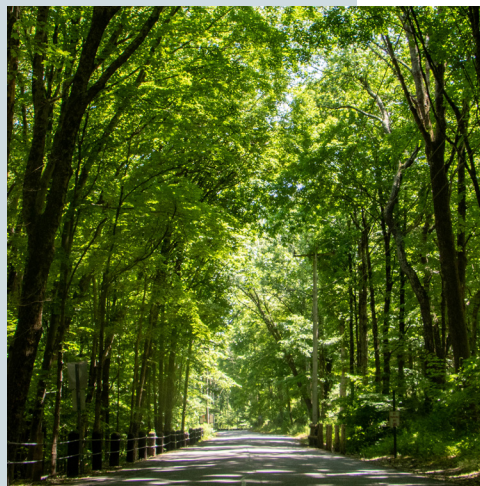




CONNECTICUT METROPOLITAN COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS

Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy

RKG
ASSOCIATES INC





Town of Trumbull
Peralta Design/ Steve Cartagena

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Cover page photos: Peralta Design/ Steve Cartagena
From top, clockwise: Bridgeport, Stratford, Fairfield, Easton, Monroe & Trumbull

A. INTRODUCTION

According to the Economic Development Administration (EDA), Comprehensive Economic Development Strategies (CEDS) are designed to bring together the public and private sectors in the creation of an economic roadmap to diversify and strengthen the regional economies.

First, the CEDS is intended to provide an accounting of regional strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. For this analysis, MetroCOG serving as the regional council of governments for the Greater Bridgeport region, is required to analyze and document demographic, socioeconomic and market data. The accompanying Technical Appendix details the results of this analysis.

Second, the CEDS must include a prioritized listing of the goals and objectives for the region. This effort is largely based on input generated from the Strategy Committee representing a wide variety of local and regional interests as well as other stakeholders.

Finally, the CEDS must include an implementation strategy that prioritizes all investment opportunities, identifies local and regional agencies that will be responsible for executing these opportunities, and potential funding sources that will help bring these opportunities to fruition. The EDA also notes that a CEDS must be a performance-based plan resulting from an ongoing economic development planning process, cultivated with broad based and diverse public and private sector participation.

This Strategy Document focuses on the second and third EDA requirements and is the culmination of the work presented in the Technical Appendix. Ultimately, the following narrative details recommendations for a comprehensive regional economic development initiative. The strategies presented in this document reflect the advice and recommendations from the MetroCOG staff, the established CEDS Strategy Committee, RKG Associates, and the stakeholders that engaged (and were engaged) throughout this effort. It is important to note that this regional strategy is not intended to supplant continued discussion, engagement, and analysis by—and on behalf of—the individual municipalities' economic development efforts. Rather, this CEDS strategy is intended to supplement those individual efforts, creating greater efficiency and efficacy in those economic development initiatives that would benefit from a regional focus, rather than a local one.

B. METROCOG & THE CEDS

MetroCOG is a multi-discipline regional planning organization that is guided by a cooperative partnership between the Region's six member municipalities: the City of Bridgeport and the Towns of Easton, Fairfield, Monroe, Stratford, and Trumbull (Map 1). MetroCOG is one of nine planning regions in the State of Connecticut and is responsible for cooperative planning across many areas including land use, transportation, housing, public facilities, open space, environment, energy, and economic development. Connecticut's planning regions provide a geographic framework for municipalities to jointly address common interests and coordinate these interests with state and federal plans and programs.

MetroCOG works closely with its municipal partners to identify projects, programs, funding opportunities and best practices that are strategic to achieving a shared vision for the Region. Member municipalities are committed to a cooperative and proactive partnership that strengthens the region, home to the state's most populous city as well as key transportation connections to metropolitan areas throughout Connecticut, New York, and Massachusetts.

MetroCOG also serves as the host agency for the Greater Bridgeport Valley Metropolitan Planning Organization (GBVMPO), which includes MetroCOG's six members as well as the cities of Ansonia, Derby, and Shelton, and the Town of Seymour. GBVMPO oversees the federal metropolitan transportation planning process and capital improvement program for this ten-town region. The membership of the GBVMPO consists of the Chief Elected Officials of the ten municipalities and the chairpersons of the region's two transit districts: Greater Bridgeport Transit and the Valley Transit District.

As one of the nine multi-discipline, regional planning organizations and state designated Council of Governments, MetroCOG provides a framework for municipalities to jointly address common interests, and coordinate these interests with federal and state plans, projects, and programs, with economic development being one of those primary initiatives. According to Connecticut General Statutes 32-741, Section a.5. "a regional council of governments, as defined in Section 4-124i" is one such entity that can be established as a Regional Economic Development District. Furthermore, in Section B of C.G.S.

32-741, REDDs must “encompass one or more of the planning regions” that exist in the State of Connecticut. MetroCOG has been coordinating with the six-member municipalities and other regional stakeholders to become the designated Regional Economic Development District. Being designated as a REDD allows the agency to conduct regional economic planning initiatives for Greater Bridgeport.

C. THE CEDS STRATEGY COMMITTEE

MetroCOG coordinated with an established (Bridgeport Regional Business Council's Economic Development Committee) and diverse group of civic leaders, business leaders, municipal leaders, and implementation partners to provide guidance and give feedback to the CEDS process. The following list details the members and their affiliations within the Region.

CEDS Strategy Committee | MetroCOG Region

<i>Committee Member</i>	<i>Representing Organization</i>
Jorge Garcia	A+ Technology & Security Solutions, Inc
Alexander Dacey	Amodex Products Inc.
Ron Agababian	Angel Commercial, LLC
Paul Antinozzi	Antinozzi Associates Architecture & Interiors
Thomas Auray	Bridgeport Fittings Inc.
Dan Onofrio	Bridgeport Regional Business Council
Edward Lavernoch	
Kenneth Scala	Century 21 Scala Group
Thomas Gill	City of Bridgeport
Paul Grimmer	City of Shelton
Curt Jones	CIVIL 1
Matt Fulda	Connecticut Metropolitan Council of Governments
Patrick Carleton	
Michelle McCabe	Council of Churches of Greater Bridgeport, Inc.

CEDS Strategy Committee | MetroCOG Region

<i>Committee Member</i>	<i>Representing Organization</i>
Kevin Foley	Cushman & Wakefield of CT Inc.
Bruce T. Moore Jr.	Eastern Land Management
Christopher Douglas	ENCON Heating & AC
Andrew Zlotnick	Fuss & O'Neill, Inc.
Ray Thiagarajan	Ganim Financial
Maureen Funke	greenbox-is
Stephen Hodson	Hodson Realty Inc
Philip Kuchma	Kuchma Corporation
James Benson	Merit Insurance, Inc. Merit-PLC
Peter C. Osborne	Moneco Advisors
Daniel Donovan	NuPower
Gordon Soper	PDS Engineering & Construction
Eduardo Cabrera	People's United Bank
Ben Toby	Prism Energy Services, Inc.
Robert A. Scinto	Scinto R. D. Inc.
Griselda Champagne	The Vault Virtual Realty
Dana Huff	Tighe & Bond
Mark Barnhart	Town of Fairfield
Kenneth Kellogg	Town of Monroe
Raymond Giovanni	Town of Monroe
Mary Dean	Town of Stratford
Rina Bakalar	Town of Trumbull
Charles Scott	Tri-State Realty & Insurance
Eileen Lopez-Cordone	UIL Holdings Corporation
Peter Maher	Union Savings Bank
Bruce Wettenstein	Vidal/Wettenstein, LLC
Douglas Wade	Wade's Dairy Inc.
Willie C McBride Jr.	WC McBride Electrical Contractors LLC
John Reis	Webster Bank Arena
Chris McFadden	Whiting-Turner Contracting Company

D. PURPOSE & VISION

Before a strategic action plan can be developed, a Region must first agree upon its desired outcomes. As part of the CEDS update process, RKG and the MetroCOG staff led a robust public engagement campaign to understand elected leaders', business owners', implementation partners', and residents' goals for economic development. Feedback gathered through a comprehensive outreach and engagement process (detailed in Section 6 – SWOT Analysis in the Technical Appendix) helped define the vision and objectives that underpin every recommendation included in the implementation matrix.

PURPOSE

To create a unified regional economic development strategy that empowers the Region's governments, businesses, and residents to collaborate in the execution of successful business retention, expansion, and recruitment strategies in an effective and efficient manner.

VISION

To position the MetroCOG Region to become the standard for a highly effective regional economic development strategy that preserves the Region's rich production-based employment history, promotes the continued growth of existing businesses, and creating new businesses.

E. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT GOALS

Building upon the purpose and vision, RKG Associates met and worked with local elected officials, municipal staff, MetroCOG staff, local businesses and the CEDS Strategy Committee to define specific economic development goals based on community feedback and the empirical analyses detailed in the Technical Appendix. These goals are meant to inform regional actions undertaken by the various economic development stakehold-

ers within the MetroCOG Region. The broad, comprehensive goals are organized into two categories: [1] Procedural Goals and [2] Outcome goals. Procedural Goals are those actions to position the Region to achieve economic development success through stronger organization and collaboration. Outcome Goals are those economic development actions the MetroCOG Region seeks to achieve success.

1. PROCEDURAL GOALS

Leverage local, regional, and statewide partners to implement action items.

Economic development activities are already underway within the Region. At the local level, five of the six municipalities have professional economic development staff, and the local chambers of commerce are active in economic development. The planning process also identified several private and non-profit entities working to promote business growth and development as well. There are several regional and statewide agencies and entities that offer marketing, workforce development and financing programs. Those resources should be incorporated into the regional economic development process, where appropriate, to increase capacity and expertise while eliminating any duplication of services.

Clearly define implementation roles for all parties. Creating defined roles is critical in a Region that has so many partners and key stakeholders. Each must understand and embrace their respective role. This is particularly important for the MetroCOG Region, as almost all executive and legislative controls are at the municipal level. Part of the process of initiating a comprehensive regional economic development effort will be to coordinate and agree upon specific roles and responsibilities for the regional effort.

Continue to promote more predictable and consistent review and approval processes.

Development processes are controlled at the municipal level and are not consistent across the Region. Establishing more consistent practices would help a regional business recruitment and retention process by reducing uncertainty for a prospect seeking to locate in the region but unsure of which municipality to locate. At a base level, having a regional ombudsman program that is familiar with the different approaches could assist businesses through those processes. More strategically, working to create consistent procedures, where reason-

able, would reduce barriers to economic development across the region.

Become more proactive in fostering catalyst projects. Each municipality has its own capability and process for partnering with the investment community to encourage new catalyst projects. Oftentimes, these investments layer local and state funding sources together. However, that capacity sometimes is not sufficient to bridge the gap for a project to be financially viable. The creation and implementation of a regional investment program could accelerate catalyst projects by bringing together resources that are currently unavailable.

Improve the effectiveness and efficiency of strategy implementation. Part of this CEDS process was to develop and understand how to better implement economic development efforts at the regional level. While there are several individual economic development efforts being implemented within the Region, there is no entity that is managing and coordinating these efforts to maximize efficiency and efficacy. This CEDS planning process led to a series of recommendations focused on the structure, operations, and approach of a regional economic development entity.

Implement a proactive community outreach and education initiative. The MetroCOG Region's diverse and complex marketplace is challenging to understand for trained professionals. Expecting citizens within each municipality to understand the "who, what, where, when, and why" of economic development without assistance is unrealistic. Helping inform the community of the benefits of the economic development process by minimizing confusion and speculation will only strengthen support for and participation in economic development investment. Further, the business community currently is not well engaged in economic development outside the local chambers of commerce board members. The regional economic development process will require a collaboration between the business community and the municipalities to reach its full potential.

