

## Obama Commerce aide Fernandez: Government willing to help Detroit become an IT-hub

Published: Friday, August 05, 2011, 3:49 PM Updated: Saturday, August 06, 2011, 8:08 AM

By [Michael Wayland](#)

Through a revived public-private partnership, Detroit is positioning itself for an economic recovery and the federal government is more than willing to help. That -- in short -- is what U.S. Assistant Secretary of Commerce for Economic Development [John Fernandez](#) told a handful of media today as he took a break from touring high-tech businesses and speaking with officials from companies such as Compuware Corp., Quicken Loans Inc. and GalaxE.Solutions.

"We wanted to come and actually get on the ground and meet some of the leadership," said Fernandez, who is the point man for President [Barack Obama](#) on economic development. "We wanted to learn more about what was happening here; look for opportunities where we can be a better federal partner to accelerate this growth."

Fernandez, who was invited to visit by GalaxE Chairman and CEO Tim Bryan, said the government is looking to help regional economies throughout the U.S., and Detroit is definitely on its radar.

"I think there are tremendous growth opportunities (in Detroit)," he said.



In the past year or so, Metro Detroit has experienced an [\*\*82 percent growth in high-tech jobs, such as engineering.\*\*](#)



"We're really about trying to be a catalyst to help accelerate the strategies that are built from the bottom-up," he said.

Some help for Metro Detroit, along with other metropolitan areas, is expected to come in October, according to Fernandez. The federal government is scheduled to release a "cluster mapping initiative" to help identify regions that are poised for growth.

"You'll be able to identify where there are competitive advantages -- where there is strength in

numbers," Fernandez said regarding the program – a partnership between the government and Harvard University.

Fernandez said major cities in the U.S. shouldn't be competing against one another because the real opponent is the rest of the world.

"We have to build these kinds of competitive regions, working together," he said. "We have to get that regional collaboration."

One of those collaboration strategies in Detroit is [\*\*the "Outsource to Detroit"\*\*](#) initiative by GalaxE, which looks to bring jobs to the Motor City by taking them away from overseas.

"This is a game-changer in the US," Bryan said. "We are talking about an alternative to going offshore, and right now is the beginning of a change in the dynamic of IT outsourcing."

GalaxE is [\*\*in the process on hiring 500 skilled IT workers\*\*](#) for its Detroit office. Bryan said the company has hired about 120 people so far. The other hirings are expected to occur in the next five years.

Fernandez, whose wife is a native Metro Detroiter, said companies hiring and bringing jobs back to the U.S. can have a ripple effect on a region.

"It's not just Ph.D.'s and rocket scientists," he said. "It's an entire supply chain.

"It's a wide base of economic support that drives that industry and creates tremendous job opportunities for a wide range of people in a region."

After a business roundtable with reporters, Fernandez was expected to meet with more Detroit business officials at a luncheon hosted by the Detroit Regional Chamber.

Detroit Mayor **Dave Bing's** Head of Staff **Kirk Lewis** and Sandy K. Baruah, Detroit Regional Chamber CEO were among the officials to join the roundtable discussion with Fernandez and Bryan.

"It is our great pleasure to host the Hon. John Fernandez, the U.S. assistant secretary of commerce for economic development," said Baruah, who held Fernandez's current position from 2005-2008 during the George W. Bush administration. "He understands urban areas; he understands the challenges they go through."

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