



Metropolitan Policy Program at BROOKINGS

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For a copy of the report, please visit:

http://www.brookings.edu/papers/2010/0927_great_lakes.aspx

The Great Lakes Are Ready, Will They Lead?

New Brookings report offers a strategy for a better economic future

Washington, D.C.—Long burdened with the nickname, “The Rust Belt,” the Great Lakes states are, in fact, poised to show the rest of the country the way to the Next Economy, according to a new Brookings Institution report, but this can only happen if the region’s business, civic, and political leaders capitalize on the region’s advantages.

This new Metropolitan Policy Program report, *The Next Economy: Economic Recovery and Transformation in the Great Lakes Region*, provides strategies to bolster the region. It describes specific policies that metropolitan leaders should apply in order to create a more sustainable economic future. These recommendations were developed through an extensive collaborative process with partners and leaders on the ground to find the best practical policies.

“The demands of the next economy need to be met with innovative thinking and investment aimed at leveraging the significant assets concentrated in the region’s metropolitan areas,” said Jennifer Vey, co-author of the report and a fellow with Brookings’ Metropolitan Policy Program. “The resources are there; the essential ingredient is leadership.”

To prosper in the Next Economy, Great Lakes leaders must reorient policies and investments to focus on areas that matter: innovation, human capital, and infrastructure. The proposed policies include developing regional innovation clusters, funding workforce development at community colleges and universities, and investing in infrastructure.

Regional leaders must also create a new set of institutions, such as infrastructure banks, advanced manufacturing laboratories, regional energy innovation centers, and a venture capital fund of funds.

The Next Economy will also require the Great Lakes region to create new kinds of cities and metropolitan areas. Most older industrial cities in the region must overhaul both their physical redevelopment strategies and local governance structures to respond to the realities of steep population and economic declines. By reshaping and repurposing their surplus urban land,

creating green urban development, and reforming governance structures so that metropolitan areas speak with a unified voice, the region's leaders can serve as models for the entire nation.

With Washington in a policy gridlock, the Next Economy will be led by the nation's states and metropolitan areas. The leaders of the Great Lakes region have the opportunity to advance federalist policies to invest in what matters, create new institutions, and grow new cities and metros.

The Great Lakes Economic Initiative

Launched in 2005, the Great Lakes Economic Initiative (GLEI) is part of the Metropolitan Policy Program's [Blueprint for American Prosperity](#) (Blueprint), which focuses on how federal policy can advance the economic vitality of the nation's metros. As part of the Blueprint, the GLEI pays particular attention to the unique challenges and opportunities faced by communities within the Great Lakes/Industrial Midwest region. Over the next several years, GLEI research and policy activities will closely align with the shifting economic and fiscal trends, environmental imperatives, and political opportunities affecting the region, focusing particularly on the older industrial metropolitan areas most impacted by the transition of the auto industry. By doing so, we hope to help create a new era of productive, inclusive, and sustainable growth for Great Lakes communities and their residents. To learn more visit:

www.brookings.edu/projects/great-lakes.aspx. _

The Great Lakes Economic Initiative has been made possible by the generous support of The Joyce Foundation, Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, New Economy Initiative of the Community Foundation for Southeast Michigan, and the KnowledgeWorks Foundation.

About the Metropolitan Policy Program at Brookings

Created in 1996, the Metropolitan Policy Program (MPP) provides decision makers with cutting edge research and policy ideas for improving the health and prosperity of metropolitan areas including their component cities, suburbs, and rural areas. To learn more visit:

www.brookings.edu/metro.

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