

Attracting and Retaining the Rock Climbers in a Flat World

The challenge facing Michigan is demographic, not economic, stated Lou Glazer, president of Michigan Future, Inc. during a presentation to state senators and representatives at the Talent Caucus Speaker Series Kickoff in October, sponsored by the Michigan Municipal League. Citing the Southeast Michigan Council of Governments (SEMCOG) report *A Region in Turbulence and Transition: The Economic and Demographic Outlook for Southeast Michigan Through 2035*, Glazer predicted that by 2035 Michigan will have 20 percent more retired residents than the rest of the nation.

Michigan Future, Inc. believes that Michigan's decline over the last 30 years is due in large part to the state's failure to adapt to a rapidly changing global economy. The past 13 years have shown that with globalization and technology anything can be done in any place by anybody. The two middle class pillars of good paying jobs for low skills and long term stable employment have crumbled under the pressure of globalization. The next 13 years will produce even more changes as machines do more of the work and new products and processes are developed.

A New Agenda for a New Michigan by Michigan Future, Inc. addresses the question "How do we position Michigan for success in a knowledge driven, entrepreneurial economy?" The answer is to create a high prosperity Michigan measured by a per capita income above the national average. Michigan held this position for most of the first 70 years of the 20th Century. However, currently Michigan is 5 percent below the national average for per capita income.

Michigan is lagging behind the nation mainly because of slow growth in the dynamic, high-wage sectors of the knowledge economy. When Michigan Future, Inc. reviewed what distinguishes high prosperity metropolitan areas, they found high concentrations of high-pay knowledge based industries such as information, financial and insurance services, professional and technical services, and corporate headquarters. These successful metropolitan areas have strong core cities that are attractive to young professional talent. Forty-five percent of young professionals live in cities. Sixty-four percent decide where they want to live and then look for a job there. Today's young professionals are taking responsibility for their own careers. They don't just climb career ladders, they are rock climbers who see opportunities and adjust their paths to engage in new experiences. They are prepared to step backward and start over to succeed in a flat world where technology has leveled the playing field.

What must Michigan do to prepare, retain and attract talent?

A knowledge-driven economy must be centered on a culture that values learning and entrepreneurial spirit. The roundtable discussions that followed Glazer's presentation centered on the need to create a culture that values education and is welcoming to all talented people from inside and outside Michigan. Young talent is drawn to areas that value and promote diversity.

We must create vibrant core cities that provide active art and entertainment scenes in walkable communities that have a mix of residential and commercial uses. Advanced connections to the Internet and mass transit are also essential.

Conventional media has traditionally focused on the negative aspects of Michigan's core cities: disinvestment, crime, poverty and loss of manufacturing jobs. Michigan communities need to use online media to broadcast the new urban message about the positive and exciting aspects of cities

and stories need to be told that focus on revitalized neighborhoods, start ups, innovations and job openings that will reach people who want to work, build a business, relocate or visit Michigan.