “Toward a New Prosperity: Building Regional Competitiveness Across the Commonwealth” confirms the problem:

“Towns from the Central region are organized into many different planning bodies...Coordinating these various groups has proven challenging. The resulting multiplicity of contending voices has complicated efforts to pursue regional planning solutions; until such organizations can identify their common interests and effectively pool their resources, it will be difficult to maximize the region’s opportunities. Regional planning agencies, local and regional chambers of commerce and municipal economic development officials need to work together more effectively. Improved collaboration will be necessary if the Region is to develop a common vision and a coherent strategy for its future.” (Central Massachusetts profile)

⁴ Hamilton, David K. “Regionalism in Metropolitan Chicago: A Work in Progress.” *National Civic Review*, 2002, 91 (1), p. 63.

To determine the most appropriate structure and functions for a collaborative organization in this region, the Research Bureau reviewed various models of regional cooperation that have been established in the Commonwealth. While there are a number of regional planning agencies across the state, the organizations that seemed most relevant to the current circumstances in the Worcester region are the Western Massachusetts Economic Development Council, the Merrimack Valley Economic Development Council, and the SouthCoast Development Partnership.

II. Private-Public Economic Development and Marketing Partnerships

A) Western Massachusetts Economic Development Council

255 Padgette Street, Suite One
Chicopee, Massachusetts 01022
Web address: www.ecdev-wma.com
Phone: (413) 593-6421
Fax: (413) 593-5126
Contact: Allan Blair, President/CEO
Budget: \$3 million—Privately funded
Staff: 50—Including the staff of its six affiliates

Mission/Description: The Western Massachusetts Economic Development Council (EDC) was founded in 1996 to provide regional leadership to the private and public sectors in the Pioneer Valley in order to improve that region's competitiveness. It encompasses Hampden, Hampshire, and Franklin counties, which according to Census 2000 has a combined population of 680,014. The EDC's purpose is to improve the region's standard of living by retaining and attracting businesses and jobs, increasing public and private investment, and attracting visitors to the area. To that end, the EDC works in collaboration with the region's institutions of higher education, corporate CEOs, professional business development corporations, and local officials.

The EDC is governed by a Board of Directors, which includes CEOs, mayors, college presidents, and public officials, and has a smaller Executive Committee that is composed predominantly of corporate leaders. The EDC's governance includes working groups that address specific areas of economic development, including governance, finance, marketing, business retention, infrastructure, government relations, and tourism. These committees meet monthly or bimonthly to ensure that the EDC's mission is being met. The CEO/President is appointed by the Executive Committee and has administrative authority to coordinate the various functions and services of the EDC. The EDC oversees six economic and business development affiliates that provide a range of services and programs to businesses and municipalities in the area. The affiliates include the Chambers of Commerce of Greater Springfield, the Springfield Business Development Corporation, TelitCom Development Corporation, Westmass Area Development Corporation, the Westover Metropolitan Development Corporation, and the Greater Springfield Convention & Visitors Bureau.

The EDC's funding is largely private and is derived from such companies as Friendly Ice Cream, MassMutual, Peter Pan Bus Lines, Spalding Sports Worldwide, Strathmore Paper, Westvaco, and Yankee Candle among others. The Greater Springfield Convention & Visitors Bureau and the Westover Metropolitan Development Corporation, however, derive some of their revenues from public

sources. Each of EDC's six affiliates has its own board of directors which approves its own annual operating budget including its pro-rata share of EDC staff expense. The EDC does not have direct budgetary control over its affiliates, but influences their work by staff collaboration and programs.

The EDC has become known in the area for accomplishing large projects. For example, through its affiliates, the EDC owns and operates six business parks, owns and manages the Westover Metropolitan Airport, and has by its own account created or retained over 3,000 jobs, secured over \$150 million in private investment, secured over \$100 million in state funds for economic development, and worked with prospective businesses that could provide another 4,000 new jobs to the area. The EDC's economic development accomplishments include the following: helping relocate Convergent Prima, a full-line manufacturer and marketer of industrial lasers, from Sturbridge to Chicopee River Business Park, which involved building a new 68,000-square foot facility that will house 80 employees; advocating and helping secure \$14 million from the state for renovations to the Calvin Coolidge Bridge in Hadley/Northampton; and helping to secure \$66 million in public and private funds for the Springfield Convention Center. The EDC works collaboratively with publicly funded regional organizations such as the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission (PVPC) and the Franklin Regional Council of Governments (FRCOG). The Pioneer Valley Planning Commission and the EDC work in tandem on many projects in which the PVPC coordinates the public sector side of the work while the EDC handles the private sector side. For example, the two regional entities have worked together and succeeded in reducing the sales and usage tax on aircraft fuel so as to make the region's airports more competitive with those in Connecticut. Also, the EDC and the PVPC are working collaboratively with their counterparts in Hartford to establish a Knowledge Corridor brand name for the region that extends from Franklin County to Hartford.

