

Business First of Columbus - May 9, 2008

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COLUMBUS BUSINESS FIRST

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Study: Columbus competitiveness improving, but still weak

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Columbus might be striving to emulate pedestrian- and eco-friendly metropolitan areas such as Portland, Ore., but a new competitiveness study indicates we still have some work to do.

The city in 2007 placed 40th out of 50 metro areas in an annual competitiveness report by the **Beacon Hill Institute**, a policy think tank at Boston's **Suffolk University**. That's stronger than the No. 44 and No. 41 rankings the city received in 2006 and 2005, respectively, but nearly 10 rungs below the No. 31 spot the city took only five years ago.

Beacon Hill used 40 sets of data to determine the ranking for each **Census Bureau**-defined Metropolitan Statistical Area in eight categories: government and fiscal policy, security, infrastructure, human resources, technology, business incubation, openness and environmental policy.

Environmental factors were a key driver in the city's weak placement. Columbus' high rate of toxic release - the second-worst of all cities in the study - contributed to its No. 46 showing for environmental policy, its worst placement among the eight categories.

It also came in at No. 44 for business incubation, with the third-worst rate of newly created employers and in the bottom five for growth of publicly traded companies.

Columbus' strongest showings:

- Infrastructure - The city ranked 11th, its best placement, when factoring in travel time to work, housing costs and electricity prices.
- Human resources - While Columbus' infant mortality rate was one of the 10 worst in the nation, its Top 10 placement for insured and high school diploma-toting residents helped it make No. 20 for the category.

The No. 1-ranked metro for 2007 was Salt Lake City, followed by Boston, Denver, Portland, Ore., and Washington, D.C. Cincinnati ranked 43rd, trailed by Cleveland at No. 44.

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