

Project Overview

The overall goal of the People, Prosperity & Place/MetroHartford Regional Collaboration Project was twofold: first, to persuade residents of greater Hartford that to sustain our prosperity, we must act together, across town lines, and that we must start acting now; and second, to build support for the Compass regional indicators project. The People, Prosperity & Place initiative followed up on the Capital Region Partnership's alliance with CPTV for the 2006 documentary on regionalism.

The project entailed a sustained multi-media campaign to raise awareness of the need to think and act across town lines. The project's "home base" is a website, www.peopleprosperityplace.org, designed specifically for this initiative. The website includes:

- Separate people, prosperity & place clips from the CPTV documentary,
- Explanations of the importance of people, prosperity and place,
- The regional town meeting schedule,
- A subscribe function,
- An interactive poll to gauge support for regional collaboration,
- A link to a more in-depth survey designed to cull out perceptions of the region's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats, and
- An explanation of the Compass project.

For the convenience of the project sponsors, important project documents such as the goals and objectives, action plan and monthly updates were posted on the website in a password-protected area.

This project also entailed holding first four, then six, geographically dispersed regional town meetings in greater Hartford during the spring of 2007. Three speakers with expertise in the separate categories of "people" (human capital), "prosperity" (economics and commerce), and "place" (physical and cultural environment) were recruited for each forum. Moderators, primarily from the media, were recruited to guide discussion at each forum. An outstanding roster of interesting, learned, engaging speakers and inquisitive moderators produced discussions of the highest caliber. The final three forums were filmed for rebroadcast on public access television.

What Went Well: Summary

- Web traffic - Between February 1, 2007 and May 31, 2007, the "P3" website got almost 21,000 hits from 5379 visitors
- Where We Live program on WNPR generated a huge spike in web traffic
- CPTV and WNPR promotions were very important means to getting the word out
- Promotional flyers
- Quality of discussions among speakers and moderators
- Cooperation from staff at all our venues
- UConn jumbotron advertisement – displayed about 1500 times per week for the last 2-3 weeks preceding May 3.
- Filming of last three forums for public access rebroadcast
- Outreach to dozens of civic and professional groups
- Forums attracted 125 highly motivated policy "mavens" and "connectors" from 27 towns– allies for regional collaboration
- More than 80% of forum participants would recommend them.

Recommendations Going Forward

1. Find ways to keep the P3 momentum going. Continuing efforts under the “People, Prosperity & Place” brand – and publicizing them – will be critical to keep it from being perceived as just another Hartford flash in the pan.
2. Attend to the care and feeding of the new regional collaboration network that has evolved from the speakers, participants and subscribers. They are allies with substantial contacts and networks of their own. Develop strong communication ties with them.

The P3 website and electronic newsletters are going to be the key tools for showing people there's substance behind all the talk. Electronic newsletters or updates should go out at least monthly. Include forum speakers and attendees in distribution. Keep a consistent P3 look to the communications.

3. Invite the speakers and moderators to a social gathering as a way to say thank you and keep them engaged.
4. Accentuate the positive! Example: A recent *Courant* article described three towns collaborating on police work: “Towns Seek To Build Synergy With Regional Traffic Enforcement Unit,” at <http://www.courant.com/news/local/nb/hc-trafficcops0525.artmay25.0.3202348.story?coll=hc-headlines-nb>
5. Follow up with participants about what they did (from the “what you can do” list in the programs).
6. Consider setting up a Yahoo group so people can keep the conversation going themselves. Example: Center Edge list.
7. Keep the P3 website fresh, current, readable, appealing to the eye, and interesting.
8. Consider making it everyone's job to find ways to link your respective organizations' new activities to People, Prosperity & Place. (Example: the June Community Design Institute sponsored by CRCOG, HFPG and the University of Hartford could be promoted as a “place” activity.)
9. Give people the specifics they want on how they can get involved. A phase 2 of the project might entail more of a working meeting designed to gather participants' views on the region's assets and challenges and inventory current activities being undertaken in the people, prosperity and place categories.
10. Capitalize on the news as it relates to P3: Two recent examples: [Town To Take Over Fire Districts' Tax Collection](#) (regarding collaboration), and [Years Of Neglect Show In Parks](#) (regarding “place”).
11. Incorporate P3 and Compass into the Regional Review section that periodically appears in the *Courant*.

Summary for Regional Town Meetings on People, Prosperity, Place

125 people representing 27 different towns attended six public forums promoting collaboration in the Metro Hartford region.

