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Advanced Manufacturing – The Cornerstone of our Economic Future

Things are really hopping here at EDawn and the *growing awareness of our competitive advantages for manufacturing* is a big part of the increased activity. Most companies looking to relocate or expand consider many criteria when reviewing their options, and manufacturing is no different. Reno-Sparks stacks up quite well against general criteria; however our region really stands out as a great place for manufacturing.

If you look at our announcements for the past two years we have assisted in the attraction or expansion of 14 manufacturing companies totaling nearly 1,400 quality jobs. This correlates to 40% of our announced jobs. As we look ahead to the next 6 to 9 months we have an additional nine manufacturing companies (two from California) that are likely to relocate or expand to our region totaling, nearly 2,000 new primary jobs. For a community of our size, this pipeline of activity is significant and demonstrates the increasing awareness of Reno-Sparks on the national radar *as the place to be for manufacturing in the West.*

Manufacturing today has become more technical and sophisticated than ever. The companies that continue to manufacture in the U.S. are doing so because it makes business sense. There is usually a significant investment in their capital expenditures. The equipment often includes heavily computerized robotics, with little need for the low paying assembly line labor typically associated with the manufacturing of the past. The Ardagh Group, a recently announced company, will hire only 140 employees but are planning to invest more than \$40M in the robotics required to mass produce state-of-the-art packaging solutions. This is the manufacturing of the future in the U.S and the kinds of high paying, technical jobs that will manufacture everything from food and candy to medical devices and unmanned aerial vehicles.

What can we do to ride this wave of great jobs and tremendous economic opportunity? The strategic advantages to attract advanced manufacturing companies already exist in our region. The low cost of doing business, our business friendly government and available workforce are all

fine *for now*. As we grow and continue to attract these companies we will soon fall short of their greatest need, a technically proficient workforce. We are not fully preparing our children, the future employees of these companies, to work in this growth sector.

The stigma surrounding manufacturing jobs characterizes them as repetitive, lower paying jobs, when in fact, the advanced manufacturing jobs which are being created now, offer an average compensation package of nearly \$60,000 a year. This is a growing industry with upward mobility that should be considered an attractive career path. The push for Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) training in education is critical and our attitude about these jobs is even more important. We must embrace and aggressively pursue this opportunity if we are going to realize our potential as an advanced manufacturing hub in the West.