



Boston Metropolitan Region

The Region

The Boston metropolitan area has over 5.8 million people and is home to one of the world's largest concentrations of educational institutions — over 100 colleges and universities — including Harvard and MIT. These institutions routinely produce the highly-trained talent that drives the economy in the Boston metropolitan region. As a consequence, the region ranks 3rd in the nation in terms of degrees granted in science and engineering and 2nd in terms of academic R&D. The metropolitan region also has a slightly higher median household income, \$52,792 compared to the U.S. metropolitan area household median income of \$50,163.

Aside from education, mainstays of the economy include financial services (mutual funds, asset management, insurance and venture capital) and high-technology, especially biotechnology. Recently, the biopharmaceutical firm Novartis chose Boston as the headquarters for its worldwide R&D center. Other major employers include Biogen, Genzyme, Fidelity Investments, the Gillette Company and John Hancock Mutual Life Insurance Company.

The Business-Led Organizations

The Greater Boston Chamber of Commerce is the primary business-led civic organization for the Greater Boston Area. The Chamber represents roughly 1,700 businesses with the vast majority of them concentrated within the City of Boston. The Chamber's mission is "to ensure the long-term advancement of Greater Boston as one of the world's great metropolitan regions." The Chamber attempts to serve its mission by providing its members with organizing and marketing events, holding seminars, and providing membership discounts for different business-related expenses. The Chamber also has a public policy office that lobbies for legislation addressing challenges such as increasing the amount of affordable housing, investing and improving the transportation network and dealing with issues related to state fiscal policy.

The only other business-led organization embracing a regional focus is the Massachusetts Business Roundtable (MBR). Created in 1979, MBR is a nonprofit, non-partisan association made up of CEOs and senior executives from diverse industries across the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. MBR's vision is "to promote economic growth and social vitality in Massachusetts through policy change." The organization's mission is "to apply the knowledge, leadership and insight of its membership toward complex state policy issues." For example, MBR's public policy agenda for 2004 includes issues such as advocating for infrastructure improvements throughout the state that are essential to economic development; researching and reviewing new ways to improve the state's healthcare system; working with state leaders in support of early childhood

METROPOLITAN AREA PLANNING COUNCIL

The Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) is a regional planning agency representing 101 cities and towns in the metropolitan Boston area. Concerned about preserving and enhancing the Greater Boston area's quality of life, MAPC recently teamed up with the Boston Foundation, Boston College Citizen Seminars and the University of Massachusetts Boston to launch MetroFuture, an initiative to update the agency's 1990 regional plan.

MetroFuture is a large-scale participatory initiative aimed at developing a vision for the region's future and an implementation strategy. The project will use public participation, data analysis and cutting-edge technologies to best inform and involve residents in this decision-making process. MetroFuture's goal is to involve residents, advocates, employers, politicians and others in a collaborative effort to identify the challenges and priorities of the region and develop an agreed upon long-term plan.

For more information, see www.metrofuture.org

education and adult literacy programs; and monitoring the state's economic recovery program with an emphasis on maintaining the vitality of corporations currently doing business in the state and increasing new business development.

The Regional Business-Civic Landscape

The Greater Boston area has a long history of being divided into special interest groups. These groups have had their own agendas and have tended to operate within a discrete geographic location rather than cutting across multiple jurisdictions. As a result, the business-led organizations within the Greater Boston area have not placed an enormous amount of resources or time into working and thinking regionally.

Paul Guzzi, President and CEO of the Greater Boston Chamber said, "Business leaders in Boston don't think regionally and politicians don't either. The culture is different in Boston — there is no formal regional structure like there is in some other places." As a result, the Greater Boston Chamber tends to focus only on regional civic issues that directly affect the city of Boston, such as the economy, housing and transportation.

The business organization that comes closest to thinking and operating regionally is the Massachusetts Business Roundtable, yet it is primarily state-focused. Part of the challenge for business and civic organizations trying to work together regionally is that the Greater Boston area has 101 municipalities, each with its own needs. More importantly, these municipalities take pride in the fact that they are autonomous and demand local control over decisions affecting their jurisdictions, even on issues that affect the entire metropolitan area, such as housing and transportation.

Despite the fragmentation within the region, members of the business community feel there is a good level of cooperation among them. For example, MBR tends to take

on statewide issues and looks to the chambers of commerce to do more on the regional level. “There is a very strong informal line of communication among staff leaders. There is little rivalry between them,” said Alan McDonald, Executive Director of the Massachusetts Business Roundtable. Overall, while the Boston Chamber is more member-oriented and engages in direct lobbying, the Roundtable is more like a think tank and plays more of an advisory role. Instead of being membership-oriented, the Roundtable’s membership consists of roughly the top 50 CEOs and its audience is the Executive and Legislative branches of government.

Business Leadership

The Greater Boston area’s business community says that the level of attention given by top business leaders towards regional civic issues has decreased over the last five years. CEO leaders are generally spending less time on regional civic issues, primarily because the change in business practice demands a global view. Major companies that were actively involved in civic issues throughout the region have gone through restructuring due to recent mergers, acquisitions and consolidations, which moved several company headquarters out of the region. For example, the John Hancock Insurance and Financial Services Company has been acquired by Manulife Financial of Canada and Fleet Bank was sold to Bank of America. As a result of these types of changes, business leaders say the CEO is focused internationally rather than focused on local and regional issues.

Business leaders also say that the level of influence by the business community on regional civic issues has diminished in the last five years. The feeling is that in the late 1990s, business was winning most of the tax policy and incentives debates, but the pendulum has swung back and labor has a bigger voice now than it once did. Most agreed that the business voice in the region was not controlling but rather balanced by that of the civic institutions and political establishment.