

# Growth strategy study planned

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SPRINGFIELD - The Finance Control Board last week authorized \$125,000 to launch a study aimed at developing an economic development growth strategy for Springfield.

Those involved in the study will include MassInc., a public policy think tank based in Boston, and the University of Massachusetts at Dartmouth's Urban Issues Initiative, officials said.

The \$125,000 funds the first phase of the study, which includes an initial survey of Springfield's "economic setting," that will include "identifying opportunities and challenges to growth," said John R. Schneider, the executive vice president of MassInc, meeting with the control board.

The group will compare Springfield to similar communities nationwide undertaking economic renewal efforts, Schneider said.

Control Board Chairman Christopher F. Gabrieli said an earlier study by the Urban Land Institute, of Washington, D.C., presented recommendations relating to urban renewal, with added focus to the downtown and South End.

The new study, in contrast, focuses on economic revival and jobs, and what industries and strategies should be pursued to create the best

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avenue for economic growth, he said.

"If we could go from languid to at least healthy in this part of the state, it would have profound implications for the state," Gabrieli said, during a separate meeting with the Editorial Board of The Republican last week.

Representatives of UMass-Dartmouth and MassInc. said the study is geared to provide strategies for the next decade

and beyond.

While Greater Boston gained 1,600 high technology firms between 1991 and 2004, Springfield gained six firms, the representatives said. The per-capita income growth in the Boston area also dwarfed Springfield during that time, they said.

Edward M. Lambert Jr., the former mayor of Fall River and director and research associate for UMass-Dartmouth, joined Schneider at the control board meeting.

Lambert said as Springfield prospers from stronger economic growth strategies, so will the region.

City Councilor Bud L. Williams joined in supporting the study, saying it expands on the work done by the Urban Land Institute.

A second phase, beginning in 2009, would involve engaging stake-holders in the community in drafting and completing the long-range economic growth strategy plan, Schneider said.



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**Finance Control Board Chairman**

**Christopher F. Gabrieli**

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