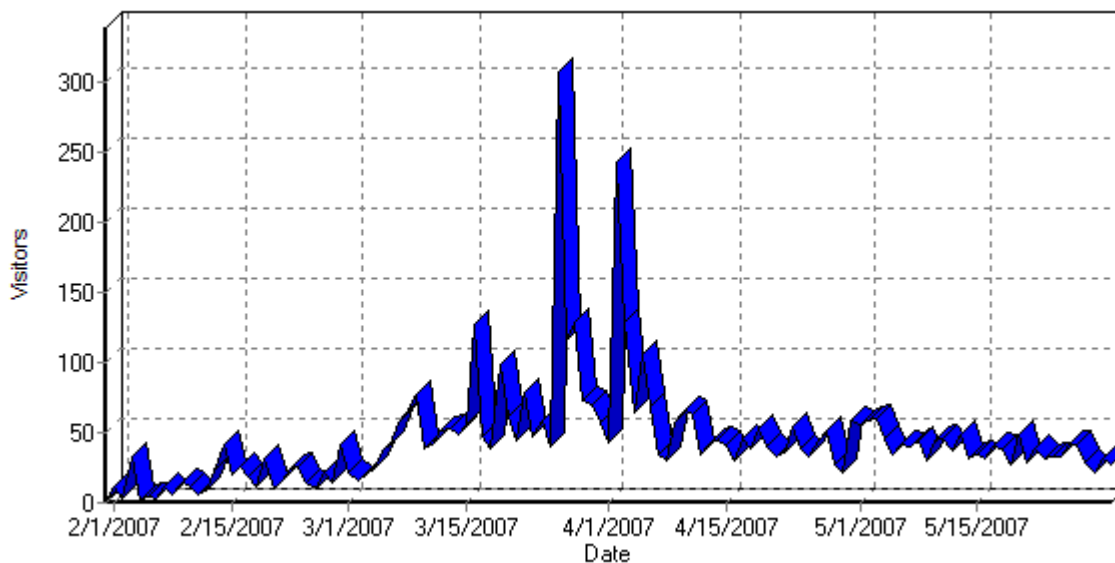
Regional Town Meeting	Participants	Towns Represented	Feedback Forms Completed	RSVPs
Enfield – Mar 28	25	4	16	13
Simsbury – Apr 5	22	6	15	7
Manchester – Apr 10	12	4	4	7
West Hartford – Apr 25	24	9	10	20
New Britain – Apr 28	13	6	4	9
Hartford – May 3	29	9	17	15
Total	125	27	66	71

Website Activity for www.peopleprosperityplace.org

Website Activity Summary

Hits	
Total Hits	20,781
Average Hits per Day	171
Average Hits per Visitor	3.86
Page Views	
Total Page Views	6,673
Average Page Views per Day	55
Average Page Views per Visitor	1.24
Visitors	
Total Visitors	5,379
Average Visitors per Day	44
Total Unique IPs	1,452

Daily Visitors – Feb 1, 2007 through May 31, 2007



Regional Collaboration Poll Results

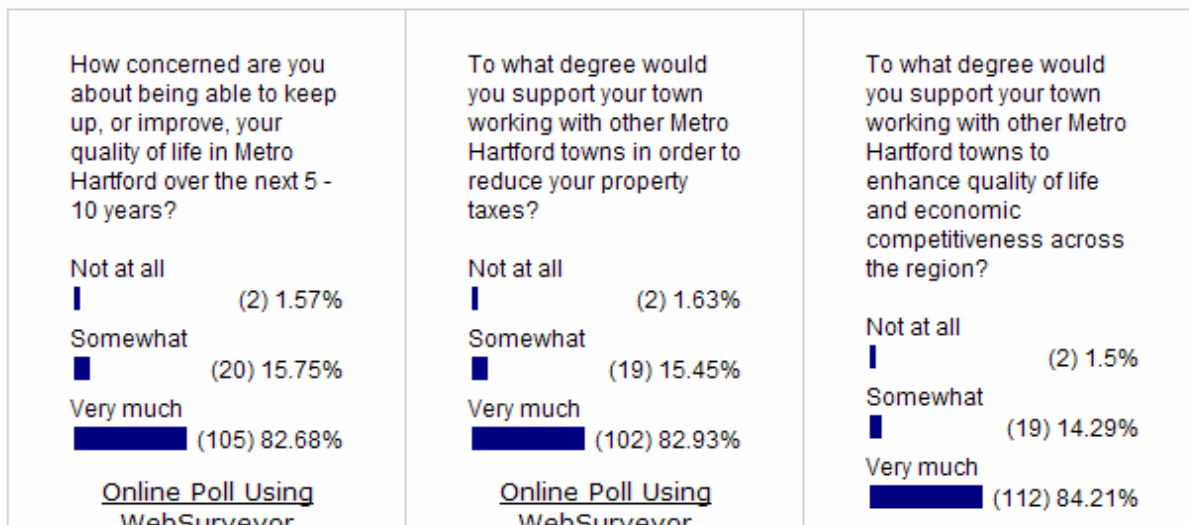
Three quick poll questions were placed on the home page of www.peopleprosperityplace.org to get a sense of where people stand on their:

