

**VALLEY NEEDS AND
OPPORTUNITIES PROJECT:**

REPORT ON PROGRESS

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

For years, Lower Naugatuck Valley leaders have been hard at work improving the lives of residents in the region's six towns. Their efforts took a new path in 2000. That year, the Valley Advisory Committee released its first *Needs and Opportunities* report. The report, commonly referred to as the Mt. Auburn report, identified needs and opportunities in a number of areas of community and regional improvement. It also outlined recommendations to improve philanthropic grantmaking and to boost regional action.

The release of the report in 2000 launched an impressive series of community discussions across the Lower Naugatuck Valley. Most importantly, the discussions led to new resolve and efforts to address community needs and opportunities Valley-wide.

There has been considerable progress to show for these efforts. In 2003-2004, Valley leaders established the region's first Valley Community Foundation. It was done with the cooperation of the Community Foundation for Greater New Haven, itself a breakthrough moment for the Valley and a departure from a varied past.

Progress also was made to boost the Valley's civic infrastructure. Valley leaders created Valley Needs and Opportunities. It has played a key role in convening the nonprofit, public, and private sectors of the Valley's civic infrastructure. It also has given the Valley a unique multi-sector and multi-disciplinary approach to address region-wide challenges and opportunities. The Valley Council of Governments is also bringing new civic clout to the region. It is a newly created governing body that adds authority to civic leadership in the Valley.

Valley leaders made considerable progress on efforts to meet the needs of the Valley's poor and working poor. The Valley's new and expanded programs in healthcare are national models to serve uninsured and underinsured residents. Similar progress has been made in streamlining and coordinating services to Valley seniors. Efforts around economic development, in particular brownfield development and the creation of the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy and Smart Growth plans, are notable. They have helped boost the Valley's economic prospects without compromising the region's natural environment.

Despite this and other progress since 2000, there is still work to be done. In 2004, the Valley Advisory Committee rehired Mt. Auburn Associates to update its report and re-look at strategic priorities for the region. This *Report on Progress* identifies future priorities that follow the organization of the original report. The report also focuses on recommendations that clarify and capitalize on new roles and structures of grantmaking in the region. The future priorities and recommendations laid out in the report include the following:

Economic Needs

In looking towards the future, the Valley needs to consider some of the following economic trends:

- while overall job growth is relatively strong, economic contraction in Ansonia and Derby contrasts with growth in Shelton and Oxford;
- while seeing job losses, manufacturing remains a critical sector in the regional economy;
- unemployment has risen, now exceeding U.S. levels;
- there is growing disparity between haves and have-not's;
- certain towns are growing rapidly, and seeing new housing development, while others are stagnant;
- the Valley is more diverse with a growing population of foreign born residents and minorities.

The implication of these trends is that there are still populations within the Valley, most notably the poor and working poor, who continue to be left behind as the economy of the region changes. Moreover, some of the Valley communities continue to face significant economic challenges.

Future Priorities

Seniors

- Meet the needs of diverse sub-groups of seniors.
- Identify transportation needs for seniors.
- Continue collaboration and make better connections with the housing authorities

Poor and Working Poor

- Develop a more coordinated approach to regional workforce development that pulls together private sector, government, and nonprofit partners and educators to focus on Valley-specific workforce needs, with the Chamber as the lead agency.
- Identify critical housing issues and the appropriate forum in which to address them.
- Combine efforts and find new efficiencies among Valley health providers.
- Sustain and expand health access to the under- and uninsured Valley residents.
- Address unresolved gaps in Valley health services.

Youth

- Engage the schools and the Boards of Education more broadly in the youth activities in the region and build more collaboration between schools and community organizations.
- Understand the opportunities and barriers to a more coherent youth services system.
- Overcome old perceptions and raise performance levels.

- Develop a comprehensive list of youth activities in the Valley.

Economic Development

- Continue to implement the strategies outlined in the CEDS and Smart Growth plans.
- Create a minority-focused entrepreneurial program.

Inter-municipal Cooperation

- Define the region.
- Develop a joint regional project related to the development of Route 8.

The Arts

- The Arts Council needs to expand relationships.
- Complete the Opera House.
- Consider models such as the Seymour Arts District to encourage patronage of the downtowns.

Recommendations

Changing Roles and Structures

- With the creation of the Valley Community Foundation, there is an immediate need for a facilitated discussion about the future roles of Valley Needs and Opportunities and the Valley Advisory Committee.

Valley Needs and Opportunities Priorities

- Push innovation, share best practices.
- Select one to two priority issues biannually—workforce development, enhanced leadership development, and facilitated and coordinated activities related to youth and public education.

Recommendations for Valley Advisory Committee

- Establish clearer guidelines to organize funding—regional effectiveness and regional equity.
- Rework the capacity building/grant writing effort.

INTRODUCTION

In May 2000, Mt. Auburn Associates completed a report for the Community Foundation for Greater New Haven and the Valley Advisory Committee that included a set of recommendations for regional strategies to address some of the needs and opportunities that were identified. Following a number of years of implementation activity, the Advisory Committee is now seeking to better understand not only the progress that has been made in implementing the recommendations, but also the barriers and gaps that exist that may hinder successful implementation. In addition, the Committee understands that in the years since the initial report was completed there have been economic, political, and institutional changes in the community. As a result, there might be new priorities for regional action that need to be identified and acted upon.

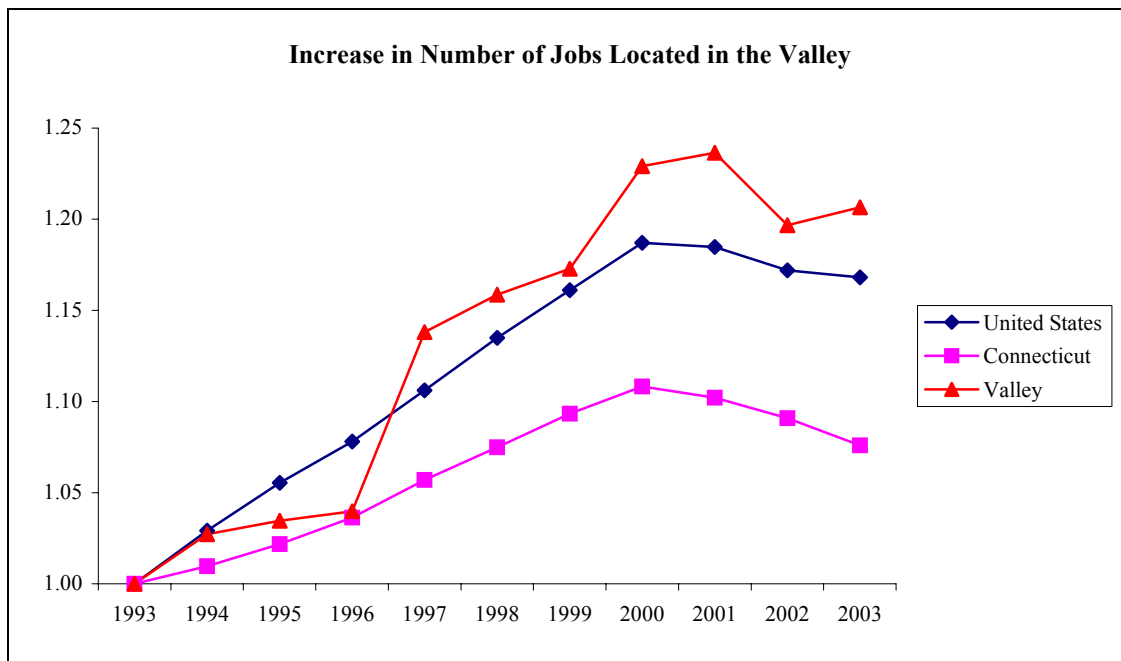
This report reviews the progress that has been made in implementing the recommendations of the initial report and identifies areas of continued priority in terms of needs and opportunities in each of these areas. The report also lays out the changing context by looking at some of the demographic and economic shifts in the region since the last report was completed. Finally, the report provides some strategic priorities for the Valley Needs and Opportunities Project.

This report is much smaller in scope and resources than the first report. The findings are based on the collection and analysis of existing secondary data, meetings with the VNOP staff and board, and interviews and focus groups with over 50 stakeholders who live and/or work in the Valley.

THE ECONOMIC CONTEXT

◆ *Job growth in the Valley continues to exceed Connecticut and U.S. levels.*

During a period of job losses in the state of Connecticut and in the nation as a whole, the Valley region has performed relatively well in terms of jobs.¹ While the region saw a steep loss in jobs between 2001 and 2002, it has recovered stronger than either the state or the nation. Between 2002 and 2003, the most recent year in which job data are available for Valley towns, the region saw an increase in net jobs (about 300). The state and nation continued to shed jobs between 2002 and 2003.

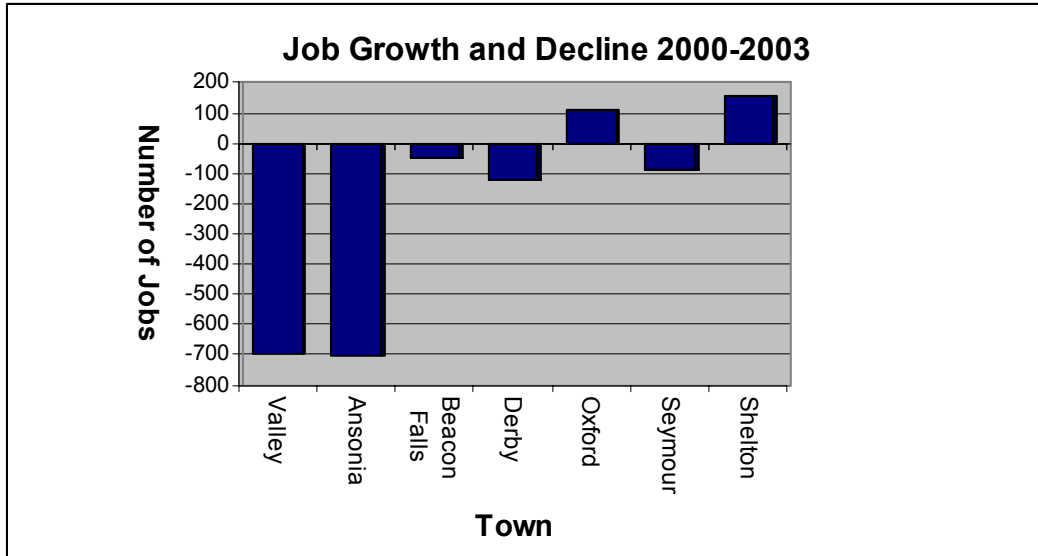


Source: Connecticut Department of Labor

◆ *Economic contraction in Ansonia and Derby contrasts with growth in Shelton and Oxford.*

The job picture, however, is uneven across the region. Since 2000, the year of Mt. Auburn's previous report, both Shelton and Oxford continued to add jobs. Both towns had over 100 additional jobs by the end of 2003 than they had in 2000. On the other hand, during this same period, Ansonia lost about 700 jobs and Derby lost over 100 jobs.

¹ The data are for jobs from employers located in the Valley towns.



Source: Connecticut Department of Labor

◆ *Shelton has become an increasingly important regional job center.*

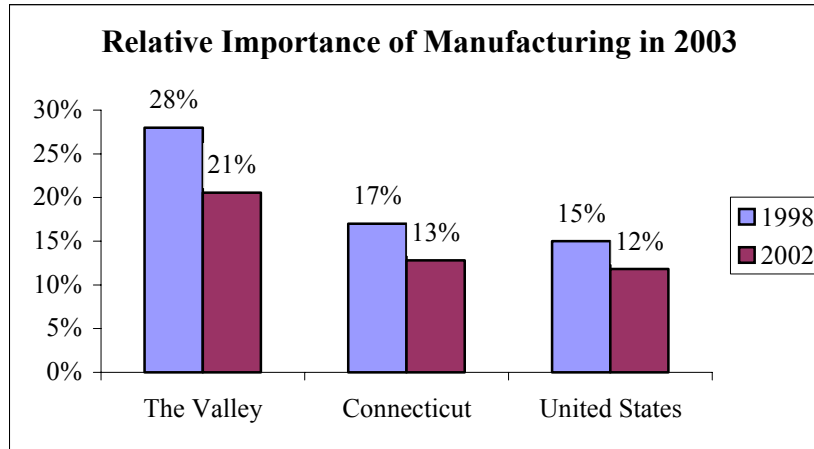
The commuting patterns that have emerged in the region provide evidence that Shelton has become an increasingly important employment center. Between 1990 and 2000, there has been a decrease in the percentage of Valley residents who work in Stratford, Bridgeport, and New Haven. In contrast, the percentage of Valley residents who work in Shelton has increased from about 16 percent to 17 percent.

Live in:	Commuting Patterns: Where Valley Residence Work											
	Work in Bridgeport		Work in Milford		Work in Stratford		Work in New Haven		Work in Waterbury		Work in Shelton	
	1990	2000	1990	2000	1990	2000	1990	2000	1990	2000	1990	2000
Ansonia	6.7%	7.3%	5.1%	5.7%	9.4%	6.0%	6.4%	7.2%	0.5%	2.1%	12.0%	9.6%
Beacon Falls	6.0%	4.9%	3.1%	3.8%	5.9%	4.2%	0.5%	4.4%	9.4%	8.1%	7.3%	8.7%
Derby	6.5%	6.8%	6.7%	6.5%	11.0%	5.7%	8.7%	5.5%	0.6%	1.2%	13.4%	14.7%
Oxford	6.9%	5.7%	3.6%	3.8%	5.3%	6.0%	4.4%	3.3%	3.7%	3.8%	6.3%	8.8%
Seymour	6.4%	6.0%	4.2%	5.6%	9.1%	4.1%	5.1%	4.8%	3.6%	2.7%	9.3%	10.9%
Shelton	16.5%	12.8%	4.7%	4.7%	11.5%	8.0%	2.8%	2.3%	0.4%	0.9%	25.8%	26.1%
Total	9.9%	8.9%	4.6%	5.1%	9.4%	6.3%	4.4%	4.1%	1.7%	2.1%	15.6%	16.7%

Source: U.S. Department of Commerce, 1990 and 2000 U.S. Census.

◆ *While seeing job losses, manufacturing remains a critical sector in the regional economy.*

While manufacturing has declined in importance in the Valley, as it has in much of the nation, it still remains a more significant component of the job base in the Valley than in the state or the U.S. as a whole. In 2003, about 21 percent of the jobs in the Valley were in the manufacturing sector.