2. OUTCOME GOALS

Engage and support more existing businesses. One of the earliest priorities that developed through this process was to preserve and support existing businesses in the Region. Local leaders, professional

economic development staff, the business community, and citizens all noted the importance and value of changing perceptions about being unfriendly to businesses. There also is general recognition that helping our existing businesses thrive and grow will be a more cost-effective way to generate new investment and job growth. Given one in six businesses that participated in the business survey (detailed in the Technical Appendix) indicated their interest in engaging with a regional economic development partner to strengthen their business, this initiative could create substantial investment in a short amount of time.

Create a more comprehensive supportive environment to foster start-up businesses. Small business and entrepreneurial development programs already exist within the MetroCOG Region (i.e., SCORE at Housatonic Community College and the IHub Coworking Space at Sacred Heart University) but are not well coordinated or marketed. Access to capital and investors is less organized. A regionally coordinated entrepreneurial development program that ties formal education, physical and financial components together would foster a more effective 'grow from within' strategy in the Region.

Implement a proactive target industry recruitment effort. Currently, business recruitment to the MetroCOG Region is a product of the individual municipalities or based on statewide economic development efforts. While a regional recruitment strategy should work in partnership with any larger statewide programs, it is not cost effective for the MetroCOG municipalities to operate six separate recruitment strategies. This CEDS document identifies specific target industry clusters that exist and thrive within the Region regardless of specific municipality. A concerted recruitment effort will ensure a unified marketing message, reduce costs compared to several local efforts, and foster a more collaborative process.

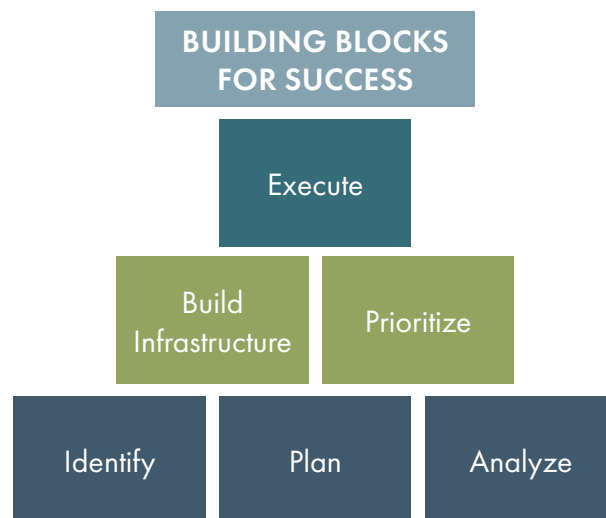
Continue implementing existing capital improvement strategies – One of the challenges facing new development is access to or lack of suitable transportation and utility infrastructure. Several efforts are underway/recently completed to identify strategic efforts to improve both. These investments provide significant benefit to existing residents and businesses while also improving the viability of longer-term economic development efforts.

Proactively market the defined economic development vision.

Marketing and outreach are core components of economic development. This CEDS has little value if no one knows about the policies, programs, initiatives, and efforts underway to execute it. Creating baseline marketing materials that detail pertinent retention, expansion, and recruitment information is a fundamental need for proactive marketing. Further, a unified economic development brand is a strong first step in selling the MetroCOG Region as a singular market rather than six individual markets. The CEDS process recognized the need to enhance all facets of outreach (i.e., to existing businesses, prospects, and residents) to increase awareness and support for these economic development efforts. Most notably, dedicating the financial and staffing resources necessary to ensure this message is accurate, current, and timely will be important early in this process. The use of digital marketing and social media activity must be a strong component of the regional effort.

F. SUSTAINABILITY PRINCIPLES

This CEDS development process has engaged several community leaders, critical implementation partners, the business community, and citizens of the MetroCOG Region. This proactive effort has identified challenges that businesses currently face, the various perspectives of what 'economic development' means, and opportunities to improve the local business climate that can benefit all MetroCOG residents. The CEDS process focuses on those opportunities where there is regional consensus. The momentum gained through this process needs to be sustained—and expanded—for the region to maximize its effectiveness and efficiency in preserving, expanding, and attracting more business investment and job retention/creation. Failure to maintain an active public engagement effort and provide background on the principles behind the region's economic development effort can lead to dissension which reduces buy-in and cooperation. The following principles should be focal points as the regional economic development efforts are formalized and executed to guide future economic development decision making.



Implementation is a process and not an event

— One of the more common challenges communities face is establishing unrealistic expectations in terms of the timing and scale of results. RKG Associates has participated in many discussions during this process focusing on roles and responsibilities, funding and financing, and prioritization of a regional economic development effort. While RKG encourages the community to debate expectations and ensure implementation efficiency, getting a regional initiative functional will require an investment of time and resources to build buy-in.

To this point, most economic development experts recognize that implementation is a process and results often are measured long-term and focused on cost-benefit (not return on investment). Many of the initial actions will be focused on adopting and changing policies, establishing new programs and initiatives, and collecting and tabulating the data necessary to be successful and better track performance. It will be critical for the individual municipal leadership to embrace the evolution process for a regional economic development strategy and champion realistic, but well defined, performance metrics.

Maintain partner coordination — As mentioned, there are several public, non-profit, and private entities currently engaged in various facets of economic development within the Region. Some act at the municipal level, others are focused on specific industries regardless of location, and others still operate in and beyond the MetroCOG boundaries. The intent of this process is not to usurp or supplant these partners and their efforts, but rather better coordinate and collaborate at the regional level so that the defined goals are more

readily, and cost effectively, achieved.

It is RKG Associates recommendation that the public and private sectors form a partnership to implement the regional economic development efforts outlined in this plan. This approach provides three primary benefits. First, there currently is no entity that has the technical expertise, sufficient funding, or the organizational structure that can efficiently bring together public, non-profit, and private funding. This regional effort will require resources beyond what the six municipalities currently invest in economic development. Any regional implementation effort will require a structure that has the support and confidence from both the public and private sectors. Second, having a single entity mitigates duplication of investment/expertise, leverages private investment, and still includes access to policy and regulatory efficiencies. Simply put, none of the existing partners will be as effective as all the partners continuing to build their strategic alliance. Finally, a regional voice in business retention, expansion, and recruitment will have more influence and credibility within the private sector than the current approach.

Be creative and flexible when implementing – This strategy document is not intended to be a literal guide for economic development efforts. The concepts and strategies provided by the consultant are interpretations of industry best practices to achieve the defined vision based on the unique market, financial, and political circumstances in the MetroCOG Region. Given the long-term timeframe of several of these recommendations, many of the contributing factors relevant to those specific recommendations may (and most likely will) change over time. In these situations, alternative approaches may be more appropriate to reach the stated vision. An initial test on determining whether the action in question remains a worthwhile pursuit is finding a balance between the needs of the market and the stated vision. If ‘success’ no longer can be achieved without compromising the community’s collective value system, then a different approach—or new initiative—should be pursued. To this point, this document should be viewed as guidelines for action and not prescriptive edicts.

Be strategic, and not ad hoc – Communities often see an increase in investment interest upon completing an effort like this. The potential for enhanced community investment, more aggressive retention and expansion efforts, and reconsideration of past policies can increase private sector speculation within the mar-

ketplace. Unfortunately, not all investment interest will be consistent with the agreed-upon goals. While RKG encourages its clients to be flexible in implementation, we also encourage them to make sure that any deviations from the plan be consistent with the long-term vision identified through this process. For example, approving a new residential subdivision in the middle of land zoned for industrial development could create future conflicts when industrial investment begins in that subdivision’s ‘back yard.’

Being proactive can provide greater opportunities – Many communities implement economic development efforts by reacting to demands from the marketplace and not the vision established by the process. Getting ahead of the investment market provides several benefits. Most notably, engaging with business prospects or property owners before there is an established plan can lead to more creative solutions that meet the needs of both the public and private partners. This proactive engagement provides greater understanding of the economic development vision and can create investment strategies to leverage that vision.

Economic development is a **pursuit of opportunities**, and not a guarantee of success. The education and outreach efforts detailed in the implementation strategy are aimed at increasing the community’s awareness of what economic development is, how it works, and the realities of engaging in it. Opting to avoid an opportunity because it ‘might not happen’ can negatively impact other related economic development efforts in the region. That said, continual assessment of the effectiveness of these regional efforts is important and change to approach/actions should occur when the costs do not justify the results.

G. ECONOMIC RESILIENCE

The United States Economic Development Administration (EDA) has aptly linked regional economic prosperity to an area’s ability to prevent, withstand, and quickly recover from major disruptions (i.e., ‘shocks’) to its economic base. Enhancing the Greater Bridgeport Region’s economic resilience enables its member communities to more quickly recover from one of these disruptions. However, in the context of economic development, economic resilience becomes inclusive of three primary attributes: [1] the ability to recover quickly from a shock, [2] the ability to withstand a shock, and [3] the ability to avoid the shock altogether. Establishing economic resilience in a regional economy requires the ability to anticipate risk, evaluate how that risk can impact key economic assets, and build a responsive capacity. Often, the shocks/disruptions to the economic base of an area or region are manifested in three ways:

- Downturns or other significant events in the national or international economy which impact demand for locally produced goods and consumer spending;
- Downturns in particular industries that constitute a critical component of the region’s economic activity; and/or
- Other external shocks (a natural or man-made disaster, closure of a military base, exit of a major employer, the impacts of climate change, etc.).

At the regional level, having economic development capacity is instrumental in building economic resilience. Economic development professionals and organizations often become the focal point for post-incident coordination, information dissemination, responding to external inquiries, and the lead grant administrator for federally funded recovery initiatives. In building economic resilience, it is critical that economic development organizations consider their role in the pre- and post-incident environment to include **steady-state** and **responsive** initiatives. Steady-state initiatives tend to be long-term efforts that seek to bolster the community or region’s ability to withstand or avoid a shock. Responsive initiatives can include establishing capabilities for the economic development organization to be responsive to the region’s recovery needs following an incident.

Table 1: SWOT Analysis MetroCOG Region	
Strengths	Weaknesses
Proximity to Major Markets Transportation Network Skilled Regional Workforce Production-Based Economy Implementation Infrastructure Value Proposition	Unified Vision Coordination/Cooperation Lifestyle Options Physical Inventory Public Perception
Opportunities	Threats
Bridgeport Redevelopment Local Talent Catalyst Sites Entrepreneurial Development Housing Type & Price Diversity	Regional Execution Intra-Region Competition Aging Workforce Housing Affordability Parochialism Funding Structure

The companion Technical Appendix details the empirical, anecdotal, and engagement analyses culminating in a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) analysis for the Greater Bridgeport Region, which Table 1 summarizes. The implementation strategy detailed later in this document was structured to maximize the strengths of the Region and mitigate the greatest challenges to enhance economic development opportunities and address the most substantial economic threats.

Most notably, the analysis revealed that the Greater Bridgeport Region should focus on its responsive goals in the short-term, enhancing regional economic development capacity, collaboration, and information sharing. At a base level, there is little formal and consistent coordination and collaboration due to the lack of public and private support for a regional economic development approach. More strategically, Connecticut has a long-standing priority for policy and engagement at the

municipal level (codified by Public Act 152 in 1959). Additionally, local funding structures have created disincentives for municipalities to engage and fund regional organizations with authority to make decisions that affect the local municipalities. Within economic development, a lack of regional effort can make some larger-scale efforts very cost ineffective (as they are executed across several smaller jurisdictions) and highly competitive (the zero-sum game theory). From a resiliency perspective, this microeconomic approach hinders a region's ability to recover, identify, and mitigate those disruptive events.

That said, the included implementation plan identifies several steady-state initiatives that would benefit from a more regional approach to economic development. There are several opportunities to maximize local strengths. For example, a stronger regional entrepreneurial program can tap into the demographic elements of having a highly educated, aging population in addition to the Region's large minority population base. Further, a more robust and proactive workforce development program that links existing and prospective employers' labor needs with formal training programs can build a stronger, more resilient workforce to sudden shocks as well as longer-term market evolutions (i.e., artificial intelligence in manufacturing production). Finally, the target industry analysis provides recommendations on how to better diversify the regional economy while strengthening existing clusters through growing horizontal and vertical supply chains.