The Knowledge Corridor initiative markets the region from Greenfield to Hartford as the next high technology area in the northeast. By emphasizing the region's 32 colleges and universities, the EDC is highlighting the availability of an educated and skilled workforce. The Knowledge Corridor project also stresses that the region has thousands of acres of pre-permitted and affordable land, affordable homes, and numerous business parks. The EDC spends over \$300,000 on marketing for the region and sends representatives to trade shows to promote economic development for the area.

Representative Work: Shortly after it was founded, the EDC developed a seven-year Strategic Vision Plan for its work that still serves as its basic blueprint for operations and services. The plan discusses the problem of duplication of expenditures and services among the preexisting regional economic development entities and how taking advantage of economies of scale can lead to greater benefits for the region.

Organizational Lessons: According to several state officials, EDC enjoys a reputation as the most productive private regional organization in Massachusetts. It has strong executive leadership, a governance structure that is balanced between centralized authority and its affiliates, and large corporate donors, which add considerably to its clout in the region.

B) Merrimack Valley Economic Development Council, Inc.

60 Island Street

Lawrence, Massachusetts 01840

Web address: www.mvcouncil.com

Phone: (978) 975-8787

Fax: (978) 975-8811

Contact: Robert Halpin, President and CEO

Budget: \$500,000—State government and privately funded

Staff: 2.5

Mission/Description: The Merrimack Valley Economic Development Council, Inc. (MVEDC) was established in 1999-2000 to promote economic development in the Merrimack Valley. The idea for the MVEDC began as a brief concept paper that was discussed with the newspaper publishers in Lowell and Lawrence. The Council's mission is to promote communication and project coordination between the public and private sectors, as well as cooperation among communities in the Merrimack Valley on common economic development opportunities. It pursues this mission by offering a forum in which public and private officials can discuss the economic well-being of the area while implementing specific economic development projects. The Council's region encompasses 24 communities in the northeastern corner of the state. This region includes the industrial cities of Lowell, Lawrence, and Haverhill, and stretches from the greater Lowell area to the coastal communities of Salisbury, Newburyport, and Rowley in the east.

A 105-member Board of Directors, which meets quarterly, and a 28-member Executive Committee, which meets monthly, govern the MVEDC. The principal criterion for receiving an invitation to serve on the Board is a commitment to sustained growth and prosperity for all communities in the Valley. The Board of Directors selects the members of the Executive Committee and the officers. The Board and Executive Committee membership, which is balanced between public and private interests, provides direction to the CEO and staff. The Executive Committee also hires the CEO. The publishers of the two area newspapers are co-founders and co-chairmen of the MVEDC, and serve on its Executive Committee, along with two congressmen, state senators, state representatives, mayors, college presidents, and the CEOs of major employers in the area.

The Council is funded with a grant of \$250,000 annually from the Massachusetts Office of Business Development (MOBD) and matching funds from businesses, such as Verizon, FleetBoston Financial Corporation, Keyspan Energy Delivery, and Joan Fabrics Corporation. Among these private donors, there are 26 major contributors that give within a suggested range of \$1,000 to \$99,999.

The MVEDC selects its projects based on canvassing among its Board members who have prioritized five work topics: workforce development, transportation, electronic business, mill and brownfields revitalization, and area marketing. An example of the MVEDC's economic development work involved Sweetheart Cup, the nation's largest maker of single-use disposable products for the food and beverage service industry, which decided to explore relocation options when its Somerville plant was closing. The MVEDC convened task force meetings between the company, the Town of North Andover, the Merrimack Valley Regional Transit Authority, the City of Lawrence, and the Lower Merrimack Valley Regional Employment Board to create a workforce development and transportation plan. It also took steps to recommend a comprehensive economic package to attract Sweetheart Cup to

northeastern Massachusetts. The resulting project included the following elements: North Andover had an abandoned and contaminated property cleaned up; Lawrence received a commitment from the company that 35% of new jobs would be filled by Lawrence residents; Sweetheart Cup received a 5% state investment tax credit and a tax-increment-financing agreement from North Andover. As a result, the region became the home to a manufacturer that has 500 employees.