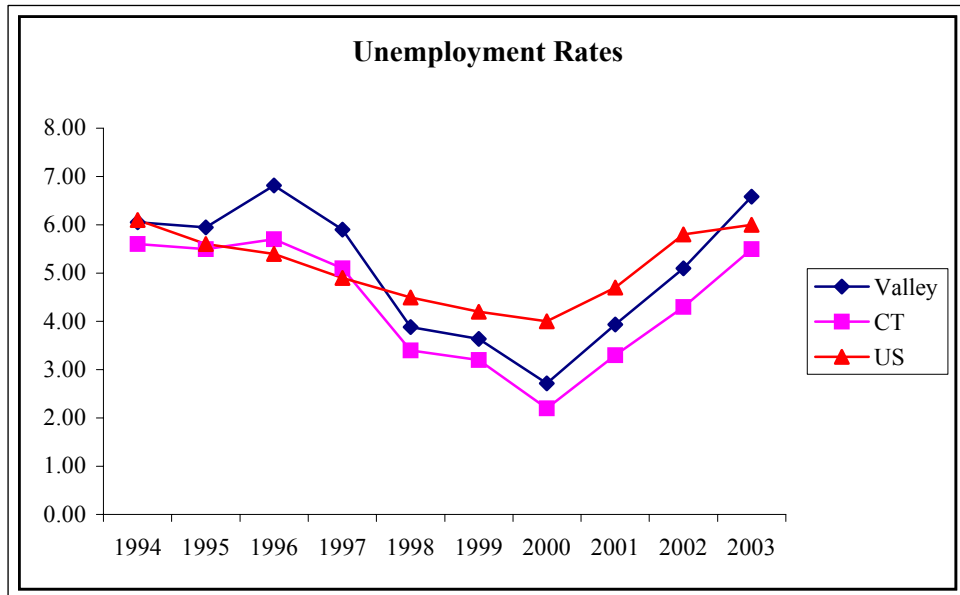


Source: Connecticut Department of Labor

◆ *Unemployment in the Valley has risen in recent years, now exceeding U.S. levels.*

While job growth has remained strong, one of the greatest changes in the Valley since the last report was completed has been the growth in unemployment amongst the residents. In 2000, the Valley had an extremely tight labor market, with an unemployment rate of only 2.7 percent. By 2003, the unemployment rate had grown to over 6 percent. The unemployment rate was

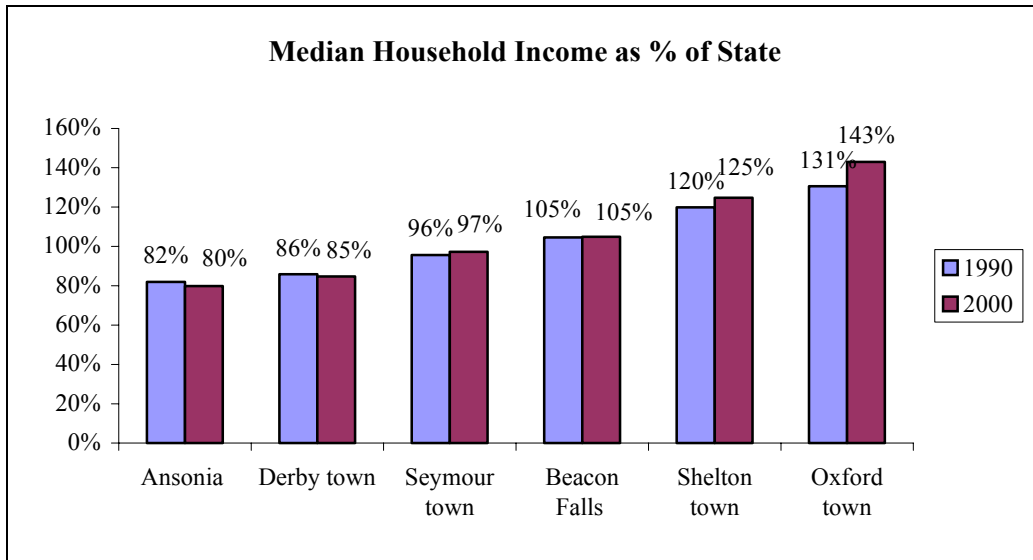
much higher throughout the Valley, ranging from about 5.5 percent in Oxford to over 8 percent in Ansonia. In 2003, the Valley's unemployment rate exceeded the national average for the first time since 1998.



Source: Connecticut Department of Labor

◆ *There is growing disparity between the haves and the have-not's.*

Not only do the jobs and unemployment figures tell the story of regional differences in economic performance amongst the towns, but also data on income. The data provide evidence that the disparities between the towns have become greater over time. In 2000, both Ansonia and Derby's median household income was significantly below the state's median household income. Between 1990 and 2000, median household income in these towns fell relative to the state median. In contrast, median household incomes in Shelton and Oxford have been rising relative to the state.



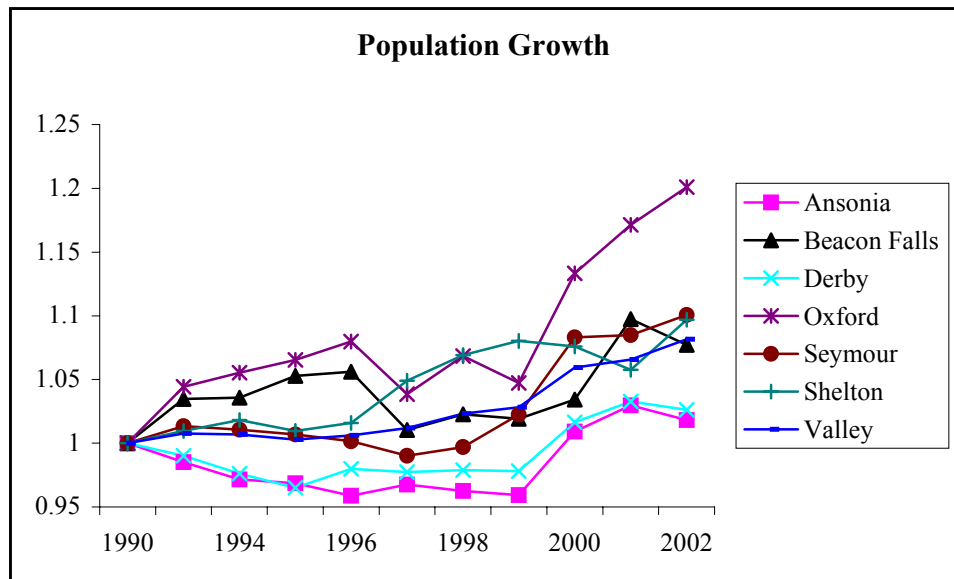
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Decennial Census, 1990 and 2000

Demographic Shifts

◆ *Certain towns in the region are growing rapidly, while others are experiencing relatively stagnant growth.*

Population growth has also varied significantly within the region, with rapid growth in Oxford, Seymour, Shelton, and Beacon Falls, and more stagnant growth in Ansonia and Derby.

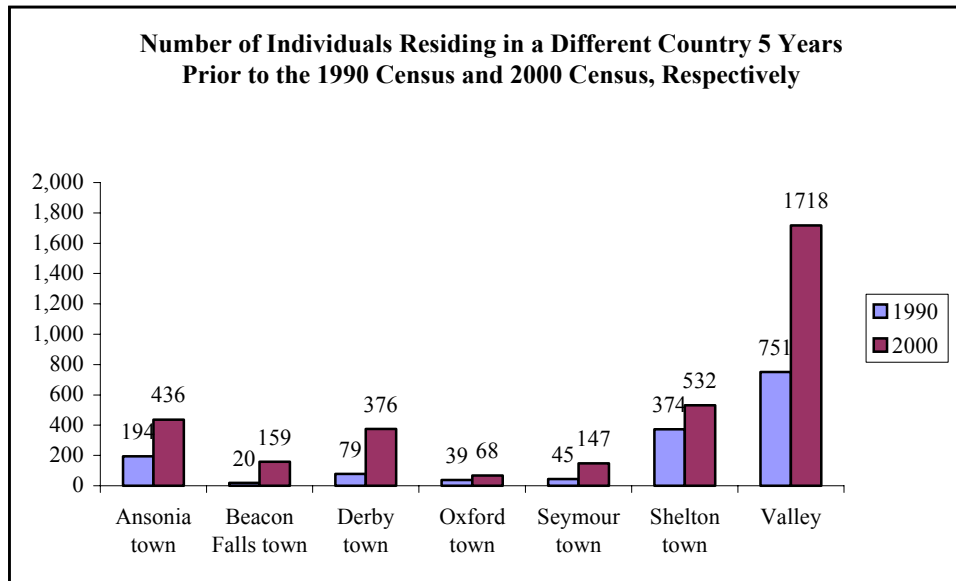
Source: Connecticut Department of Labor



◆ *The foreign born population has increased.*

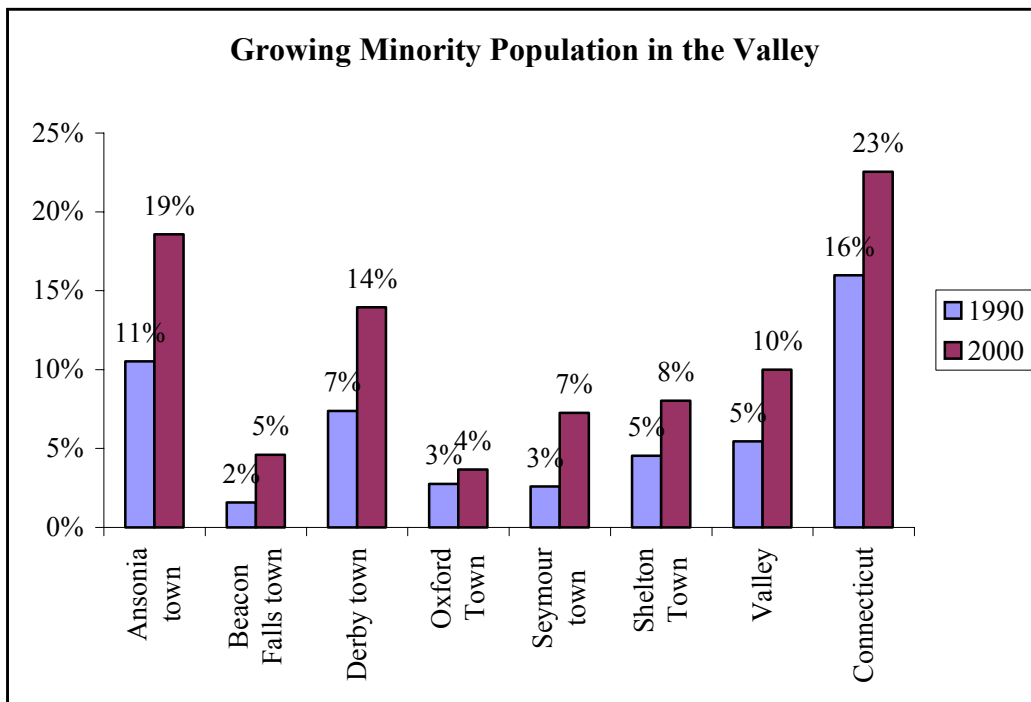
The region has also seen a change in its population in terms of its diversity. Most notably, the region has seen a rapid increase in its foreign born population. Anecdotal evidence suggests that even since the 2000 Census was taken, there has been an increase in immigrants in the region, most notably individuals from Eastern Europe.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Decennial Census, 1990 and 2000



◆ *The region has a growing minority population.*

The region has also become more diverse racially, seeing an increase in its African-American and Hispanic populations.



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Decennial Census, 1990 and 2000

The African American Population in the Valley				
	Percent of Total Population*		Percent of High School Students 2002**	
	1998	2000	1998	2002
Ansonia	10.1%	8.2%	13.0%	16.6%
Beacon Falls	1.2%	0.9%		Note 1
Derby	3.0%	3.8%	6.4%	7.0%
Oxford	0.2%	0.9%		Note 2
Seymour	1.0%	1.2%	1.4%	1.7%
Shelton	1.1%	1.0%	1.3%	2.3%
Valley Total	2.9%	2.7%		
*Source:	U.S. Census Bureau			
**Source:	Connecticut Department of Education			
Note 1:	Students attend Region 16 School District through grade 8 then spread across several districts including Seymour, Naugatuck, and Wolcott.			
Note 2:	Students attend Oxford School District through grade 8 then spread across several districts including Seymour and Regional School District 14.			

The Latino Population in the Valley				
	Percent of Total Population*		Percent of High School Students 2002**	
	1998	2000	1998	2002
Ansonia	3.6%	7.3%	7.1%	11.1%
Beacon Falls	1.4%	1.3%	Note 1	Note 1
Derby	5.8%	7.3%	8.2%	13.3%
Oxford	2.1%	1.4%	Note 2	Note 2
Seymour	1.8%	3.2%	2.3%	5.0%
Shelton	3.2%	3.3%	3.9%	4.2%
Valley Total	3.2%	4.0%		
*Source:	U.S. Census Bureau			
**Source:	Connecticut Department of Education			
Note 1:	Students attend Region 16 School District through grade 8 then spread across several districts including Seymour, Naugatuck, and Wolcott.			
Note 2:	Students attend Oxford School District through grade 8 then spread across several districts including Seymour and Regional School District 14.			

ASSESSMENT OF PROGRESS ON VNOP INITIATIVES

Grantmaking

The 2004 report made a number of recommendations related to grantmaking by the Community Foundation for Greater New Haven (CFGNH). It proposed:

1. Refocusing the grantmaking priorities by providing longer-term grants, providing seed funding for new ideas, developing a clearer mission for the neighborhood program, streamlining the Small Grants Program, and undertaking a more ambitious marketing effort for the Neighborhood Program.
2. Improving the grantmaking process by strengthening relationships between Foundation staff and Valley organizations, and leveraging foundation support.
3. Building local organizational capacity through a capacity building effort, broadening the representation of the VAC, and having the VAC play a more active role in the community.

In the earlier report there was a greater focus on the actual grantmaking process and, thus, the recommendations addressed a broader range of issues. This analysis focuses primarily on progress related to the overall relationship between the Valley and the CFGNH rather than each of the recommendations that was made to improve the grantmaking process in the Valley.

Progress

While progress has not been made on every recommendation made in the 2000 report, at the most fundamental level there has been a huge shift in the entire relationship between the Foundation and the Valley. In some ways, the changes have gone beyond some of the recommendations that were made.