Ultimately, the CEDS implementation strategy provides specific objectives and actions to enhance the Greater Bridgeport Region's ability and capability to endure—and avoid—economic disruptions in the future.

H. TECHNICAL ANALYSIS SUMMARY

The Technical Appendix details the results of the empirical and community engagement analysis. The following section highlights the major findings from that effort.

1. DEMOGRAPHIC ANALYSIS

The MetroCOG region is aging – Like much of the U.S., the MetroCOG region has a large concentration of Baby Boomers (persons born between 1943 and 1968). This population represents a disproportionate share of age cohorts (particularly compared to the Generation X cohort). As Baby Boomers continue to reach retirement age, the need to find additional workforce will be necessary to maintain existing employment levels in addition to accommodating any new job growth in the region.

This growing need is further exacerbated by the Baby Boomer generation becoming less likely to relocate after retirement. The declining workforce combined with lower-than typical housing turnover will require MetroCOG communities to encourage new housing development to be able to sustain and expand upon current economic activity levels. To this point, increasing housing diversity to accommodate a range of price points and occupancy types will be critical to long-term regional economic development success.

The region's population is diverse and continuing to diversify – MetroCOG has a diverse population, particularly within the City of Bridgeport. Historic and current population growth trends indicate that the region's population base is growing in racial and ethnic diversity. This is an economic development opportunity, as the MetroCOG region can build upon this momentum to develop new ethnic-based businesses and minority entrepreneurs. Anecdotal feedback from regional leaders identified several opportunities to create new paths to business and job creation through stronger engagement with the region's minority populations.

The MetroCOG region has an income dichotomy – The data analysis indicate that the City of Bridgeport and the surrounding Towns have very dif-

ferent socioeconomic conditions, from income to education to housing tenure. From an economic development perspective, this dichotomy can adversely impact business recruitment. At a base level, access to employment centers outside Bridgeport is not always convenient or cost effective for all workers. Having limited access to a variety of labor skill sets can impact business location decisions. More strategically, the changing urban/suburban dynamics has created challenges to garner public support for some types of development.

The comparable slower growth within MetroCOG is both symptomatic and predictive

— The MetroCOG region has not grown as rapidly as other Fairfield County “Gold Coast” communities or other areas within Connecticut. On one hand, the region has not delivered as much new housing as other regions within the state. The lack of new development adversely impacts growth. On the other hand, the region has not experienced comparable job growth. Without greater housing development (particularly greater housing diversity), the MetroCOG region likely will continue to experience more modest economic growth.

2. ECONOMIC BASE ANALYSIS

The region is an employment center, but exports labor

— The MetroCOG region is an employment center with industry concentrations in manufacturing, health care, and retail/services. In fact, the MetroCOG region experienced a 5 percent net increase of jobs between 2010 and 2020 while Fairfield County and the State of Connecticut experienced little or no growth. Despite this, more than twice the number of working MetroCOG residents commute out of the region for work than stay to work locally. Data indicates these individuals tend to work in other coastal employment centers in Connecticut and New York.

Anecdotal data from local business leaders and real estate professionals indicate that the MetroCOG region offers a comparatively affordable housing alternative to areas like lower Fairfield County, as well as strong transportation connectivity. From an economic development perspective, this presents an opportunity to market entrepreneurial programs that would enable these workers to create their own businesses and work closer to home.

The region needs to attract younger workers to replace the existing aging workforce in order to sustain existing economic activity

— As noted in Section 2: Demographic Analysis of the Technical Appendix, a substantial part of MetroCOG’s and Fairfield County’s workforce is nearing retirement age. Countywide, this cohort (persons 55 years-old and older) totals more than 115,300 workers, constituting almost 28% of Fairfield County’s existing workforce. While this cohort offers a substantial opportunity to promote entrepreneurial development (as many of these workers are very experienced and, in the peak, earning years of their careers), economic development efforts to ensure the region can attract—and house—workers to replace these individuals as they retire should be an important focus for the region.

The region’s strongest employment growth is in jobs requiring minimal education

— Since 2010, jobs in Fairfield County requiring a high school education (or less) increased by more than 16,700 jobs, or 15 percent. In contrast, jobs requiring bachelor’s degrees or post graduate degrees declined by more than 9,300. While consistent with statewide and national trends, this finding indicates two needs. First, greater regional investment in retaining and attracting jobs targeting well educated workers will be necessary to reverse this trend. Second, there is an opportunity to better connect the regional education continuum (vocational, secondary, and post-secondary) to both industry retention and targeting efforts as well as individual residents’ career stabilization and career development.

The manufacturing sector remains the region’s largest ‘primary’ employment sector

— Primary employment sectors are those industry groups where their consumer base is largely outside the immediate region. These sectors are vital to a region’s ability to increase wealth, as the profits and salaries paid generally come from money collected from outside the community rather than a redistribution of money already circulating in the community. Within MetroCOG, the manufacturing sector is the largest primary employment base. The CEDS analysis indicate that a stronger regional effort to preserve existing manufacturing businesses and jobs should be a cornerstone of future economic development efforts.

3. REAL ESTATE ANALYSIS

The economic development strategies will not be universally applicable – The land use and real estate analyses confirm that economic opportunities and strategies vary greatly between the six MetroCOG municipalities. While the City of Bridgeport is unique within the region, given its long-time industrial and maritime history, the five other municipalities have their own development patterns and stated economic development goals. Most notably, the Town of Easton has very little non-residential activity and only three brick-and-mortar businesses. Interviews with local leaders indicate the Town’s goal is to remain a rural residential and recreation-focused community. To these points, while some strategies (i.e., workforce development) will benefit all regional residents and businesses, others (i.e., industrial retention and recruitment) will be more applicable in certain municipalities than others.

New non-residential development largely has bypassed Bridgeport – While Bridgeport remains the largest non-residential marketplace within the MetroCOG Region, very little new commercial development has occurred in the city. In fact, Downtown Bridgeport has experienced conversions of former office buildings into residential uses. In contrast, Monroe, Stratford, and Trumbull have realized more than 5.7 million square feet of new commercial and industrial development since 2000. Real estate professionals indicated several factors that have caused this disparity including perceptions of safety, transportation access, and suitable land for development/ redevelopment. From a real estate perspective, the lack of undevelopable land in Bridgeport will require adaptive reuse and/or redevelopment for the city to capture more investment, and the financial feasibility of those efforts are limited at this time.

Historic trends do not necessarily predict future opportunities – Employment projection data, largely based on historic trends, indicate the MetroCOG Region is poised to experience a contraction in demand for new non-residential development, particularly within the industrial sector. However, recent market performance data and feedback from local real estate professionals indicate that demand remains strong, and the challenge is the appropriateness of existing space more than waning demand. At a base level, recent market performance in the industrial

sector indicate that building consumption has remained strong including the delivery of new facilities. That said, there was consensus among industry professionals that business and employment growth potential is not being maximized due to a more reactive approach being taken regionally compared to surrounding markets in Connecticut and New England.

There is need for better non-residential space in the region – One of the primary issues identified by local real estate professionals is the mismatch between the existing building space available to new (or growing) businesses and their need. Most of the Region’s non-residential building inventory is more than 50 years old. These spaces were built with a different focus and available technology. More modern space with better market-defined amenities could increase business—and job growth—within the region. Unfortunately, the financial feasibility of delivering this space is challenging due to limited locations that allow this development, the need for environmental remediation, and the comparative return from other land use types, particularly residential development.

Table 2: National Top Site Selection Factors | 2019 MetroCOG Region | Strengths & Opportunities

Rank	Factor	
1	Highway Accessibility	▲
2	Availability of Skilled Labor	▲
3	Labor costs	▼
4	Quality of Life	---
5	Occupancy or Construction Costs	▲ ▼
6	Corporate Tax Rate	---
7	Energy Availability and Costs	▼
8	Tax Exemptions	▼
9	Environmental Regulations	▼
10	Proximity to Major Markets	▲

▲ Green Triangle, Competitive Strength
▼ Red Triangle, Competitive Strength
--- Black Bar, Consistent with Competitors

Source: : Area Development Magazine & RKG Associates, Inc. 2020

Table 3: CEDS Target Industry Clusters, Previous & Proposed

<i>2009 One Coast, One Future</i>	<i>2021 MetroCOG Region</i>
BioScience	Legacy Manufacturing
Finance & Insurance	Aerospace
Healthcare	Medical Equipment & Supplies
	Intermediate Parts
Maritime Industries	Consumables Manufacturing
Tourism	Internet of Things (IoT)
	Health Care
Source: RKG Associates	Recreation & Leisure

Improved economic development coordination would benefit regional efforts

— The region's current economic development efforts are primarily driven at the local level. While this approach is appropriate for certain scales and types of developments, there is inherent value to a more regional approach in certain instances. Unfortunately, there is often a disconnect between where resources are available and where development is most appropriate. The MetroCOG Region would benefit from a more coordinated, and jointly funded, economic development effort that could bridge those divides.

4. TARGET INDUSTRY ANALYSIS

The target industry analysis combines empirical data assessment with qualitative market analysis. Data points, such as current location quotient and historical employment growth, provide a clear measure of how successful and impactful a given industry has been within the MetroCOG Region. This information is juxtaposed against more qualitative analysis, such as local and regional appropriateness and land use appropriateness, to assess and identify non-traditional targets and prioritize various opportunities. Each rating criteria was then scaled based on input from the community (detailed in the accompanying Technical Appendix) and RKG Associates' professional judgment.

The MetroCOG Region has some competitive advantages and disadvantages within these top site selection

criteria (Table 2). The region's physical location provides it with many competitive advantages. The community is located along I-95, connecting the region to all other major markets that are located along the East Coast. Additionally, the region is in close proximity to both New York City and Boston, allowing MetroCOG residents and businesses close access to these markets as both customers, suppliers, and employers. The area's well-educated population means a strong availability of skilled labor. Compared to elsewhere in Connecticut, primarily lower Fairfield County, occupancy costs are cheaper in the Region. This is both an advantage and disadvantage, as the region is able to attract tenants wanting to be in Fairfield County but unwilling or unable to pay for more expensive locations. However, construction costs are similar in the MetroCOG Region to other areas of Fairfield County, meaning that all else equal, developers would rather build in areas where they are likely to net a higher return.

Quality of life in the region involves tradeoffs. While the region is relatively more affordable from a total cost perspective, the area does not have the amenities that many other communities in Fairfield County offer. Additionally, the region suffers from a relatively high cost of doing business, including taxes, labor costs, energy costs, and environmental regulations. However, these issues are present at the state level and therefore do not necessarily put the MetroCOG Region at an advantage or disadvantage compared to elsewhere in Fairfield County and the state. Overall, these issues put the State of Connecticut at a disadvantage compared to other states, particularly those in the sunbelt region that have experienced significant economic growth over the past ten years.

The results of this effort provide a list of industry clusters that offer the MetroCOG jurisdictions the greatest potential for industry retention, expansion, and recruitment. Table 3 details the Target Industries identified in the 2009 One Coast, One Future CEDS (of which the MetroCOG Region was a part) and the proposed Target Industries for the Region in 2021. As noted, the proposed Target Industries are more focused on the specific strengths and opportunities of the MetroCOG Region, and less so on the larger One Coast, One Region study area (detailed in Section 2 – Demographic Analysis of the Technical Appendix). More specifically, the proposed Target Industries identify the continued opportunity and potential of key components of the Region's production-based economy.