The Council's work also includes marketing the region through a comprehensive website and advertising efforts. Its website serves as a gateway to all current resources in the region, including information about development sites, financial resources for brownfields redevelopment, local utilities, mill properties, workforce development opportunities, Valley colleges and universities, and media outlets. As part of its marketing campaign the Council places full-page advertisements in business magazines such as *The Boston Business Journal*. The MVEDC's regional public relations work is also highlighted by its newsletter, which appears five times annually and is circulated to over 4,000 businesses, community leaders, chambers of commerce, and state officials.

Representative Work: In 2001, the Council convened a task force to address the shortage of nurses and qualified health care personnel in the Merrimack Valley. In collaboration with Valley hospitals, educational institutions, and state and local Workforce Investment Boards (WIBs), the Council was able to develop career pathways for health care workers. It established the Merrimack Valley Health Career Development Partnership, which included 20 of the area's health care educators and providers. The Partnership focused its energies on training entry-level workers with an interest in medical careers. Through discussions with health care providers and educational institutions, the Partnership learned that prospective workers lacked the necessary skills and education to pursue a career in medicine. The Partnership established a tutorial strategy that offered literacy, writing, and basic skills programs at places of employment. The Partnership then worked with the Lower Merrimack Valley WIB to submit a proposal to the Commonwealth Corporation under the Governor's BEST Initiative (Building Essential Skills through Training). In February, 2002, the BEST proposal was approved while the Greater Lowell WIB took a leading role in submitting another grant application for a program which would assist hospitals by searching abroad for qualified medical personnel.

Organizational Lessons: The MVEDC is an example of combining the efforts of the public and private sectors to promote regional economic development. The idea of utilizing a concept paper to attract the major newspapers in the area proved vital towards fostering a public-private regional organization. The ad hoc task forces that the MVEDC convenes allows it to provide leadership for major projects, without duplicating the efforts of smaller, preexisting regional entities. One of its co-founders is a former Massachusetts Secretary of Economic Affairs while its CEO is a former town manager in the region. Both are in the position to provide strong regional leadership.

C) SouthCoast Development Partnership

285 Old Westport Road

Dartmouth, Massachusetts 02747

Web address: www.southcoastdev.org

Phone: (508) 999-8412

Fax: (508) 999-8773

Contact: Paul Vigeant, Executive Director

Budget: \$500,000—State government and privately funded

Staff: 2

Mission/Description: The SouthCoast Development Partnership (SCDP) is a public-private regional organization established in 1999 to coordinate the implementation of a regional marketing plan for lower southeastern Massachusetts. The SCDP's primary mission is to market the region and enhance the reputations of the cities of New Bedford and Fall River. The Partnership's marketing agenda emphasizes regional cooperation, the low cost of real estate, the lack of congestion on area roadways, and its productive labor force. In particular, the SCDP works to market the region with the hopes of attracting Boston area as well as out-of-state companies and residents to relocate along the coast. The SCDP region includes 14 municipalities along Interstate-195 from Seekonk to Wareham, as well as the cities of New Bedford and Fall River.

The SouthCoast's Community Partners is a governance structure composed of local state representatives and senators, delegates from regional chambers of commerce, local economic development agencies and the mayors of Fall River and New Bedford. A smaller Steering Committee, which serves as an executive committee, includes the president and publisher of the *New Bedford Standard-Times*, area CEOs, the presidents of a local bank and insurance company, and the Chancellor of the University of Massachusetts-Dartmouth. The SCDP's Community Partners and Steering Committee each meet monthly and provide the direction for regional marketing. The SCDP maintains a close relationship with the University of Massachusetts-Dartmouth, as its current and past Chancellors have been supportive and the Partnership is located on its campus. This linkage should continue to grow as the Massachusetts Office of Business Development (MOBD) was budgeted by the state legislature to open a new regional office on the campus.

