

## NEW ENGLAND: Six Teams — or One?

By Neal Peirce and Curtis Johnson

Are New England's best days behind it? Is it fated to be an old, blue, cold and complacent corner of a red-hot America?

Some indicators suggest so. The six states are barely holding their own in population; Massachusetts is actually slipping backward. Each year the merger mania of big companies seems to snap up a famed New England corporation -- a Hancock, Fleet or Gillette. Only scrappy fights stem closure of the region's principal military bases, an anchor of its long-standing defense economy. Despite the remarkable surge of biotech research and corporate spinoffs in the Boston region, the overall economic growth rate is anemic.

Check around New England, as we have in hundreds of interviews over the past three years, and you sense little of the dynamism of the American South and West. The region's congressional strength is dwindling, and it won no favors in Republican-led Washington with its six-state sweep for John Kerry in 2004. Right now, states like Massachusetts, Connecticut look strong in national rankings of education and income, but the trend lines are down as competitors nip at their heels.

But is decline inevitable?

We argue "no." This is a region with stupendous assets. It has smart and resourceful people, great places to live, world-famed universities, lively self-governance, and a leading edge in critical 21st century technology skill sets. It's attached at the hip to metropolitan New York, a linchpin of the national (and global) economy.

New England's environmental consciousness, its tradition of political independence and self-reliance, suggest character and strength, whether capitalizing on good times or coping with disasters. And in a nation being engulfed by faceless cookie-cutter development, the images of New England seascapes, farmlands and hills, the region's historic towns and cities, tug at heartstrings, generate envy across the continent.

So what stands in New England's way?

The region's own mind set, we suggest. New Englanders themselves are first to tell one what a hopelessly disjointed, every-town and every-state-for-itself region they

live in. The attitude we heard everywhere: "Our towns go back to 1630 or before, our states almost as far; we've done fine each town or state going its own way, so why collaborate now?"

Each time we heard that, we wondered to ourselves: "What century do these folks believe we're in?" The islands of time and space that once separated this lovely corner of America from the maelstrom of global reality are gone. No more waiting decades if not centuries to recover from such crises as the rise and fall of clipper ships, or the flight of textiles to the American South, or the loss of high-tech eminence from Route 128 to Silicon Valley. The region must sink or swim in an era of instant global communications, finance and warfare. It faces profound peril from likely storms and floods intensified by global warming, from energy shortages and terrorism that respect no borders. It can expect little help

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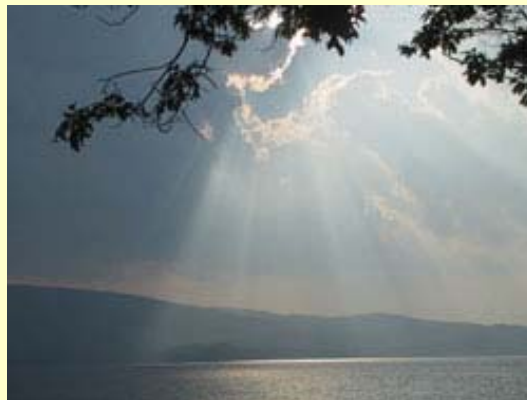
from an increasingly debt-ridden and war-distracted national government.

Historically New Englanders have innovated, thought anew to reposition themselves for new eras' challenges. But in these years when precedent-shattering collaborations for survival and progress are being forged around the world, is New England in the game?

Is there matching New England effort, for example, to the inventiveness of the European Union? Nations torn for centuries by bitter and bloody warfare have made remarkable progress through a common passport and currency (the euro). Plus, they're working very closely together on such issues as energy, transportation, and special help for ailing countries and regions.

Couldn't the six states of New England, "divided only by a common language," be as inventive? With its wealth of talent, what better region in America to mount team approaches to energy, education, transportation, health care? We discovered some highly creative networking -- grassroots groups impatient to move ahead on "green" energy initiatives, to compare notes across state lines on "smart growth" strategies, to measure progress and set goals in every area from job growth to health to housing. They're impatient to see how their communities, and New England as a whole, are performing, and might excel.

