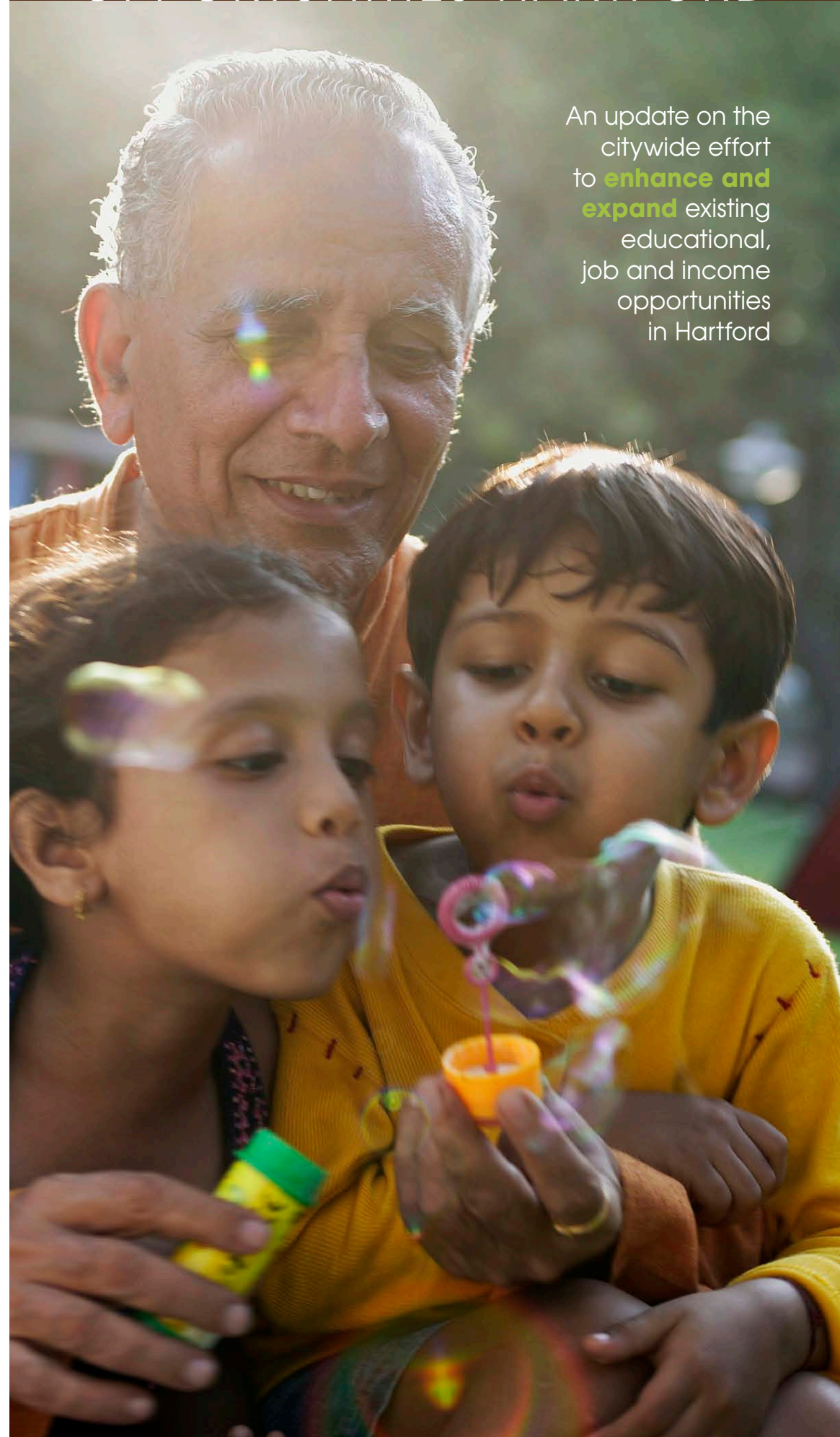




OPPORTUNITIES HARTFORD INCLUSIVE RESPONSIVE ACTIONABLE INTEGRATED STRATEGIC

An update on the citywide effort to **enhance and expand** existing educational, job and income opportunities in Hartford



PEDRO E. SEGARRA
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The purpose of the **Opportunities Hartford** initiative

When Mayor Segarra assumed office in July 2010 he was fully aware of both the challenges confronting the city and the opportunities that exist to overcome them. This was clear from the mission statement he issued at the time:

We must create jobs and improve the quality of education for Hartford's children and adults. We must also pursue opportunities to accelerate and expand the economic vitality of Hartford's business community and neighborhoods.

It remains clear to the Mayor that the Hartford community provides many opportunities for the people who live, learn, work, play, visit, and worship here. However, even the best the opportunities to lift the income and education of residents and improve their prospects for better jobs have been limited in scope and scale and not coordinated. On their own, many promising opportunities do not have the clout and are not backed by sufficient resources or the comprehensive strategy needed to make a community-wide impact.

