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Metro Hartford - we're home! A great place to live, work, raise a family and open a business - by Rebecca Nolan

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As I am writing, things seem dire in Connecticut – no state budget; a looming possibility for the city to enter bankruptcy; a historical corporate headquarters relocating. With all this uncertainty surrounding the capital region, what makes me stay? Why is the Metro Hartford region still a great location for business? I believe, quality of life, education, access to major markets, transatlantic air flight, multi-national companies, and diverse, ethnic, cultural experiences make the Hartford region a great place live, work, raise a family and open a business!

I point you toward a recent blog that focuses on positive developments in and around the region. In it, Chris Duprey, principal of Strategic Initiatives at Crosskey Architects, writes “5 Things Going in the Right Direction in CT (Spoiler: They Exist)”...you can find his posts at <http://blog.crosskey.com>. His optimism is based on facts. The region is not on a downward spiral, as many residents would claim. It continues to be one of the best places in the state.

As mentioned, one of the unseen benefits to Hartford was its designation as an Innovation Place by CTNext. My colleague John Shemo, vice president, Entrepreneurial Ecosystem has worked in economic development for decades and has seen the rise, fall and rebirth of the region. The future lies within high-tech hubs that will draw talent to stay in the Hartford region. This fall, UCONN will open its Hartford campus to students that will benefit by corporate engagement. Business accelerators are opening to support startup businesses. The insurance and financial services cluster is focusing efforts to create fin-tech opportunities. Hospitals and medical research facilities are working with the colleges and universities to attract and retain talent.

According to the CNBC's 2017 ranking:

Connecticut has climbed 10 spots to rank 33rd in CNBC's 2017 ranking of top states for business. The improved ranking was largely a result of better scores for education and the workforce.

In fact, the workforce category, where Connecticut ranked 7th in 2017 as opposed to 18th a year ago, and infrastructure, where it remained at 47th, are considered major drivers among 10 major

categories and 66 metrics CNBC uses to rank the 50 U.S. states.

Connecticut's favorable ranking comes as a bit of a surprise since the state lost GE's corporate headquarters to Boston last year and is losing Aetna's corporate headquarters to New York City this year.

All these measures are keeping the region competitive.

At a recent dinner party, the conversation navigated toward jobs of the future. We discussed what type of job will be needed, and all agreed they will be filled by high-tech talent and will support industries that may be automate production. Though automation may at times feel like there would be a lesser need for jobs, these still require highly-educated and talented individuals to fulfill the need. All of which need real estate! Of course, this is where the New England Real Estate Journal and I should be discussing that requirement.

With talent however, housing opportunities become essential to provide amenities that the young and more experienced talent demand. A newly renovated Goodwin Hotel in downtown Hartford, boasts a new restaurant – Harlan Brasserie, with a French-American menu, but also offers a children's menu to support the attraction of the urban family. Bushnell Park's long-awaited streetscape is coming to completion and with parks, comes community.

One of the greatest Jazz Festivals was held for the 25th year in Bushnell Park July 14-16. This is a free concert in downtown Hartford. Hartford has it – does it work for you?

Again, amenities are important to any community and that would include pharmacies...a new CVS has just completed its move to 777 Main St. beneath the gleaming new apartments of the same name, making it more convenient for the residents who occupy the almost full apartment landscape downtown.

Which all leads me back to the question – why stay in Connecticut and the Hartford region? For me, its family, friends, and transportation. Did I mention in early 2018 there will be a new rail line from New Haven to Hartford and onto Springfield, Mass? And there is a Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) being developed by the Capital Region Council of Governments (CRCOG) for FFY 2018-2021. Public participation to comment on the TIP will continue July 24, at noon. Written comments will be accepted until July 21. For more information http://crocog.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/DRAFT-TIP-2018-2021-Summary-only_6_8_2017.pdf.

Why stay in CT? Housing, transportation, talent, education, quality of place, and family are all reasons why Connecticut! I'm happy to stay in CT; I'm proud to say I'm from CT; we all need to pull together to squash negative speak and say WHY CT? Because there is no other place like HOME!

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