Table 4: Industry Cluster Assessment | MetroCOG Region

Target Industry Cluster	Industries		
	Established	Growth	Emerging
Aerospace Manufacturing	Aircraft Manufacturing		Aircraft Engine and Engine Parts Manufacturing Other Aircraft Parts and Auxiliary Equipment Manufacturing
Medical Equipment Manufacturing	Surgical and Medical Instrument Manufacturing Dental Laboratories		Dental Equipment and Supplies Manufacturing Surgical Appliance and Supplies Manufacturing Ophthalmic Goods Manufacturing
Intermediates Manufacturing	Measuring and Control Instrument Manufacturing Machinery Manufacturing	Metal Treatments Materials Manufacturing Electrical Equipment and Appliance Manufacturing	
Consumables Manufacturing		Commercial Bakeries Breweries Distilleries	Frozen Food Manufacturing Other Artisanal Food Product Manufacturing
Health Care	Hospitals Medical/Dental Offices Nursing Facilities	Services for the Elderly Continuing Care Facilities Medical Laboratories Research and Development	Pharmaceuticals
Recreation and Leisure	Dining Out Venues Entertainment/Performing Arts Venues	Cottage Artisans Physical Artists	Waterfront Activities Maritime Support Industries

Source: RKG Associates

As noted, this does not indicate that all other industry sectors cannot be successful locally. Rather, these chosen clusters most likely will maximize the return on staff and money invested in marketing and assistance. Table 4 provides greater detail of specific industry groups that provide the MetroCOG Region the best chance for success in retention, expansion, and recruitment.

I. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT RELATED CAPITAL PROJECTS

The MetroCOG Region has several entities that invest in capital projects to benefit the residents and businesses within the region. These projects range from small community improvement investments to substantial transportation projects. RKG Associates identified the capital improvement programs for each of the municipalities as well as those for regional and state entities (i.e., the State of Connecticut Department of Transportation) to identify capital projects that may have catalytic impacts on the Region's economic development efforts based on the following criteria (Table 5).

Table 5: Capital Projects with Economic Development Potential | MetroCOG Region

<i>Fiscal Year</i>	<i>Project</i>	<i>Route</i>	<i>Municipality</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Total Cost</i>
FY2022	0015-0339	CT 130	Bridgeport	Rehab Br 02475 o/ Pequonnock River (Phase 2)	\$20,000,000
FY2022	0015-0368	Lafayette Circle	Bridgeport	Realign @ Lafayette Cir. & Improvs on SR 700	\$12,000,000
FY2021	0015-0382	I-95 NB	Bridgeport	Widen Br 03532 to Increase Exiting Capacity at Exit 27A to CT 8 NB	\$9,000,000
FY2024	0015-0385	CT 130	Bridgeport	Rehab Br 03637 (Movable) o/ Yellow Mill Pond	\$15,000,000
FY2021	0015-xxx1	I-95	Fairfield/Bridgeport	Placeholder - Exits 19-27a (PEL)	\$5,000,000
FY2021	0050-0220	Duck Farm Rd	Fairfield	Replace Br 04953 o/ Mill River	\$7,000,000
FY2023	0050-xxx1	I-95	Fairfield/Bridgeport	Placeholder - Exits 19-27a (PD)	\$24,000,000
FY2021	0138-0245	US 1	Stratford	NHS - Replace Br 00326 o/ Metro North RR (IBP)	\$23,140,000
FY2021	0138-0248	I-95	Stratford	Full interchange at Interchange 33 w/ new SB off-ramp & new NB on-ramp	\$37,458,486
FY2021	0173-0415	CT 25	Trumbull	Rehab Br 06750 (Culvert) o/ Unnamed Brook	\$1,830,000
FY2025	DOT0301	NHL	Stratford	NHL - Main Street Bridge, Stratford	\$35,000,000
FY2025	DOT0301	NHL	Stratford	NHL - East Main Street Bridge, Stratford	\$25,000,000
FY2023	0045-0089	Route 59	Easton	Shared use path	\$1,200,000
FY2023	DOT03010168	NHL	Stratford	NHL - DEVON Moveable Bridge	\$65,000,000
FY2021	DOT0410	GBTA	Bridgeport	GBTA - Bridgeport Intermodal Center Improvements FY 21	\$750,000
FY2022	N/A	N/A	Bridgeport	Gateway To South End/Citywide Strategic Acquisition	\$4,000,000

continued on next page

Table 5: Capital Projects with Economic Development Potential | MetroCOG Region

continued

<i>Fiscal Year</i>	<i>Project</i>	<i>Route</i>	<i>Municipality</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Total Cost</i>
FY2021	N/A	N/A	Bridgeport	Amphitheater Additional Funding	\$4,500,000
FY2022	N/A	N/A	Bridgeport	Beardsley Zoo Improvements	\$6,665,000
FY2022	L084-0001	Trail	Monroe	Pequonnock River Trail extension	\$1,500,000
FYTBD	N/A	Route 25 & Route 111	Monroe/Trumbull	Capacity & intersection improvements (see 25/111 Corridor study)	\$TBD
FYTBD	N/A	Route 127	Trumbull	Trumbull Center improvements	\$TBD
FYTBD	N/A	Route 111	Trumbull	Long Hill Green neighborhood: multimodal improvements	\$TBD
FYTBD	N/A	N/A	Bridgeport	WPCA Capital Improvements	\$TBD
FYTBD	N/A	N/A	Fairfield	WPCA East Trunk Line replacement (Grasmere neighborhood)	\$TBD

Source: RKG Associates

REGIONAL IMPACT

Projects were reviewed based on their overall impact to the greater region. Simply put, projects that provided benefit to the greatest number of MetroCOG residents and businesses received priority over those that only serve a select few.

PURPOSE AND NEED

Projects were also considered based on whether they meet an immediate need or deficiency. MetroCOG, member municipalities, and regional and statewide implementation partners all provided some form of prioritization based on purpose and need through their Capital Improvement Programs (CIP) programs.

FUTURE GROWTH POTENTIAL

In this case, projects that offered the greatest short and long-term growth potential, in terms of new development, received the greatest priority. Projects limited to repairing existing facilities or that do not increase the ability of the region to attract expansion or new development are rated lower (A full list of projects will be included in the publicly released draft).

J. PRIORITY ACTIONS

An Implementation Matrix was developed as part of the CEDS Strategy Document (Page 37). The Matrix includes detailed list of objectives and action recommendations across a variety of economic development focus areas:

- [1] Organization and Coordination
- [2] Business Retention and Expansion
- [3] Business Recruitment and Attraction
- [4] Existing Asset Development
- [5] Economic Development Toolkit
- [6] Outreach, Communication, and Marketing

In whole, these six focus areas and related objectives and actions provide a comprehensive 'to do list' that positions the region to address the economic development goals and objectives identified and prioritized by the community. Each component of the plan works in coordination with the others.

That said, RKG Associates has identified specific priority objectives and actions from the full Implementation Matrix that it considers essential to position the region to maximize its implementation efficiency and effectiveness. These priority objectives and actions create the foundations that will enable the MetroCOG Region to improve its potential for success. The following sections provide greater detail on these priority objectives and actions. The full list of objectives and actions can be found in the Implementation Matrix beginning on Page 36 of this document.

1. ORGANIZATION & COORDINATION

Objective #1

Create a Public Private Partnership (PPP) implementation entity to increase private sector engagement and enhance the region's effectiveness and efficiency at business retention, expansion, and recruitment

One of the most substantial challenges that the MetroCOG Region faces in executing an effective regional



economic development campaign is not having a centralized implementation entity. While there are several organizations and entities that are executing some portion of economic development, there is no singular organization that is positioned to coordinate these individual efforts into a cohesive and comprehensive regional strategy. For example, each municipality (except for Easton) has a municipal-focused economic development department. Given the differing needs and priorities of the municipalities, these operations have varying focuses and primary purposes. While this approach makes sense for certain economic development efforts (i.e., land use planning), it is less efficient for others (i.e., entrepreneurial development). Simply put, the scale of the MetroCOG communities does not require six (or five) different entrepreneurial development professionals.

Further, there are several non-governmental entities and organizations engaged in economic development efforts. These well intentioned and task-specific efforts create substantial benefit to the MetroCOG Region but could be more effective if coordinated with a larger joint-funded effort that brings the public sector, these mission-specific organizations, and the Region's business community together. This is not to say that coordination and collaboration does not exist. Rather, RKG Associates recognizes that there are instances where efforts are duplicative and even conflicting, which can create unnecessary competition amongst the implementation partners and confusion/frustration for existing business owners and prospective new companies. The benefits of a regional PPP organization are three-fold.

Engaged Business Community – The most substantial benefit of creating a regional PPP entity to execute this regional strategy is the ability to bring the existing business community into decision making and investing in economic development. There are several examples, both locally (i.e., Metro Hartford Alliance) and nationally (i.e., Hampton Roads Alliance), where the region’s business community actively invests and takes a leadership role in economic development efforts. On one hand, private sector investment increases the resources to execute economic development without increasing public commitment of funds. However, this requires that the business community have a direct voice in decision making. On the other hand, having the Region’s most noted and respected business leaders endorse and invest in a regional economic development strategy will create instant credibility for the effort and bring the talents of those who have been actively investing in business development within the MetroCOG Region for years (or even decades).

Shared Costs – Engaging the private sector can leverage public investment to attract more resources to enhance implementation. This benefit also extends to leveraging public investment as well. As noted earlier, there are several economic development functions that do not require six individual efforts within the MetroCOG Region. The most logical examples of this are business recruitment, workforce development, and entrepreneurial development. These three functions can bring substantial new business development, job growth, individual wealth creation, and fiscal sustainability opportunities. However, these efforts do not require six (or five) separate entities for effective implementation. By partnering together, the six municipalities within the MetroCOG Region can create strong programs using fewer respective resources. When combined with the private sector investment, it multiplies the financial benefits.

Unified and Coordinated Efforts – Economic development is not naturally organized by jurisdictional boundaries, but rather the strengths (and challenges) of a natural market ecosystem. Within Connecticut’s coastal region, these natural markets tend to cluster around the original industrial cities. A regional economic development entity will ensure that these macroeconomic-scaled economic development efforts are done in a unified and coordinated manner. A well-operated regional organization will have the ability to bring existing economic development partners together, provide the necessary resources to augment existing efforts, and

create a level of credibility with existing and prospective businesses. While the creation of a regional economic development entity will take substantial business and municipal outreach, it offers substantially more opportunity for the six MetroCOG communities than it creates in logistical challenges.

As part of this CEDS process, RKG Associates analyzed all entities and organizations that are currently engaged in economic development. While each of these organizations are a valuable partner and component to the Region’s economic development ecosystem, none are currently well positioned to become the lead regional entity. Challenges range from not having a full regional reach (i.e., the Bridgeport Regional Business Council) to not having the governing structure that will attract private investment (i.e., the COG), to not having the full breadth of focus that the regional effort will need. Further, there already are examples within Connecticut where a regional public private partnership with a joint board of directors is proving effective. Thus, the creation of a new regional public private partnership for the MetroCOG communities is recommended. The implementation matrix details specific recommendations, but the following points highlight the most important structural components.

Majority private sector Board of Directors

– One of the frequent questions asked about the PPP approach is, “why does the board need to be majority private sector representatives?” The answer is simple, business leaders are not going to invest funding into an economic development effort in which the decision making can be influenced by political agendas. Simply put, business leaders that invest in economic development want to make sure that decisions are made based on the best interests of the economic development effort, not for the specific benefit of one jurisdiction or individual candidate’s benefit. For the private sector to participate, there will need to be an entity that these leaders believe will execute the priorities they are supporting financially.