If that kind of fresh thinking means reversing 400 years of New England "I'll take care of myself" stoniness, so be it! Conservative grassroots organizing altered American politics in recent years. The Howard Dean presidential campaign and a flurry of activist "dot.org" groups have disrupted old top-down ways of doing things. Citizen-backed non-profit groups,



Newfound Lake, NH

### A KING'S WARNING

**Wake-up words from former Maine Gov. Angus King:**

"In today's global economy, the historic rivalries and differences between New England states are luxuries we can't afford. Virtually every job we do is subject to global competition: in 20 years the only jobs that can't be outsourced will be those that touch a person or something they own. The world wants our standard of living. It will take a massive effort at education and innovation to maintain it."

**King's message to the region:** "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."

linked by the Internet, may be poised for major impact.

Amazingly often, we found, "official" New England lends a tin ear to fresh ideas and initiatives, even when they come from prominent statewide organizations. The congressional delegation focuses sporadically, at best, on New England-specific issues. The New England Governors Conference meets infrequently, doesn't even emulate groups like the Western Governors Assn. with a shared research staff to analyze challenges and propose strategies. Massachusetts Gov. Mitt Romney actually withdrew Massachusetts from the conference, purportedly to save dues.

The result for New England: one missed opportunity after another. Consider tourism, a "clean," multi-billion dollar, job-generating industry that also draws potential future residents. It's true: many visitors do now flood into Vermont, Cape Cod and the Maine Coast. But overall, New England tourism is underdeveloped. Yankee Magazine underscores the region's potential draw: over half its subscribers live outside the region. A national survey by the business-led Team New England group found outsiders have a higher positive image of New England as a whole than any of its individual states. Yet the six states keep going their own way, refusing to promote New England jointly -- except to foreign markets.

And if the states have a tough time making common cause, it seems even tougher for New England towns to drop their prickly go-it-alone mindsets and collaborate for mutual gain. Though when they do, the gains can be big.

Take Maine's twinned, historically cantankerous cities of Lewiston and Auburn facing each other across the Androscoggin River. They're collaborating creatively to rebuild economies devastated by the loss of textile and shoe factories. Old downtown mill buildings are being handsomely restored, arts, culture and health care are thriving, new industries have been recruited, and the cities have concluded 23 intercity service agreements. Leaders of these historic rivals hurry to tell visitors, with immense pride, of how much they've gained, how much more confidence they feel, as a result of working closely together.

And they're not alone. "New England's Knowledge Corridor," a first-ever Springfield- and Hartford-rooted development alliance of businesses and famed Connecticut River Valley universities, is striving to make inroads against the big psychological barrier of the Connecticut-Massachusetts border.

Rhode Island has largely abandoned its selfish "Mass Exodus" campaign to snatch jobs from the neighboring Bay State. Instead it now affirms, even advertises, its identity as the southern anchor of the Greater Boston citistate with its amazing pool of universities and entrepreneurial networks. There's really no longer any such thing as a separate Rhode Island economy, says Rhode Island economic development leader Kip Bergstrom: "We're a lot better off defining ourselves as part of an integrated metro

area with 8 million people, instead of a separate place of 1 million."

But scattered islands of collaboration need to grow if New England is to deal with tough economic perils:

**Population loss.** In the '90s, Massachusetts, Connecticut, Rhode Island and Maine all saw more people move out than in. Today, even as national population levels surge forward, New Hampshire (fed by Massachusetts migrants) is the only New England state showing appreciable increase.



Photo Credit: Sun Journal/Lewiston, Maine

The Androscoggin River which separates the Maine cities of Auburn (left) and Lewiston (right) is increasingly viewed as a common tie that bonds the two. Photo was taken during the annual Great Falls Balloon Festival.

Does stagnant population matter? The answer's yes: Taxes are higher for the people left. Fewer people mean a smaller workforce, a red flag to any corporation deciding where to locate or expand. The resulting danger, says Doug Fisher of Northeast Utilities: "loss of vibrancy and hope."

**Talent shortage.** This emergency was cloaked in the '90s, when foreigners accounted for *all* of New England's labor force growth. Without the immigrants who came to get a New England university education, the region today would have a critical shortage of physicians and skilled laboratory researchers. But post-9/11 security concerns have thrown a shadow over the immigrant welcome mat, for the skilled and unskilled alike.

Even with foreign enrollment, the count of students earning scientific, engineering and information technology degrees in New England universities -- the lifeblood of the region's vaunted high-tech economy -- actually *declined* in the '90s.

**Flight of youth.** Even while New England "grays" faster than any other U.S. region, its young people are fleeing to the Atlantas and Phoenixes of America. New England lost a stunning 20 percent -- twice the U.S. average -- of its 20-to-34 year-olds in the last decade.

