

Innovation Valley (www.ivalley.org)**'A Time Like No Other'****The Boston Foundation's 'Hub of Innovation' Tool is a Model for the Merrimack Valley.****Seth J. Itzkan**

On June 19th, 2007, The Boston Foundation announced the release of their 2006 Boston Indicators report, titled, 'A Time Like No Other'. This data-rich summary of two year's worth of research, examines the local impact of global trends, and identifies critical challenges, opportunities, and achievements for the MetroBoston region. It is the defacto State-of-Region report, and the formal release event on the 19th is a must-attend affair for the region's influential stakeholders. As an indication of its significance, the release is held at the Boston Harbor Hotel, hosted by the Boston College Citizen Seminar, and features keynote and panel speakers such as Boston Mayor Thomas M. Menino, and MIT president Susan Hockfield.

To cut to the chase, the findings of the Boston Foundation's Indicators Report are worth paying attention to. It is the signature project of The Boston Foundation, the largest community development foundation in New England, and with assets of \$830 million, one of the 10 largest in the country. Last year The Boston Foundation donated \$70 million to nonprofit organizations in the MetroBoston region, so when they state where they believe the challenges and opportunities are for the region, people listen.

I'm writing about this for three reasons: First, the report has findings that are germane to the Merrimack Valley; second, the report is itself a model that should be replicated, and third I have personally been involved in helping to conceive and create a key component of the report, a web-based tool called The Hub of Innovations. If you visit the Boston Indicators website, you will see a section titled Hub of Innovation. The feature highlights over 120 exemplary programs and visionary prototypes from cities and research labs around the world that hold promise for improving the quality of municipal life. Following the lead of the rest of the Indicators project, the Hub tool investigates innovations in 10 categories tracked by the Boston Foundation. These categories run the gamut from Civic Health to Transportation, and include Energy, Housing, Health, and

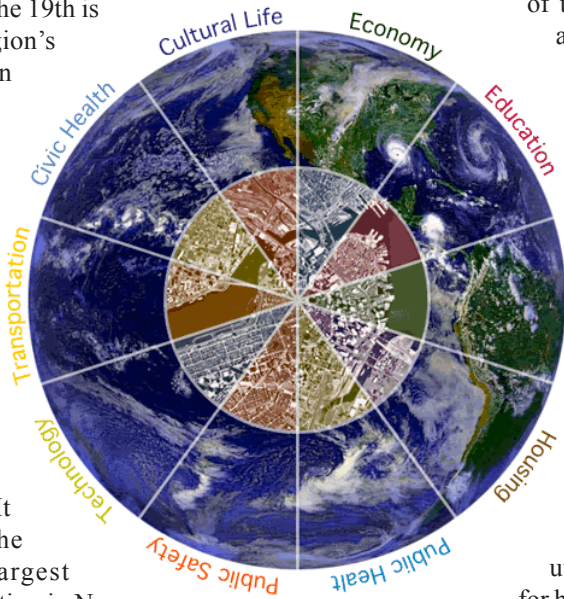
others, as you can imagine. The tool is of great use to regional planners, as it provides a single source for information about what is state-of-the-art for city life, both locally, and afar. I am proud of this contribution to the Boston Foundation's Indicators Project, as are they, and I'm happy to share with you what I believe some

of the most significant innovations are, and also, to advocate for adoption of a similar report and tool for specific focus on the Merrimack Valley.

Those of you that read the Innovation Valley column you will be familiar with many of the cited programs in the Hub of Innovation tool, and some of these, I am happy to say, are from the Merrimack Valley. One such exemplary model from the Merrimack Valley is Monarch Lofts in Lawrence. This is one of world's most ambitious utilizations of geothermal energy for heating and cooling in a residential development. As such, it is a leading

example of Green Architecture, and is bringing a new wave of urban homeowners into an otherwise written-off corner of Lawrence.

Another regional representative in the Hub of Innovation is Andover's InnoCentive Inc. InnoCentive is changing how research is financed. It is the first online incentive-based organization designed to link the global research and development community to the commercial world. In their program, R&D "challenges" are posted to a secure forum where scientists will respond with proposed technical solutions. Rewards for successfully applied solutions can range from \$15K to \$100K plus other arrangements for shared or licensed Intellectual Property (IP). The beauty of the approach is that InnoCentive has learned how to help the R&D community while in the process creating a new industry in "innovation brokering". I believe InnoCentive has a message for the Merrimack Valley. We must find a way to broker innovations across the entire region with buyers and investors across the globe. The Merrimack Valley needs an innovation broker.