Investment from all municipalities – Similarly, this initiative will not maximize the Region’s potential if only supported by one, or a few, of the MetroCOG communities. RKG Associates recognizes that governmental action has been almost exclusively at the municipal level for decades. However, certain aspects of economic development—like transportation planning—are more effective and efficient if done on a regional level. Similar to the benefit that the Council of Government brings for planning and transportation efforts, a regional economic

development entity will create a greater value than the individual investments made by each municipality.

No elected officials in Board of Director seats

— It is RKG Associates experience that private sector investors in economic development require these organizations to be apolitical. While each municipality needs to have an appointed seat on the Board of Directors to ensure the public perspective is well represented in decision-making, it is better these positions be occupied by administrative leaders (i.e., town managers) or locally employed industry professionals (i.e., economic development directors). Avoiding even the perception of having a politically motivated economic development effort will build trust and credibility from both the business community as well as the Region's citizens.

Focused role of the organization — The regional economic development implementation entity is not intended to replace or usurp existing economic development efforts and organizations. For example, RKG Associates envisions this new entity working closely with both the State of Connecticut Department of Economic Community Development (DECD) as well as each of the municipal economic development departments. Rather, the point of the regional economic development entity is to shift those specific roles that are more effective and efficient being done collaboratively. The new regional entity's focus should be on business recruitment/marketing, business retention, workforce development, and entrepreneurial development. Actions like land use planning are better suited for the local economic development lead. That said, many actions within the implementation matrix envision regular communication and joint effort to maximize success (i.e., business retention visits). RKG Associates recommends the regional entity have an executed Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with each of the municipalities that details the regional entity's responsibilities as a condition of public investment.

Objective #6

Activate engaged MetroCOG citizens in community outreach and implementation

One way that economic development efforts can expand capacity and effectiveness without increasing financial or staff commitments is to build volunteer capacity to assist in implementation. More specifically, there are a few strategic areas where citizen volunteers can play important roles in expanding the implementa-

tion capacity. The following recommendations focus on those specific areas.

Community advocates to assist in community outreach — To date, not much effort has been used to engage residents about the opportunities/challenges of implementing economic development initiatives. The citizen survey performed as part of this process revealed there are several people who do not view economic development the same as the goals defined through this process. Further, awareness of existing efforts was inconsistent across the various facets of economic development. Given the challenge of reaching all the different community groups (and economic development perspectives of the Region), RKG Associates recommends engaging a select group of interested citizens to assist in community outreach and leadership. Ideally, the community advocates would be individuals with strong ties and broad recognition within either a specific municipality or with a civic group. Individuals selected to be advocates should be familiar with the CEDS economic development efforts, can discuss and explain economic development concepts, and be well spoken. Most importantly, the advocates must be available to assist in outreach to various community and civic entities. The advocate effort is intended to build community-wide awareness of the benefits and challenges of implementing an economic development strategy at the local level without requiring a staff large enough to provide individual attention to every citizen.

Ambassadors to assist in industry retention and recruitment — The ambassador program is a collection of business and industry leaders that provide support to the economic development entity's staff for industry recruitment and retention. Although these individuals will have no formal authority within the recruitment process, they provide a 'real life' vantage point for prospects about doing business in the MetroCOG Region. This group will augment the private sector Board of Director members, who also should be active participants in the implementation of the regional economic development effort. The most important ambassador function is to provide a business perspective for prospects interested in locating/expanding within the Region. Utilizing business leaders in the recruitment process legitimizes the recruitment effort through testimonials while leveraging the staff's time and effort. It is important that ambassadors be well informed, well-spoken, and respected within their industry. In other words, the most effective

ambassadors may not be from the largest businesses. Ambassadors should be chosen to represent each of the major industry sectors to ensure appropriate coverage regardless of the prospect.

Mentors to aid new entrepreneurs to be successful

— A business development mentorship program pairs successful entrepreneurs with individuals who have a business concept, but limited resources or understanding of starting, operating, and growing a business. These programs provide local entrepreneur's access to someone who has 'been there' within their industry, adding confidence in the advice and direction provided. Having a local mentor also provides stability, as the relationship created can carry forward after the program has served its purpose. The participant typically signs an agreement to operate for a certain period within the boundaries of the program (the Region in this case) or pays a mentorship fee. Given the large and growing retirement-age population in MetroCOG, there already should be a substantial local knowledge base to find volunteer mentors. It is recommended that training programs be utilized for mentors to ensure consistent and successful efforts (i.e., the Mentor-Protégé Program through the Small Business Administration or SCORE). Existing mentorship programs should be coordinated with the regional implementation entity's efforts to reduce duplication, ensure consistency, and allow for specializations.

2. BUSINESS RETENTION & EXPANSION

Objective #2:

Continue to implement the business survey annually

This CEDS process included the first region-wide business survey (See Technical Appendix for Survey Results). Business surveys are a cost-efficient way for economic development organizations to gather information on market challenges, opportunities and needs of local businesses. The questions included in the first survey covered topics such as workforce needs/challenges, market growth opportunities, competition challenges, location/physical needs, etc. While the survey topics should remain consistent into the future, future iterations should be continually reviewed by the industry roundtables and implementation partners (i.e., the Chambers

of Commerce and municipal economic development departments) to ensure the questions remain relevant to regional economic development needs.

Responses have four primary purposes. First, programs and policies can be created to address challenges/opportunities identified by several businesses. Second, trends/issues in each industry or municipality can be identified and mitigated through collaboration with key stakeholders. Third, individual responses can be used to ensure site visits and that individual business outreach is targeted to those businesses that have greater opportunities to grow or are at risk of downsizing/closing. Finally, survey findings can be tracked over time to identify market trends and fine tune programs based on the current and projected economic climate.

As awareness of the survey grows, it can be expanded to serve as a comprehensive approach to identify workforce, market, regulatory, and growth needs of the Region's business base. At that time, the results collected from this effort can guide any changes to existing business outreach approach and help define economic development policy focuses for the Region and each municipality.

Objective #3:

Build Industry Roundtables in different market areas

Establishing industry-specific roundtable networks can demonstrate the Region's commitment to attracting and retaining firms in its target industries. These business-led groups can assist in advocating for the MetroCOG Region's role at the forefront of statewide economic development efforts to develop new industry clusters or preserve and grow existing clusters. Meetings should be held at regular intervals (recommended quarterly) and include businesses of different sizes and from different municipalities. In addition to convening businesses that can help advocate for continued growth, the roundtables can also provide the new economic development entity with critical feedback on needed interventions or improvements relevant to a specific industry cluster. This feedback can help inform annual action plans for the public-private partnership in the future. These roundtables should be led by a coalition of PPP staff, municipal economic development staff, and the identified ambassadors from that specific industry cluster.

3. BUSINESS RECRUITMENT

Objective #1

Create a proactive business recruitment effort in one target industry sector, adding new target sector efforts as resources and capacity allows

The current organization and structure of the Region's economic development efforts has limited the amount of proactive recruitment done to date. Simply put, current staffing and investment levels have made economic development efforts more reactionary to current needs or specific land use challenges. While the changing landscape of economic development recruitment is easing the need for staff-heavy outreach efforts, having a dynamic and comprehensive repository of data and a presence in key national industry professional organizations remains a valuable approach to building awareness within industry sectors and among site selectors.

To this point, the new regional economic development entity is the logical tool to execute targeted recruitment efforts. These efforts involve three basic steps: [1] target identification, [2] target communication, and [3] recruitment. Each step builds on the success of the previous step. However, the steps should be repeated on a regular basis as new companies are developed and since leadership within companies consistently shifts. Furthermore, the marketing process will vary from company to company, oftentimes requiring a long 'courtship' process.

Target Identification – Target identification involves developing, maintaining, and expanding a list of businesses to actively contact and recruit. When focusing on individuals and companies that are not location-specific, the greatest success will come from focusing on companies that are consistent with the Region's available physical assets and workforce. Within MetroCOG, focusing on companies at or below 100 workers likely will be more effective than trying to secure those "home run" businesses. Furthermore, the new implementation entity should use data analytic support from companies such as Dun and Bradstreet and EMSI to find specific targets based on exacting criteria (i.e., size of company, regional presence, target industry...). This likely will increase the success rate, as these companies will be most aligned with the strengths and assets of the Region.

Target Communication – Target communication includes all interaction between the implementation entity and the prospects from initial contact to face-to-face meetings. The communication process should be initialized through a combination of site selector relationships and a direct outreach campaign using the target list just discussed. The outreach effort should include information about the community, business and amenity-specific information within the region, and other pertinent documentation. If the prospect is a referral, then the person making the referral should be involved early in the process.

Recruitment – Communication beyond the initial phase of contact needs to be tailored based on the response of the prospect. The recruitment process may require several contacts, meetings at professional trade shows and/or multiple outreach attempts. The goal should be to get the prospect to visit the community either on a one-on-one basis or as part of a recruitment/networking visit. Regardless of the timeline, continued contact is important in developing a rapport with the prospect. It is important to note that the person/persons in charge of working with a prospect should be consistent throughout the process, when possible.

The regional recruitment effort should be done in coordination with statewide initiatives. Partnering with state economic development efforts on recruitment trips exposes the Region to a wide variety of prospects while reducing the amount of local effort to coordinate the trip and the overall local cost. RKG Associates recommends the MetroCOG Region focus on those industry sectors that are most viable locally, including aerospace and medical device manufacturing, professional services, logistics & distribution, and recreation & leisure. Specific recommendations include:

Attend industry-oriented events – Joining national and/or international trade organizations within the target industry sector provides a direct conduit for the Region to engage with new business prospects and market directly through exhibiting at regional/national conferences.

Implement targeted recruitment trips – The Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) should augment the partner trips with strategic site visits to prospects within the United States. These trips often-times identify between 10 and 15 prospective companies within a confined geography for one-on-one visits. Developing these target lists and establishing these trips

typically are coordinated with consultants that specialize in prospect identification and development.

Locally-hosted prospects – The CEDS should consider hosting individual and groups of prospects. Hosted events should be themed in nature (i.e., vertical supply chains for existing companies, target industries...), lasting between 2-3 days. The event should be highly structured, integrating social events with ambassadors/local industry leaders with information sessions and strategic site visits. Partnerships with local, regional, and statewide economic development entities to implement site visits are highly recommended in the short term. This approach provides many advantages to the implementation entity, most importantly, the potential to leverage additional staff and financial resources.

It is important to note that expanding the existing recruitment efforts will require greater resources and personnel. Simply put, attending conferences, traveling for recruitment efforts, and hosting prospects costs thousands of dollars per event. Current resources already are being used to their capacity. To this point, efforts should be reviewed annually to assess their effectiveness while exploring options to expand efforts. Further, the initial effort should focus on a single target industry and expand as resources become available.

Objective #2

Implement a more proactive entrepreneurial development program

The MetroCOG Region has several indicators that a coordinated, comprehensive, and proactive entrepreneurial development program would be an effective way to offer residents the opportunity to build wealth while also retaining the talent being developed in the existing post-secondary ecosystem. The initial step in this process is to inventory all existing local and regional small business support providers and identify gaps/overlaps in service/coverage. Enhancing existing efforts to create a unified regional entrepreneur program that ensures both market-based and geographic coverage would increase interest from residents and students alike. Most notably, the regional initiative should focus on both augmenting any gaps in coverage and an aggressive marketing campaign to increase awareness. Areas of specific opportunity identified through this effort include:

Artist and artisans – The MetroCOG Region has an established, burgeoning artist and artisan community.

Products range from two-dimensional and three-dimensional art to culinary and beverage manufacturers. Efforts to encourage and support these operations exist but are inadequately funded and currently not well coordinated. One of the challenges identified is the lack of resources available to individual organizations to support new entrepreneurs in these sectors.

Entrepreneurial diversity – The MetroCOG Region is one of the most racially and ethnically diverse in Connecticut. The CEDS outreach process uncovered that there is an untapped market potential for entrepreneurial development within the Region's minority communities. It was noted that there is both a lack of awareness of existing programs as well as a lack of trust of municipally led efforts. Creating a more regionally focused program that better engages existing business leaders in these communities could create new business development opportunities for existing residents with strong ties to the MetroCOG Region.

