

STATE OF THE REGION

Report touts economic improvement, outlines challenges the region faces

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The Greater Baltimore region has seen significant growth in per-capita personal income, high-tech employment and investments in academic research and development over the past 10 years, supporting the claim that the region is becoming increasingly affluent and furthering itself from a "Rust-Belt" reputation.

But that doesn't mean the region is without challenges to economic growth, according to the 2007 State of the Region Report, compiled by the **Greater Baltimore Committee** (GBC) and the Baltimore Metropolitan Council and released Thursday.

In a comparison of 20 U.S. metropolitan regions, including Boston, Philadelphia and Washington, Baltimore ranked in the top five in 24 of 105 economic and quality-of-life indicators, including first in academic research and development expenditures in 2005 (\$1.8 billion) and hospital quality in 2007.

"The Baltimore region has be-



"This report clearly affirms the stature of the Baltimore-Washington region as a technology supercorridor," said Donald Fry, president and CEO of the Greater Baltimore Committee. — Arianne Starnes/ Examiner III

come a much more affluent area," said Donald Fry, president and CEO of the GBC. "We continue to work hard to move toward a knowledge-based economy."

The region, though, ranked in the bottom five in 19 of the indicators, including last in information employment in 2004 and 2006, 19th in manufacturing employment in 2004 and 2006, and 19th in violent crime rate.

Traffic congestion continues to

be another of the region's challenges, said Richard Clinch, a University of Baltimore economist who worked on the report. Baltimore ranked 18th in average travel time to work (28.9 minutes).

Among other report findings:

» Baltimore ranked second in per-capita personal income growth (6.3 percent to \$41,320 in 2005 from 2003), fourth in median household income (\$61,010) and fifth in the number of high-tech jobs in the state

Cost of living

In the Greater Baltimore region, the median home price has more than doubled from \$118,200 to \$279,900 from 1997 to 2006. The region has also had a cost of living nearly 18 percent above the national average.

Source: State of the Region Report

(2,890 jobs per 100,000 people).

» Baltimore ranked in the bottom five in air quality, housing starts and infant mortality rate

"The important thing is the region is moving in the right direction," Clinch said. "We've got more jobs and more high-tech jobs."

This is the fifth edition of the State of the Region Report to be released since 1998. Clinch worked on the first report and was impressed with how much the region has progressed since then.

"When we worked on this 10 years ago, I don't think anyone would have predicted the success we've had," Clinch said.

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