The SouthCoast's budget is comprised of \$250,000 from the MOBD with another \$250,000 in matching funds from a consortium of businesses and utilities in the region such as Verizon, NSTAR, Brayton Power Station, and Massachusetts Electric. This budget supports a two-person staff with a significant portion of its funds being directed towards the region's marketing, advertising, polling, and promotional campaigns.

The SCDP has undertaken an advertising campaign that was displayed in business magazines such as *Business Week*, *Fortune*, *Kiplinger's*, *Money*, and *Entrepreneur*. In addition, the Partnership has established a comprehensive website that has links to real estate websites, municipal websites, state agencies, upcoming events, historic sites and museums, and technology industries. Marketing efforts were supported with advertising on the radio on WBZ/WCBS, print media such as newspapers in Boston and in the local area, and direct-mail projects. The SouthCoast's promotional materials emphasize the presence of the University of Massachusetts-Dartmouth, community colleges, and 15,000 annual graduates of local colleges and universities to demonstrate that its local labor pool is

well educated and skilled. The SCDP also highlights the region's beaches, deep-water ports, resorts, and working farms as part of its environmental resources.

The Partnership contracted with the Cambridge based pollster Opinion Dynamics and the Center for Policy Analysis at the University of Massachusetts-Dartmouth to evaluate the impact of its marketing work. The evaluation showed that although advertising had had some success in promoting the region, the name "SouthCoast" was still not widely recognized. Additional polling data also show that businesses still have concerns about the quality of the labor force, the current economic climate, the potential for sales/business growth, and the cost of doing business in the region.

Representative Work: Last October, the SouthCoast Development Partnership launched a Hometown Tourism Weekend for the region since tourism is one of the region's largest industries. The Massachusetts Office of Travel and Tourism (MOTT) calculated that Bristol County generated more than \$257 million per year in direct tourism expenditures, supporting 2,600 tourism jobs with \$57 million in payroll earnings. During a four-day tourism weekend, the SCDP coordinated 40 businesses in the region to participate and provide free or discounted admission to tourist attractions and entertainment sites. The goal of the Hometown Tourist Weekend was to encourage residents of the SouthCoast to visit area tourist attractions, increase its residents' awareness of these attractions, and promote continued visitation. The Center for Policy Analysis reported that SouthCoast residents comprised nearly two-thirds of all visitors, and over 90% of patrons said they would visit the attractions again. This weekend event generated an additional \$326,229 in total sales for the region. Specifically, the downtown New Bedford venues earned \$35,317, Battleship Cove and Carousel earned \$29,650, and the Buttonwood Park Zoo earned \$15,164. Service establishments like restaurants, gas stations, and retail stores outpaced the downtown sites and earned \$246,097 during the weekend.

Organizational Lessons: The SCDP has had some modest successes in the short period of its existence. However, despite the fact that it has 5 public members, 10 private CEOs, and 6 private nonprofit business leaders, it appears to have the complexion of a publicly funded regional organization with many state government and public sector linkages. For example, the SCDP has influential legislators and public officials on its board that insure its \$250,000 in state funding, while similarly funded regional organizations in Cape Cod, the Merrimack Valley, and the Berkshires have all experienced significant state budget cuts or been eliminated.

III. Conclusions

The approach to regionalism that is largely private sector economic development and marketing found especially in the work of the Western Massachusetts Economic Development Council and the Merrimack Valley Economic Development Council would seem to be helpful examples for the Worcester region. These initiatives began during the late 1990s with the goal of securing greater financial well-being for neglected regions of the state. These organizations seem to resemble the "new regionalism" described in the introduction to this report. The common ingredients among these regional organizations are a clear definition of the region, financial backing from the business community, solid support and favorable coverage from local newspapers, an established procedure for prioritizing projects and implementing them and strong leadership by the governing board and executive officer. Also, the EDC, the MVEDC, and the SCDP developed strategic plans and/or concept papers that carefully outlined the purpose and goals for these regional organizations. It seems that the

Pioneer Valley has best developed a model of “new regionalism” that includes both the public and private sectors. The Pioneer Valley Planning Commission, the Franklin Regional Council of Governments, and the EDC have established a corridor of regional cooperation from Greenfield to Springfield that has linkages as far south as Hartford. These efforts are the most comprehensive in their public sector planning work and private sector driven economic development. This model is instructive because it has taken existing public and private agencies and brings them together when needed to execute particular projects.