Collegiate program graduates – The CEDS process included engaging with the existing two-year and four-year post-secondary academic institutions. Each of the different entities has some form of entrepreneurial development programs already. However, these programs have not yielded significant new business development within the MetroCOG Region, as graduates of these programs reportedly relocating elsewhere to begin their careers. Lack of access to capital and strength of market were commonly noted as barriers to retention of these students after graduating. This indicates the potential for a regional economic development initiative to create the physical and financial incentives for these graduates to begin their careers locally rather than seeking those resources out elsewhere.

4. ASSET DEVELOPMENT

Objective #2

Identify 'priority area' economic development properties and engage their owners to connect their investment strategies with the regional asset marketing efforts

One of the critical assets within economic development are the physical land and building inventories available for business expansion and recruitment. These assets range in size, amenities, and market potential. Given the municipality-focused governance of Connecticut, it is

logical that marketing be done at the local level for the small and mid-sized assets. However, there are specific assets within every community that transcend a single jurisdiction. These assets have regional, and often state-wide, economic development implications.

In these instances, RKG Associates recommends that the regional economic development entity play a more active role in marketing these projects. Using a more proactive method to garner interest for these assets from a larger area than just the immediate region provides the potential to create a more beneficial project than originally conceived. Further, a regional marketing effort for these catalytic assets can encourage and facilitate inter-jurisdictional coordination and cooperation, potentially creating a project (or projects) that produce more positive results than if done independently.

The regional economic development entity should work with municipal economic development staff to create a set of criteria that can identify these locations and generate support for a more proactive and collaborative marketing effort.

Objective #4

Consider a Regional Economic Development Investment Fund (EDIF)

CEDS outreach efforts revealed that there are some private business investors (called angels) within the region. These investors seek opportunities to provide capital to companies looking to start/grow in exchange for an ownership stake in the company. The Economic Development Investment Fund is a tool that enables MetroCOG communities to leverage public investment in economic development by partnering with these investment entities to expand business investment and development. This partnership also has proven to attract debt investors (i.e., banks) by making these venture capital investments less risky from a lending perspective. Transactions can be formalized through a partnership arrangement.

The EDIF concept would have a public-private investment match where 80 percent to 90 percent of the resources come from private entities, and the remainder would come from a joint municipal investment. A minimum contribution should be required for private participation in the EDIF. Private investors will pay a small servicing fee based on ownership percentage and will receive quarterly (or semiannual) payments based on total funding activity, ownership percentage, and earned interest. The EDIF also could be used to

organize networking events for businesses and investors and/or formal presentation events where business owners present their business case to secure funding (i.e., the TV show “Shark Tank”). Ultimately, the EDIF would serve to better connect business ideas with the capital needed to implement those ideas.

More specifically, the EDIF concept should be done in coordination with the entrepreneurial development strategy (detailed earlier). One of the largest obstacles to promoting small business and entrepreneurial development is securing funding. Many capable business owners with viable product lines/services are not sufficiently capitalized to initiate and sustain a business startup. However, these businesses often are too small to qualify for state or federal support. When they do qualify, the terms often are not favorable for the business. To meet this need, many communities have created public/private loan consortium partnerships. These partnerships provide a “win-win” for both the community and the lenders. The community leverages its investment by requiring a matching investment from the lenders while the lenders defray risk by pooling resources and utilizing the public investment to reduce their exposure. The funds can be made available in many forms including primary or secondary mortgages, gap financing or equity investment. The enticement to investors is that it is partially funded by the public sector, creating a cushion in loan-to-value and debt coverage ratios.

5. WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Objective #3

Establish and implement a MetroCOG job fair

Despite the COVID-19 pandemic, the unemployment rate within the MetroCOG Region remains comparatively low. Several business leaders interviewed for this initiative indicated there are substantial labor shortages, particularly within the production-based target industry clusters (i.e., intermediate products manufacturing). Simply put, much of the Region’s aging workforce in these sectors is not being replaced by subsequent generations, as had been the norm in previous generations. All that said, the Region has consistently experienced ‘brain drain,’ or the loss of the local youth upon reaching working age as they pursue education or work opportunities elsewhere.

To these points, there is an opportunity to lead a regional effort to increase awareness of existing job and career opportunities for both adults and local students. Part of building that awareness is to highlight existing employers and provide the local workforce access to understanding both the type of job as well as the prerequisites for obtaining that job. A regional job fair will provide employers and job seekers an opportunity to collectively interact, increasing the potential for employers to find workers and residents to find jobs.

The exposition is envisioned to be a two or three-day event that brings together regional employers to showcase the types of jobs available, the education and training requirements, and the salary ranges of these jobs. A regional coordination effort between the new implementation entity, the municipal economic development departments, the local Chambers of Commerce, public schools, post-secondary institutions, and regional employers will be necessary to successfully connect the job opportunities to local residents and students in the local post-secondary institutions.

RKG Associates recognizes that worker recruitment and job placement efforts already exist through several local partners, particularly the post-secondary institutions. However, these efforts are focused on current enrollees and/or are not broadly known within the community. Creating a regional job fair initiative through the regional economic development organization will both [1] increase potential participation from local businesses and [2] ensure the job fair includes all MetroCOG residents.

One particular focus of the job fair should be engaging school-aged children (middle school through high school). RKG Associates has witnessed the benefit of engaging the future labor force early and often about the importance of education to their future earning potential. The objective of the employment exposition is to provide separate, specialized sessions for middle school and high school children to engage these students about educational needs, potential career paths and typical incomes. One of the days of the job fair should be committed to students, ensuring the programming is dedicated to middle and high school students and avoiding any potential conflicts with adult job seekers. Furthermore, efforts should be made to engage the students' parents as well, given many work and education decisions for teenagers are made at the family level.

Ultimately, this effort is intended to be a bridge between the Region's current and future workforce and the com-

panies that require them to be appropriately prepared for jobs. Sponsorships should be sought from participating businesses to defray the costs of holding the event.

6. MARKETING & OUTREACH

Objective #1

Create marketing collateral to 'sell' the defined economic development vision

The MetroCOG Region needs a more comprehensive print and digital marketing effort. At a base level, the CEDS process identified inconsistent awareness of available programs, opportunities, and support networks within the Region. More strategically, there is very little information available to businesses that want to learn more about doing business in the MetroCOG Region. Most notably, industry-specific materials should be part of this strategy so that targeted recruitment efforts can focus on those programs/offerings that are relevant to the prospect. It is important to note that while marketing materials are a minimum benchmark for disseminating information, keeping those materials current is the true benchmark. This is particularly important for Internet-based materials, as having inaccurate/out-of-date data sources can harm the community's potential for a prospect before ever learning about the opportunity. Specific recommendations include:

Quality of Life Sheet – The quality-of-life brochure should focus on the intangibles of living and working in the MetroCOG Region, highlighting the various technology, workforce, cost of living, and social amenities of the area as a whole and each individual municipality. The content should emphasize factors such as school performance, cultural assets, proximity to road and rail transportation, access to the regional metropolitan markets, and quality/variety of leisure activities. This material is particularly valuable in workforce recruitment and entrepreneurial development.

Target Industry Materials – As mentioned, industry-specific marketing materials for each of the target industries is a minimum standard. Each document should be customized based on the cluster. The documents should highlight information including employment and establishment growth data, regional wage rates, current businesses operating in the area, competitive advantages of operating locally, unique incentives available

(where applicable) and local business contacts (ambassadors).

Incentive Sheet – A series of incentive documents should be created that detail all local, state, and federal incentive programs available for businesses locating in the Region. Each incentive sheet should focus on those programs relevant to the industry group being targeted. Prospective businesses can use this document to gauge the financial benefits to doing business, and existing businesses may be alerted to incentive programs they were unaware of, therefore helping to ensure their continued presence. As noted during the analysis, providing formulaic incentives (i.e., land costs, tax abatements) will enable prospects to gauge each community's competitiveness.

Business Testimonial Book – RKG Associates' efforts for this analysis has revealed several compelling "success stories" of existing businesses succeeding in the MetroCOG Region. However, these experiences are not chronicled or readily available to use in marketing. RKG Associates recommends crafting a business testimonials book with written statements from existing industry leaders on topics ranging from quality of life, business climate, market performance, and personal preference to do business locally. Getting input from companies that have chosen and thrive locally is valuable to industry recruitment. Individual testimonies of leaders from businesses in the target industries should also be included in the target industry brochures.

Objective #6

Create an online economic development presence for the MetroCOG Region

Like the rest of society, economic development is becoming more virtual. Information is transacted digitally, site selection almost exclusively begins with an online effort to collect first-level requirement data, and business owners/citizens rely on websites, social media, and direct communication to get their information and learn about opportunities/issues. To this point, regional economic development will need a dedicated presence online. Regardless of how the regional economic development plan is implemented, the following recommendations are critical to better position the MetroCOG Region for economic development success.

Develop a stand-alone regional economic development website – The current COG website has

an economic development link under its regional planning banner. This webpage has some information about CEDS processes and links to some of the area's business organizations. Municipalities have similar economic development presences on the Internet, but without a robust, interactive presence that is easily navigable and comprehensive. A baseline standard is a stand-alone website that brings together all the data resources, business retention and relocation information, contact data, and regular communications from the implementing entity (i.e., newsletters, business highlights, implementation dashboards...). The Metro Hartford Alliance (www.metrohartford.com) is one local example of an effective website. The Hampton Roads Economic Development Alliance (www.hreda.com) offers a different layout with the same baseline data. Regardless of approach, the MetroCOG Region should invest in creating a dynamic, comprehensive online presence that details the pertinent information about doing business and living in the region.

Make the economic development website experience user-friendly

– The examples above provide good experiences for users seeking various information about those communities. Each economic development website needs to be well organized and easy to navigate for residents, businesses, and partners. Having a robust 'partners' area of the website that connects all of the existing participants in the regional economic development process is critical, as this will allow the regional website to not be overly cumbersome with information. Ensuring these organizations link back to the regional economic development website is important as well. This connection is particularly important between the regional economic development effort and the individual municipal economic development websites.

Create separate business and resident sections on the website

– Given the need for better community engagement within the MetroCOG Region, a portion of the regional economic development website should provide information to residents and enable them to interact with the regional economic development entity staff. Having information about why economic development is important (i.e., links to articles or locally made resources) creates as much value as information on what initiatives are being pursued (i.e., upcoming events, recent successes...). The resident portion of the website is the ideal place to advertise and implement the annual

resident survey and post results (both current year and comparative past results) for the community. Connecting the economic development performance dashboard to both the business portion of the site as well as the residential portion of the site is recommended.

Ensure there is consistent social media activity

– While the creation of the website is a critical first step, consistent monitoring and updating of the website, as well as a proactive social media presence, is equally important. Having a stagnant/out-of-date website is equally as bad as having no website at all. Making sure information is current and recent activity is highlighted ensures prospects are getting accurate information and visitors are encouraged to return to follow the regional effort progress. Having a more day-to-day presence on social media platforms (i.e., Instagram, LinkedIn...) offers more consistent updates in ‘bite-size’ form, which can pique interest in getting more information on the full website and create positive momentum about the success of the Region and its economic development efforts. Creating local content (i.e., editorials, business spotlights, press releases) should be part of the online/social media presence rather than relying on simply posting third party content.

