

February 27, 2006

Best Metaphor for the Regional Jobs Initiative—Tool Box

Last week's annual meeting of the Regional Jobs Initiative (RJI) had many inspiring moments and astute thoughts. A continuing theme is the notion that our historical efforts at change were fragmented and transactional in nature. Attempts to address symptoms in isolation in the midst of chronic, systemic dysfunction would not lead to transformation. Mayor Autry called the RJI a tool box, a way to bring order and focus to our efforts. Kathy Millison noted that for years other sectors blamed government for the problems and that a big change is that business has stepped up to help. Now it's time for the community to take ownership of our many challenges. We have reached the point where just sitting it out is no longer acceptable. The RJI is one of many inter-related efforts aimed at transformation. Fresno Unified, ReadFresno, Measure C, the Creative Economy Council, Fresno Coalition for Arts, Science & History, Central Valley Business Incubator—there is an oar for everyone.

Measure C Extension Expenditure Plan Complete—On to the Campaign

While the journey had its frustrating moments, in the end we became one community fully recognizing that our economic prospects and quality of life are inextricably linked together. The 25 person steering committee formed in May 2005 and covered enormous amounts of technical and qualitative material to come up with a plan that honors the core values of most likely voters. The values are: maintain a vibrant economy, clean the air, maintain local control, leverage funds with state and federal resources, and insure the creation of a citizen oversight committee. With over \$7.5 billion in transportation needs, the \$1.7 billion generated by the new Measure C must be highly leveraged to be effective. The Chamber of Commerce will lead the campaign and will be counting upon all of us to help. Today when we advocate for state, federal and nonprofit resources, it's not just about need, we have become investment worthy. Investing in ourselves is a clear demonstration of that fact. A special thanks to the co-chairs of the steering committee... Trini Rodriguez, Mary Savala and Lynne Ashbeck and also to the staff of COG and FCTA.

California Regional Blueprint Planning Program—San Joaquin Valley Received First Year Funds

The old days of silo transactions has given way to interdependent planning as the unintended and unanticipated consequences of a single focus have become painfully clear. Where once the concern about affordable housing plagued minimum wage earners, now the question is where will the teachers and police officers live? The State Department of Transportation has awarded the eight counties of the San Joaquin Valley \$2 million to: improve transportation, build capacity for regional collaboration and integrated planning, foster more efficient land use patterns, addresses issues of housing, reduces impacts on prime agricultural land and creates vibrant healthy neighborhoods. This is a tall order crossing over many vested and vulnerable interests. Our community values begin with stewardship and end with the disclosure of conflicts of interests. While the planning process is a critical first step, only implementation will determine if it is successful.

11th Annual Excellence in Business Awards Luncheon Set for May 17

One of the largest business events each year celebrates a comprehensive assessment of excellence. Eleven years ago, the Fresno Bee introduced the Excellence in Business Awards in an effort to recognize those companies and individuals who make a difference in the Valley. There are nine business categories and one individual category—the Hall of Fame. The criteria include: high ethical standards, success/growth, employee/customer service, community service and concern for the environment. With the advent of the Internet and the reality of a global economy, the challenge of excellence has grown more complex. In many cases, success requires collaboration with competitors, government and customers. Entry forms are due March 6 by 5:00 p.m. For questions, contact Nene Casares at 441-6067 or email at ncasares@FresnoBee.com.

February 28—Big Day in for Fresno Community

In the early morning of February 28th, you will receive the next edition of The New Valley Times, a 2006 community report. "Is our community showing improvement? You decide" asks the plastic wrapper. Another question to ask is...and what am I doing to help. Also on February 28, the Creative Economy Council's march on the Fulton Mall. A vibrant downtown...indeed.