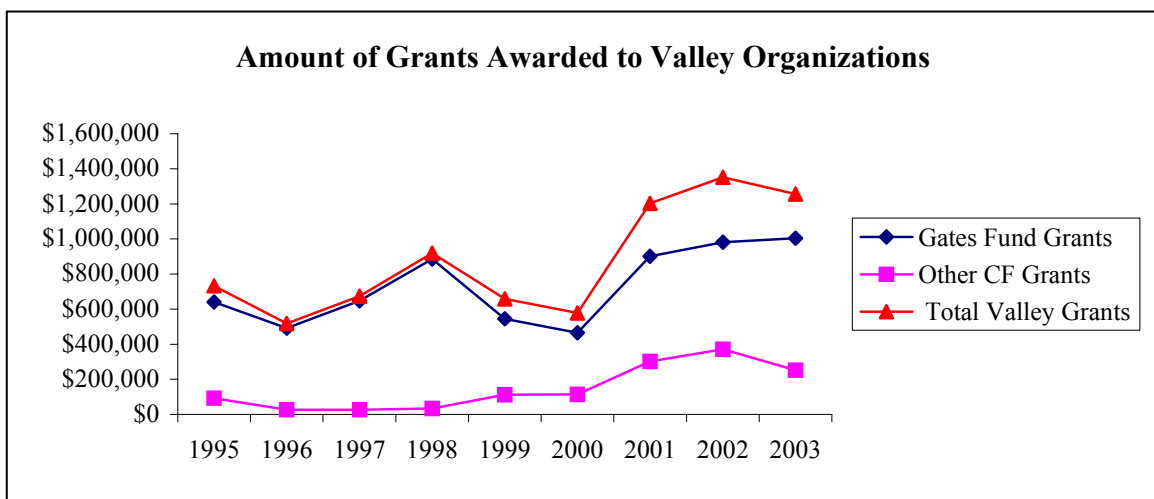
In terms of some of the specific areas of progress, according to VNOP staff:

- Starting in 2004, CFGNH began providing multiyear grants with benchmarks and performance reviews.
- The application for the small grants program was revamped in 2001 or 2002.
- CFGNH staff work with VNOP staff to develop outreach plans and contacts for outreach.
- The Program Officer for Community Capacity works closely with VNOP, Foundation Program Officers will refer discouraged applications to VNOP for additional information, and CFGNH has changed reporting formats to reflect concerns of VAC members.
- CFGNH has coordinated with the Matthies Foundation on VNOP applications and is willing to work with Valley agencies to leverage funds from other sources in specific cases.
- The Chairman of the Valley Council was added to the VAC and there has been increased involvement by many of the VAC members.

But, beyond these specifics, the grantmaking relationship was changed dramatically by the creation of Valley Needs and Opportunities. This was a major step in addressing some of the challenges in the grantmaking relationship between the Foundation and the Valley.

The second, and even more significant, change has been the creation of the Valley Community Foundation (VCF) in 2003-2004. Leaders of the Valley, in cooperation with CFGNH, established VCF to promote increased philanthropy in the five Valley communities of Ansonia, Derby, Oxford, Seymour, and Shelton. The VCF is responsible for philanthropic development, and investment management will remain at CFGNH. The distribution—grantmaking activity—will remain in New Haven. VCF has its own board of directors and has hired a full-time president to run day-to-day operations. According to CFGNH staff, “A core decision that the Foundation had to make is, are we ready to turn over Gates money over time. The Board was comfortable with this.”

Additional evidence of the changing relationship is the increased level of CFGNH funding in the Valley. Since the completion of the previous report, the amount of grantmaking to the Valley has increased significantly.



Source: Community Foundation for Greater New Haven

Future Priorities

With the improvement in the relationship between the Foundation and the Valley organizations, there remain a number of challenges:

◆ ***Developing a transition plan for the VAC.***

With the creation of the Valley Community Foundation, the roles of both the VAC and VNOP need to be reconsidered. (See section on recommendations.)

◆ ***Raising “net new” funds for the Foundation.***

The challenge for the new Foundation is to meet its fundraising goals. It is important that this is done in such a way that it is not competing with other existing fundraising within the Valley, but raising new funds from existing sources or tapping new sources within the Valley.

Civic Infrastructure

Original Strategy

The VNOP report proposed that the region focus on a more streamlined and productive civic infrastructure in the Valley through the following initiatives:

1. Hold a full-day summit in the Valley focused on creating a more efficient and streamlined civic infrastructure.
2. Plan a community meeting to review this report with the Valley residents, and another community meeting one year from the release of the report.
3. Substantially broaden the leadership base in the Valley.

Progress

The dissemination and community review of the 2000 Mt. Auburn report was impressive. The Valley Advisory Committee and a wide variety of other groups held meetings throughout 2000, 2001, and 2002 to discuss and respond to the report. It generated detailed feedback as well as thoughtful discussion about the Valley's areas of priority and opportunity. Most people in the community know of the "Mt. Auburn report" and can cite some of its findings. This level of community input, discussion, and follow-through is rare.

One of the areas of ongoing discussion in these meetings has been the creation of a more streamlined and productive civic infrastructure. Although leaders did not hold a "full-day summit" to focus on this issue (as recommended in the 2000 report), there have been a number of other major changes. Many of these changes have strengthened the Valley's civic infrastructure. Since 2001, VNOP has played a role of convener, planner, and information broker in the Valley's complex web of civic institutions. "The council of governments is going in one direction, the business community's going in another, education and the Valley Council are all going in different directions," said one Valley leader. "We're the neutral body. We see how things impact each sector." The VNOP's impressive list of contributions to strengthening the civic infrastructure include facilitating new joint initiatives (Housing Coalition, Youth Committee, and Transportation Committee), publication and distribution of multi-media (a community newsletter and cable television productions), bringing new resources to the Valley (grants research, pool of funds for grant writers, and Yale School of Management outreach), and tightening lines of communication with the COG, Valley Council for Health and Human Service, and others.

In addition to the creation of VNOP and the development of the Valley Community Foundation (discussed in previous section), a third major change was the creation of the Valley Council of Governments. On July 1, 2002, the Valley Regional Planning Agency (VRPA) officially became the Valley Council of Governments (VCOG). The organization turned from one where the Mayors or First Selectmen appoint representatives to one where the Chief Elected Official represents the community. This new structure increases the profile and reach of the planning and inter-governmental functions in the region. In addition, the original Mt. Auburn study was a major driver of the Valley United Way Community Impact Grants.

There have been a number of efforts to broaden the leadership base in the Valley, another recommendation in Mt. Auburn's 2000 report. An ongoing program is Leadership Greater Valley, a partnership of the Chamber, United Way, and the Valley Council for Health and Human Services. Leadership Greater Valley has been a strong advocate and mechanism for recruiting new leaders. Its structure and content are similar to other leadership development groups across the country.

Historically, the Valley has had strong civic leadership from its nonprofit sector. The Valley Council for Health and Human Services plays the planning and coordinating role for this sector. It has been in existence for over 10 years and has more than 50 agency and organizational members. It has held major planning retreats since 2000, including the "Valley Cradle to Grave Retreat" in March 2001. This retreat led to action priorities in marketing, housing, resource development, collaboration, and integration of services.

Corporate leadership, on the other hand, remains harder to organize and has not substantially grown. This situation mirrors what has happened in other communities across the country. Today's business executives are more mobile and have shallower roots in the community, making long-term commitments to development in a particular region more difficult. Leadership Greater Valley plays a role in recruiting new corporate leaders, as does the United Way's Corporate Volunteer Council. This latter group coordinates the involvement of over 70 employers in community projects and other Valley-wide civic events. Another major event was a Sikorsky-hosted CEO summit in 2004. This event was organized by Valley United Way. One of its goals was to identify new companies to become involved in the civic life of the Valley.

Leadership from the region's education community also has been more difficult to engage. Valley leaders report that they would like the educational community to become more involved in cross-sector collaboration. The Valley's school superintendents meet in their own forum on a regular basis.

Future Priorities

- ◆ ***Focus attention on leadership development and succession planning to ensure that the region's civic organizations have stable, diverse, and strong leaders.***

This issue needs to be tackled if the Valley is going to make significant progress that encompasses the entire community, not just issue-areas or certain constituencies. The Valley's civic infrastructure is spread thin. Community organizations, committees, task forces, councils, and boards compete for leaders' time and resources. Current leaders are tapped-out and in danger of being burnt out. The leadership base also needs to be widened. Leaders from the health and human service sector make up a disproportionate part of the leadership structure. Leaders of the corporate community, minority community, and education, in particular, need to have a stronger presence in the Valley's civic infrastructure. The quality of civic leadership also suffers. Lack of time and resources result in many leaders and organizations simply focusing on information sharing. Leaders have less time for higher level planning and follow-through. One solution is to implement the original recommendation in the 2000 report to hold a full-day summit that focuses on Leadership issues and works towards helping regional organizations with developing "succession plans" for their board and staff.

Seniors

Original Strategy

The strategy to create efficient systems of service delivery among the Valley's senior centers and to extend services to isolated shut-ins proposed the following initiatives:

1. Host a special senior citizen planning session in the Valley.

Progress

The Valley has made considerable progress in responding to the strategy and initiatives laid out in the 2000 Mt. Auburn report.

A core group of eldercare providers immediately convened to discuss the Mt. Auburn report after its release in 2000. The result was a series of meetings that included a number of providers in the Valley from August 2000 to February 2001. These meetings led to the report *Valley Eldercare Provider Response to the Mt. Auburn Study: Senior Issues*, released February 2001. The report recommended the formation of a regional council of eldercare providers along with a number of initiatives.

Valley eldercare providers heeded the call of their own report (and the recommendation outlined in the Mt. Auburn report) to create the Valley Senior Services Council (SSC). Since its creation in 2001, the Valley Senior Services Council has met quarterly. It has developed a mission statement and outlined a set of goals and objectives. It has officers, has standing subcommittees, and is a subcommittee of the Valley Council for Health and Human Services. Twenty-three service providers participate in varying degrees on the Senior Services Council.

The Senior Services Council has achieved many of its goals and has responded to a number of issues outlined in the 2000 Mt. Auburn report. It appears the level of communication and coordination among senior centers in the Valley has vastly improved because of the Senior Services Council. Senior centers in the Valley have hosted joint fundraising efforts, staff trainings, and trips and events for seniors—all collaborative events that did not occur regularly before the inception of the Senior Services Council.

The Senior Services Council also applied for and received funding from the Katharine Matthies Foundation to support a thorough assessment of need among seniors in the Valley. The result was the *Report of the Pilot Senior Center Needs Assessment Project in the Lower Naugatuck Valley Towns*, May 2003.

One of the major recommendations of the report was the creation of a regional human services staff position to be shared by the six towns in the Valley. The purpose of the position is to give senior centers some social worker capacity. This role previously fell to state-sponsored social worker positions in each town and the Elder Options Resource Center at Hewitt. Since the release of the 2000 Mt. Auburn report, both of these programs have been de-funded or closed. The Senior Services Council twice has applied to fund the position, but did not receive a grant each time.

Providers report three other outcomes of the Senior Services Council. First, better connections have been made to the Senior Commissioners in each of the towns. The relationship

was not very productive or consistent prior to the creation of the Senior Services Council. Second, the group has worked with the Elder Response Team (now a standing committee of the SSC) to launch a series of public education efforts highlighting the issue of elder abuse and resources to get help. Presentations have been given on this issue, along with the airing of a public service announcement on local cable television. Third, the council, through the Elder Response Team, has created a crisis intervention account to aid seniors with emergency needs. The money for this fund comes from fees collected for regional workshops and events sponsored by the Senior Services Council.

There have been a number of other happenings related to seniors in the Valley since 2000. Most of these events have been independent of the activities and purview of the Valley Senior Services Council. A sampling of these events includes:

1. *The development of both affordable and market rate senior housing.* Seymour's housing authority plans to open a 56-unit affordable assisted living complex called Smithfield Gardens in 2005. There has also been new housing developed by private corporations as well as some additional senior housing sponsored by the public through housing authorities. There has been new "market rate" construction in Oxford for residents aged 55 and over that is priced \$400,000 and up. Ansonia Main Street Development Corporation has developed and partnered with the Ansonia Housing Authority to open new senior housing in its downtown.
2. *The sale of Hewitt to a private, for-profit company and the closing of Hewitt's Elder Options Resource Center.* The resource center provided information and counseling on a fee-for-service basis for seniors. It became a central clearinghouse for elder services, but was closed because it was too costly to the company.
3. *The de-funding of state-sponsored social workers.* While the social workers provided connections and services that were not age specific, many seniors used them as a resource to get services. The positions were victims of budget cuts by the state of Connecticut.

Future Priorities

◆ *Meet the needs of diverse sub-groups of seniors.*

An issue of lingering concern to the Valley's senior citizens is the isolation of shut-ins. This sub-group of Valley seniors is not connected to available social and service networks in the six towns. They suffer from isolation in their homes and the use of services available. The identification of the number of shut-ins and scope of their needs is a step that still requires attention by leaders in the Valley. As one senior center director reports, "This has been a real stumbling block for us." There are some rudimentary methods of identification and tracking of this population, from coordination with in-home visiting agencies (the Visiting Nurse Association, Valley Interfaith Caregivers, and Meals-on-Wheels, to name a few) to the tracking of seniors who suddenly stop attending a senior center. Because of the loss of resources noted above, eldercare providers are hard pressed to add this coordinating and tracking function to their existing duties.

Related to this issue is the changing demographic of the senior population in the Valley. The fastest growing segment of the senior population is those 85 years of age and older. This

group grew by 31.9 percent in the Valley between 1990 and 2000. Many Valley residents in this older group have more serious health and care issues that need attention and require more intensive resources. At the same time, in the next ten years the largest growing group of seniors will be the baby boomers. From 1990 to 2000, the baby boomers grew by 3,414. This segment of the Valley population is reaching the age of seniors. They will have different needs and wants than the current population of seniors. For example, their technological know-how will likely be greater. Bingo and crochet, popular activities at some senior centers, will likely not be the favored pastimes for the baby boomers. The growth in both of these segments of the senior population will have significant repercussions on the delivery of senior services.

Changing Age Demographics in the Valley				
Age	1990	2000	Absolute Change	Percent Change
50 to 64	12,871	16,285	3,414	26.5%
65 to 84	10,350	12,344	1,994	19.3%
85 and over	1,396	1,842	446	31.9%
Source: US Census Bureau, 1990 and 2000 Decennial Census, STF1 File				
Note: Data are for the towns of Ansonia, Beacon Falls, Derby, Oxford, Seymour, and Shelton.				