**Deep income divisions.** There are millions of financially secure New Englanders -- but also disturbing numbers, native or immigrant, caught in distressed mill towns, remote rural areas or troubled inner cities, unprepared to prosper or

contribute without dramatically broadened education and community-building initiatives.

New England is high-cost country -- to live, and to do business. Decent incomes are offset by high housing, transportation and energy costs. And businesses constantly cite thickets of rules and regulations imposed by the six states' 3,700 local governments -- raising the cost of everything they do.

In a recent report for the New England Council, the nationally-known consulting firm of A.T. Kearney reported that measured by cost of living, New England's current level of prosperity is only average in the U.S. "*Boston and expensive* are all too frequently uttered in the same breath," it observed, pinpointing high wages and housing costs, taxes and utility rates.

In Team New England's survey of business executives from outside the region, 27 percent volunteered they'd never do business in New England at all, preferring areas with lower taxes, energy and housing costs and a growing workforce. As one of the survey's sponsors lamented: "New England's image is of a costly, tightly regulated historic theme park, (and by the way bring a parka!)"

So what's to be done? In this series, we'll identify challenges that can best -- or only -- be solved only when New England starts acting like a team, faces the world as a coherent entity, like a single state.

#### **November: Take the offense on energy.**

The days of easy-come oil and gas are fast-disappearing. Imagine a coordinated New England energy security strategy that pushes hard to assure outside supplies but also focuses on smart self-help -- conservation, developing bio-fuels, wind farms, building efficient new "green" buildings, retrofitting old ones.

#### **December: Play a smart new education card.**

New England, America's Athens, faces fierce university competition, from Chapel Hill to Bangalore. Tuitions are soaring, attendance is static, public universities undernourished. Why not imagine all New England as one great campus, with a radical new way for students (local or across the world) to tailor their own New England education, in classroom or on-line?

**January: Growth gamble.** Even as New England hemorrhages youth -- the seedcorn of its future -- many towns resist families with school-age kids. Simultaneously, sprawl development imperils the region's world-signature countryside. But six-state-wide action could avert what demographers see as "slow economic suicide."

**February: Connect to compete.** To compete, New England needs border-to-border broadband -- soon. And to score, it must turn earliest-possible attention to glaring deficiencies in its transportation system -- roads, rail, air, water and interconnections.

**March: Health - consumer as captain.** New England's teaching hospitals and laboratories

are world-famed. But high-tech medicine alone is failing to deliver healthy lives. Rx: a New England-wide agenda to make consumers co-healers with their doctors, computer-based

scorecards on results, a big push for healthy lifestyles.

Can New England conceivably pull together to face its 21st century priorities? No choice, as

we see it. Or as our friend, the late great civic leader, John W. Gardner, put it: "What we have before us are some breathtaking opportunities disguised as insoluble problem.

## North-South, East-West, How Do We Identify?

By Neal Peirce and Curtis Johnson

"You have to understand. There are two separate New Englands."

Talk to New Englanders and this is what you hear. The south is rich, the north is poor. There's no common connection.

Sorry, we don't agree. To be sure, there's a connected, university-packed, high-technology southern New England. It's the place of economic buzz, bigger incomes, fed by the bustling Boston economy or spun off from the commercial colossus of New York. It even has high-tech fingers poking northward, in big numbers in southern New Hampshire, plus Maine's hot-growth belt -- Portland and its environs.

And it's true -- northern New England, hit by factory and lumber mill closings, is often seen as rural, remote, unwired, and often withering, even by some residents. As one Maine editor noted: "The northern two-thirds of this state have been in economic transition for 25 years, with no indication of where it will take us. We're the coastal anchor of a depression belt across the northern tier through New Hampshire, Vermont and across Upstate New York."

Even so, thousands of southern New Englanders prize the north, its mountains and lakes and villages, for vacations, and dream about retiring there. The secret of successful regions isn't differences, it's connections. Neither north-versus-south nor east-versus-west thinking helps plan a future. As attorney and civic activist Don Dubendorf of Williamstown, Mass., told us over lunch on a cold crisp day: "New England uses geography as an excuse for all kinds of decisions -- or not making any."

But the excuse disappears if you see New England as a single region linked south to north rather than separated north versus south. It's two corridors where the vast majority of New Englanders have chosen to live and work.

