



Eddie A. Perez, Mayor

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NEW STUDY SHOWS HARTFORD'S STAR CONTINUES TO RISE WITH CITY AND SUBURBAN RESIDENTS

Familiarity with City Yields High Marks

(January 9, 2006)--- A new study shows Hartford area residents continue to have a much more positive image of the Capital City. They think it is safer, a wonderful place to work, more vibrant, and provides high quality cultural entertainment. Also, a majority is optimistic about seeing more improvements in the year ahead.

The Hartford Image Project, a collaboration of organizations promoting the *Hartford, New England's Rising Star* campaign, commissioned the fourth annual study. Witan Intelligence Strategies, Inc. conducted the survey of area residents. A summary of the survey results are available at Hartford.com, the region's most complete web site for all things Hartford.

The study shows that for the fourth consecutive year, there are more area residents (37 percent) who believe the city has made significant improvements. In fact, there was a sharp decline (8 points) in those who believe it has worsened in the past year. Moreover, those who are most familiar with the city are more than twice as likely to say things have improved (54 percent vs. 21 percent). Younger residents also are more likely to express a view that Hartford has improved than their older counterparts (42 percent vs. 29 percent).

That positive attitude looks likely to continue, with 59 percent of survey respondents stating that the city is likely to improve in 2006, vs. only 10 percent who think conditions will decline.

Mayor Eddie Perez says, "These positive results come at an important time. More and more people are enjoying living, working, and playing in Hartford and it is necessary that everyone is informed of all the progress that is really happening in our great city. However, we cannot rest on our laurels."

Mayor Perez notes the progress being made in public safety (+11 percent) and credits the Neighborhood Policing Plan. Other very visual areas of progress can be seen thanks to \$800 million in school construction and renovation, and 3,000 new housing units available at a wide variety of income levels that are either completed or in the process of being built or planned. Also, numerous economic development projects throughout the city are strong indications that the Capital City is moving in the right direction.

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“This demonstrates how Hartford, New England’s Rising Star, continues to soar. We are building upon our strengths of history, diversity, and culture by investing in all of our neighborhoods. This investment is changing attitudes as well as our skyline,” says Mayor Perez.

Interestingly, the study points out what it calls a marked “perception burden,” meaning that people who live, work or regularly enjoy social activities in Hartford score it significantly higher than those who have less direct experience with the city.

“The clear message here is: ‘try it; you’ll like it,’” says Greater Hartford Arts Council Executive Director Ken Kahn. “Those of us who know Hartford well, live here and spend our work days and leisure time here know what tremendous assets we have, and we keep discovering the city’s many charming and affordable venues.”

Kahn added that the survey shows the city scores highest among area residents for its cultural performances, museums and heritage attractions. With venues such as the Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art, The Bushnell Center for the Performing Arts, Hartford Stage, TheaterWorks, Artists Collective, Mark Twain House and Museum, and a vast array of small and mid-sized cultural organizations, few communities this size could rival Hartford’s cultural offerings.

Hartford also gets high marks as a place to work, noted R. Nelson “Oz” Griebel, President and CEO of the MetroHartford Alliance. “We’re delighted with the progress that the collaboration continues to produce on the Rising Star campaign. The continuing improvement of the image of the city strengthens the region’s ability to compete for jobs, capital and talent.”

Also turning in strong scores in the survey were Hartford’s major entertainment and burgeoning restaurant options. The study also shows strong gains in the areas of nightlife (+8 percent) and livability (+6 percent).

Awareness of the *Hartford, New England’s Rising Star* marketing campaign continued to make significant gains, with exceedingly high name recognition among area residents. Some 55 percent of survey respondents said they were aware of the slogan. Among those younger than 35, that number skyrockets to 83 percent.

“The momentum documented in this study shows that there is a healthy return on investment in promoting what the area has to offer,” says John Bourget, president of Witan Intelligence Strategies, Inc., which conducted the survey. “As people who had written off the region hear good news about developments and interesting events and venues, they are tempted to give it fresh look. The result is that we see increased numbers of people enjoying and enthusiastic about what the city has to offer. This growing ‘buzz’ floats many boats from real-estate values to our employers’ ability to attract and retain the best. We’re clearly way ahead of where we were four years ago.”

About the Hartford Image Project

The Hartford Image Project (HIP) is a collaborative marketing and promotional initiative for Hartford and the Hartford region. The HIP logo and tag-line, *Hartford, New England’s Rising Star*, is the brand for a unified marketing program celebrating the assets of Hartford, and designed to improve perceptions and attitudes about Hartford and generate visitation.

The partners of Hartford Image Project include Greater Hartford Arts Council, the City of Hartford, the Capital City Economic Development Authority, Waterford Development, Hartford 2000, the MetroHartford Alliance, the Central Regional Tourism District, the Greater Hartford Convention & Visitors Bureau, the Connecticut Office of Tourism, and the Office of Governor.

The *Hartford, New England’s Rising Star* campaign is funded by the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving, area corporations, regional businesses, and the Hartford Image Project members.

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