

Why is Sustainability Important to Economic Development?

First of all, *what is sustainability* and how does it apply to business? From a “green Industry” perspective sustainability is a safer, healthier, smarter and more economically beneficial way of doing business. Some will say that a sustainable business is one that is designed to meet the triple bottom line of People – Profit – Planet. I like the simple thought of reducing our carbon footprint and our overall impact on the environment in a cost effective way to leave our planet and its resources in a better place for the next generation. So why is this important to economic development? Actually, *it is very important to all three legs of our economic development program*, quality job attraction, retention/expansion and entrepreneurial job creation.

From a quality job attraction perspective we need, as a community, to embrace sustainability - that is more than just using a few squiggly light bulbs. We need to demonstrate in our actions that as individuals, companies, and governments, sustainability is part of our values and is worth our time and our resources. The green industry is growing and with it comes considerable capital investments and quality jobs. *Companies that are growing in that industry want to be a part of a community that shares their commitment to sustainability.* These are not just government funded renewable energy projects but thousands of other green industry companies that are already profitable and will continue to grow in the years ahead. We must be environmentally friendly and committed to reducing our carbon footprint if we are going to nurture and attract these green/renewable energy companies, as well as the young professionals and talented individuals that embrace sustainability.

From an existing industry retention perspective, *the green/sustainable technologies will save our local companies on energy/water use and may also help them from a branding perspective.* Supporting sustainability also makes a company more desirable to employees, so attracting and retaining talented employees is easier. Additionally, recent studies confirm that LEED certified buildings improve the quality of employee’s work and have a positive impact on employee’s health.

Finally, from a job creation or start-up perspective there are *countless opportunities for the development of new companies and jobs in areas associated with sustainability* including: recycling, energy efficiency, water purification, geothermal operations, even sustainable tourism. The list of new technology and sustainability opportunities continues to grow and we, as a community, need to encourage and even support this growing opportunity.

In addition to the many economic and job creation reasons to engage actively in sustainability there is the fundamental issue *of doing “what is right” from an environmental perspective.* Our planet has limited resources and the better this generation is at sustainability the better the next generation and the ones after that, our grand kids, will find it and be able to enjoy it.

To highlight the business advantages of sustainability EDAWN is hosting *a luncheon at the Peppermill on September 12th* that is open to the public and will include vendor booths from 11:00 am to 2:00 pm. If you are interested in attending, please email Sheila Imsdahl at imsdahl@edawn.org or 829-3704 by September 10.