Ironically, the southern anchor isn't even in New England -- It's New York City. The grand division into corridors occurs at New Haven. The coastal corridor, its marker federal Interstate

95 and the Northeast rail corridor, stretches past New London, up to Providence, through metropolitan Boston to coastal Maine, with a significant bump of development focused on I-93 into southern New Hampshire and another through Worcester, Fitchburg and Keene.

encompasses the lively northern city of Burlington on Lake Champlain, with Montreal not far to the north.

The western corridor has an admittedly less glowing reputation -- in part because Springfield has had to struggle economically and Hartford, though a state capital, suffers acutely the New England's syndrome of centuries-old town borders sealing off poor center cities from their affluent suburbs. Still, if it's pushed strongly, the bi-state "Knowledge Corridor," with its focus on academic-scientific assets, has real potential to invigorate this area's economy.

A two-corridor New England concept doesn't mean eastern and western New England get disconnected. Instead, it suggests rich varieties of connection that give each corridor a stake in the other's success. A prime example: supplementing Northeast Corridor rail with high-speed service running west from Boston, through Worcester to Springfield, then down through Hartford to New York -- a potentially big shot in the arm for

western corridor cities, as their accessibility to Boston and New York soars.

Another potential: "on-shoring," encouraging Boston area pharmaceutical firms to choose close-by but lower-cost New England labor markets in the Connecticut River Valley for their production facilities, a concept advanced by A.T. Kearney in its regional economic analysis for the New England Council. Otherwise, the manufacturing continues to float off to places like North Carolina, or overseas.

In a globalized, broadband, instant-access century, New England's ingrained divisions look more myopic and petty than ever. Seen from afar, this is a tiny corner of the U.S. and the world. Florida alone has more people, California almost 2.5 times as many. Yet opening its eyes to new reality, New England could move confidently to create new connections, geographic corridors and communities of intriguing opportunity.



Graphic Credit: Citistates Group

Are there two New Englands? Yes, but not the two you think: the old notion of a northern tier so different from everything south is yielding to a new reality. Today's New England is two corridors, running north to south, side by side, rich in assets that could be combined more powerfully.

At its easternmost extremity the coastal corridor has fingers probing into Canada's eastern maritime provinces. With an economy reinvented around higher education and technology, biosciences, healthcare and financial services, plus the much-sought-after tourist and retirement communities that share lobstering activity along the south Maine coast, the coastal corridor is mostly prosperous, though dotted with pockets of serious poverty.

New England's other major development spine lies more inland, chiefly along I-91's ribbons of concrete and asphalt. This corridor moves up the Connecticut River valley to Hartford and then Springfield, through Massachusetts's Pioneer Valley including the remarkable constellation of colleges around Northampton, and then directly beside the river as it divides Vermont and New Hampshire. Along the way it passes by the prosperous (and we found forward-looking) "Upper Valley" community focused on Hanover, N.H. and its notable Dartmouth-Hitchcock Medical Center. The corridor's I-89 spur

# A Brand for Today's New England?

By Neal Peirce and Curtis Johnson

In an age of clever commercial and place branding, how about New England? Las Vegas is flash. New York is the Big Apple. So how does this historic, established corner of the nation remind the world that it exists, excels, offers uniquely wonderful qualities? How can it use that identity to draw and hold students, workers, retirees?

It's true, brands are always part myth. But if they have a core of reality, they build value, identity, pride. A better brand builds bonds.

Take Vermont. It's green, it's lovely hillside farms, it's picturesque towns. It's a quiet but firm sense of community. In the words of Jerry Greenfield of Ben & Jerry's -- Vermont is all about the "purity, untainted, wholesome quality" he claims for his own product. Vermont resists mass ways and the likes of Wal-Mart. Skeptics say Vermont just "sells nostalgia," the fact is it declared itself beckoning country. And Americans come by the millions.

Maine has a real brand too. It's the rugged, outdoors image, land of dramatic seascapes and northern forests, territory of the backwoodsman and tough, taciturn lobsterman. It's individualism but a willing hand for a neighbor in trouble. L.L. Bean prizes the Maine image for itself-- integrity, durability, resilience, and a strong land conservation ethic, as one executive put it to us.

Each of the states has brand power: New Hampshire's granite peaks, glacial lakes and fierce "Live Free or Die" independence. Plucky little Rhode Island with its lovely bay, Newport mansions and comeback capital city. Massachusetts, home to New England's star city of Boston and a concentration of brainpower with few global equals. Connecticut, the state of personal wealth, industrial ingenuity and insurance.