- 1) Concerns about their standard of living in the next 5-10 years,
- 2) Support for regional collaboration for the purpose of reducing property taxes, and
- 3) Support for regional collaboration for the purpose of improving quality of life and enhancing economic competitiveness.

The same questions were incorporated into the feedback form for the regional town meetings.

133 people answered at least one poll question. Between 82% and 84% of the respondents support regional collaboration to reduce property taxes, improve quality of life, and enhance economic competitiveness. It appears that even among proponents of regional collaboration, there may be more

support for proactive, economic competitiveness collaborations than there is for sharing services and consolidating operations to reduce property taxes. Initially, respondents appeared considerably more supportive of collaboration to enhance economic competitiveness than they were toward collaboration to reduce property taxes. This nuance may be worth paying attention to.



Feedback from Regional Town Meetings

At the close of every forum, we encouraged forum participants to complete feedback forms before they left. We developed a companion online survey, into which we entered participants' feedback the day after the each forum.

The day after each forum, we also emailed participants and speakers to thank them for attending and to invite them to provide feedback in the online survey if they had not already completed a paper survey.

All participants' feedback on the regional town meetings is available online at <http://www.surveymonkey.com/sr.aspx?sm=yorks4%2fQqgMkgkSPuMkNeiZVJk8JmfH7NKWxZd7mxTqU%3d>. The survey itself may be viewed at <http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?sm=z8X9tjGulnvzhPZjc32zhg%3d%3d>.

Would you recommend these regional town meetings?

Yes: 91.1% (51/66) No: 8.9% (5/66) No answer: (10/66)

If Yes, Why:

- An opportunity to hear from those people charged with the responsibility to make policy and improve regional communication, the experts.
- Very informative, creative thoughts from panel and audience
- brings people together helps them understand common problems
- Although I expected the panel to be more knowledgeable about our geographic area of the state, I did find value in what was presented.
- Great opportunity to hear different perspectives and have a chance to dialogue
- for the prosperity of the area to which I/we have moved
- It's good to hear and share concerns and ideas.
- I think it is important for each town to look outside the box. Our towns are linked together and we need to meet to find ways to grow together.
- It always does good to educate the public and inform.
- to start discussions!
- It's very important for people to know we need to take giant steps

12. Yes, because they get people thinking about what can be done regionally
13. Because I think it is very important. However I think you need more actual conversation - what we had were some excellent speakers but not real conversation.
14. Conversations are essential. I would recommend a number of dinner parties where people can meet each other and listen.
15. to broaden citizen input
16. Two key issues: 1. Connecticut is losing ground economically and needs fundamental policy changes; and 2. Our quality of living is challenged. Both can be addressed using a regional approach.
17. To bring people together to discuss their ideas
18. Why weren't more people here tonight? This should be a broader discussion involves a better representation of who lives here.
19. People come together, seeds are being planted.
20. Informative and very important data
21. I think knowledge is the first step to better regional planning and understanding.
22. It is very important for citizens to know about their town and state because some people are completely clueless
23. We need buy-in for change, and the information provided at the town meeting served as a step in that process.
24. Need to continue discussion of cooperation among towns and foster big picture planning
25. We need to have more regional gatherings with reps from all of the towns so we can all see/hear what is happening in other towns. Perhaps then we can work toward each town offering its best resources to the other towns rather than every town trying to be all things to all people.
26. It is extremely important for people to become informed about regional issues, but even more importantly to get in the habit of thinking about major development issues from a regional perspective.
27. They are helping create awareness of the challenges Connecticut faces.
28. I believe that it is essential for the success or more importantly to the survivability of Connecticut and New England to pursue regional government and initiatives
29. To share ideas, interact, motivate to action, - volunteerism
30. It's always good to discuss issues
31. This concept of regional collaboration is somewhat new to me, but I found the discussion interesting
32. Because people have a voice in important issues

If No, Why:

