



The Fairfield County Economic Integration Initiative

One Coast, One Future is a consortium formed by the Bridgeport Regional Business Council and The Business Council of Fairfield County. The initiative seeks to spark new and renewed economic growth, job creation and individual economic opportunity by linking the Coastal Fairfield County region's business centers in a new and stronger alliance for their mutual benefit. **One Coast, One Future** is funded by a \$493,322 federal grant procured by Congressman Shays.

The interdependency of Bridgeport, Stamford and Norwalk is based upon infrastructure, commutation patterns, housing cost differentials, employment trends, communication, Long Island Sound coastal locations, and shared health care providers, higher education institutions, and transportation services. The combined region is statistically among the wealthiest in the country, yet prosperity is distributed unevenly and local economic vitality varies widely.

One Coast, One Future's first step will be to create joint work teams to address known challenges by:

- integrating existing "sub-regional" plans and visions;
- mapping economic, technological, workforce and other assets; and
- adopting a common strategy to implement specific growth initiatives.

This regional approach will not obstruct any of the partners from building up its own municipal development assets, but rather will complement that development.

One Coast, One Future's long-term plan consists of six key objectives including a Comprehensive Economic Development plan; Development of a Marketing Campaign focused on development and housing opportunities; development of a marketing campaign focused on cultural and entertainment opportunities; creating a growth strategy for jobs in healthcare; linking employer needs with available employee skills through a JobsNet; and creating a WI-FI network in city centers.

One Plan: Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS)

The region's municipal Chief Elected Officials, economic development directors, Chamber of Commerce executives and regional planning agencies will be part of a network which convenes regularly for one year to build a Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy encompassing the Greater Bridgeport and Southwestern planning regions, and with the aid of a consultant, assemble economic data on regional connectivity.

One Marketing Campaign: Development and Housing Opportunities

Currently the Coastal region's economic strength is concentrated at the western end, creating commuting and housing patterns that cause congestion and limit the entire region's ability to grow. By marketing available development sites and transit-centered housing opportunities at the eastern end of the region, congestion will be lessened, commute patterns reversed, and a regional balance achieved. In addition, marketing available sites at the western end of the region will in-fill economic opportunity.

One Coast, One Future's marketing efforts will include the development of:

- A guide to available commercial and industrial sites, including Bridgeport site development opportunities, Norwalk's planned mixed-use public-private partnerships, and existing vacant Stamford office capacity;
- Guides to transit-centered housing opportunities for Bridgeport, Norwalk and Stamford;
- A Coastal Corridor Development Map.

One Marketing Campaign: Culture and Entertainment Activity

To connect economic and housing opportunities between the three major urban centers, we must foster an interchange of people. In other words, people residing and working in Stamford need to be encouraged to visit Bridgeport's and Norwalk's burgeoning cultural and restaurant attractions, and vice versa.

One Coast, One Future will:

- convene regional arts, entertainment and tourism cluster meetings;
- develop an analytical survey of regional attractions and restaurants;
- produce marketing materials for cross-regional restaurant and attraction marketing; and
- create a **One Coast** region Restaurant/Attraction website.

One Growth Strategy: Health Care Cluster Initiative

As aging, affluent baby boomers – a disproportionately large share of the region's population compared to national averages – age, demand for health and fitness and related services and products will rise. At the same time, the rapidly growing immigrant population, which is 25-30% of the populations of Bridgeport, Norwalk and Stamford, will need family- and child-centered health care and may be less able to pay for it.

The **One Coast, One Future** Health Care Cluster Initiative will develop a strategy to convert this challenge into job and entrepreneurial opportunities for the region's for-profit and non-profit entities by:

- gathering and analyzing demographic data to identify emerging and future needs, and determining the region's capacity to meet these needs;
- creating a strategic plan to determine opportunities for job creation, business formation and expansion, housing development (for medical and fitness professionals and assisted living options) and higher education program expansion; and
- assisting all three cities in considering the health care industry's growth in their formal planning for sustainable economic development.

One Labor Force: JobsNet

The region simultaneously faces a labor shortage and unemployment because much of the workforce does not fit neatly into the available positions due to low awareness of opportunities, a lack of mobility, municipally-focused support networks (such as community-based organizations, libraries and adult education programs) and a skills mismatch. Training and education opportunities need to be tailored to entry proficiency and upward mobility.

One Coast, One Future's JobsNet initiative will link resources and opportunities to needs by:

- creating a council of employers;
- training providers, educational institutions, constituent services organizations, and relevant public agencies to help employers recruit, train and retain employees;
- developing a Employer's Guide to Labor Force Resources (print and online);
- producing a Directory of Training Providers (English and Spanish, print and online); and
- creating an "Opportunities" newsletter (English and Spanish) to community-based organizations, libraries and media.

One Regional Web: WI-FI Initiative

Free public and private WI-FI hotspots are being set up throughout the country in an effort to create user-friendly public spaces, establish a contemporary sense of community and to position parks, buildings, neighborhoods and municipalities as cutting edge locations.

One Coast, One Future will create and link WI-FI hotspots in Bridgeport, Norwalk and Stamford. Individuals logging on in any of the three locations will find a single brand portal to enable seamless connectivity between housing and employment centers in the coastal region.