IV. A Proposal for Regional Economic Development Collaboration

After reviewing the regional collaboratives discussed above and the existing network of public and private regional organizations in Central Massachusetts, the Research Bureau recommends the development of a private sector-initiated organization to be called the Worcester Regional Economic Development Alliance (WREDA). The Alliance would be based on the principles of the “new regionalism,” a collaborative, nonhierarchical process under which each party comes to the table as a relatively equal participant in decision making. The region should be defined as the southern part of Worcester County, stretching from Westborough in the east to Princeton in the north, the Connecticut border and the Blackstone Valley to the south and southeast and Sturbridge in the west. These seem to be logical boundaries because they are practically coincidental with the jurisdictions of the Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission, the Worcester Regional Chamber of Commerce, the Central Massachusetts Regional Employment Board, and the service area of MORE.

The purpose of the Alliance would be to promote a more favorable business climate to facilitate economic development in this region. It would include representatives of organizations, both public and private, that address issues of transportation, workforce development, business development, brownfields redevelopment, marketing, and tourism. It would offer a number of services including the following: coordinating inquiries from prospective businesses; maintaining an inventory of and disseminating information about developable land, available buildings, financial resources, workforce development opportunities, and other resources; coordinating a website that lists available resources to help businesses in the region; and assisting businesses in accessing technical and financing programs. The Alliance should draw heavily on existing resources; it is expected that the staffs of the member organizations would do the bulk of the work. For example, the Worcester Marketing Corporation, which would be a member of the Alliance, would still be responsible for implementing its recently unveiled plan to market the region. As structured, the Alliance should be able to subsist on a modest budget. However, some funds will be needed, for example, to develop and maintain an inventory of economic development opportunities and resources, and to develop and maintain a website with this information. Once the Alliance is established, the members would be better able to determine how much funding and additional staff, if any, are required. (It should be borne in mind that in previous years the state granted \$250,000 annually to comparable organizations in the Merrimack Valley and the SouthCoast. The area could better negotiate for these state funds with a regional partnership in place.)

The governing board, which would consist of all the member organizations, would meet quarterly, and the executive committee, which would be chosen by the board, would meet monthly. The governance structure might include standing committees that address business development and retention,

brownfields redevelopment, infrastructure needs, marketing, government relations, transportation, and tourism.

The work of the Alliance would be complemented by MORE (Municipalities Organized for Regional Effectiveness), whose membership consists of the chief executive officers of the City of Worcester and the towns. These individuals are responsible for implementing regional public policies. One policy that might be pursued by these administrators is to develop a more standardized permitting process throughout the region.

Both the Alliance and MORE should work with an assembly of elected officials from the region including the mayor of Worcester, the chairmen of Boards of Selectmen, and state legislative and congressional delegations from Worcester and the neighboring communities, all of which play an important role in developing regional policies and lobbying the state on regional issues of common interest. This coalition of local government leaders is needed in the absence of county government or metropolitan councils such as those that exist in Portland (OR) and the Minneapolis region.

The private sector cannot be successful without the support of the public sector. Forming an economic development alliance that coordinates its work with public officials, both appointed and elected, would allow the greater Worcester area to better capitalize on the region's assets and to compete more successfully for economic development opportunities. The benefits should include an expanded tax base, job growth, and improvements in the quality of life in the region.

V. Next Steps

- The Worcester Regional Chamber of Commerce, which has been advocating the establishment of an economic development alliance for several years, should host a forum for prospective members at which the proposal will be presented. (Any other regional organizations or institutions interested in co-hosting this forum should be invited to do so.)
- Assuming there is agreement to move forward, the Board of Directors, comprised of member organizations, and Executive Committee should be appointed.
- The prospective member organizations should determine how they will go about promoting a more favorable business climate: what steps need to be taken for the Alliance to become the focal point of inquiries about development opportunities, the source of information about available resources to businesses, and the source of guidance and assistance to businesses.
- The Board should determine how staff members from member organizations would contribute time to the work of the Alliance. The Board should consider applying to the state to secure \$250,000 in Massachusetts Office of Business Development funds for the region.
- MORE should meet with the Alliance to determine how best to work together on issues of regional economic development.
- The elected officials of the region should form an assembly that works with the Alliance and MORE on issues that will benefit the region.