But what of New England as a whole? Can its states drop their typically divisive ways and find a way to work together to draw students, attract entrepreneurs and investment?

We believe there's a fantastic asset to build on -- a brand-in-waiting that's been evolving, ripening for close to four centuries, a core value no modern advertising campaign could begin to emulate.

So what is the brand? Dozens of ideas came up in our interviews. Consider these:

- Birthplace of the nation's culture and the American Revolution
- A place of ingenuity, creativity, and adaptability, coping with northern winters and challenging seas -- thus the image of the

"tough" (but ultimately successful) New Englander

- Constancy, reliability, persistence ... here, historian James Truslow Adams wrote, "the gristle of conscience, work, thrift, shrewdness, duty, became bone."



Boston's new Leonard P. Zakim Bunker Hill Bridge.

- Constant innovation -- a region forever reinventing itself, from farming to clipper ships, textiles to high finance to biotechnology, and today's bid to make arts and design a new century economic key
- Reverence for learning, America's premier center of world-renowned universities and research laboratories, hundreds of colleges, the birthing spot of America's first public schools
- An ever-expanding vision of human rights, from overthrowing Britain's colonial rule to championing abolition of slavery to today's controversies of civil unions and gay marriages



Town officials are sworn in at the town meeting in Sutton, N.H.

- Deep suspicion of war, but New England states in the forefront of patriotism and volunteering (like today's Vermont, with

largest per-capita numbers of Iraq war volunteers -- and fatalities)

- Authenticity of place, embodied in the intimate scale of the historic New England town, now also in gritty Industrial Revolution cities like Lowell

- High environmental values, the legacy of Henry David Thoreau, innumerable land trusts, preservation efforts from Cape Cod to the Maine Coast, Long Island Sound to the White Mountains -- clear pointers to a 21st century New England that should lead in renewable energy, combating global warming, and building sustainable communities

- Town meeting America -- public-mindedness, taking responsibility for one's own community, not yielding to so-called "professionals" -- New Englanders may often seem stingy, but they do volunteer

- Character and courage in public life -- defying partisan stereotypes, the region that produced such independent figures as Eliot Richardson, John Chafee, Ralph Flanders, Warren Rudman, George Aiken, Lowell Weicker, Margaret Chase Smith, Edmund Muskie and many still active on New England's congressional delegation

The skeptic will ask: But what about today's jarring New England realities -- pockets of political corruption, cold-hearted NIMBYism in privileged towns, "McMansions" that stomp on their historic setting, the new-born addiction of casino gambling, and a barrage of fast-food fed obesity?

Our reply: No branding is ever complete; great places are always far from perfect, forever "works in progress."

The hugest New England peril we encountered was complacency -- a belief the region has always excelled and triumphed, so why worry about the present?

But we also heard a chorus of impatience from thoughtful New Englanders who believe it's time for more working together and less stubborn Yankee go-it-alone-ism. Success in this century, we heard, will require New Englanders to cultivate -- in business, universities, government, and the region's growing array of non-profits -- a set of radically expanded networking and collaboration skills.

Innovation and creativity made New England great; today's challenge is to connect the dots of New England's store of curious minds, its pools of capital and strong institutions, to do it again -- and build the brand for the new century.

## Creative Economy: Region's New Success Ticket?

By Neal Peirce and Curtis Johnson

Can New England's creative arts help to sculpt the region's economy for the century?

Five years ago the business-led New England Council, executives from such fields as manufacturing and banking, took a bold step. In a special report, they celebrated the region's growing "creative economy." They saw that the region's fine arts, music and drama fields were not only growing but inspiring such other fields of imaginative design as architecture, photography, film and web design. The resulting 245,000-job sector, they reported, was growing twice as fast as New England's overall economy.

If there were skeptics back then, there are many fewer today. In our interviews from Providence to North Adams, the Berkshires to the Maine Coast, no one claimed a creative economy solves all problems. But we found growing numbers focusing on the arts as key to their lives and livelihoods in what's become a bleak season for traditional manufacturing, lumbering and fishing.

In Providence, Mayor David Cicilline told us arts and culture are at the heart of Providence's 21st century strategies: "They contribute to our humanity and quality of life; they're a huge piece of our economic development." Roger Mandel, president of the fabled Rhode Island School of Design, backed him up, proclaiming all of Rhode Island "a very art-friendly place," a state where "artists aren't seen on the fringe," where government is willing to take such steps as tax-free zones for artists and designers.

