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## **Building on the Strengths of Michigan's Cities**

*Business Leaders for Michigan commissions study of regional strengths, areas of opportunity critical to the redevelopment of Michigan's urban cores and metropolitan areas*

**DETROIT, Mich., July 28, 2011** — The Business Leaders for Michigan (BLM), the state's business roundtable, today announced initial findings from a study it commissioned to develop strategies that the state could use to encourage, facilitate and support our urban and metropolitan areas with their redevelopment efforts. The final report will be available in early 2012.

"The business leaders of our organization recognize the importance of vibrant cities to growing the state's economy and included it as a critical aspect of the Michigan Turnaround Plan," said Doug Rothwell, President and CEO, Business Leaders for Michigan. "We are excited to work with Public Sector Consultants and in collaboration with Brookings Institution on this project. While acknowledging the state's fiscal condition, there are a number of innovative and creative approaches that the state can take to help our metropolitan areas redevelop their urban cores."

"Brookings has deep experience helping state leaders connect their policies to the unique assets and particular challenges of their metropolitan areas," said Bruce Katz, Vice President and Founding Director, Metropolitan Policy Program, Brookings Institution. "We look forward to working with Michigan's state and metro leaders to determine how the state can set the platform for metros to flourish."

The project is being conducted by Lansing-based Public Sector Consultants in collaboration with the Brookings Institution. The project involves many components, including:

- A review of Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA)-level data for Michigan's major metropolitan regions and a comparative analysis to peers nationally
- A review of best practices nationally
- An assessment of key existing Michigan and federal urban policies and programs, as well as philanthropic priorities, and how they align with the asset-driven goals and strategies determined by Michigan MSA leaders, other experts, and foundations
- A recommended set of changes to state and federal policies based on best practices and asset driven priorities of Michigan's MSAs

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“We have brought together diverse Michigan metropolitan stakeholders – including local and regional leaders, corporate and private foundations, non-profits, and state agencies – to guide this work. These leaders have provided substantive input on how the state can better support and leverage economic growth and community revitalization efforts of Michigan’s metropolitan areas,” said Julie Metty Bennett, Vice President, Public Sector Consultants.

“Preliminary research shows that Michigan’s metropolitan areas lead the nation in several important — even groundbreaking — areas, such as export intensity, facets of the clean economy, higher education and research sectors and in advanced manufacturing plants that drive innovation,” said Rothwell.

A preliminary look at the findings:

- Our state’s unique manufacturing heritage continues to produce quality Michigan goods suitable for export. Detroit and Grand Rapids are among the highest export areas in the nation, sending roughly 15 percent of their total output abroad in 2009. Flint, Kalamazoo, Battle Creek, and Muskegon are also highly export intensive.
- The future may be greener than we realized, as Michigan possesses a core competency in clean consumer products. Detroit has a larger than average share of jobs in electric vehicle and battery technology, while Grand Rapids is ten times as strong in green consumer products as the average metro. Flint and Kalamazoo lead in electric vehicle technology, while Holland, Saginaw, and other smaller cities are strong in manufacturing of green building materials and energy efficient appliances.
- Michigan’s cities are highly innovative, with Ann Arbor and Detroit leading all U.S. metropolitan areas with higher than average patent application rates. In addition, Muskegon, Niles, Jackson, Monroe, and Bay City all specialize in the research and development of at least one kind of renewable energy technology, solar or wind energy, as reflected in patent applications.
- Many Michigan metropolitan areas are plagued with low rates of educational attainment and limited skills training, however growing college and graduate school enrollment and the prevalence of technical training programs at community colleges suggest that Michigan will be able to turn these challenges into important opportunities for future growth.

Rothwell noted, “My appreciation goes out to those who are participating in this study as it will help shape the outcome. I am confident that Michigan’s largest cities, once dynamic centers of the nation’s economy, can again play a big role in driving job creation and business attraction if we capitalize on our strengths.”

The research for BLM’s Urban Strategies Initiative is being conducted in tandem with Brookings’ Metropolitan Policy Program, which is supported by the Brookings-Rockefeller Project on State and Metropolitan Innovation and the Kresge, Charles Stewart Mott, Ford, and Joyce Foundations.

#### **About Business Leaders for Michigan:**

Business Leaders for Michigan ([www.BusinessLeadersforMichigan.com](http://www.BusinessLeadersforMichigan.com)) is a private, non-profit executive leadership organization dedicated to making Michigan a “Top Ten” state for job and economic growth. The organization is composed exclusively of the chairpersons, chief executives or most senior executives of Michigan’s largest companies and universities, which provide over 320,000 jobs in Michigan, generate over \$1 Trillion in annual revenue and serve over 135,000 students. The organization’s work is defined by the Michigan Turnaround Plan, a holistic, fact-based strategy to get Michigan’s economy back on track. Visit [www.michiganturnaroundplan.com](http://www.michiganturnaroundplan.com) for more information.