A third sub-group of seniors that is of concern is racial and language minorities. By all accounts, the number of racial minorities is growing in the Valley. Valley leaders note a large influx of Hispanic residents and their elders moving to the Valley from Fairfield County and beyond. In general, they do not participate in service opportunities at the same rate of their non-minority counterparts, which mirrors a larger trend in the Valley. The same is true for elders who speak other languages, whether it be senior citizens whose language is connected to their native home in Albania, Ecuador, Mexico, or Poland. Leaders note their overall numbers are growing, but do not know the extent of their elders who need or want to be connected to senior services. Current services are not geared to meeting the linguistic needs of non-English speakers.

◆ ***Identify transportation needs for seniors.***

The availability of transportation for seniors, and other residents, is a concern to some in the Valley. There is agreement that seniors need access to more public transit options as they get older and no longer drive. Transit is vital for seniors to get to and from appointments with doctors, to take care of common household chores such as grocery shopping, and to keep socially active and prevent isolation. The transit nexus can become particularly difficult in the Valley because points of service are spread out or are centered in New Haven, Bridgeport, or Waterbury. Still, the Valley Transit District meets some of the demand for seniors with point-to-point service, picking up and dropping off seniors at central locations or their homes. There is disagreement over the convenience and affordability of this and other available services (such as Valley Interfaith Caregivers and the Red Cross) in the Valley. Some say the costs for a roundtrip fare are too high for seniors with limited incomes or the hours do not work for emergency visits. Others say that the demands of seniors are sometimes unrealistic given the constraints of current

funding levels for public transit. Still, others say that information about the available transit options is not clearly communicated to seniors.

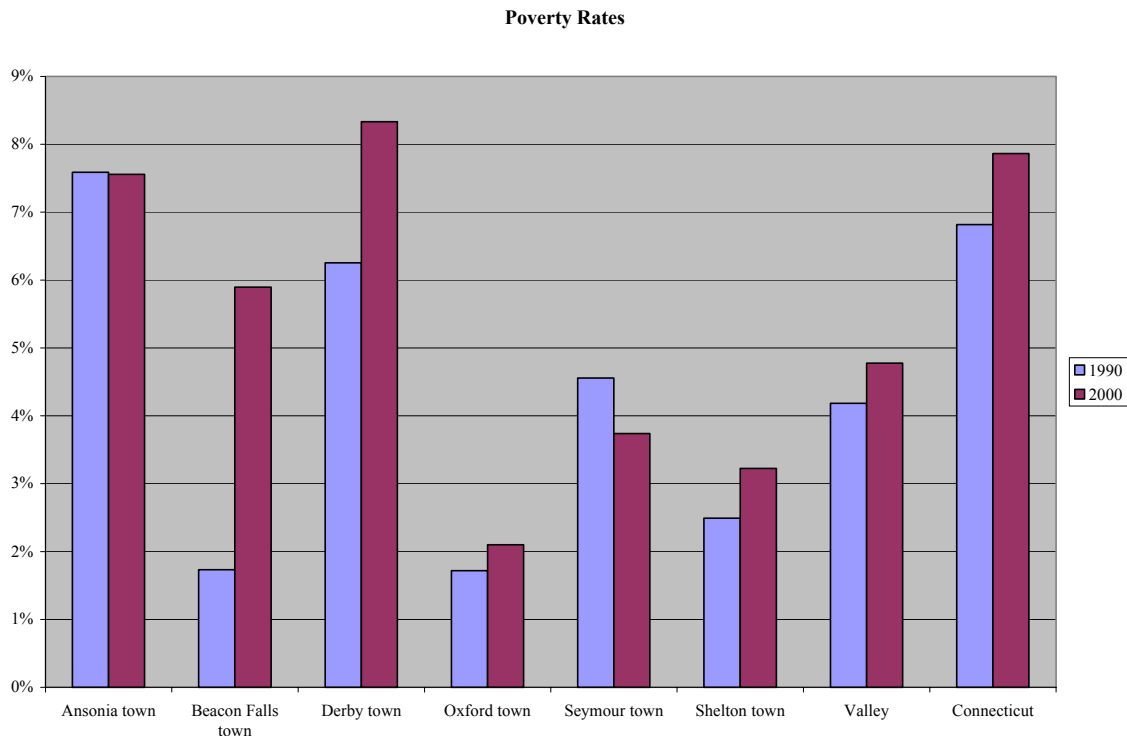
◆ ***Continue collaboration and make better connections with the housing authorities.***

Regional collaboration in the area of senior services, while vastly improved, still can be extended to other areas of the senior service delivery system. In other words, continuous improvement never stops. One area for improvement is the link and communication between senior providers and the housing authorities. At the moment, there is very little connection between the two, even though they serve the same population. This is an area that could achieve a level of efficiency as well as reach new seniors if links were tightened. Seniors living in publicly-subsidized living could be better connected to the social outlets available at the senior centers. At the same time, seniors who are in danger of losing their independence while living at home could be better informed about different housing options offered through the public housing authorities.

Another area of improvement is to extend the already exemplary model of collaboration started by the SSC and its senior centers. Current efforts require time and resources from already strapped and under-budgeted agency staff. The SSC could investigate new areas of financial support to continue and to extend its collaborative network to other areas of the senior service system.

Poor and Working Poor

The 2000 Mt. Auburn report concluded that one of the populations with special needs in the Valley was the “poor and working poor.” The working poor were defined as those people earning low wages, the underemployed, vulnerable blue collar workers and former welfare recipients with low wage jobs. The “poor” were defined as those living below the poverty level. Review of both the data as well as interviews reveal that this group still has significant needs within the Valley. (See chart below on poverty rates.)



Source: 1990 and 2000 U.S. Census

Three sets of recommendations are focused on meeting the needs of this targeted population: workforce development, housing, and health. While there were recommendations related to workforce development in the initial report, the recommendations related to healthcare and housing were much more limited. This section reviews the progress in these three areas and some of the continued areas of priority.

Workforce Development

The strategy to create a strategic approach to workforce development proposed:

1. Develop a Valley workforce development plan.
2. Launch a demand-driven training program.
3. Design career ladders for the underemployed.

The Valley has a record of mixed results on workforce development over the last four years. Some of the uneven record is due to seismic changes in the economy as well as shifting federal policy. Other reasons are due to factors closer to home.

The change in the economy must be taken into account when assessing the progress of the Valley in the area of workforce development. The timing of the release and implementation of the Mt. Auburn report in 2000 coincided with the beginning of the economic downturn. A decline in job growth turned the labor market's demand-supply equation on its head. While the economic expansion of the 1990s afforded all kinds of employment opportunities for entry-level, low-skilled, and working poor jobseekers, this job market has been much different. In general, employers were not hiring new workers or, when they did, they had a deep pool of applicants from which to choose. From 2000 through 2002, for example, the Valley lost more than 6,000 jobs, a decline of -14.8 percent. This downward trend in the job market has lasted through 2004. The unemployment rate for the Valley as a whole doubled between 2000 and 2004. As of June 2004, the unemployment rate in the Valley was 5.6 percent, up from 2.6 percent in 2000.

In addition to the change in the economy, changes in state and federal policies deeply affected the delivery of local workforce development programs in the Valley. In 2000, Connecticut began to feel the full effects of the federally-mandated changes with the Workforce Investment Act (WIA). The full implementation of WIA affected the breadth and depth of workforce offerings from the Valley's community-based education and training providers. One of greatest challenges to WIA has been the ability of the Valley's community-based education and training providers to attract enough customers with Individual Training Account (ITA) vouchers. Community-based providers have struggled to maintain sufficient cash flow to keep their training programs operating with the onset of WIA's ITAs. In short, WIA has put Valley community-based training providers out of business and shifted the base of training to larger educational institutions (most often to the community colleges) in Bridgeport, New Haven, and Waterbury.

Residents of the Lower Valley access resources at three community colleges, each with its main campus on the periphery of the region. The closest geographically to the Lower Valley's population core is Housatonic Community College in Bridgeport. College officials say that 12 percent of their student body comes from the Valley. The Valley's Regional Adult Education program provides field trips to Housatonic Community College for its ESL students and for credit diploma and GED programs. The college also holds classes for its child development program at TEAM. Some residents also take classes at Gateway Community College, especially in the allied health division. Naugatuck Valley Community College in Waterbury has deeper connections to towns along the northern border of the Lower Valley. In fact, the community college has partnered with Teikyo Post University and the Oxford Innovation Center to offer classes in entrepreneurship. Naugatuck Valley Community College is also a key partner in the Greater Valley Manufacturing Training Network, which serves companies throughout the Lower Valley.

Residents also access a number of private institutions of higher education. Sacred Heart University, for example, has made in-roads to the Valley. It offers classes at Derby schools during hours convenient for working adults. The University of New Haven, for its part, has run MBA programs at the Hilton Hotel for Sikorsky employees.

In the last four years, TEAM and Valley Regional Adult Education have felt the effects of shifts in state and federal policy. TEAM's division of workforce development went from roughly \$500,000 per year in funded workforce programs to \$75,000 per year. Valley Regional Adult Education lost its Nurses Aide training program that served residents from and workers in the Valley. It no longer offers these programs.

Another change has been the retraction of state funds for the local Department of Labor job center in the Valley (located in Ansonia and co-housed with a local office of the Department of Social Services). A one-stop center in Derby has replaced the job center. It is staffed with one professional, down from two full-time staff persons in 2003. It provides "core services" such as assistance with self-directed job search, resource, and referral to other training programs, and employment assessment activities.

The Career Coach, a brand new initiative by The Workplace, may fill some of the void left by the closure of the Department of Labor job center. The Career Coach is a self-contained 38-foot vehicle equipped with state-of-the-art telecommunications equipment. It will "dock" at the Ansonia Housing Authority one day per week. Some of the technology on-board the Career Coach includes 11 computer workstations, satellite high-speed Internet, and a 42-inch plasma screen for instructor lessons. The mobile Career Coach will deliver four hours of open time for workers and students to access skill building tools and career services. At least two hours a day will be dedicated to "closed" training modules, such as computer training in Microsoft Office.

Another change since 2000 is the scaled back commitment to school to career programs by the federal government. School to career programs across the state lost money and many districts cut their coordinators. Shelton is still one district in the Valley that still embraces its school to career component. This is an area where formalizing model programs may make them more achievable in other districts in the region through replication.

One response to these many changes could have been a more strategic, measured plan. The Valley never developed a "Valley workforce development plan," as recommended in the 2000 Mt. Auburn study. While the WorkPlace, the regional Workforce Investment Board in Bridgeport that is responsible for the Valley, has broad regional workforce development plan, it does not have the capacity at this time to develop sub-regional workforce development plans. A local lead agency or agencies to promote the development and secure resources are needed in order to develop such a sub-regional plan. The Lower Valley is in the middle of three economic regions—New Haven, Bridgeport, and Waterbury. Such a Valley plan could have organized regional resources by making stronger connections between workforce institutions and resources in the three abutting regions so that Valley residents would not be left behind. A Valley plan could have also blunted some of the negative consequences of changing workforce policy and helped the Valley to adjust to a labor market that pushed unemployment up and demand for workers down.

On a more positive note, the Valley was successful in carrying out one of the more substantial initiatives recommended in the 2000 Mt. Auburn study. In 2002, the Chamber of Commerce sponsored the Greater Valley Manufacturing Training Network, a collaborative workforce development and training initiative among Naugatuck River Valley manufacturers. The collaborative identified workforce competencies common to a cross-section of

manufacturers. It has led to English as a Second Language and Leadership training for more than 120 workers in companies such as Derby Cellular, OEM Controls, Thule, Spectrum Plastics, Dresser, PTA Corp, Hamworthy-Peabody, and Shaw Mudge. The training network continues to receive funding through The WorkPlace from the Community Foundation for Greater New Haven, and from the Connecticut Department of Economic and Community Development. Monies from the Katharine Matthies Foundation go through the Greater Valley Chamber of Commerce. The training network planned to train another 60 to 70 workers in the second half of 2004 and is gearing up to offer several computer courses.

Housing

The 2000 Mt. Auburn report concluded that the residents and leaders in the Valley perceived affordable housing to be a gap in resources for the working poor and recommended the formation of a regional nonprofit housing developer in the Valley to address the housing challenges that the region faced.

The spirit behind the housing strategy laid out in the 2000 Mt. Auburn report was twofold. First, Mt. Auburn’s strategy pressed the Valley to develop an organization or group that looked to the overall housing needs in the Valley, from homeownership, to workforce housing, to senior housing, to low-income housing. Second, Mt. Auburn’s strategy urged Valley leaders to put together a Valley-wide organization with development capacity to meet regional housing needs.

One of the happenings in the Valley in the last four years was the release of *Housing the Workforce: An Assessment of Housing in the All-America Valley*. The Lower Naugatuck Regional Housing Coalition, a group of business, nonprofit, and government leaders directed the study. It was funded in part by the Katharine Matthies Foundation and Community Foundation for Greater New Haven. At its heart, the report found that housing prices are outpacing growth in median household income in the Valley and that the chances for many working families to buy a home have diminished. The report generated lots of initial discussion upon its release in mid-2004.

Growth in Median Single-Family Home Sales Price Versus Growth in Median Household Income in the Lower Naugatuck Valley		
	Percent Change	
	1985 – 1998	1999 – 2003
Housing Prices	3.2%	9.8%
HH Income	4.5%	3.0%
Source: <i>Housing the Workforce: An Assessment of Housing in the All-America Valley</i> , Executive Summary, February 2004.		

The Housing Coalition continues to meet and it has broadened its base to include more business leaders. It also continues to discuss implementation strategies.

There are a number of other housing-related happenings in the Valley over the last four years. The Ansonia Main Street Development Corporation, for its part, has expanded its role in

Ansonia. It has acquired and redeveloped mixed-use buildings (with senior housing) making downtown Ansonia a more attractive place to live. Also in Ansonia, a nonprofit developer rehabilitated three prominent dwellings, reduced the density, and developed affordable rental housing units. The city of Ansonia sold two old factory buildings to a private developer from New Jersey. The developer's plans, which have been stalled a number of times, call for more than 55 market rate condominiums in the heart of downtown. Similar plans have been floated or executed in Shelton and Seymour, to name two of the other towns, while various senior housing options are being created Valley-wide by private developers, nonprofit developers, and housing authorities.² Finally, smaller scale developments in the Valley have occurred for special populations. One of these is Birmingham Group Health Services' new residential program for Valley residents with traumatic brain injury.

The Greater Valley Chamber of Commerce released a December 2004 report that outlines several housing developments in the region, which is attached as an addendum to this report.

Health

There were no specific health-related strategies or initiatives outlined in the 2000 Mt. Auburn report. There were, however, a number of findings that identified strengths and gaps in the Valley's system of healthcare delivery. Some of the strengths identified were the presence of strong institutional health providers in the Valley and the overall well-being of Valley residents in terms of health indicators relative to the state.

