

JOBS ARE KEY!  
“Nevada County Business News”  
October 2004  
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If you're a fan of intrigue, high expectations and big spending, this year's local elections did not disappoint. On a personal note, I recall being elected Mayor of a city of 50,000 in Colorado. Some felt that I simply must have been in some special interest's pocket after spending the princely sum of \$2,000 on my campaign! Times have certainly changed...

Very interesting in this year's campaign was the fact that there was next to no mention of jobs as an important issue. Candidates spoke volumes about growth, traffic and their own levels of experience, but none provided any focus on the issue of jobs for our local residents. Could it be that we have solved the issue of jobs? I suspect that the 27% of our workforce that commutes to jobs in other counties would disagree.

Are our young people able to return to good jobs in Nevada County after completing their education? Not if you believe the stories I hear from parents who would dearly love to have their grandchildren nearby.

Without question, the issue of quality jobs is alive and well in Nevada County. And unless we engage in some serious community dialogue soon, it will not get better.

In the last issue of this publication, I noted that the average cost of a single-family home in western Nevada County had increased more than 98% since 1997. It requires an annual income in excess of \$74,000 to qualify for a mortgage on this average home. With each passing year, more and more residents are priced out of the local housing market.

Now consider this. If the same historic trends that have driven housing prices in Nevada County since 1997 (12.1% per year) continue at the same rate for the next five years, the average sale price of a home will increase to over \$626,000, and require an income of \$135,000 to qualify for a mortgage!

Several readers commented on my last article. One, a father with a management position locally, whose wife works as a teacher, together with three teenage sons, related his family's experience. They have been looking for the “past few years” for any reasonable buying opportunity without coming up with anything. In the meantime, they live in an apartment.

Admittedly, the issue of job availability is far more complex than a simple look at housing costs will allow. Many other factors are involved, including the quality of the local workforce; state, national and international economic conditions; access to transportation and higher education; taxation policy and local government's attitude toward business. Still, if workers cannot afford to live here, employers will have no choice but to relocate to those areas where they can access employees.

Without jobs, without the vitality and contributions of young people, our community is not going to look like it does today. Are we willing to take a serious look at where our community is heading? Care to comment? Send me an e-mail at [ncerc@nccn.net](mailto:ncerc@nccn.net).