

# Proposal for Merrimack Valley Regional Innovation Network

"Culture Eats Strategy for Breakfast," Dr. Berkeley Cue, former Vice President of the pharmaceutical giant Pfizer

## John Michitson & Seth Itzkan

The Merrimack Valley has a golden opportunity to meet a regional challenge by once again demonstrating its ingenuity.

In two MassINC publications, "Mass Jobs: Meeting the Challenges of a Shifting Economy," released this month and, "Reconnecting Massachusetts Gateway Cities," released earlier this year, two conclusions were made regarding cities in the Merrimack Valley: 1. There have been significant job losses since 2001 that have not been recovered, and 2. The gateway cities, such as Lawrence and Haverhill, have not found their niche in the knowledge economy.

At the highly successful Green Chemistry Business Summit held at the Northern Essex Community College Technology Center in Haverhill on October 31, Dr. Berkeley Cue, former Vice President of the pharmaceutical giant Pfizer, said that the biggest hurdle to deeper penetration of green chemistry in the pharmaceutical industry is that "culture eats strategy for breakfast." He cited compelling business cases for products based on green chemistry principles, but cautioned that the myth - if it is good for the environment it must be bad for business - still prevails because it has been embedded in our business culture for decades.

He believes that a mindset change is needed to routinely apply green chemistry and other Design for Environment (DfE) principles at the very beginning of product design, so that these three main benefits will prevail: 1. A manufacturing process that minimizes or eliminates hazardous wastes; 2. An end product that contains little or no hazardous materials; and 3. An environmentally sound manner to dispose of the

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actions concerning the sale of city-owned properties. Their blatant disregard for the process and fairness was a slap in the face to taxpayers and individuals placing bids.

Still, hope is on the horizon. Councilor Nilka Alvarez-Rodriguez has been trying to right the ship.

I honestly believe that Councilors Jorge Gonzales and Grisel Silva also want to do the right thing. Additionally the city will benefit from the professional leadership of newly elected City Councilors David Abdo, Michael Fielding, Frank Moran and Roger Twomey.

Now I wonder if I can get the State Ethics Commission and the Attorney General's Office interested in what happened regarding Providence Street. To be continued...



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*"Being in the San Francisco Bay area, I get to live in and near municipalities that are competing with each other in this way. Oakland was first with its no-Styrofoam law; San Francisco's law came 6 months later. San Jose will hopefully soon allow composing of used paper towels in corporate restrooms—catching up to San Francisco's existing allowance. Chicago and San Francisco are close for requiring green buildings (LEED certifications)."*

- Pamela Gordon, TFI President

product at the end of its lifetime. Dr. Cue's assertion presents an opportunity for the Merrimack Valley to meet the challenges identified in the MassINC reports - by helping to reverse the myth.

Technology Forecasters Inc. (TFI), a research and consulting firm from Silicon Valley that participated in the Green Chemistry Business Summit agrees



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wholeheartedly with Dr. Cue's assertions. At the Summit, Technology Forecasters identified several tools to help change the culture at corporations in the United States to think about the ecology at the same level as profit.

According to TFI's President, Pamela Gordon, some municipalities are starting to address the needed mindset shift, "Being in the San Francisco Bay area, I get to live in and near municipalities that are competing with each other in this way.

Oakland was first with its no-Styrofoam law; San Francisco's law came 6 months later. San Jose will hopefully soon allow composing of used paper towels in corporate restrooms—catching up to San Francisco's existing allowance. Chicago and San Francisco are close for requiring green buildings (LEED certifications)." The Merrimack Valley aims to provide such leadership on a broader scale by networking.

The Merrimack Valley Regional Innovation Network (MVRIN) is being proposed to support rapid product development in the area of eco-friendly technologies through Intellectual Property (IP) brokering and cross-industry and financial sector

The Innovation Valley initiative seeks to help stimulate economic growth and quality-of-life enhancements in the Merrimack Valley. Every month we will report on innovative businesses, practices, and ideas that are helping to make Merrimack Valley the place to be. Look for our article in print media and online at [www.ivalley.org](http://www.ivalley.org).

collaboration - with initial focus on Green Chemistry. It will also support robust communication among the larger pool of regional stakeholders including elected officials, regional planners, academia, business and engaged citizenry.

The long-range goal is to brand the region as innovative and eco-friendly and

to attract and retain businesses that invent and develop emerging technologies, transform them into profitable, eco-friendly products and provide related services such as workforce development and retail. A key strategy is to help change corporate mindsets to apply Design for Environment principles at the start of product design as proposed by Dr. Cue. This will help brand the region and spur business development by encouraging a new class of eco-friendly products..

The proposed network would employ the model of "Open Innovation" that is streamlining product development and breaking the traditional "silos" of corporate research and development departments.

The network will facilitate the interaction of scientists, industrial executives, and financiers to co-develop profitable, eco-friendly products. An online emerging technologies marketplace complimented with face-to-face events and services will spawn corporate interaction and create investor opportunities. This approach is essential to keep the region viable as a center of clean technology industry for a global marketplace.



John Michitson was a Haverhill city councilor for 10 years; the last 2 as president. He is a manager and electrical engineer at the MITRE Corporation in Bedford, Mass. John and his wife, Heidi, are enjoying the childhood of their 4-year-old daughter and 6 year-old son. email: [jmichitson@verizon.net](mailto:jmichitson@verizon.net)

The Merrimack Valley Regional Innovation Network would tie into and build upon the precedent setting networks already established in the Commonwealth for multidisciplinary collaboration and technology transfer. These models, all of which were represented at the Summit, include: (1) The Green Chemistry and Commerce Council, (2) Massachusetts Technology Transfer Center (MTTC), and (3) InnoCentive and Yet2.com

"Open Innovation Marketplaces."

In addition to supporting rapid product development, the MVRIN will build a coalition of regional stakeholders committed to economic growth and quality-of-life improvements through a trusted network that facilitates purposeful collaboration, timely and germane information sharing, and robust discussion.

Tim Jordan, Co-Chair of Team Haverhill said: "It is my personal belief that this could be a great opportunity for Haverhill to pursue this type of economic development.

It would be wonderful for the Merrimack Valley, and Haverhill in particular, to become a leader as the destination for innovative and eco-friendly companies to locate."

Topics from workforce development to international business management will be par for the course. This regional stakeholder communications network can be a template for the rest of the Commonwealth. Using the Merrimack Valley as a model, subsequent networks can be established in 4 other principal economic regions in Massachusetts: Greater Boston, Southeast Mass, Central Mass and Western Mass.

The MVRIN will be formed in close collaboration with the stakeholder agencies that played an instrumental roll in the Green Chemistry Business Summit and that are at the cutting-edge of Green Chemistry and economic innovation in the Commonwealth.

These are: 1. The Merrimack Valley Economic Development Council; 2. The Merrimack Valley Venture Forum; 3. The Greater Haverhill Chamber of Commerce; 4. The Warner-Babcock Institute of Green Chemistry; 5. InnoCentive; 6. Yet2.com; 7. Massachusetts Technology Transfer Center; 8. The Green Chemistry and Commerce Council; and 9. Beyond Benign Foundation.

Immediate next steps include (1) Surveying the Summit participants for their thoughts on moving forward, (2) Creating the regional impact assessment for how this network could affect the Merrimack Valley (what companies, industries and academic institutions would be most affected), and (3) Create the business model - how are revenues and IP shared by partners?



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