Two of the health-related challenges identified in the 2000 report were lack of health insurance for the working poor and increased pressures on services in light of the retraction of state, federal, and private funding.

The Valley made steady in-roads to address challenges laid out in the 2000 Mt. Auburn report. Valley health providers continued to show strong levels of collaboration, and the beginnings of more strategic planning as a region. Health leaders convened and organized a number of times in the last four years to plan for future healthcare issues in the region. An initial meeting was organized March 2001, the so-called "Cradle to Grave Retreat," with follow-up meetings in 2002. These meetings brought together members of the Health Subcommittee of the Valley Council and other healthcare providers. More recently, the Naugatuck Valley Health District hosted an assessment and planning process focused on the region's overall public health system. In general, these meetings provide opportunity to plan and develop a list of strengths, gaps, and areas of priority for the health community. These meetings, in and of themselves, are a strong indication that collaboration in the health-related field continues to progress. They also bring new challenges to the table, chief among them the challenge of getting beyond generating lists of needs and opportunities and getting to action.

One action item that Valley leaders have made considerable progress on is creating new avenues to close the gap of insurance for the working poor and uninsured. Griffin established the Women's Health Coordination Center in 2001. The Center's mission is to bring better health access to under- and uninsured residents of the Valley. It is one of 12 federally-designated "Centers of Excellence" across the U.S. Since its inception, it has started a discount prescription

² See the section on Seniors to learn more about these developments.

drug program, hired an insurance eligibility specialist to link people to existing insurance programs, created a database to refer and coordinate services in the region, and, most recently, started Valley Project Access. This last project has enlisted 50 physicians to provide medical services for residents who fall between employer-sponsored programs and state- and federally-funded insurance programs. From December 2003 through August 2004, Valley Project Access leveraged \$112,000 in free or reduced-fee physician care to uninsured Valley residents.

Another laudable achievement in the Valley is the creation of the Mental Health Crisis Team. The Team coordinates mental health providers, fire and police, and other agencies to respond quickly and comprehensively to emergencies and crises large and small, such as the Lower Valley's Anthrax incident or tragic automobile accidents. Community leaders say it is unique because leaders identified partners outside their usual realm of services and crossed municipal boundaries.

There have been a number of other smaller victories for healthcare in the Valley since Mt. Auburn's last report. The Community Health Connection has become a bigger part of the Valley healthcare system. Its patient load has increased from 1,500 to 7,500 patients over the last decade. It has established new connections to Griffin Hospital, hired an eligibility specialist to connect more uninsured residents to care, and moved to a new, expanded space on Wakelee Avenue. Griffin Hospital's mobile health resource center and the related parish nurse program have grown. The Valley also re-doubled its efforts to address increased breast and prostate cancer morbidity rates relative to the state. New prevention and screening programs were begun. Birmingham Group and the Parent Child Resource Center are conducting a needs assessment of adolescent behavioral health, sponsored by the Valley United Way. And, Birmingham Group, Parent Child Resource Center, and the Naugatuck Valley Health District, just to name a few, also saw new programs start or old ones expand.

In the face of this progress, however, are the very real bottom-line pressures healthcare providers are dealing with as declines continue in reimbursement rates from Medicaid, Medicare, and private insurance. In short, Valley healthcare providers have been asked to do more with less. In the last four years, many providers have responded the only way they could—by cutting back or repackaging their services.

Griffin Hospital, for example, was losing as much as \$350,000 to \$400,000 per year in its Outpatient Psychiatric Clinic alone. Fortunately, it found an innovative way to deliver these services through a merger of sorts with Birmingham Group's Valley Mental Health Center. Other agencies have not been so fortunate. St. Francis Care, often know as the former Elmcrest facility, shut down its partial day facility for adolescent behavioral health. The Liberty Center, recently bought out by the Waterbury-based Morris Foundation, has scaled back the range of adolescent substance abuse services it once provided. And, Catholic Family Services has been forced to ration its services and reduce its staff because the agency cannot afford the reimbursement rates given by the state and other insurers.

Finally, recent reports indicate that the Valley still has a number of system issues to address when it comes to healthcare. According to these reports, major areas that need improvement include:

1. Valley providers need better access to and ability to utilize current technology. For example, most providers lack geo-coded data and GIS capabilities, and health partners need to be better linked to each other.
2. Valley healthcare providers need a more formal community improvement process. The Valley has a more difficult time aligning its health priorities because current practice lacks accountability.
3. The Valley is not coherent in its identification of the personal health needs of regional sub-groups of the population. For example, leaders state that the nature of the medical transportation shortfall for seniors needs greater attention.
4. In the workforce arena, the region needs to fill healthcare jobs and identify ways to get training.

Future Priorities

Based on interviews with stakeholders in the region, the following set of priorities was identified to meet the needs of the region’s poor and working poor:

- ◆ ***A more coordinated approach to regional workforce development that pulls together private sector, government, and nonprofit partners and educators to focus on Valley-specific workforce needs, with the Chamber as the lead agency.***

As noted, the Valley is in an unusual position within the state of Connecticut—sitting in the middle of three economic regions and workforce service areas—Bridgeport, New Haven, and Waterbury. Job growth in parts of these regions, especially from the bursting “gold coast” of Fairfield County, is projected to be strong. Shelton is already reaping the benefits of this growth, and Seymour and Oxford are seeing their fair share of new development pressures. Residents of the Valley have potential access to jobs in each of the three surrounding regions, all within easy commuting distance. While the community colleges and Workforce Investment Boards have done a good job in identifying the workforce needs in their respective “communities,” the location of the Valley makes it somewhat unique. No one community college or WIB can fully understand the types of job opportunities that residents in the Valley have access to, as well as the specific barriers they face in accessing these opportunities. The danger is that the wage and wealth creation benefits will bypass the Valley if the region’s residents are not adequately prepared. The Valley’s system of training providers, employers, and workforce partners is too scattered at this time to make sure this does not happen.

The Valley needs to put together a coordinated response to focus on workforce development. The Chamber of Commerce is a natural lead agency in this area. The coordination effort may focus on three new and emerging priorities in the Valley.

1. The first priority is incumbent worker training—the need to boost the skills and earning power of thousands of under-trained working adults in the Valley who will otherwise be left behind by the new economy. The Valley likely has thousands of working adults with less than a high school degree or limited English skills. These workers do not have the right skills required by employers in the Valley’s current and emerging high-demand job sectors. As a result, good jobs in some of the region’s fastest growing industries will be filled by workers from outside the region, or go unfilled altogether. This hurts the

productivity of Valley employers and dilutes the benefits of wealth creation for Valley residents and their towns. This priority fits with The Workplace's new emphasis on adult education.

2. The second priority is strengthening the achievement and career potential of students in the K-12 system. In today's fast-evolving knowledge-based economy, workers have little hope of enjoying a middle-class lifestyle without a postsecondary degree or industry credential. As recently as 20 years ago, a worker could leave high school and find a job as a floor sweeper or assembler with the expectation of learning new skills to climb the company ladder. That equation has changed. Employers are now requiring workers to develop new skills to adapt to complex work processes and new technologies. They want to hire workers who can problem-solve and innovate. The new economy places a premium on relationship skills, customer service, basic technical competency, and the ability to keep learning. By 2006, close to two-thirds of all jobs will require education and skill levels beyond a high school diploma. By 2008, occupations requiring an associate's degree or more will account for 40 percent of the total job growth in the U.S. The Valley needs to make sure its high school graduates are able to take advantage of these changes.
3. The third priority is to meet the workforce needs in high demand industry sectors with elevated worker shortages. One such industry is healthcare. There is concern among employers in this industry that workforce shortages are cutting into quality of care and the bottom line. This concern is expressed among Valley hospitals, long-term care facilities, and other health employers. The Valley needs to find workers to fill these positions.

◆ ***Identify critical housing issues and appropriate forums in which to address them.***

Further investigate appropriate forums in which to identify and discuss critical housing issues.

◆ ***Combine efforts and find new efficiencies among Valley health providers.***

It is clear that the many agencies are struggling to sustain current levels of care in the face of decreasing reimbursement rates from state, federal, and private insurers. This problem needs to be addressed on a variety of levels. One is attracting new funding or increased reimbursement rates from insurers to make up for the current shortfalls. The Valley stands in line with many other efforts in the state to reverse this downward trend in funding. The Valley could better coordinate its lobbying efforts or be more purposeful to search out special funding opportunities such as the Center for Excellence. But this takes staff time and money. Another avenue is to replicate the partnership and economies of scale that Birmingham Group and Griffin Hospital started with their consolidation of outpatient behavioral health services. Entrenched habits, proprietary programs, and longstanding community support can prevent many of these logical "connections" to happen. The Valley needs an impartial voice, a body of respected leaders, who can identify new areas of opportunity for combined efforts, increased efficiency, and, ultimately, a more solid financial foundation for success.

◆ ***Sustain and expand health access to the under- and uninsured Valley residents.***

Approximately 10,200 Valley residents are uninsured. Almost half of the 841 clients of the Women Health Coordination Center report that they do not take their prescription medicine because they cannot afford it. The challenges to reduce these numbers persist, as they do across the nation. But the Valley has made tremendous progress through its Community Center of Excellence in Women's Health grant from the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) and the subsequent development of the Women Health Coordination Center in the Valley. The Center has found new, creative ways to provide medical care to the Valley's under- and uninsured residents. That progress needs to be continued.

One of the biggest threats to continued progress, however, is the Center's inevitable loss of funding from HHS. The HHS grant is roughly \$300,000 to \$400,000 per year in revenue for the Center. The grant is scheduled to expire in the next year or two, sooner if Griffin Hospital does not receive the one-year extension for which it has applied. Valley leaders need to make the long-term funding of the Center's core services a regional healthcare priority, and use its political and community clout to secure the more immediate extension from HHS.

◆ ***Address unresolved gaps in Valley health services.***

There are a number of persistent service gaps that need renewed attention from Valley leaders. A beginning list of these services includes:

- *Affordable dental care.* Healthcare leaders report that the Valley does not have an adequate supply of dental care for low-income and state-insured patients.
- *Inpatient and outpatient addiction services for adolescents.* Professionals note that the merger of the Liberty Center and the overall lack of inpatient facilities in the region continue the Valley's shortfall in adolescent substance abuse services.
- *Adolescent residential services in behavioral health.* There has been no replacement in the Valley after the closing of St. Francis Care's partial day facility for adolescent behavioral health. It should be noted that the Birmingham Group and Parent Child Resource Center are conducting a needs assessment of children behavioral health.
- *In-home services for senior citizen shut-ins.* The identification of the number of shut-ins and scope of their needs is a step that still requires attention by leaders in the Valley.

Youth

Original Strategy

The strategy to create a more comprehensive approach to after-school activities and community services for the Valley's youth involved the following recommendations:

1. Establish a Valley-wide youth collaborative.
2. Turn public schools into community learning centers.
3. Establish business-education partnerships throughout the Valley.

Progress

The Valley has had mixed results in responding to the youth-related strategy and initiatives presented by Mt. Auburn in 2000.

The Valley did make progress on establishing a Valley-wide youth collaborative. In 2002, a broad cross-section of representatives from youth services formed the Youth Services Committee, a subcommittee of the Council. Not included in this group were representatives from the regional superintendent's meeting, as recommended by Mt. Auburn in the 2000 report. The new committee laid out its priorities at a June 2002 meeting. The priorities included bringing a juvenile system to the Valley (modeled after Shelton's program) and filling gaps in teen services and youth behavioral health.

Despite this initial progress, the committee has had trouble organizing itself. Attendance at its quarterly meetings was not consistent. Leaders say that the interests of participants were too varied for one group. Some participants were focused on youth behavioral issues while others were focused on childcare. Still others were focused on after-school activities for teens. The committee stopped meeting at the end of 2004.

There has been a mix of progress and continued challenges in other youth service-related activities in the region. Not unlike most communities across Connecticut, leaders identify after-school activities as still a need. This is particularly the case for Valley teens. The Boys and Girls Club continues to be the largest provider of recreational activities on this front. For its part, the Valley YMCA has expanded its after-school programs since Mt. Auburn's last report. These programs are more structured and offered on-site at the schools. The Valley Y now has after-school programs in three school systems (Shelton, Derby, and Ansonia) at a total of five elementary schools. The so-called "Ansonia Project" is an initiative by the Boys and Girls Club to rehabilitate a major building in downtown Ansonia for youth recreational activities. The Valley Y will be a tenant in the basement and offer full-day childcare there. Other before and after-school providers are Seymour Oxford Nursery and Child Care Association (SONCCA). They offer before and after school care for children attending elementary school in the towns of Seymour and Oxford. Two other programs to note are the High School Leadership program, sponsored by the United Way for the last 15 years, the High School Volunteer Council, which is a regional program that brings together high school volunteers and their staff advisors on a regular basis, and the Girl Scouts, which offers some in-school programming.

Other programs fill additional needs in after-school activities. While it was not possible to inventory all of the many school and municipal youth activities as part of this report, it is clear that many of the towns have sustained or developed new youth activities. As just one example, Derby and Shelton have opened a collaborative skate park.

Transportation to and from after-school activities continues to be a challenge for after-school programming. Another constraint is the uneven communication between these providers. In addition, there are two noted gaps in the area of youth health services. One is inpatient and outpatient addiction services for adolescents. Professionals note that the merger of the Liberty Center and the overall lack of inpatient facilities in the region continue the Valley's shortfall in adolescent substance abuse services. Another is adolescent residential service in behavioral health. The closure of St. Francis Care's partial day facility left a void for adolescents in this area. Birmingham Group Health Services (BGHS) and the Parent Child Resource Center (PCRC) are trying to understand this issue further. They are conducting a needs assessment funded by the United Way to identify gaps and issues in child behavioral health. These two organizations also started the Transitional Youth Program, a new program in the Valley since Mt. Auburn's 2000 report. The program is designed to serve as a bridge between the children's and adults' service systems for people diagnosed with mental health or emotional disorders.

Infant and toddler care, and school readiness, have received renewed attention since Mt. Auburn's first report. TEAM completed an "Infant Toddler Community Planning Initiative" in June 2000. The initiative outlined goals, objectives, and activities, along with a timeline for completion, to better meet the needs of infants and toddlers on a wide range of issues. In 2002, a team of people from Ansonia and Shelton came together to determine what might be done to help all young children in the two communities to begin kindergarten successfully. This "Discovery Team" gathered data and issued a report in 2003. The Parent Child Resource Center also hosts a new early childhood consultant. This consultant position is part of a new statewide initiative that funds a staff person to evaluate and jointly create action plans for childcare providers and their children.

