

What Is Growth?

By Gil Mathew, President/CEO

Nevada County Economic Resource Council

For that matter what is economic development? Good questions. In these times of what seems like massive amounts of negative growth with the closures of businesses like Dave's Shoes, Copy Right, Bank Street Cafe, we might wonder if there is any economic development at all or is it all just chaos. Capital has shrunk, loan criteria has tightened, and there is an air of pessimism in much of the business community, but there are still bright spots as well.

One of the really bright spots is the creative and intellectual capacity of many. Rob Shelton as an example. He is a young entrepreneur working in the programming field, and as a sole proprietor, he is looking to assemble other young entrepreneurs into a consortium of like minded people to find cooperative space where desk sharing and other asset sharing can be done. (The ERC has now helped put together the "Nevada County Site Share" program allowing single desk rental on a monthly basis. These are desks equipped with broadband connectivity in an upscale building.)

Or look at the creative and energetic power that is being assembled with the young people who have recently attended two gatherings to hear from the "old guard" about getting involved in the "process" whether it is the political process or the civil process. The gathering has no name or formal organization, but a variety of veteran citizens have taken on the responsibility of finding young people (generally under the age of 35), bringing them together and offering mentoring and a helping hand. These veteran citizens realize the future lies in the hands of the young, and they are standing ready to help them take the reins of leadership.

The closure of a major facility makes headline news. The loss of 15 or 20 jobs at the likes of Hills Flat Lumber makes one pause, but the slow steady beat of adding one new job here, one new job there goes almost unnoticed. Look at the numbers in the *Nevada County Business News* Top Fifty Employers survey; still no major drop. Yes, that might change, but as young people with their creative energy and optimistic outlook find traction and assistance, there will be bright spots all over the county.

The "Bring Them Home" campaign by the ERC will have a very positive effect on the economy of Nevada County in the long haul. The campaign involves searching out those Nevada County graduates who have left the county over the past 10 years and inviting them back with support as they begin to start their own companies. Support from mentoring to financing to things like "Nevada County Site Share," where low cost start-ups can mingle with other creative people, can incubate all sorts of positive growth.

Yes, the glass is more than half full.

(Contact the ERC at 274-8455 or visit www.ncerc.org)

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