1. I think we need a venue where folks from all the affect communities can attend. Where hosting meetings in each town residents tend to view issues from their town perspective. Let's find a great location and invite all of the areas residents ...maybe two dates at different central locations. Overall the discussion was good..but we must good the focus on regional situations to the problems impacting all our towns
2. Not really. There's too much generalization. I still don't know what COMPASS is or does, or what CRCOG does (I had heard of CRCOG though), or what all these behind the scenes efforts are. I don't feel I've been informed of much, just that I've been in the presence of some people who were in on a lot of -- of what?
3. It won't do anything for Enfield because we don't vote on our budget.
4. Vague, unfocused, and in some cases unrelated or uninformed about the community in which they take place.
5. Not unless positive proposals are offered for reaction aimed at improvement. Way too much of a negative explanation. No explanation of roles of these regional organizations.

What could we do differently to improve the program?

1. Regarding the Hartford discussion, how about physically opening up the discussion area, rather than partitioning off the discussion area so that folks visiting the library might simply wander in and take a seat. The partitions made it seem like a private event. It seems like the participants are preaching to the choir and so how to reach a wider audience might be a discussion. Little things like removing a physical barrier might help a bit or locating the discussions in an area where people congregate naturally.

2. Have local person from town, a resident
3. See above
4. have city administration present
5. Its important that when you are discussing "regionalization" in a specific "region" that you know something about it and that your examples are relevant to your audience. The examples used were New Haven, and south - we don't relate. Enfield, East Windsor, Somers, Suffield, etc are the "forgotten" towns in CT. We don't get much news coverage or much attention unless something wants something from us and its usually to help someone else. Even examples related to Hartford don't have a lot of relevance to our population since many don't work in Hartford.
6. People seemed to want to hear concrete ideas that they could offer their reactions to.
7. I think the Region has done enough planning. I am wary of data commandos! WHAT IF: we just started having roundtables on educational issues and regional consequences? My read from is that residents see regionalism as a threat and a consequence that is out of their control. If we could think up a way to retool the word regionalism and define it DIFFERENTLY depending on the specific issue perhaps we will make headway.
8. think it might help the process to focus more on getting people to tell you what their vision is first and getting them interested in collaborative efforts that help move towards that vision rather than start the discussion with consolidation. At least two of the speakers talked about regionalization in terms of consolidating services: schools, police, fire, etc. and the audience response to that wasn't enthusiastic. It was a small sample but, based on meetings like this that I have participated in in the past, I think many people would react the same way. Even if you say 'we aren't going to mandate it,' people will think you are going to force them. I thought that Abbott's comments about how Falls Village decided to start a collaborative process was a very good point - the bottom up approach is very inviting to people.
9. Hard to get larger crowds, but that would be desirable.
10. Make some specific recommendations. Your job is to have a broad vision (ie: rail transportation) but many of these initiatives could be started "small" There needs to be incentives for just Simsbury and Avon and or Granby and Canton to jointly do a project or program...start at the town level.
11. Please advertise these types of meetings better.
12. Like the gentleman in the crowd said, people need to leave with a sense of what they can do to improve the situation. This should be discussed by the panelists at an earlier stage of the meeting.
13. you should speak a little bit more about the positive aspects.
14. Perhaps have audience record questions before or during the presentation and pass to moderator
15. I think it would be better to have at least 15 minutes at the end for audience participation. Often one person's comment or questions leads to another. In this way, we can learn what other people are thinking/doing and it enlarges the panel discussion.
16. There were two shortcomings at the Saturday NBMAA event - 1) there should have been more audience involvement in the discussion earlier on; 2) the private sector dimension of current economic challenges and opportunities did not get the degree of attention education and smart growth policy received. The Benchmarking report includes a lot of excellent documentation and analysis that could have helped ground the discussion in some economic specifics.
17. Involve the audience more.

Conclusion

The Spring 2007 People, Prosperity, Place initiative was another successful introduction to the idea of regional collaboration to the people of greater Hartford. The six regional town meetings, combined with the P3 website, the March Where We Live show on WNPR, the extensive outreach to civic and professional groups, the CPTV and WNPR promotions, the promotional flyers, and the UConn jumbotron promotions in downtown Hartford absolutely generated curiosity and interest in "people, prosperity and place" and the regional collaboration message.

The challenge going forward is to build on that momentum. Frequent communication to—and among—the regional collaboration network that has emerged from this project, about how we in MetroHartford are aligning our efforts to capitalize on our people, prosperity and place assets, and how more people can get in on the action, will be key. Regional collaboration truly is starting to take root in MetroHartford. And with a few more strategic pushes in just in the right direction, the world around us really can be tipped.