The Valley's progress of "turning public schools into community learning centers," as noted in the 2000 Mt. Auburn report, has also been varied. In general, the public schools are open for a wide range of activities, and quite accessible to community residents. Adult Education programs are offered by most school systems. Schools also work with a significant number of health and human service organizations. The level of partnership varies across school systems and by organization. While some service providers still note that the school systems "get very defensive and are closed because of all of the issues that they deal with," most say that the schools have become better at cooperating with outside providers.

Several of the Valley's school districts did take part in a regional cooperative effort through a joint program with Telemedia. The program offered classes through Telemedia's cable system. Shelton, for example, offered a class in Italian that was shown on the cable system in each of the Valley communities. The effort was not sustained because of a lack of funding. At the same time, none of the schools adopted a formal Community-in-School Program, as recommended in the original Mt. Auburn report. Progress was not made on this front because funds for creating such a program are severely limited and space constraints are confronting schools in each district.

The Valley's progress on fortifying business-education partnerships was also fair. The Corporate Volunteer Center connects businesspeople with K-12 students, as does the Junior Achievement program. This latter program is particularly strong in the Shelton school district. The GE facility in Shelton alone sends 60 of its employees to mentor children through Junior Achievement in the public schools. The program has expanded since 2000. Other companies, such as Pitney Bowes and United Illuminated, have engaged the schools through scholarship awards, career programs, and specialized programs (notably, the robotics program). However, the real richness of these model programs is not being realized Valley-wide. A program organized in a more widespread, systematic fashion can build on current practice.

Future Priorities

Most of the recommendations in the original report remain valid. Many challenges remain to address the wide range of educational and recreational needs of the Valley's young people. Some of the highest priorities include:

- ◆ ***Engage the schools and the Boards of Education more broadly in the youth activities in the region and build more collaboration between schools and community organizations.***

Completing a full assessment of the many education-related issues within the Valley was well beyond the scope of this project. However, the continued need to strengthen the overall quality of education in the region, to involve the leaders of the public schools in all aspects of community life, and to explore areas of further collaborative activities among the public schools is an important priority for the future.

- ◆ ***Understand the opportunities and barriers to a more coherent youth services system.***

The Valley benefits from a lot of programs, resources, and services directed to children. Many of these activities are model initiatives. The challenge for the Valley, however, is to make the sum of these parts into a more coherent whole. Do we understand our strengths and deficits? What kind of impact are we having? Do we have strategies to make sure the Valley's youth service delivery system is effective and productive? How do we increase parental involvement in these efforts? A future priority should be to answer these questions and then take action to find solutions. One way to do this would be to extend to other areas the needs assessment process key leaders are undertaking in youth behavioral services.

- ◆ ***Overcome old perceptions and raise performance levels.***

Common to most districts across the country is the challenge to raise student performance and adapt curriculum to meet the education and skills needs of a more sophisticated business community. This challenge exists in the Valley, too.

For example, some Valley towns consistently underperform statewide averages on the Connecticut Mastery Tests in Reading, Writing, and Mathematics. Two towns in the Valley also fall below state averages for adults with less than a high school degree.

Percent of Population 25 years and older with less than HS							
Ansonia	Beacon Falls	Derby	Oxford	Seymour	Shelton	Valley	CT
17.8%	13.3%	21.4%	7.7%	15.0%	12.7%	14.6%	16.0%
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000							

While the 2000 report and this update are not about evaluating school performance, there are challenges to address in the school system; most notably, the amount of funding that is available to Valley school systems. Valley schools generally fall toward the bottom of the state's per capita spending. Another challenge is taking advantage of the new populations that are moving into Valley communities. Many of these families are highly educated and they expect more from educational systems. However, they can also be resources if opportunities are provided to get them actively involved in school issues. Finally, the schools in the Valley should use the examples of other communities across the country that have built formal, institutionalized Education-Business Partnerships. The Mt. Auburn report outlines a number of very solid programs that have emerged from the partnerships, and these programs could be of tremendous benefit to both teachers and students in the school systems, as well as the business community and other employers in the Valley.

◆ *Develop a comprehensive list of youth activities in the Valley.*

Development of such a list will serve as a resource to youth and their families, but will also help to better coordinate calendars.

Economic Development

Original Strategy

To retain and create new jobs in the Valley the report recommended the following:

1. Initiate a Business Calling program to assist in the retention and expansion of existing companies.
2. Advocate for the establishment of a one-stop business assistance center at the Valley Chamber of Commerce.

Progress

Leaders in the Valley have responded to both economic development initiatives outlined and recommended in the 2000 Mt. Auburn report. A number of economic development entities participate in business calling activities as recommended in the first Mt. Auburn report. The Chamber of Commerce carries out informal business calling and outreach activities as a regular part of its business. The Chamber meets with businesses on a regular basis to find out what needs and opportunities exist within the business community. United Illuminating also “calls” on many of its customers to identify their in-plant or on-site needs. It also identifies a broader range of business issues that are of importance to the utility and region. For their part, organizations such as Shelton Economic Development Corporation and the Oxford Economic Development Corporation meet and talk regularly with business customers. And, the mayors and their economic and community development staff have similar conversations with people from the business community.

The region also made considerable progress on establishing a one-stop business assistance center, the second initiative recommended by Mt. Auburn in 2000. The Chamber recently received a \$10,000 grant from the Community Foundation for Greater New Haven to establish such a center. It should be operational before the end of the year. The Chamber has brought in other partners to help in this effort. The Small Business Development Center, Senior Corp of Retired Executives (SCORE), the state Department of Economic and Community Development (DECD), and the Connecticut Community Investment Corporation will be among the partners providing services through the center.

There have been a number of other significant economic development-related efforts in the Valley since 2000. There has been progress in completing economic development plans for the downtowns in some of the Valley communities. In addition, the Shelton Economic Development Corporation and the Waterbury Development Corporation prepared and submitted a Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) for 17 municipalities in the Naugatuck Valley Corridor. The preparation of the CEDS included significant public comment that began in 2003. It is led by a steering committee that represents diverse interests of the Naugatuck Valley (including regional government, municipalities, community organizations, and business). The CEDS plan identifies major economic trends in the region and names priority strategies for development. For example, it uses an ongoing evaluation mechanism to score and rank the multiple capital investment projects planned or underway in the region. The CEDS also

identifies priorities involving industry cluster development and keeps tabs on overall economic conditions in the region. Transportation is one of the CEDS' major priorities. A regional economic summit on transportation was held as part of the CEDS. Preliminary meetings also have been held with Brownfield's Pilot, Workforce Development, and Cluster representatives to identify their roles in the ongoing CEDS process. The Community Foundation for Greater New Haven has made a three-year commitment to support funding for the Naugatuck Valley Corridor CEDS process. It was matched in the first year by the Matthies Foundation. A CEDS Plan is normally a prerequisite to be eligible to receive funds under most programs from the U.S. Department of Commerce's Economic Development Administration.

The Naugatuck Valley Economic Growth Initiative is also a new effort in the Valley. The Initiative includes five towns: Ansonia, Beacon Falls, Derby, Naugatuck, and Seymour. The participating towns received a special earmark of \$2.5 million as part of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's Economic Development Initiative program when Congressman Maloney was in office. Most of it is geared to industrial park infrastructure improvements. Beacon Falls and its efforts to boost the Pike Ridge Industrial Park was the driver to get the money. A smaller proportion of the program is earmarked for quality-of-life kinds of enhancements in the downtowns such as landscaping and improved façade, lighting, and streetscapes. The Naugatuck Valley Growth Initiative Policy Council oversees the grant. It consists of the five chief elected officials of the towns and four other citizens. Ansonia Main Street Development Corporation acts as a fiduciary and administrator for the program.

Finally, the Oxford Regional Innovation Center was developed and located at the Oxford Airport in 2004. This Center is a small business incubator focusing on supporting entrepreneurship and small business development in the region. It has strong connections to Teikyo Post University and Naugatuck Valley Community College. Leaders of the Innovation Center say that its creation, in part, was spurred by Mt. Auburn's recommendation in 2000 to establish a regional business assistance center.

The continued development of the Brownfield Pilot Project and the adoption of the Council of Government's *Smart Growth for the All-America Valley: Strategic Plan of Conservation and Development* can also be considered progress in the arena of economic development. There are also notable downtown development projects. Ansonia, Seymour, and Shelton have made considerable progress on parts of their downtowns. Beacon Falls also has a new downtown group.

The Alliance for Economic Growth was an attempt to bring about more inter-municipal cooperation around economic development. Even though it did serve as a communication and planning tool, it did not appear to meet the needs of the municipalities to the degree they wanted, and, therefore, the Alliance was discontinued.

Future Priorities

◆ *Continue to implement the strategies outlined in the CEDS and Smart Growth plans.*

Implementation of these plans has already begun. For example, one of the actionable items in the CEDS was to convene periodic regional economic summits. Regional leaders held a summit in 2004 focused on transportation. Nearly 100 officials, citizens, and other CEDS

partners were in attendance at the Waterbury campus of the University of Connecticut. Progress on implementation should continue, in particular as it relates to revitalizing and rebuilding the economies of Ansonia and Derby or for projects that have been highly ranked and have a beneficial regional impact on all Valley communities. These communities need to become stronger contributors to the regional economy. If Ansonia and Derby become more vital economic engines, the region will gain.

◆ ***Create a minority-focused entrepreneurial program.***

The Valley could increase its efforts to bring more African-American and Latino residents into the economic mainstream. One option would be to create an Entrepreneurial Development program that targets existing African-American and Latino entrepreneurs and those in the community who would like to start their own business.

Inter-municipal Cooperation

Original Strategy

To increase inter-municipal cooperation around a range of development issues that affect the communities of the Lower Naugatuck Valley, the report recommended:

1. The Valley Regional Planning Agency, working with area residents and businesspeople, should develop a plan to protect and sustain the region's natural environment.
2. Fund a pilot regional project initiative (e.g., joint industrial park), cooperative approach to downtown, increased cooperation around the schools through the creation of a Valley School Foundation.

Progress

The Valley made important progress on the first inter-municipal initiative laid out in the 2000 Mt. Auburn report. The Valley Council of Governments sponsored and adopted a strategic plan of conservation and development called, *Smart Growth for the All-America Valley* in 2003. The plan makes a priority of inter-municipal cooperation, lays out opportunities to protect the environment, and pushes smart growth. The plan also identifies all of the right natural and environmental resources—scenic areas, open space, greenways, water, and historic sites. Individual towns have also developed programs designed to protect natural resources and historic sites. The full implementation of the conservation and development plan has not occurred. There are still many opportunities to capitalize upon the recommendations presented in the plan.

Valley leaders have done quite well in two other areas of inter-municipal cooperation. The Brownfields Pilot Project is by far the most noteworthy and laudatory program of municipal cooperation. It receives very high marks from the EPA and each of the towns has developed at least one site. In 2003, the Valley, through the Shelton Economic Development Corporation and the Naugatuck Valley Development Corporation, also prepared and submitted a Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) for 17 municipalities in the Naugatuck Valley Corridor. The leadership, cooperation, and planning that led to the strategy is also a strong example of inter-municipal cooperation.

Other notable examples of cooperation include the Valley-wide response to the fire at the Latex Foam site, the formation of the mental health crisis team, and the Council of Government's programs on transportation and geographic information systems.

In the face of these positive developments, however, there remain additional opportunities around inter-municipal cooperation. Mt. Auburn's 2000 report recommended three options to develop another regional pilot project. Though these were not implemented, municipalities have entered into new endeavors. One example is a joint skate park developed by the cities of Derby and Shelton. Local communities have been developing river walks that, when complete, will link one to another through the region. There is a development along Route 8 that, though it has a private developer, has needed inter-municipal cooperation. Additionally, the Valley COG members have identified Route 8 as a regional priority.

Each municipality has its own culture, yet taking advantage of appropriate opportunities for inter-municipal cooperation can attain economies of scale, and other advantages to the region.

Future Priorities

◆ *Define the region.*

One priority is to decide whether it matters to define which towns are or are not part of the Lower Valley. Some leaders feel that the “definition” question can hinder inter-municipal cooperation when it comes to certain regional issues, and it is a significant problem. Other leaders say that it is better to have a fluid definition and to allow for partnerships at different levels and along different issues. In either case, there needs to be some kind of resolution to this issue; leaving this issue in a state of suspension is not productive.

A specific question that might be addressed is the position that Shelton will play in the Valley’s economic future. It currently engages in three economic orbits: the Lower Naugatuck Valley, Fairfield County, and the new CEDS district that extends to Waterbury. What kind of role will Shelton play vis-à-vis the Valley in the future? Will its role be similar to or different than the one it played during its business growth and expansion over the last 5-7 years?

◆ *Develop a joint regional project related to the development of Route 8.*

A second future priority is to go back to the recommendation in the initial Mt. Auburn report and, in fact, develop a joint regional project. This recommendation is still valid and it would demonstrate the kind of inter-municipal cooperation that was proposed. Valley COG members have identified Route 8 as an issue for focusing some regional attention. Route 8 provides easy access to the Valley and has also brought challenges to the area. Working together to address the challenges is an area where inter-municipal cooperation can and should occur.

Diversity

Original Strategy

The 2000 Mt. Auburn report noted that the racial and ethnic diversity of the Valley was one of its potential strengths. Yet, many minority residents have not been involved in the region's leadership and the needs of many minority residents remained unmet. The following initiatives were recommended to address these challenges:

Specific Initiatives:

1. Organize and conduct a Study Circles program in the Valley that focuses on race and ethnicity.
2. Identify and recruit Latino leaders to become an integral part of the Valley's civic infrastructure.
3. Create a Translator Pool within the Valley Council to serve the needs of non-English speaking residents.

Progress

Valley leaders have made clear efforts to involve diverse populations in the civic infrastructure. Despite these efforts, the results to date have not been as successful as hoped.

One of the initiatives recommended in the 2000 Mt. Auburn report was the development of a Study Circles program. While information on the Study Circles program was distributed to the VNOP Committee, the committee decided not to pursue the Study Circles program. With limited resources, VNOP could not make this a major priority.

For its part, Leadership Greater Valley, a partnership of the United Way, the Chamber of Commerce, and the Valley Council, has been a major source of leadership recruitment and training in the Valley. It has also served as a vehicle for recruiting minority residents on to Valley commissions, boards, committees, and task forces. Since 2000, the Leadership Program has had one Latina in each of the classes offered. Some individuals have commented that they felt that the time that classes were offered prohibited many of the individuals for whom it was designed from attending.

