

OP-ED or IT'S MY TURN: BURLINGTON FREE PRESS

A recent letter to the editor in your paper mentioned New England Futures – a project that should be of great interest to your readers.

Recognizing that no state alone can solve the huge problems confronting the region - including unstable energy supplies, lack of affordable housing, unequal access to quality education, and inadequate rail transportation and broadband connections – a growing collaboration of New Englanders from business, government, academia, media, foundations and non profits are working together to ensure that New England thrives as a region in the 21st Century. The partners include the Institute for Sustainable Communities, Citistates Group, New England Council, New England Initiative at UMass-Lowell, New England Association of Regional Councils, Mt. Auburn Associates, and Orton Family Foundation. There is widespread support for the project from community foundations in all six states, corporations and private foundations.

As former Maine Governor Angus King said, “We’re in peril. We New Englanders must strengthen ourselves, break historic precedent, find new and innovative ways to maximize our joint strengths, work together.” King is joined by former Vermont Governor Madeleine Kunin, former Massachusetts Governor Michael Dukakis and other key business, academic, non profit and faith leaders in a Strategic Alliance that leads the project.

How can New England apply its tremendous educational, technological, cultural, scientific, natural and human resources to the task? With your help. All across the region people are working on solutions to some of New England’s most intractable problems. Through this project we seek to connect these people and mobilize a broad cross section of New Englanders to engage in public dialogues to set a regional agenda for action.

To begin this process, the Citistates Group-renowned journalist Neal Peirce and public policy strategist Curtis Johnson- interviewed over 500 people across New England (over 100 in Vermont alone) about the region’s most pressing issues and the most promising opportunities for resolving these issues. They prepared a series of six articles entitled, “New England: New Century, New Game,” to be released once a month beginning in October. Over 22 daily newspapers in the region printed the first article. Public radio and television stations, New England Cable News and our own CCTV are conducting interviews with the authors and experts on the issues and developing call-in programming.

Following the release of the last article in the spring of 2006, we will begin a series of New England Town Meetings – accessible in each state and utilizing the

latest networking and consensus building technology – designed to bring people together to develop a regional agenda for action.

Throughout the process the New England Futures website, www.newenglandfutures.org, will be a hub for information. Visit the website to read the articles, tell us your ideas, meet others working on these issues and take brief surveys on each topic.

The New England Futures project offers New Englanders an unprecedented opportunity to take responsibility for their own future, strategically build on regional assets, and unleash environmental, social and economic entrepreneurship to make New England an even better place to live, work, and play in the new Century.

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