K. IMPLEMENTATION MATRIX

The following pages detail the specific implementation objectives and action items recommended for the MetroCOG Region’s Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS). The matrix is organized by topic area and objective, and includes recommended time-lines, estimated budgets, frequency of those costs, and likely implementation partners to enhance efficient and effective execution. It is important to note that this matrix has a ‘menu’ of options for the regional implementation entity to consider. Actual implementation actions will be dictated by several factors including: [1] available staffing and resources, [2] organization of the implementation entity, [3] priorities established by the governing board of directors, and [4] current/emerging market conditions/needs within the Region. To this last point, these recommendations should be considered guidelines for implementation and not prescriptive recipes that require full adherence. This is particularly true for longer term recommendations (2+ years out), as market forces and financial commitments may vary greatly than projected in the matrix.

Legend	PARTNERS	BRBC	Bridgeport Regional Business Council	PUBLIC	BPT	City of Bridgeport	PRIVATE	C	Consultant
					EA	Town of Easton		F	Financial Institutions
		CC	All Chambers of Commerce		FFLD	Town of Fairfield		I	Industry Leaders
		COG	MetroCOG		MON	Town of Monroe		N	Neighborhood Residents
		CVB	Visit Connecticut		ST	Town of Stratford		O	Property Owners
		ED	Economic Development Organization <i>NEW</i>		TR	Town of Trumbull		R	Realtors/Brokers
		FCC	Fairfield Chamber of Commerce		MUN	All Municipalities	COST	A	Under \$1,000
		HOU	Housatonic Community College		BOE	Public School Systems		B	\$1,000 to \$10,000
		MCC	Monroe Chamber of Commerce		CT	State of Connecticut		C	\$10,000 to \$50,000
		TWP	The Workplace	ACTION		D		\$50,000 to \$100,000	
		UN	4-Year Colleges	IMPLEMENTATION		E		\$100,000 to \$250,000	
		UT	Public Utilities			F		\$250,000 to \$500,000	
						G		Over \$500,000	

METROCOG COMPREHENSIVE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY IMPLEMENTATION MATRIX	Implementation Lead		Timing: 2022-2026					Cost	
	Public/ NP	Private	22	23	24	24	26	Est.	Freq.

Organization & Communication

Objective 1 Consider a new or existing organization to be designated as the implementation entity to increase private sector engagement and enhance the region's effectiveness and efficiency at business retention, expansion, and recruitment

Actions																			
1	Evaluate existing board structures and explore the feasibility of a new organization that can provide public and private representation in regional economic development	COG, MUN	C, I															A	One Time
2	Ensure any board structure maintains a private-sector majority voting ratio	COG, MUN	C, I															A	One Time
3	Provide one (1) appointed seat to each municipality, that seat can only be filled if the municipality funds the economic development organization	COG, MUN	C, I															A	One Time
4	Emphasize majority private sector contributions and set minimum public funding requirements.	COG, MUN	C, I															A	One Time
5	Fund new or existing implementation entity commensurate with outcome expectations.	COG, MUN	C, F, I															F	Annual
6	Ensure the new or existing implementation entity is staffed commensurate with the stated goals.	ED																	Annual

Objective 2 Create greater coordination and collaboration with economic development entities and partners within the MetroCOG Region

Actions																			
1	Create a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with each municipality on the regional implementation entity's roles and responsibilities within their respective borders	ED, MUN																A	Biannual
2	Coordinate with the respective Chambers of Commerce on roles, responsibilities, and partnership efforts. This is particularly important for event coordination.	ED, FCC, MCC, BRBC																A	Biannual
3	Create coordination protocols with MetroCOG, regional Chambers, and municipal economic development entities	ED, COG, MUN																A	Biannual
4	Develop similar operational agreements with other partners (i.e., public schools, Visit Connecticut, local arts groups...)	ED, HCC, BOE, TWP, UN																A	Biannual
5	Provide ongoing progress reports to the MetroCOG Board of Directors on status of projects and progress in metrics (SEE TOOLBOX RECOMMENDATIONS)	ED																A	Quarterly
6	Establish meeting schedule with all municipal economic development partners to discuss any ongoing or upcoming coordination efforts	ED, MUN																A	Quarterly

METROCOG COMPREHENSIVE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY IMPLEMENTATION MATRIX	Implementation Lead		Timing: 2022-2026					Cost	
	<i>Public/ NP</i>	<i>Private</i>	<i>22</i>	<i>23</i>	<i>24</i>	<i>24</i>	<i>26</i>	<i>Est.</i>	<i>Freq.</i>
Organization & Communication									

Objective 3 Enhance strategic relationships with local and statewide implementation partners

Actions									
1	Establish coordination meetings with statewide implementation partners to discuss ongoing initiatives and coordination opportunities (i.e., the CT Department of Economic Community Development)	ED, CT						A	Semi-Annually
2	Create a coordination meeting schedule with representatives neighboring regional economic development partners on joint marketing/collaboration efforts (i.e., inter-regional transportation projects)	ED, COG, CT						A	Semi-Annually
3	Have a direct liaison to each industry segment team for state economic development effort, making sure to have representation at regular meetings	ED						A	Monthly
4	Provide reports to regional and statewide partners on activity and successes to regional and statewide partners (can also serve as part of communication with the municipalities)	ED						B	Annual

Objective 4 Activate engaged MetroCOG citizens in community outreach and implementation

Actions									
1	Work with the municipal economic development departments to identify and train community advocates that can engage civic groups on the intent and benefits of regional economic development cooperation	ED, MUN	N					A	Annual
2	Identify and train business ambassadors for each of the target industry sectors to assist the economic development staff in retention and recruitment visits	ED	I					A	Annual
3	Work with the local economic development departments to coordinate a unified business mentor program, using a recognized mentorship training program	ED	N					C	Annual

METROCOG COMPREHENSIVE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY IMPLEMENTATION MATRIX	Implementation Lead		Timing: 2022-2026					Cost	
	<i>Public/ NP</i>	<i>Private</i>	22	23	24	24	26	<i>Est.</i>	<i>Freq.</i>
Business Retention & Expansion									

Objective 3 Build industry roundtables in a number of different market areas

Actions									
1	Create an industry roundtable for every key market sector within the Region including [1] Manufacturing; [2] Healthcare; [3] Recreation & Leisure; [4] Professional Services, and [5] Logistics & Distribution	ED	I						A One Time
2	Make sure all partner organizations have representation on roundtables that crossover missions	ED,- MUN, CC, CVB, TWP	I						A One Time
3	Meet with each roundtable as necessary, with one meeting targeted immediately after the release of the business survey results	COG/ ED	I						B Quarterly
4	Use roundtable meeting to discuss: [1] market climate; [2] regulatory issues; [3] growth opportunities; [4] implementation coordination	COG/ ED							A Continual
5	Use feedback from roundtables to help inform CEDS annual reporting requirements	COG/ ED							A Continual

Objective 4 Engage is a more comprehensive and proactive business outreach effort

Actions									
1	Use the comprehensive business list to identify new companies to visit and track past visit efforts.	ED, MUN	I						A Annual
2	Use business survey results to prioritize outreach efforts	ED, MUN							A Annual
3	Use a CRM-type database of visited businesses to track frequency and results of the visit	ED							A Continual
4	Activate ambassadors and Board members to assist in outreach, providing them training on questions to ask and how to track the conversation	ED	N, I						A Continual
5	Create a direct "help line" initiative on the economic development website that allows businesses to connect to an economic development staff member for assistance	ED	C						A One Time

METROCOG COMPREHENSIVE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY IMPLEMENTATION MATRIX	Implementation Lead		Timing: 2022-2026					Cost	
	<i>Public/ NP</i>	<i>Private</i>	<i>22</i>	<i>23</i>	<i>24</i>	<i>24</i>	<i>26</i>	<i>Est.</i>	<i>Freq.</i>
Business Recruitment									

Objective 2 Implement a more proactive entrepreneurial development program

Actions																			
5	Partner with local colleges and universities, workforce development agencies, and municipal partners for entrepreneurial development candidates and programs	ED, HCC, TWP, MUN																A	Annual
6	Provide graduates of the program with support to identify and secure their first location	ED, MUN	R															A	Continual
7	Create a small business lending consortium with local banks and investors to augment existing revolving loan fund, creating a shared landing pool for start-ups and an angel investor network for accelerating businesses	ED, MUN	F, N, I															F	One Time

Objective 3 Create a regional entertainment, recreation, and leisure initiative, bringing existing partners together

Actions																			
1	Engage existing organizations that promote tourism, arts & entertainment, leisure activities to develop an industry roundtable	ED	I															A	One Time
2	Inventory all entertainment, recreation, and leisure destinations in the Region for a coordinated marketing effort	ED, MUN																A	Annual
3	Fund a regional tourism, leisure, and entertainment study that provides recommendations on how to best organize, structure, and implement a retention and expansion initiative	ED, MUN	I															D	One Time
4	Create a unified marketing and outreach brand/strategy that integrates all facets of tourism, entertainment, and leisure activities in the Region	ED, MUN	I															C	One Time
5	Engage with Visit Connecticut to create a MetroCOG Region-specific local web page committed to local attractions and events	ED, CVB																A	Annual

METROCOG COMPREHENSIVE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY IMPLEMENTATION MATRIX	Implementation Lead		Timing: 2022-2026					Cost	
	<i>Public/ NP</i>	<i>Private</i>	22	23	24	24	26	<i>Est.</i>	<i>Freq.</i>

Asset Development

Objective 1 Create a regional property and asset database

Actions												
1	Inventory all existing vacant commercial and industrial land and buildings, focusing on those properties that meet a minimum size/scale (i.e., 2 acres minimum)	ED, MUN	I, O								A	Annual
2	Connect with all property owners to detail price, availability, and vision for those asset; include in online listings	ED, MUN	O								A	Continual
3	Create a web-accessible database of those assets to connect to the economic development website	ED	C								C	One Time
4	Create an 'open source' database for property owners and brokers to submit new assets and changes to existing listings	ED	C								Included	
5	Work with municipal and state implementation partners to make sure their asset lists are current and complete	ED, MUN	O, I								A	Monthly
6	Maintain regular communication with municipal partners and property owners to ensure occupied/developed land is removed	ED, MUN	O, I								A	Continual

Objective 2 Identify 'priority area' economic development properties and engage their owners to connect their investment strategies with the regional asset marketing efforts

Actions												
1	Work with municipal partners to develop criteria and identify those areas in the Region that provide the greatest catalytic impact for economic development	ED, MUN	O								A	Annual
2	Create a comprehensive ownership database of all commercial properties in each priority area	ED	C								C	Tri-Annual
3	Outreach to property owners during planning efforts to understand existing investment priorities	ED, MUN	O								A	Continual
4	Continue dialogue with owners, particularly catalytic parcels, on a regular basis to track changing strategies and create new opportunities	ED, MUN	O								A	Continual
5	Create a catalyst sites prospectus, defining property ownership, implementation concepts, and available incentives to help bring the vision to fruition	ED	C, O								B	Annual
6	Utilize criteria developed for previous objective to score potential future economic development sites based on ownership changes and/or future infrastructure investments	ED, MUN	O								A	Annual

METROCOG COMPREHENSIVE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY IMPLEMENTATION MATRIX	Implementation Lead		Timing: 2022-2026					Cost	
	<i>Public/ NP</i>	<i>Private</i>	22	23	24	24	26	<i>Est.</i>	<i>Freq.</i>
Asset Development									

Objective 3 Continue to support local, regional, statewide and federal infrastructure improvement strategies

Actions																			
1	Champion all transit and transportation plans that create greater connectivity and access to employment centers and commercial corridors	COG, ED, MUN	O															A	Continual
2	Coordinate with municipal public works staff to ensure economic development projects/priorities are support-able, seeking joint solutions where inadequacies exist	COG, ED, MUN	C															A	Continual
3	Provide technical assistance to all infrastructure processes as necessary, including [1] fiscal impact analyses of proposed investments, [2] market potential analyses of specific areas, and [3] case study research for joint projects	COG, MUN, CT	O															A	Continual
4	Bring relevant municipal departments into prospect projects early to identify and problem solve for any potential issues	ED, COG, MUN	I															A	Continual

