

Establishing a World Class region

There's a question about our region that I find myself getting asked more and more frequently. The question is simple, but powerful: What will it take for Greater Philadelphia to reach its highest potential and be recognized as a truly world-class region?

There are as many possible answers to this question as there are barstools from which to debate them. However, a growing number of leaders believe that two stand out above all others. They believe that the secret to achieving Greater Philadelphia's higher aspirations starts with greater focus and collaboration. If we can find a way to focus the passion and talent of our region's business, civic, and public-sector leaders around a limited number of shared goals and strategies, the future and Greater Philadelphia's role in it takes on a whole new outlook.

That's the spirit behind World Class Greater Philadelphia — an initiative led by the Economy League of Greater Philadelphia to establish a set of long-term priorities and focused strategies. Over the past two years, the Economy League has brought together more than 1,000 business, nonprofit, government, labor and community leaders at a series of roundtables, workshops and focus groups to discuss what's most important for our shared future. Across these interactive sessions, three clear priorities for strategy and action emerged: education and talent development, business growth, and infrastructure.

These three regional priorities along with a set of related goals are outlined in a new report, *Focus 2026: Priorities and Goals for a World Class Greater Philadelphia* (available along with more detail about the World Class initiative at www.WorldClassGreaterPhila.org). Over the next several months, the Economy League will be joining forces with the United Way of Southeastern Pennsylvania, the CEO Council for Growth, and Urban Land Institute-Philadelphia to convene thought leaders and practitioners to identify the most promising short- and long-run strategies to achieve these World Class goals. This effort will result in the creation of Global Positioning Strategies — or GPSes — by the end of 2012 that will help guide ongoing collaboration to improve regional ed-



Notebook

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ucation and talent development outcomes, boost business growth, and make our infrastructure more effective and reliable. These open-source strategy documents will set the stage for immediate initiatives and campaigns to be taken on by World Class partners.

Why do World Class supporters believe that this effort will succeed? First, it is built upon two years of extensive engagement that helped establish critical buy-in among key regional stakeholders. Second, it is powered by partnerships among the region's top business and civic leadership organizations — groups that have a bias toward action and are using the results of current strategy development efforts to inform their own business plans and investments. Third, in taking on this ambitious effort, the Economy League has made an ongoing commitment to monitor progress toward measurable goals and to continue to convene regional leaders around World Class strategy adjustment.

But what really stands out is that even amid economic uncertainty and challenges, optimism among Greater Philadelphia's leaders about our region and what it can become remains at a high. Coming together around shared goals and strategies is the path to realizing the potential that this region's ardent leaders know is currently just beyond our reach.

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