Mandel's goal is to make Providence and Rhode Island a globally recognized center of design and "right-brain" thinking that sparks creative problem-solving. RISD's Center for Design and Business has helped hundreds of artist-entrepreneurs launch their own businesses. Probing new frontiers, it's now working with the MIT Media Lab on new ideas and product design to ease the problems of aging.

In the Berkshires, one's reminded of New England's preeminence in the fine arts -- the 300,000 yearly visitors drawn to the Tanglewood Music festival, Jacob's Pillow (arguably the U.S.'s best festival for contemporary and modern dance), the Williamstown Theater Festival (in top ranks of summer stock theaters) and the prestigious Clark Art Institute at Williamstown.

But for development drama, nothing beats Mass MOCA - the Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art at North Adams. It's situated in what director Joe Thompson calls a "red elephant" space -- one of New England's historic brick mills, "buildings with great bones -- 10 or 12 foot high ceilings -- humane comfortable environments, with lots of windows, places with a warmth and patina of 120 years of human

labor in them, making them beautiful places to reclaim."

Today Mass MOCA isn't just a world-class modern art museum that's given fresh life to the 13-acre, 27 building site Sprague Electric deserted in the '80s, leaving thousands jobless. MOCA has also -- in the words of president Mary Grant of the Massachusetts College of Fine Arts -- brought North Adams "an infusion of artists, writers, film-makers and others who bring new ideas, new energy, a degree of wealth and willingness to take risk."



Photo Credit: Kevin Gutting/Daily Hampshire Gazette

From old to new New England: A workman sandblasts the exterior of One Cottage Street, Easthampton, Mass., as it's converted from an historic mill to a new center for business and the arts.

Plus, North Adams has become a poster child of New England towns revived by arts and artists. In 1993, 20 percent of its downtown storefronts were occupied; today it's around 80 percent. Several high-grade restaurants have moved in. Thompson says "the Maginot Line between prestigious Williamstown and North Adams the tough mill town" is disappearing; indeed, "Mass MOCA sprang like a rib from Williams College; we have lots of Williams alumni and trustees on our board."

Thompson's point underscores the case made by Evan Dobbelle, president of the New England Board of Higher Education -- that the region's world-famed array of colleges and universities "drive the creative economy" as they forge new connections and prepare "tomorrow's architects, painters, sculptors, writers, dancers, designers, thinkers, entrepreneurs."

Indeed, claims Dobbelle, the combination of higher education, design, graphics, and now digital media, "make a real industry for the future" that's tough to duplicate elsewhere. Why? Because "culture here is so significant-- everywhere an historical or art museum-- this is a very civil place."

In Brunswick, Maine, former Gov. Angus King picked up on the point. Not only does New England have "a tremendous stack of intellectual capital" that feeds innovation, he said, but it offers exceptional quality of place -- a huge asset when, for the first time in human history "people can work where they live instead of live where they work." Provided New England can keep unsightly sprawling development under control, said King, its place advantage will only grow:

"A century ago Maine's asset was falling water. Then it was cheap labor. In the future the place itself will be the economic asset."

One morning, in western Massachusetts' heavily rural Pioneer Valley, we heard King's thesis underscored by civic leaders meeting at the Greenfield Community College. They regaled us with stories of multiple ways they've worked together to recover from loss of manufacturing and regional recessions, how they were encouraging small start-up firms, and seeking to keep downtown Greenfield vibrant despite a big nearby mall (even starting their own discount department store to give residents an option to the mass retailers.)

But the Pioneer Valley peoples' most amazing tale was of a "hidden tech" economy of hundreds of small (many just one-person) start-up enterprises. Some, they said, are formed by natives, more by young or mid-career professionals moving in from metro areas like New York or Boston, anxious to live in new "pristine" environments, yet more mobile than ever

before because the Internet increasingly lets them work anywhere.

The "hidden tech" occupations? Many (though clearly not all) have an arts base. We heard about painters and musicians, a voiceover artist, graphic artists, web designers, software developers, novelists, management consultants, e-commerce retailers, and groups of performers. Similar stories abounded in our interviews across Vermont, Maine and New Hampshire. They seem to jibe with reports of northern New England leading a recent U.S. boom in second homes for vacations, investment -- and eventually, for many, a new place to live and do business.

