

AUGUST 1, 2005

Let's shift gears a bit this week. We spend a lot of time reporting significant progress already made in numerous arenas around here because of the commitment of this Business Council and its partners. What we don't discuss as often is the incubation and hatching of new programs that will support and accelerate our ongoing regional transformation. These fledglings will fly because of our deep down belief that good things happen when good people unite for a good purpose. All of this is my sneaky way of leading up to an old Scandinavian saying that I offer as this week's:

THOUGHT FOR THE WEEK: *"Faith Is A Bird That Feels Dawn Breaking And Sings While It Is Still Dark*

Changing Frameworks—Thinking Differently About Economic & Community Development

Last week, U.S. Commerce Secretary Carlos M. Gutierrez released the final report of the Strengthening America's Communities Initiative. The report begins by acknowledging that globalization has fundamentally transformed our economy and that economic regions, not political boundaries, are the new building blocks for prosperity. Unlike the past where recruiting new companies or competing on cost drove economic thinking, today it is regional competitiveness. Logistically, the report recommends reforming and restructuring the 18 existing Federal development programs to target need and respond to opportunity and to assure flexibility, accountability and results. Over time, particularly without built in triggers for renewal, programs often become more about habits, entitlements and influence rather than results. What is inspiring about this report is it centers on investing where communities have already taken responsibility and are prepared for investment. Communities would compete based upon their assets, rather than their deficiencies. While need is an element, need without being investment ready calls for a different strategy—capacity building. The report and additional information can be found online at <http://www.commerce.gov>

Fresno's Role in the Strengthening America's Communities Report

The advisory council that crafted the report was made up of political, economic, academic, and nonprofit leaders from across the United States. Mayor Alan Autry was one of a handful of mayors serving on the team. The first meeting of the council was in Fresno on April 15, 2005. To illustrate the concepts and principals included in the report it includes examples of alliances that cross political jurisdictions and multi-sector collaborations. The Regional Jobs Initiative that began in the Fresno Area is included as one of the successful models that incorporate many of the recommendations and principles in the report.

Some Key Thoughts From the Report:

- In the 21st Century America's communities will derive economic strength by acting and partnering regionally to compete globally. Innovation and entrepreneurship are the twin engines for wealth creation and a rising standard of living.
- One of our nation's greatest assets is its entrepreneurial spirit and tangible success.
- Every region of the United States must craft a regional economic and community development strategy to build and sustain a competitive advantage in a rapidly changing global marketplace.
- Every region is different, therefore federal policy must be flexible, agile, multidisciplinary, and it must fuse a whole host of capability with a strategic goal of focusing on the future---not on sustaining the past.
- There has been no fundamental change to policy or economic development strategy at the federal level for four decades. Policy makers must understand a new geographic scope and the predominant new drivers of growth: innovation and entrepreneurship at a regional level.
- Regions must build an infrastructure—intellectual, digital and physical—that can be the basis for long-term economic growth.