The Merrimack Valley can probably be carbon-neutral in two decades... Meeting this goal is a galvanizing vision worthy of the region's legacy.

Of all the compelling programs and visionary ideas in the Hub of Innovation tool, however, I am probably most intrigued by the cited prospect for carbon neutral cities. There are two such cities currently in development that are aiming to be completely free of greenhouse gas contributions. These emerging cities are Dongtan, "China's Carbon-Neutral Eco-City", in Dongtan province, China, and Masdar, a "zero-carbon and waste free" planned community in the land of oil itself, Abu Dhabi. Both are claiming to be the world's first sustainable city. They are being designed from the ground up with state-of-the-art technologies for carbon and waste elimination. Dongtan will be home to 25,000 residents - half the size of Haverhill - and will be powered entirely by wind, biofuel, hydro, and solar. It will feature extensive carbon-free transportation networks, and will have a citywide rainwater recovery system. Masdar city, in Abu Dhabi, will be a car-free community for international workers. Capitalizing on the all-pervasive sun, it will feature a large photovoltaic power plant and personalized rapid transport. The two cities are being designed with consultation of London-based firms, Arup and Foster+Partners, respectively.

These two planned cities, both slated for completion this decade, are clearly indicators of what tomorrow will bring. They will be prototypes of the technology that drives sustainable cities of the future. Although both are clearly, also, top-down, master projects, and will lack the sense of history and diversity that bring endearment to New England cities, these modern marvels are, non-the-less, important benchmarks on the global stage, and it will be our challenge to equal or better them. We can, for example, define as our objective a "Carbon Neutral Merrimack Valley". This is probably achievable in two-decades if we put our Yankee brain and brawn into the challenge. To my knowledge, no other region has claimed to be attempting that. Meeting this goal, even daring to aspire toward it, is a galvanizing vision worthy of the region's legacy. It would clearly make the Merrimack Valley *the* hub of innovation - in New England, and around the globe.



Seth Itzkan is president of Planet-TECH Associates, a consulting agency identifying innovations in economic development. Recently, Mr. Itzkan helped The Boston Foundation to conceptualize and implement its Hub of Innovations tool. You can email him at seth.itzkan@gmail.com



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The Innovation Valley initiative seeks to help stimulate economic growth and quality-of-life enhancements in the Merrimack Valley. Every month we will report on innovative businesses, practices, and ideas that are helping to make Merrimack Valley the place to be. Look for our article in print media and online at www.ivalley.org.

Valley Patriot Wall of Honor

Joe Edward Smith
 Thomas Hudner
 Thomas Petrillo
 James Cassidy
 Muriel Katschker
 Mike Ingham
 Frank Sanzi
 Terrance Hart
 Staff Sgt. Eldon Berthiaume
 Joe Messina
 Christian Farnham,
 Dan Leary & Philip Brooks
 Luther McIlwain, Tuskegee Airman
 Chief Petty Officer Ed Mitchell
 Don & Linda Campbell
 William Callahan
 John Doherty
 CPL. Harvey Gibeau
 Frank Shimko

Each month, The Valley Patriot honors men and women who have served their country in the armed forces with a front page feature called "Valley Patriot of the Month - Heroes in our Midst."

This month, with our chief editor taking some much needed R&R, we honor their service and celebrate the birthday of America by saying THANK YOU to all of the men and women who have been featured previously and all of those man and women who are or have previously served this nation by putting their lives on the line to protect our way of life.

Pfc. Alexander "Alex" Milne
 Captain Jim Mulligan
 Charles Bruderer
 Charles & Edward Boddy
 Ted Cole
 Michael Buglione
 Corporal Ted Eaton
 Sylvio "Sy" Uliano
 Tech Sergeant, Jeremiah Sullivan
 Commander George Henderson
 Jack Fitzpatrick
 Ed Hoppy Curran
 Walter Pomerleau
 Elliot Seigal
 Christine LeCaine
 Haggarty, Lopez, Bienvendio
 Butch Buchonis
 Jim Cassidy