

## Private-Sector Partners in New York's Resurgence

An Interview with Kathryn S. Wylde, President and  
Chief Executive Officer, Partnership for New York City, New York



Kathryn S. Wylde

**EDITORS' NOTE** Prior to assuming her current post in 2000, Kathryn Wylde served as the founding President and CEO of the nonprofit New York City Housing Partnership and as founding President and CEO of the New York City Investment Fund, the Partnership's economic-development arm, a position she still holds. She is a member of the boards of directors of the New York City Economic Development Corporation, the Biomedical Research Alliance of New York, the Lutheran Medical Center, the Manhattan Institute, the Lower Manhattan Cultural Council, and the Economic Development Corporation of the City University of New York (CUNY). She also sits on the advisory boards of the CUNY Business Leadership Council, the China Center, and the Center for a New Economy in Puerto Rico.

**ORGANIZATION BRIEF** With a mission to maintain the city's position as the center of global commerce, the Partnership for New York City comprises more than 200 partner CEOs from New York's top corporate, investment, and entrepreneurial firms who work in partnership with city and state government officials, labor groups, and the nonprofit sector to enhance the economy and culture of the city. The Partnership focuses on research, policy formulation, and issue advocacy at the city, state, and federal levels by leveraging its network of CEO partners. Through its affiliate, the New

York City Investment Fund, the Partnership directly invests in economic development projects across the city.

### The Partnership for New York City has many issues to address today. How do you focus your efforts?

We're primarily concerned with public education, which is important in the 21st century's knowledge-based economy, and on continued economic diversification and growth. New York is a world city, and we are required to rise to the occasion with a public-private partnership that is strong on economic and educational development. That is how New York will remain competitive with other world cities.

### What is the Partnership's role in New York's educational system?

The Partnership led efforts to abolish the old Board of Education and give the Mayor control of the schools, so that he could assume a position to drive change. And we organized funding and business expertise to help Chancellor Joel Klein's key initiatives, including the New York City Leadership Academy.

### How are the city's economic development efforts faring?

The city is on a very strong economic track. With a gross city product of \$467 billion, New York – if it were a country – would be the 10th-largest economy in the world. Since 9/11, job creation has turned around, as well. We're tracking 42 million visitors to the city this year, and that positively impacts the retail, theatre, and cultural sectors. New York is a world center for so many industries, and as a result, is attractive to international companies looking for an entrée into the Western markets. The Partnership has enlisted its members in the effort to solicit investments in the city and to encourage international companies to establish their Western headquarters in New York.

### Has the Partnership participated in efforts to promote the city's biotech industry?

A feasibility study we conducted about six years ago showed that New York is equal to California and the Boston area in basic research capacities. The science

from our great institutions has been the basis of the most successful biotech companies in the world. But unfortunately, we were incubating great ideas that were ultimately commercialized elsewhere. That is no longer the case. Through a public-private partnership with a company called Alexandria, we are developing the one-million-square-foot East River Science Park, which will position New York to have a very strong life-sciences industry.

### What is the New York City Investment Fund?

The Fund is meant to create jobs and improve the quality of life in the city. Henry Kravis founded it under the umbrella of the Partnership, and members gave \$1 million each to capitalize the Fund. Last year, the Fund had really its most successful year to date – with over \$115 million in capital invested in a number of job-generating activities. We also have invested in a new set of not-for-profit and for-profit projects to help the city carry out its economic-development agenda. The Fund helps to fill gaps that conventional private financing has not filled.

### What efforts has the Partnership made to combat traffic in the city?

We have begun prioritizing the investments in mass transit that will not only improve the passenger's experience, but will also create the next generation of economic development. Such projects include the new Fulton Street transit hub, the extension of the 7 subway line, a ferry system, and the development of a Brooklyn waterfront. Also, we think we can control traffic congestion by restricting traffic in commercial centers, which will in turn make businesses more efficient and productive, as they depend on timelier deliveries, meetings, and client service.

### How would you define the spirit of the Partnership?

In founding the Partnership, David Rockefeller's credo was: to participate in philanthropy, don't just send a check; you have to be personally engaged. That's the spirit of the Partnership, and it has contributed to the city's phenomenal trajectory over the past 30 years. New York is an enormous success story. ●