Objective 4 Consider a Regional Economic Development Investment Fund

Actions																			
1	Define a funding program that brings together municipal participation for economic development projects that have regional implications	MUC, COG, ED																G	One Time
2	Define the potential uses of the annual contributions to [1] site development; [2] land acquisition; [3] speculative building development; and [4] infrastructure investment costs related to specific economic development projects	COG, ED																A	One Time
3	Enable the use of the resources as either a direct-pay approach or the ability to bond the revenue stream	COG, ED																A	One Time

Objective 5 Consider consistent, formulaic municipal incentive programs for economic development projects

Actions																			
1	Create a simplified, defined threshold for financial incentives, focusing on [1] net new jobs created, [2] net new property value, [3] location of investment, [4] industry sector.	ED, MUN																A	One Time
2	Consider bonus incentive thresholds for businesses in target industries	MUN																A	One Time
3	Consider incentive bonuses for business that locate in economic development priority areas	MUN																A	One Time

METROCOG COMPREHENSIVE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY IMPLEMENTATION MATRIX	Implementation Lead		Timing: 2022-2026					Cost	
	<i>Public/ NP</i>	<i>Private</i>	<i>22</i>	<i>23</i>	<i>24</i>	<i>24</i>	<i>26</i>	<i>Est.</i>	<i>Freq.</i>
Workforce Development									

Objective 2 Create unified marketing materials that highlight local, regional, and statewide workforce and education training programs available to residents, businesses, and prospects

Actions																			
1	Publish and market all existing local, regional, and statewide workforce training and education programs available	ED, HCC, BOE UN, TWP																A	One Time
2	Build a workforce and education website dedicated to marketing and advertising these offerings, providing customized information based industry sector and/or business size	ED, HCC, BOE, UN, TWP	C															C	One Time
3	Develop industry-specific printed materials detailing the programs available, how to qualify for those programs, and the financial/implementation benefits of each	ED, HCC, BOE, UN, TWP	C															Included	Tri-Annual
4	Develop marketing and outreach materials targeted to residents that inventory all workforce programs available, and how those programs correspond with local job availability	ED, HCC, BOE, UN, TWP																B	Tri-Annual
5	Create a jobs matching web application for businesses to post job opportunities and residents/interested workers to post resumes	ED, HCC, BOE, UN, TWP	C, I															C	One Time

Objective 3 Establish and implement a regional job fair

Actions																			
1	Host a regional job fair connecting local employers to the existing and potential workforce each year	ED, HCC, BOE, UN, TWP	I															C	Annual
2	Outreach to all primary employers and businesses within target industry clusters within the region to exhibit at the job fair	ED, HCC, BOE, UN, TWP	I															Included	Annual
3	Hold a 'school day' event where middle school and high school students from the Region can engage with the employers about career paths	ED, HCC, BOE, UN, TWP	I															Included	Annual
4	Incorporate a short town hall discussion with students on job opportunities in the Region as well as the requirements/challenges of qualifying for those jobs	ED, HCC, BOE, UN, TWP	I															Included	Annual

METROCOG COMPREHENSIVE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY IMPLEMENTATION MATRIX	Implementation Lead		Timing: 2022-2026					Cost	
	<i>Public/ NP</i>	<i>Private</i>	<i>22</i>	<i>23</i>	<i>24</i>	<i>24</i>	<i>26</i>	<i>Est.</i>	<i>Freq.</i>

Workforce Development

Objective 3 Establish and implement a regional job fair

Actions

5	Work with exhibitors to have information on the education/training requirements and potential salaries of the positions they have available	ED, HCC, BOE, UN, TWP	I															Included	Annual
6	Provide soft skill and job readiness training/experiences (i.e. resume writing, mock interviews...) as part of the job fair for both students and adults	ED, HCC, BOE, UN, TWP	I															Included	Annual
7	Provide space at the job fair for parent/child discussions with exhibitors on an appointment basis	ED, HCC, BOE, UN, TWP	I															Included	Annual

Marketing & Outreach

Objective 1 Create marketing collateral to 'sell' the defined economic development vision

Actions

1	Create target industry-specific fact and information sheets	ED	C															B	Annually
2	Create a comprehensive contact list for all implementation partners and engaged parties in economic development within the Region	ED, COG, MUN																Included	
3	Create an incentive pamphlet that lists all available incentives by business type and size (where applicable)	ED, MUN, CT	C															Included	
4	Create quality of life information sheets on livability and amenities in the MetroCOG Region	COG, ED																Included	
5	Create a priority area prospectus book highlighting available land and buildings (digital only)	ED	C, I															Included	
6	Create all materials in print and digital format, updating regularly (minimum once a year)	COG/ED																Included	

METROCOG COMPREHENSIVE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY IMPLEMENTATION MATRIX	Implementation Lead		Timing: 2022-2026					Cost	
	<i>Public/ NP</i>	<i>Private</i>	<i>22</i>	<i>23</i>	<i>24</i>	<i>24</i>	<i>26</i>	<i>Est.</i>	<i>Freq.</i>
Marketing & Outreach									

Objective 2 Create a more robust performance dashboard to better engage municipal leadership, the business community, and MetroCOG residents

Actions																			
1	Establish a formal economic development dashboard to track performance across each of these topic areas: [1] retention, [2] recruitment, [3] entrepreneurial development, [4] workforce development, [5] fiscal sustainability	ED																A	One Time
2	Retention metrics should include: [1] site visits performed, [2] business assists, [3] jobs retained/expanded, [4] capital investment, [5] event attendance, [6] prospect contacts	ED																A	One Time
3	Recruitment metrics should include: [1] number of prospects, [2] successful projects, [3] total jobs created, [4] average annual wage, [5] total capital investment, [6] debrief highlights from lost opportunities	ED																A	One Time
4	Entrepreneurial metrics should include: [1] enrollment inquiries, [2] business enrollment, [3] graduations, [4] jobs created, [5] debrief on businesses leaving the program	ED																A	One Time
5	Workforce metrics should include: [1] programs offered, [2] program applications and enrollment, [3] internships, apprenticeships, and employment placements, [4] businesses assisted, [5] business inquiries	ED																A	One Time
6	Fiscal sustainability metrics should include: [1] number of incentives, [2] value of incentives, [3] jobs created/preserved from incentives, [4] capital investment created, [5] new tax revenues, [6] other benefits	ED																A	One Time
7	Provide regular updates to the COG board and municipal partners (recommend quarterly)	ED																A	Quarterly

METROCOG COMPREHENSIVE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY IMPLEMENTATION MATRIX	Implementation Lead		Timing: 2022-2026					Cost	
	<i>Public/ NP</i>	<i>Private</i>	<i>22</i>	<i>23</i>	<i>24</i>	<i>24</i>	<i>26</i>	<i>Est.</i>	<i>Freq.</i>
Marketing & Outreach									

Objective 3 Implement a proactive community engagement and education initiative

Actions										
1	Hold a annual public meeting to discuss accomplishments and ongoing efforts for the previous/upcoming year	ED	N							A Annual
2	Continue the resident survey completed as part of the CEDS process annually. Use the results to determine panelist discussions/targeted outreach meetings	ED	N							A Annual
3	Hold a community outreach meeting in each municipality annually to engage business leaders and residents on economic development issues, opportunities, and challenges those areas are facing	ED, MUN	N							A Annual
4	Host expert panelist discussions on topics of economic development each year. These discussions should address specific market/location opportunities and challenges facing MetroCOG Region businesses	ED, MUN	N							B Quarterly
5	Provide an online tool for citizens and groups to submit questions, provide feedback on content, or request meetings	ED	N							A Continual

Objective 4 Establish a regular newsletter focusing on recent, current, and future economic development activities

Actions										
1	Highlight recent economic development activity and successes, maintaining a 'running tally' dashboard of accomplishments for the year	ED								A Quarterly
2	Publish regular opinion editorials from Board members, partner organizations, or invited guests focused on topics that influence (or are influenced by) economic development in the Region	ED								A Quarterly
3	Include separate topic-themed Board Chair and CEO messages in each newsletter	ED								A Quarterly
4	Implement, monitor, and report the results of opinion polls and business surveys through the newsletter	ED								A Quarterly
5	Highlight a different businesses (preferably from the target industries) in each newsletter	ED								A Quarterly

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Strategy Committee

<i>Committee Member</i>	<i>Representing Organization</i>
Jorge Garcia	A+ Technology & Security Solutions, Inc
Alexander Dacey	Amodex Products Inc.
Ron Agababian	Angel Commercial, LLC
Paul Antinozzi	Antinozzi Associates Architecture & Interiors
Thomas Auray	Bridgeport Fittings Inc.
Dan Onofrio	Bridgeport Regional Business Council
Edward Lavernoch	
Kenneth Scala	Century 21 Scala Group
Thomas Gill	City of Bridgeport
Paul Grimmer	City of Shelton
Curt Jones	CIVIL 1
Matt Fulda	Connecticut Metropolitan Council of Governments
Patrick Carleton	
Michelle McCabe	Council of Churches of Greater Bridgeport, Inc.
Kevin Foley	Cushman & Wakefield of CT Inc.
Bruce T. Moore Jr.	Eastern Land Management
Christopher Douglas	ENCON Heating & AC
Andrew Zlotnick	Fuss & O'Neill, Inc.
Ray Thiagarajan	Ganim Financial
Maureen Funke	greenbox-is
Stephen Hodson	Hodson Realty Inc
Philip Kuchma	Kuchma Corporation

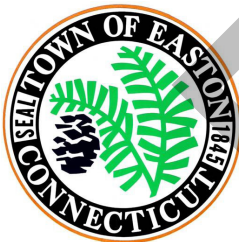
Strategy Committee

<i>Committee Member</i>	<i>Representing Organization</i>
James Benson	Merit Insurance, Inc. Merit-PLC
Peter C. Osborne	Moneco Advisors
Daniel Donovan	NuPower
Gordon Soper	PDS Engineering & Construction
Eduardo Cabrera	People's United Bank
Ben Toby	Prism Energy Services, Inc.
Robert A. Scinto	Scinto R. D. Inc.
Griselda Champagne	The Vault Virtual Realty
Dana Huff	Tighe & Bond
Mark Barnhart	Town of Fairfield
Kenneth Kellogg	Town of Monroe
Raymond Giovanni	Town of Monroe
Mary Dean	Town of Stratford
Rina Bakalar	Town of Trumbull
Charles Scott	Tri-State Realty & Insurance
Eileen Lopez-Cordone	UIL Holdings Corporation
Peter Maher	Union Savings Bank
Bruce Wettenstein	Vidal/Wettenstein, LLC
Douglas Wade	Wade's Dairy Inc.
Willie C McBride Jr.	WC McBride Electrical Contractors LLC
John Reis	Webster Bank Arena
Chris McFadden	Whiting-Turner Contracting Company

Council of Governments



City of Bridgeport:
Mayor Joseph P. Ganim



Town of Easton:
First Selectman
David Bindelglass



Town of Fairfield:
First Selectwoman
Brenda Kupchick



Town of Monroe:
First Selectman Ken Kellogg
Chair



Town of Stratford:
Mayor Laura Hoydick
Vice Chair



Town of Trumbull:
First Selectman Vicky Tesoro
Secretary

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Lawrence Ciccarelli, Administrative Services Director

Devin Clarke, Regional Planner

Matt Fulda, Executive Director

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This report was prepared with financial assistance from the U.S. Department of Commerce, Economic Development Administration. The opinions, findings and conclusions expressed in this publication are those of MetroCOG and do not necessarily reflect the official views or policies of the federal and state agencies through which MetroCOG is funded.

MetroCOG staff are entirely responsible for the design and format of this report.

