

January 22, 2007

### **Message From the Chair Emeritus—Dick Johanson**

Now that our public officials have all made their anticipated pledges to represent all of the people during their upcoming terms of office, perhaps the time has come to expect more than traditional rhetoric from them. Extremism on both sides of the political spectrum is rapidly being relegated to irrelevancy. From our Governor's commitment to work with all people to the public commitments of emerging national leaders to walk a middle ground, we are witnessing a window of opportunity for a significant local and regional social and economic transformation. The Fresno Business Council has been a forerunner in its ongoing advocacy for the abolishment of bureaucratic silos as well as increased interaction between the private and public sectors. It would appear that the lights are on and the door is open. Let's enter tomorrow together.

### **Comprehensive Strategies in Play**

When a community is in transition, there are many moving parts and all impact one another. Interdependence is the reality of the work we are doing. As we move into 2007, the results and continued promise of a collaborative civic sector have inspired more people to participate. Positive change is happening—the question is how quickly and how well we leverage it. As both a review and to provide a way to focus, the Fresno Business Council will continue to play a key role in the following initiatives:

#### **Regional Jobs Initiative (RJI)**

Launched in 2003, this extraordinary effort has earned a national reputation as a best practice. With the measurable goal of 30,000 net new jobs in 5 years and the sustainable goal of transforming the way we do economic development, the RJI has played an instrumental role in raising expectations, developing our collaborative capacity, and diversifying the economy. Cluster leaders have identified their needs and aspirations and moved forward on many projects. The public sector leaders are working hard to align resources and workforce preparation behind shared strategies. To get involved or for more information go to [www.fresnorji.org](http://www.fresnorji.org).

#### **Land Use & Transportation**

How we develop land and our choices regarding transportation options impact every aspect of quality of life and our economic opportunities. Years ago, the award winning *A Landscape of Choice* was issued as a value based set of recommendations to apply Smart Growth principles that would protect prime agricultural lands, green space and provide more housing choices. Today, we are in the midst of the San Joaquin Valley Blueprint Planning Process aimed at developing an 8-county vision for our region. The challenge is getting the vision implemented. A new idea gaining traction is called Metro Rural Loop, a land use and transportation strategy that if fully implemented would actualize the vision so many people have embraced. This is a highly technical, expensive and time intense arena where decisions have multigenerational implications. Insuring that stewardship is at the helm is critical to successful results.

#### **Human Investment Initiative (HII)**

The Human Investment Initiative is a continuation of one of the strategies of the Collaborative Regional Initiative. While many would agree that people are a community's greatest asset, turning that thought into a strategy and implementing it has proven difficult. The HII is using what has been learned through the RJI and applying it to the arena of human investment, those systems that address education, health and mental health, social services and justice. Linking, aligning and leveraging these systems are the goals. With technology and the use of networks added to a better understanding of human development, the opportunities for transformation in these arenas are ripe. There are many elements to this work and many people already involved. If you are interested in more information, a white paper is available upon request. Contact [dnankivell@fresnobl.org](mailto:dnankivell@fresnobl.org) for more information.

#### **Education Initiatives**

Insuring that there are pathways for life long education and quality jobs is an ongoing challenge. There are many new and old ideas germinating in the education field. Coming back on line is a commitment to multiple pathways that include vocational and technical training during and after high school while at the same time building a stronger college going culture. Given the flux in the job market, insuring that everyone has the resiliency and adaptability to continue to upgrade skills is essential. We must insure that there are many opportunities to acquire new skills throughout a life time. Our educational, business, nonprofit and government communities are working together to build these pathways. We all have a personal responsibility for life long learning and together we have a responsibility to insure the opportunities are there for everyone.