Many organizations in the Valley have gone out of their way to increase minority representation on their board of directors. For example, in response to the changing racial makeup of the Valley, Birmingham Group Health Services created a Multicultural Affairs Committee to improve the cultural competency of its staff in 1999. However, overall, results related to increasing minority board recruitment have not always been successful.

Area Congregations Together developed a directory of agency employees who are bilingual. The Latino Hispanic Resource Council was formed, with support from the Naugatuck Valley Project, as an all-volunteer translation service that focuses on the Spanish language. There may be liability issues related to offering translation services. These potential issues should be researched before translation services are developed by any organization.

Funding for this update and progress review report was limited and did not allow for in-depth analysis of any topic. An issue as complex as racial and ethnic diversity would require substantial research and analysis. The limited number of interviews completed for this report did not allow us to reach definitive conclusions about progress in this important area. As a future priority, additional funding might be needed to update this area more comprehensively.

The Arts

While there were no specific recommendations in the original Mt. Auburn report, the Arts were listed as an industry that offered economic opportunity for Valley residents. Since then, significant inroads have been made both to increase the number of cultural entertainment events and to provide support for local artists. However, difficulties remain in making the Valley competitive to offerings in New Haven and Waterbury.

The Valley Arts Council grew out of a September 2000 report entitled *Lower Naugatuck Valley Arts and Cultural Assessment*. The report was commissioned by the Alliance for Economic Growth and funded by the Community Foundation for Greater New Haven. The report highlighted the fact that there was a small, but growing, base of artists in the Valley, as well as a series of arts and cultural activities that occurred in each of the communities in the region. However, the artists were not connected in any fundamental way, and the arts and cultural activities were not being fully capitalized upon. To address these issues, the Valley Arts Council was formed in January 2001.

Currently, the Council has approximately 100 artist members, including painters, illustrators, photographers, sculptors, film makers, and craftspeople. The Council covers all seven communities in the Valley and is overseen by a 10-member board of directors. The annual budget is typically in the range of \$10,000, with contributions from the Foundation, the state Department of Tourism, individual Valley communities, and dues from members.

To help member artists enhance their markets and revenue, and to promote the other arts and cultural activities in the Valley, the Council engages in the following activities and support services:

- an Artist-of-the-Month program that exhibits the work of individual artists at the Greenwich Workshop Gallery in Seymour;
- other exhibit opportunities at area restaurants and Teikyo Post University in Waterbury—additional exhibit venues are continually being explored;
- a workshop funded by the Foundation that helps artists to digitize images of their work, thus making it more visible to a wider range of potential customers and buyers;
- a Resource Listing that helps artists find suppliers, networks of other artists, exhibit opportunities throughout the northeast, and connections with educational institutions; and
- the Summer in the Valley Program that organizes and supports music, theater, films, and dance in the seven Valley communities. These summer programs include performances by the Kerry Boys – Sounds of Ireland, the Sommers-Rosenthal Family Bluegrass Band, and the Naugatuck Harvest Moon Festival.

Although the Council has achieved considerable success in the last few years, it does have a few challenges: building stronger relationships with area corporations; gaining access to shared administrative support services, perhaps through a local business or service organization; and developing closer and more formal linkages with the Valley's public school systems.

The Sterling Opera House, listed in the original Mt. Auburn report as an opportunity for development, is currently undergoing a \$10 million renovation project. Thus far, nearly \$1.5

million has been invested with another \$1 million possibly coming from the state (as of this date, no further information is available). Building off this initial investment, a fundraising/capital campaign will be undertaken to secure additional funds. When complete, the facility will offer live music and theatre, and have space available for local artists.

Downtown Seymour has developed an arts district that promotes cross marketing of businesses. The district holds a themed event the first Saturday of each month to encourage patrons to visit the area.

Future Priorities

- ◆ *The Arts Council needs to expand relationships.*
- ◆ *Complete the Opera House.*
- ◆ *Consider models such as the Seymour Arts District to encourage patronage of the downtowns.*

RECOMMENDATIONS

Cross-cutting Challenges and Opportunities

Challenges

- Regional alignment
- Equitable development
- Effective and efficient civic institutions
- Broadening and strengthening leadership—political, nonprofit, and business
- State and municipal pressure

Opportunities

- Transitions in regional organizations
- Philanthropic resources
- Economic growth benefits from Fairfield County
- Collaborative culture Pockets of excellence and innovation

Changing Roles and Structures

The overall needs and structure of the Valley’s efforts to promote more strategic grantmaking will shift with the creation of the Valley Community Foundation. At the time of the first Needs and Opportunities report, there was still a focus on ensuring that a fair proportion of the Gates funds were spent in the region and that there was some strategic guidance in terms of how the funds were spent. The creation of the Valley Community Foundation necessitates a new look at how the region structures itself vis-à-vis the Community Foundation for Greater New Haven.

◆ *With the creation of the VCF, there is an immediate need for a facilitated discussion about the future roles of VNOP and the VAC.*

VNOP plays an unusual role in the Valley communities. It is basically a central convener of three important parts of the region’s civic infrastructure: the nonprofit sector, the public sector, and the private sector. In addition, it provides a forum to discuss the intersection of economic development, community development, and human services. What is unique about it is its multi-sector and multi-disciplinary approach to the challenges and opportunities in the region.

Valley leadership needs to make a strategic decision about the continued importance of this regional intermediary and where to potentially house it. From our perspective, it would make sense to continue VNOP as part of the new Valley Community Foundation. It would not make sense to place it within the COG because the COG is comprised solely of public sector leaders. The Valley United Way, another potential “parent” organization, is primarily a funder of human service-related activities. It is not seen as funding or supporting economic

development or community development. A community foundation, for its part, plays an important role as an intermediary in its community that is able to transcend some of the “silos” that often constrain effective collaborative actions. As such, it would make sense to be the new home of VNOP. In effect, VNOP would be part of the initial staffing of the Foundation, helping it eventually to develop an appropriate grantmaking strategy that meets the needs of the varied interest groups within the Valley.

A second related issue that needs to be addressed is the need for the VAC given the creation of the Valley Community Foundation. In the long-term, as a larger proportion of the Gates funds are transferred to the Valley Community Foundation, there will clearly be no need for a continued VAC. This transition, however, may take a number of years. The VAC should thus be seen as in a transition phase and a plan should be developed with specific benchmarks that would lead to its eventual dissolution. In our view, in the next couple of years, as the Valley Community Foundation is still in its infancy, the VAC should continue to play an ongoing advisory function for the Community Foundation for Greater New Haven.

We would recommend that a set of strategic meetings be set up to more formally lay out a plan for how the institutions involved will interrelate, both in the short-term as well as in the longer-term. These meetings would have to include representatives from the CFGNH, the VAC, VNOP, and the VCF.

VNOP Priorities

◆ *VNOP—Push innovation, share best practices.*

One important driving force of a successful economy is innovation—innovation in the use of technologies and resources, innovation from entrepreneurs and inventors, innovation in economic development and business practices, and innovation in capital investment.

The Valley was once a region of manufacturing innovation, and that innovation led to a vibrant economy, decent standard of living, and well-paying jobs for Valley residents. Although the manufacturing base of the Valley will never be as vital and robust as it once was, the Valley has had its share of success, and it is home to new and expanding businesses. And, although the scale of innovation will never be as great as in the halcyon days of manufacturing, there are pockets of innovation occurring in the Valley that are exemplary and, if further capitalized upon, could enhance the image and economic identity of the Valley.

A potential role for VNOP would be to facilitate learning around innovation. In this role, VNOP would identify existing examples of innovation and work to spread it throughout the region.

Several examples of innovation are worth noting (others certainly exist).

1. The Valley’s Brownfield Redevelopment work has drawn national attention from EPA and others on the federal level. Most communities are lucky to develop one or two brownfield sites, but the Valley has developed almost a dozen through partnerships, strategic planning, and an innovative approach to redevelopment.
2. Griffin Hospital is noted throughout much of the healthcare world for remarkable innovations in its operations, design, and patient and customer-service orientation. And

the partnerships, collaborations, and new programs that have been developed in the last several years are clearly rooted in the institution's culture of innovation. One of the hospital's partners, the Birmingham Group, is also noted for its innovative approach in mental health.

3. Shelton and Oxford have grown and prospered in the last ten years, becoming the home of large-scale corporations, growing manufacturing firms, and new startup microenterprises. Much of the success of these two communities comes from their location, and their land and infrastructure resources, but much of it also comes from the creative and innovative approaches each community has taken to industrial and commercial development—breaking down barriers, being flexible, maximizing resources, and taking calculated risks.

Again, these are but a few examples of notable innovation occurring in the Valley. We believe that the innovative resources and culture of innovation present in these efforts and these institutions should be more recognized, promoted, and capitalized upon. We recommend that, in partnership with United Way and the Chamber, VNOP take responsibility for identifying the distinguishing elements within these innovative efforts. Then VNOP would create learning environments and mechanisms to share “best practices” among the Valley's communities, organizations, and agencies. The adoption of some of these innovative practices could enhance the performance of institutions in the Valley, and perhaps signal the Valley as a region where modest, but important, innovation is taking place and is part of the culture.

◆ ***VNOP should select one to two priority issues bi-annually.***

In the context of this report's overall findings, we believe that much could be gained from more focus. To date, VNOP has taken on a very broad agenda. It has spread itself with limited staffing and resources. We recommend that VNOP select one or two issues as bi-annual priorities rather than being involved in the full range of community issues it currently undertakes. Such an approach could result in a significant impact, particularly if adequate funds are earmarked. We recommend three areas of potential priority: workforce development, enhanced leadership development, and facilitated and coordinated activities related to youth and public education.

The role of VNOP would be as a convener and a facilitator of action along these priority areas. The following three areas of potential focus are suggested:

1. *Workforce Development:* In workforce development, for example, the Chamber may take the lead with VNOP's close support. VNOP could help bring a broad range of stakeholders to the table and share learning in the field. Attachment A provides some models of workforce development approaches in other communities that could guide this work.
2. *Succession Planning:* In the area of leadership development, VNOP could focus on enhancing certain aspects of existing efforts underway by the United Way and others in the community. The focus could be on helping the region's nonprofit institutions with developing succession plans for their boards and key staff. Again, the attachment provides some of the key learning from our review of leadership development activities in other locales.

3. *Public Education and Youth:* A third area of focus could be engagement of the school and education communities in a broader range of community efforts. While this report was unable to fully address issues related to this area, we uncovered enough information to suggest it is a part of the region's infrastructure that could use additional attention.

Some of this discussion has already occurred as part of the review of this report. We would recommend that the dialogue continue. A meeting should be held to review these three options. Following the meeting, VNOP staff could put together a workplan for the next year related to each option. Based upon the workplan, VNOP's strategic priorities could be set.

Recommendations for VAC

◆ *Establish clearer guidelines to organize funding—Regional Effectiveness and Regional Equity.*

The spirit of this recommendation is to sharpen and strategically focus the funding allocations within the Valley. Currently, the funding is very broad; it provides funds to a large number of organizations, and it targets virtually all segments of the Valley's population. While this equitable approach has been appropriate and laudatory, we recommend that funding in the future be driven more by where the most significant needs in the Valley are, and where the biggest impact can be made in addressing the Valley's most visible gaps. Therefore, we recommend that the two major priorities be around Regional Effectiveness and Regional Equity.

Funding that focuses on **Regional Effectiveness** should be directed at helping Valley organizations, agencies, and councils perform at higher levels of productivity, and with measurable outcomes. Previous funding was, quite understandably, directed toward the delivery of services and programs, and to building the foundation of organizational collaboration, cooperation, and communication. And, to a large extent, this kind of funding direction made sense. There were populations in the Valley that clearly needed continued or expanded services, and the organizations and agencies in the Valley needed to work more collaboratively in order to meet the needs of these populations. And, in large measure, the funding strategies worked. More services are indeed being provided and there is significantly more organizational and inter-agency cooperation.

In the next several years, however, we believe the funding needs to go to the next level and help organizations and agencies be more strategic. They should be responding to questions like "Are we being effective in our programs and services? Where are the next critical areas of need and opportunity? What performance indicators and measurable outcomes are appropriate? How can we determine when and if we are making a difference and having an impact?" In essence, we suggest that the next phase of funding be targeted to those organizations that want and need to address these questions. We also suggest that funding be focused on giving them the tools and resources they need to take on this challenge.

The emphasis here shifts from outputs (what we are doing) to outcomes (how are we doing, and are we making a difference). Most national foundations have insisted on this shift because they believe, as resources become scarce, it is important to know if an organization is being effective and having a meaningful impact on a neighborhood, city, or region. In light of this, the next phase of funding should be developed with clear and thoughtful deliberation,

perhaps within the next year, with adequate input from the Valley organizations and agencies. It should also be developed with the benefit of the experience and best practices of foundations like the Casey Foundation, Rockefeller, The Heinz Endowments, etc. Finally, funding should be available for technical assistance and capacity building to organizations that wish to move to an outcomes-based modus operandi. Valley United Way started the discussion on Outcomes Measurement in the Valley. VNOP worked with Yale SOM to develop a concise, usable outcomes measurement tool that is used for project planning and evaluation. Valley United Way has implemented this tool with partner agencies and in a competitive grants process.

The second strategic area where future funding should be targeted is in the area of **Regional Equity**. As the economic and demographic data suggest in this report, Ansonia and Derby have higher concentrations of poverty, have struggling downtowns, fewer business locations and expansions and, as a consequence, are not able to contribute to the long-term economic development of the Valley economy to the extent that Shelton and Oxford, for example, are able. Until this inequity changes, the two communities will continue to lag the others. They will slow the overall growth capacity of the Valley and hinder its evolution to a high-performance economy.

In this context, we recommend that funding be directed to helping these two communities in ways that enhance their downtowns, strengthen their economic development capacity, enhance the education and skills of their population, create business and entrepreneurial opportunities for their residents, and make the condition of their physical and telecommunications infrastructures more competitive. The two communities need these kinds of investments in order to succeed. The emphasis here is on investment, not charity.

◆ ***Rework the capacity building/grantwriting effort.***

The VNOP developed a pool of funds to provide support to small organizations in the Valley that needed resources to hire a grantwriter. The goal of the program was to provide small groups with the capacity they would need to leverage other public and philanthropic funds. Demand for these funds proved to be very limited. Often, groups were working on a tight timeline. They were not able to apply for the grant writer fund with enough time to still meet their funding deadline. Local organizations still have a need for assistance in the grantmaking process. Prior to redesigning the program, we recommend the VAC hold a forum to get input from small, nonprofits in the region. The goal would be to find out what type of support would be the most useful moving forward.

