

## Executive Summary: The Sustainable Global Cities Initiative

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**Vision:** The Sustainable Global Cities Initiative (SGCI) at UConn Hartford aspires to be a university-wide interdisciplinary research unit investigating questions relating to cities and new models of urban life that identify and address key challenges faced by cities in Connecticut and around the world, with the goal of enhancing UConn’s research capacity, scholarship, and public engagement.

**Why Cities?** Spheres of social creativity — ranging from arts and culture to community initiatives to science and technology — as well as a growing share of the world’s wealth generation processes are increasingly located in metropolitan areas. Diversified urban economies with high levels of human capital are especially well positioned for innovation and growth. Cities, however, must simultaneously grapple with very complicated issues of human capital development, health, public safety, affordable housing, social exclusion, and neighborhood stability. Equity issues in cities, especially for residents disadvantaged backgrounds and immigrant communities, and avenues for intergenerational mobility require inclusive economic development. As cities search for innovative and sustainable approaches to promote development and prosperity for their populations, public universities, including UConn, are increasingly responding to these issues.

**Why UConn?** Urban areas have many advantages and opportunities for UConn’s research agenda. UConn has considerable research capacity that focuses, or could be focused, on urban-related topics, spanning numerous schools, colleges, and research centers. UConn’s contributions involving research and training of graduate students harbor incredible potential for improving the quality of life for urban residents and promoting the kind of technological and economic development that 21<sup>st</sup> century cities need.

**Purpose and Activities of the SGCI:** The SGCI will maximize UConn’s urban-related research and outreach efforts by identifying, connecting, and supporting scholars and experts and marshaling UConn’s resources to increase research capacity. A dedicated interdisciplinary work space like the SGCI would be uniquely positioned to support research on expansive topics like urban sustainability and could lead to new research agendas on emergent topics like the “Smart Cities” movement. The SGCI will attract new researchers and provide infrastructure for existing researchers through seed grants and post-doc support. The SGCI will be a catalyst for new partnerships with external institutions, which will also provide new local, national, and international opportunities for UConn research. Finally, the SGCI will actively promote these initiatives through social media, original podcasts, and a website featuring a portal to an up-to-date searchable database.

**Sources of support:** To fulfill the aspirations of a university-wide unit, multiple deans need to be engaged and persuaded to support the SGCI. This will be accomplished by identifying faculty members and centers in schools and colleges with urban-related research interests. With the support of deans, the conversation will shift to key members of the central administration and university offices such as Global Affairs. Funding support will be sought within the university as well as through external grant competition, foundations, and governmental agencies. Formal recognition by the university will facilitate building relationships and securing external funding.