Visiting with editors of Yankee Magazine, in Dublin, N.H., we were told of 100 start-up firms in that single town. National charts show New England a leader in small enterprises as the bulwarks of local economies. Julie Eades of the

New Hampshire Community Loan Fund estimates there are 100,000 microenterprises in her state. Maine Public Broadcasting's "Made in Maine" series, now in its 17th year, had identified hundreds of firms, a diversity running from one-man shops up to the Bath Iron Works.

Does the "creative economy" definition fade so easily into other fields that the phrase is meaningless? Bill Schubart, an entertainment industry executive in Burlington, Vt., fears so. Even new agriculture enterprises can be called part of a creative economy, he said-- and in fact we heard many stories of profitable niche industries in cheeses, syrups, dairy products and meats (even llamas!) sprouting across New England. Their inventiveness may well open new economic frontiers.

And as we traveled, the stories of new and creative enterprises seemed never to cease. Bellows Falls, Vt., on the Connecticut River, has used art to jump-start a now thriving downtown and tourist economy, including a community theater company, restoring the long-silent Town Hall clock, and returning vibrant life to its main street. Forty miles upstream, at White River Junction, a Center for Cartoon Studies -- a rare curriculum of art, graphic design and literature to prepare students to create comics and graphic novels -- opened this fall, to the delight of town leaders. Visiting Monhegan Island, 10 miles off

the Maine coast, we found a thriving, entirely indigenous artists' colony -- emblematic of a respect and love for arts that pervades the state.

Former Gov. King told us he'd recently met a man in the Portland airport, asked him what he did, and was told: "I'm a clown." He and 100 colleagues fly out of their Maine base to do festivals for car dealers all over the U.S.

Shift from clowns on the move to high culture in New Haven: we heard claims that through Yale, with its world-class collection of departments in art, music, architecture and drama, New Haven is now home to a significant chunk of the world's premier art talent. The Yale School of Architecture alone, for example, has spun off a bevy of architectural firms doing business around the world. The city's yearly International Festival of Arts & Ideas fuses brilliant music, dance and theater from around the globe with high-level intellectual thought.

Boston, meanwhile, has its sterling array of famed arts institutions, has just added its first two new theaters in 75 years, and is reaching out ethnically with a Center for Latino Arts in the South End and a new arts center in Roxbury's Dudley Square. Close to 80 percent of Bostonians attend live professional arts events in a year -- highest among U.S. metro areas.

Do all the arts and intellectual activities assure a successful creative economy? There is hope. Arts do open imaginations -- critical, as Mike McMahon of the Rhode Island Economic Development Corporation pointed out to us, "to make order out of chaos, have sensitivity, interact in groups, be creative and design" -- skills that the standard engineering education in such countries as India don't yet deliver. In New Haven, an operation called "Factory Direct" recently placed artists in 13 manufacturing facilities for a period of time, letting them suggest new and inventive forms of problem-solving.

There are tough realities to face. Economist Charles Colgan of the University of Southern Maine says he's skeptical of how much creative arts and small entrepreneurs can impact the economy; for appreciable impact, he'd wait until a start-up firm reaches 500 or so workers.

Others say it's not the number of jobs but what people are doing. In the words of Rhode Island economic development specialist Kip Bergstrom: "A creative economy puts its marbles on innovation -- and that's our future if there is to be one."

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## About the Writers and the Project

Journalists Neal Peirce and Curtis Johnson have reported for newspapers on the unique strategic issues facing two dozen metropolitan regions nationwide. Peirce is a syndicated columnist (Washington Post Writers Group) who has also written two books on New England. Johnson is a public policy analyst and a former community college president and Minnesota government official. They co-authored the book *Citistates*.

These articles are the kickoff of a New England Futures Project aimed at identifying key 21st century challenges facing the six-state region. Citizen reaction and participation, leading to a shared regional agenda, are key to the project. Your input is welcome at [www.newenglandfutures.org](http://www.newenglandfutures.org).

The sponsoring Partnership for New England includes the Vermont-based Institute for Sustainable Communities (which will coordinate follow-up public debates across the region), the New England Council, the New England Initiative at UMass Lowell, Mt. Auburn Associates, the New England Association of Regional Councils, and the Orton Family Foundation. Financial backing comes from community foundations in all six states, the Bank of America Foundation and others (full list at the web site).

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Journalists Curtis Johnson (left) and Neal Peirce, are co-authors of the "New England: New Century - New Game" series.