ATTACHMENT A: WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT MODELS

Memphis/Shelby County

In the Memphis/Shelby County area, there is a close relationship between Southwest Tennessee Community College and economic development organizations, particularly the Memphis Regional Chamber of Commerce. There are also linkages, although not as strong, between the community college, the chamber, and the Workforce Investment Network, the area's WIB.

The Chamber spearheaded *Memphis 2005*, a comprehensive economic development strategy that incorporates workforce development. The development of the strategy also involved local and county governments and a regional utility, with broad regional participation. The strategy's workforce development component seeks to meet employer skill needs by aligning local industries into seven industry/career clusters and by identifying skill requirements for occupations within each cluster.

Following completion of the strategy, the Chamber established the Memphis Regional Alliance for Workforce Development to implement the workforce development recommendations. The Alliance is staffed by the Business-Education Collaboratives Department at Southwest Tennessee Community College. The Alliance serves as a broker for the stakeholders of the emerging, transitional, and current workforce, and works with directors of each sector of the workforce continuum to ensure the alignment of processes, strategies, and outcomes. In addition to its leadership role in the cluster efforts, the Alliance serves as a clearinghouse for research and best practices in education and workforce investment, and supports the Workforce Investment Board as it develops policy to achieve its mission, goals, and objectives.

The Business-Education Collaboratives Department also leads *The Partnership for Preparing a Regional Workforce*, a consortium of businesses, schools, and community organizations focused on workforce preparation in the K-12 system. It includes more than 400 businesses, 10 colleges and universities in southwest Tennessee, three public K-12 systems serving more than 160,000 students (Memphis City Schools, Shelby County Schools, and Fayette County Schools), seven private K-12 schools, and 44 community-based organizations.

The Partnership supports five major initiatives:

1. connecting education and the workplace for students, educators, businesses, and community stakeholders;
2. providing career awareness, exploration, and experience for students;
3. facilitating curriculum enhancement and reform;
4. supporting school reform (e.g., thematic schools, institutes, quality-in-education initiatives, and centers of excellence); and
5. providing professional development opportunities for teachers, counselors, administrators, and educational professionals.

The Chamber plays a significant role in appointing business representatives to the WIB. The Chamber selects the majority of the WIB's business representatives, and representatives of the Chamber and the community college also sit on the WIB board.

There are some examples of coordination between the WIB and the community college. The WIB contracts with the Business-Education Collaboratives Department to direct the activities of its Youth Council, and the community college is one of the WIB's major training vendors. At the same time, the community college seems to operate its own one-stop center independent of the WIB's career center network. Its Workforce Development Center, a unit of the Workforce Development & Continuing Education Division, provides comprehensive services for individuals and organizations to obtain job skills, employment, and self-sufficiency. It receives funding from the Tennessee Department of Human Services to provide employment and career services to TANF recipients and from the Federal of Bureau of Prisons to provide post-secondary educational services to inmates at a federal corrections institution located in the Memphis area.

More Information:

Southwest Tennessee Community College: www.southwest.tn.edu/wfd/

Memphis Regional Chamber: www.memphischamber.com

Jobs for the Future: High-Leverage Governance Strategies for Workforce Development Systems.

Ohio Bridges to Opportunity

In 2002, the Knowledge Works Foundation launched the **Ohio Bridges to Opportunity Initiative**. The goal of the initiative is to link Ohio's technical and community colleges, career-technical schools, and other providers of adult basic education to the entire workforce development system in order to increase the skills of low-wage workers. The effort involved a stakeholder planning group consisting of leaders from the state's community and technical colleges, career-technical schools, other adult basic education providers, employers, and representatives of human service and economic development agencies. In March 2003, the Initiative issued a set of strategies and an action plan. The strategies included: 1) building pathways for job and educational advancement; 2) enhancing recruitment of low-income adults into programs that help them advance; 3) improving program retention; and 4) advocating for public policy reforms. A five-point action plan was articulated, the first element of which was to pilot strategies through regional partnerships of community colleges, career-technical schools, adult literacy providers, employers, economic development and human service agencies, and others. Other elements of the action plan include research and technical assistance to support pilots, support for policy development and coordination among state agencies, and strategic communications to build awareness and support for the initiative.

Subsequent to the completion of the action plan, a statewide conference was held in October 2003 to introduce the initiative and to solicit proposals for regional collaboratives. The Foundation funded 12 proposed collaboratives to engage in a deeper planning process. The collaboratives typically involve business representatives, community and technical colleges,

vocational-technical schools, one-stop career centers, and community-based organizations. They range in geographic scope from Workforce Investment Areas, to Metropolitan Statistical Areas, to groups of rural counties. Most of the collaboratives are targeting one industry sector or cluster as a pilot project.

The stakeholder group that helped create the vision and action plan for the Initiative has continued to meet in reconstituted form to clarify a policy agenda that will be informed by the individual pilot initiatives. The Foundation is also providing technical assistance through periodic conferences and assigning experienced coaches to each site.

More Information:

KnowledgeWorks Foundation: www.kwfdn.org

KnowledgeWorks Foundation: *Building Bridges to Opportunity and Economic Growth in Ohio: The Importance of the State's Community and Technical Colleges in Educating Low-Wage Workers*, 2003.

Cedar Rapids – Career Edge

Career Edge–For the New World of Work academies initially involved Kirkwood Community College, school districts within the Cedar Rapids-Marion area, the Workplace Learning Connection (a regional nonprofit intermediary linking business and education through work-based learning activities), Grant Wood Area Education Agency, and area business partners. This partnership has expanded to include over 25 high schools throughout Kirkwood's seven-county service area. Funding to develop and sustain Career Edge Academy programs has come from local, state, and federal sources.

Career Edge–For the New World of Work began with the establishment of a coordinating council of stakeholders committed to the design, development, and implementation of new learning opportunities for students during their final two years of high school. The coordinating council agreed that these programs would be designed as a career-focused school-within-a-school at area high schools. There was also a commitment that each academy, regardless of location, would include a set of core elements:

- **2+2+2 Program Design.** Students would see how their two years in high school would provide a seamless transition to a community college program, a four-year college or university, or both. Students would have multiple options to continue their education or enter the workforce immediately after high school.
- **Dual Credit.** Students would earn both high school and college credit with the college tuition paid by their local school districts.
- **Career and Academic Coursework.** Students would follow a Career Pathway Plan involving high-quality career and academic coursework.
- **Work-Based Learning.** Each academy would involve strong linkages with business and industry through job shadows, internships, tours, and guest speakers arranged through The Workplace Learning Connection, an intermediary linking education with business.
- **Skills Certificates.** Academy courses would provide students with certificates validating competency achievement.

- **Scholarships.** Each academy would have scholarship opportunities for students to continue their education at Kirkwood Community College.
- **Advisory Committee.** An advisory committee would be established consisting of business and industry, students, and faculty from both high school and college.
- **Career Edge Website** (<http://www.careeredge.info/>). The website would provide academy information for students, parents, and counselors. Students would be able to apply for an academy and faculty would access instructional resources.

Specific Career Edge Academy programs were selected for development based on several factors, including current and future employment needs, careers that paid a livable wage, student interest, faculty support, and Kirkwood department commitment. The development process involved the selection of an academy champion who would convene interested schools and facilitate the development process. Through the process, schools could select which Career Edge Academies to offer. To date, Career Edge Academies have been developed in automotive technology, computer programming, engineering technology, graphics and media communication, health services, human services, information systems management, and local area networking technology.

Over 650 area high school students were enrolled and earning college credit in one of the Career Edge Academies offered in fall 2002. They represent a major student growth area for Kirkwood. A significant number of students continue their education at Kirkwood after high school.

More Information:

Kirkwood Community College: www.kirkwood.edu

League for Innovation in the Community College, *Learning Abstracts*, May 2004:
www.league.org.

ATTACHMENT A: LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT MODELS

The literature on Leadership Development is very broad and very deep, and in many ways has become an “industry” of its own, with hundreds of academic and applied books, consulting, video guides, how-to manuals, etc., all designed to help businesses, communities, and organizations to recruit and train a new generation of leaders. “Best practices” from this material are quite extensive.

In addition to the more commercially-available literature and materials, national foundations have invested heavily in research and practice, and they have played an important role in educating businesses and communities about Leadership Development. For example, the John G. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation sponsored a publication entitled, *Best Practices Scan: Regional Leadership Development Initiatives* that summarizes the experiences of ten Leadership Development Programs from around the country. The Alliance for Regional Stewardship conducted the research on behalf of the Foundation, and it focuses on programs like the Institute for Civic Leadership in Portland, Maine, the Regional Leadership Institute in Atlanta, the Denver Community Leadership Program, and Leadership St. Louis.

The Kellogg Foundation helped create the Leadership Learning Community (LLC), “a national organization that connects the learning, practice, and resources of leadership development program staff, funders, and scholars” throughout the country. There are more than 100 members in the Leadership Learning Community network. An annual meeting serves as a vehicle for highlighting and promoting many of the “best practices” in leadership development, and a website sustains the learning process between annual meetings.

The Ford Foundation, through a program called Grant Craft, provided funding for a publication entitled, *Leadership Development Programs – Investing in Individuals*. The publication is a how-to manual for building an effective Leadership Development Program.

Additionally, large regional organizations, like the Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC), invest significant resources in leadership development. The ARC, for example, recently published a *Directory of Leadership Resources*, a document that catalogues nonprofits that offer training and technical assistance to communities, businesses, and organizations in the Appalachian Region.

Although an exhaustive inventory or description of Leadership Development Programs is beyond the scope of this report, there are a significant number of best practices and program principles that are found in many of the programs that Mt. Auburn reviewed. Following is a listing of those practices and principles that may have relevance to the Valley as it seeks to further enhance its ability to train and engage a new generation of leaders.

1. A self-assessment tool is sometimes used to help potential program participants identify their personal and professional goals, as well as their perceived leadership strengths and weaknesses. The self-assessment tool makes the process very personalized, and it provides a means for participants to measure the progress they have made after completing the program.

2. Several programs use a “Learning Contract” that participants complete. The contract identifies specific responsibilities that each party will have during the duration of the program. Like the self-assessment tool, the contract personalizes the learning process and establishes a sense of mutual accountability between the participant and the program director(s).
3. Most programs identified specific leadership development skills that program participants will gain from the program. To many Leadership Development program sponsors, the acquisition of these skills is critical. Among some of the skills areas that participants could expect to learn are:
 - meeting facilitation
 - strategic planning
 - program development
 - coalition-building
 - the art of balancing process and content
 - conflict resolution
 - negotiating
 - leadership styles and principles
 - bringing diversity into organizations, businesses, and communities
 - understanding the basics of regional economies.
4. Team building was a core component of a number of programs—that is, a participant in a Leadership Development Program would team up with another participant in the program and work cooperatively on problem-solving exercises or community projects. On occasion, weekend programs would be developed and include an Outward Bound kind of experience. The idea is to build a deeper connection among participants, make the experience more meaningful on a personal level, and allow for more peer-to-peer learning opportunities.
5. Many programs opted for larger blocks of time for the program, as a means of giving greater attention to skill development, and as a way of helping participants make connections with each other on a deeper level. Consequently, some programs would hold their Leadership Development Programs over a weekend or several days, rather than conducting the program for a few hours in evenings during the workweek.
6. For some programs, recruitment is often done through existing businesses, neighborhood groups, agencies, and organizations, with the explicit acknowledgement and support of the CEO or Executive Director. Also, recruitment is generally targeted at a very diverse cohort of people from large, medium, and small companies, community development corporations, churches labor unions, regional and local government bodies, public schools, and arts organizations. Recruitment is also aimed at people who left the community and returned, newcomers who recently moved into the community, and people of color.

7. There are a significant number of Leadership Development Programs that are either sponsored by universities and colleges, or done as a formal collaboration between universities and community-based organizations. The university affiliation often brings the resources of a wide range of faculty members, best practices leadership research, college credit, and the prestige of having a higher educational partner. Foundations are particularly interested in funding these kinds of partnerships.
8. A few programs clearly had a focus on the local community—that is, using the Leadership Development Program to address local issues, needs, and opportunities. However, these programs also made connections with state, regional, and national Leadership Development Programs through special meetings, attendance at state and national conferences, or being part of an e-based communication system. These wider connections introduced participants to a wider network of leaders and programs and, therefore, gave them an appreciation for the fact that leadership development is a national priority for communities and regions throughout the U.S.
9. Many of the programs Mt. Auburn examined charged a fee for the program. The belief here is that participants will take the program much more seriously if there is a cost involved. Some programs charged the sending business, organization, or agency. Others received support from foundations, which subsidized the cost for participants who paid on their own. Others simply charged each participant the full cost of the program and expected them to cover that cost.
10. Many programs also had an experiential component to the program, in which a participant, or a team of participants, work on a community issue or “hot topic.” These issues could be anything from tax overrides, to capital campaigns for parks or new schools, to downtown revitalization. In any case, the intent is to get participants into a learning/action mode that makes the theory and principles of leadership development very concrete. And, when participants get involved in these kinds of community projects, it is usually done with the help of a mentor or coach.
11. Upon completion of some leadership development programs, participants are typically invited to sit on the board of an organization, a high profile committee, or a community task force. Exactly where a participant ends up depends in part on their self-assessment, their performance during the program, and their interests. Also, in some instances, meetings and discussion between participants and graduates of previous Leadership Development Programs occur before someone is placed on a board or committee. The idea here is that program graduates may have insights about an organization or agency that would help in the placement decision-making process.
12. Finally, a number of Leadership Programs have developed useful guidelines for majority communities and organizations that want to broaden the participation of people of color in the civic infrastructure. Following are a few examples of these guidelines (the Leadership Learning Community, noted above, has more information on this issue in a paper entitled “The Potential Role of Leadership Development Strategies for Increasing Leadership Opportunities for People of Color”).

- Majority communities and organizations need to understand the fundamental barriers that people of color face in their community before engaging in a recruitment process.
- The recruitment process needs to be very intensive, often starting on a one-to-one basis, and focused on longer-term trust building.
- Organizations and committees that intend to recruit people of color should assess their existing leadership styles, priority issues, current racial make-up, translation capabilities, etc. in order to identify potential barriers that might make it difficult for minorities and non-English-speaking people to fully and comfortably participate.
- A Leadership Development Program, or a modified program, comprised only of people of color should be considered, so that participants have the opportunity to gain skills and experience in a comfortable setting, before enrolling in a broader Leadership Development Program.
- Existing minority organizations, churches, agencies, and businesses should be used to recruit/nominate people for leadership positions, or for participation in a Leadership Development Program. This would presumably build strong institutional connections between the majority and the minority communities, and provide an opportunity for the minority community to have more of a formal role in the civic infrastructure-building process.