With resources tight, too many citizens living below the poverty level and with the economy only slowly recovering, it has been critical for the city's leadership to set strategic priorities for improving educational results, creating jobs and increasing the median income of our residents.

INCLUSIVE



The evolution of *Opportunities Hartford*

Getting Started.

In October 2010, Mayor Segarra charged his cabinet with developing a strategic response to the city's existing landscape regarding education, jobs and income. José Colón-Rivas, the then acting Chief of Staff and now Director of Hartford's Department of Families, Children, Youth & Recreation, was assigned to lead the effort. The following month a task force named the Mayor's "Opportunities Work Group (OWG)" was formed. It consisted of individuals with expertise in the areas of communications, project facilitation, research/evaluation, policy advocacy, and community relations. A team from the Connecticut Association for Human Services was engaged to support the OWG's work.

Prior to the end of 2011, the OWG recommended that the Mayor initiate a community-wide effort to identify, enhance and expand upon the most promising opportunities that now exist to favorably impact educational achievement, career advancement and income levels for Hartford residents. The OWG recommended and the Mayor approved naming this effort **Opportunities Hartford**. At this time, Jared Kupiec became the permanent Chief of Staff and joined José Colón-Rivas as the co-chairperson of the OWG.

Mayor Segarra and his administration launched **Opportunities Hartford** with three initial goals in mind:

- 1 **Identify the greatest opportunities** that now exist in Hartford to improve community-wide results in the areas of education, job readiness/job creation/career advancement and family-sustaining income for our residents
- 2 **Convene, coordinate, support, and lead** the efforts of individuals and groups who together possess the skills, abilities, knowledge, and resources to enhance and expand these existing opportunities
- 3 **Funnel public and private sector funds** when and if available to invest in the targeted areas of opportunity

Preliminary Research.

Members of the OWG from the Connecticut Association for Human Services researched and developed background information on best practices addressing poverty reduction and community improvement initiatives in other urban areas such as Providence, NYC, Portland, OR, Baltimore, Burlington, VT, Charlotte, Dayton, Kalamazoo, Rochester, NY, San Jose, Savannah, and Springfield, MA.

Over the winter of 2011, a survey was conducted in English and Spanish. In-person interviews also were held with 400-500 people representing a cross section of the Hartford community (residents, government, non-profit, business, and education). Research participants were asked to cite the greatest education, job and income opportunities that exist in Hartford and what they would do to enhance and expand them and what new opportunities they would pursue.

Analysis & Strategy Development.

Results of the research were reported to the Mayor in the spring of 2011 along with the recommendation to form a Community Steering Committee (CSC) comprised of approximately 20 leaders representing nonprofit service organizations, employer and employee groups; educational entities; residents; and faith communities. The OWG recommended that the CSC members be furnished with the OWG's comprehensive research data (including white papers and Web-based support materials) and assigned the task of forming three Sector Teams (Jobs, Education, Income) which would over a six to eight month period of meetings develop a comprehensive and integrated set of recommended opportunities for the Mayor and his administration to pursue and to support. The Mayor approved this approach as well as the continuance of the OWG's work.

Mayor Segarra and the OWG identified the specific people representing the specific organizations who would be invited to become members of the Opportunities Hartford CSC. At the end of June 2011, Mayor Segarra sent letters of invitation to prospective CSC members most of whom agreed to join the CSC.

RESPONSIVE

Convening the Community Steering Committee.

The first CSC meeting took place in August 2011 at which time the participants unanimously agreed to participate in the multi-month process of working together to develop and present a set of recommended opportunities for Mayor Segarra's administration to pursue. The CSC members signed-up to join one of the three Sectors Teams— Education, Jobs, or Income.

The CSC convened monthly through March 2012 and the individual Sector Teams met in between the monthly meetings to develop their recommended opportunities. In March, each sector team presented three sets of recommended short-term, mid-term and long term opportunities and also submitted a more detailed written set of recommendations.

The CSC reconvened in May to hear the Mayor's response to the recommendations, which was a resounding call to immediately begin to implement each of the three short-term recommendations. He also discussed how best to integrate the mid-term and long-term recommendations into one cohesive plan of action that can be meaningfully supported by the city over the next three years.





Overview of the Community Steering Committee's Recommended Goals & Actions

Overarching common goal of the three sector teams:

Every Hartford resident is economically self-sufficient (as defined by the 2012 Basic Economic Security Tables). The five conditions necessary for successful implementation of *Opportunities Hartford*—a common agenda, shared measurement systems, mutually reinforcing activities, continuous communications, and a backbone support organization.



The Education Sector Team's goal:

Every Hartford resident will be college or career ready. In pursuing this goal, the Education Sector Team intends to coordinate early child education and adult/life-long learning with the K-12 operating plan of the Hartford Public Schools.

Education Recommendations.

Short-Term ... Increase access to life-long learning opportunities through alignment and a resource directory.

Mid-Term ... Expand access to quality early learning and expand employability of home daycare providers by piloting a life-long learning center using a home daycare model.

Long-Term ... Develop a comprehensive life-long learning center.



The Job Sector Team's goal:

Every working family in Hartford has self-sustaining employment.

Job Recommendations.

Short-Term ... Reduce unemployment by building on existing training programs and improving transportation.

Mid-Term ... Move low-wage workers to higher-skilled jobs focused on growing job sectors.

Long-Term ... Develop policies and a compact to create new jobs in the city and region.



The Income Sector Team's goal:

Every Hartford household has self-sustaining income.

Income Recommendations.

Short-Term ... Increase enrollment in work support programs, including through free tax preparation sites.

Mid-Term ... Increase residents' financial stability with free financial education and counseling programs.

Long-Term ... Advocate for policy change that reduces the high cost of poverty.

Next steps for meeting **Opportunities Hartford's** goals

- 1 Reach out to the broader Hartford community during the 2012 summer months to increase public awareness of the **Opportunities Hartford** initiative, of its process to date and the recommended opportunities that Mayor Segarra's administration plans to pursue.
- 2 Develop a strategic action plan for the implementation phase of the **Opportunities Hartford** initiative and enlist local, state and national partners with the capabilities and resources to bring it to life.
- 3 Enlarge the composition of the CSC to more comprehensively support the continuance of **Opportunities Hartford** on a sustained basis.

Looking Forward With Optimism

The ultimate payoff of **Opportunities Hartford** must be to narrow the most glaring educational, job and income gaps that separate our city from the rest of our state. We can do this. The city, through strong executive leadership and grassroots buy-in and support from all sectors, can align and coordinate the most promising efforts that now exist here while also adapting promising practices from other cities. In doing so, it will be critical for all Hartford stakeholders to hold ourselves accountable for improving the well-being of Hartford's residents and increasing their share of the prosperity experienced by most of the rest of our state. Mayor Segarra invites all of the city's stakeholders to learn more about the Opportunities Hartford initiative and to support it in whatever ways possible.



Original Members of the Community Steering Committee:

Jim Boucher, Capital Workforce Partners (Jobs Team)
Peggy Buchanan, Greater Hartford Central Labor Council, AFL-CIO (Income Team)
Bill Cibes, Independent Budget & Finance Expert (Income Team)
Fred Carstensen, Connecticut Center for Economic Analysis (receives meeting notes/does not attend)
Julio Concepción, MetroHartford Alliance (Income Team)
Liz Donohue, Governor's Office (receives meeting notes/does not attend)
Mayra Esquilin, HART (Income Team)
Paula Gilberto, United Way of Central and Northeast Connecticut (Jobs Team)
Linda Guzzo, Capital Community College (Education Team)
Steven Harris, Community Activist (Jobs Team)
Tina Jeter, Hartford Adult Education (Education Team)
Linda Kelly, Hartford Foundation for Public Giving (Education Team)
Christina Kishimoto, Hartford Public Schools (receives meeting notes/does not attend)
Yvette Meléndez, Hartford Hospital (Jobs Team)
Thea Montañez, The Hartford (Income Team)
Matt Morgan, Journey Home (Jobs Team)
Alex Nardone, Hartford Public Schools (Education Team)
Lois Nesci, Catholic Charities (Education Team)
Matt Poland, Hartford Public Library (Education Team)
Lena Rodrigues, Community Renewal Team (receives meeting notes/does not attend)
Michael Stotts, Hartford Stage (Jobs Team)
Donna Taglianetti, Independent Family Economic Stability Expert (Income Team)
Michael Williams, CT Department of Children and Families (Income Team)
Lyle Wray, Capitol Region Council of Governments (Jobs Team)
Elaine Zimmerman, Commission on Children (Education Team)

Opportunities Work Group Members:

Sarah Chasse, Connecticut Association for Human Services
José Colón-Rivas, Hartford's Department of Families, Children, Youth & Recreation (Co-Chair)
Jalmar De Dios, Connecticut Association for Human Services
Jim Horan, Connecticut Association for Human Services
Sheryl Horowitz, Connecticut Association for Human Services
Sandra Kee Borges, Corporation Counsel, City of Hartford
Jared Kupiec, Mayor's Office, City of Hartford (Co-Chair)
Trudy Lebon, Clark Community School
David Panagore, Chief Operating Officer, City of Hartford
Michael Salius, Salius Communications, LLC
Pedro E. Segarra, Mayor, City of Hartford
Trish Torruella, Hartford's Department of Families, Children, Youth & Recreation
Tara Washington, Procurement, City of Hartford

ACTIONABLE