Economic Sustainability

BY CAROL A. KENNEDY

The elusive concept of economic sustainability can encompass a wide range of issues. Generally speaking, economic sustainability means an economy is healthy, balanced and growing and is able to maintain that status over an extended period of time. An economically stable environment should meet current needs without jeopardizing those of the future. The San Diego Association of Governments (SANDAG) has defined sustainability as a composite of the quality of the natural environment, the working environment and the quality of the social and cultural opportunities available to citizens. Economy, environment and social equity must work together harmoniously to sustain a region's quality of life.

Collaborative efforts are key to economic sustainability in North San Diego County. The health and wealth of surrounding areas are important in supporting an economically stable area. North County will need both regional cooperation and support through organizations and coalitions dedicated to growing the county's economy to ensure future sustainability.

While many organizations work to attract companies to North County, retaining these companies and ensuring their long-term success is essential to prolonged economic success for the region. Investment in public transportation, education, strategic partnerships and innovation will also be key to future economic sustainability in North San Diego.

According to Marney Cox, Chief Economist for SANDAG, discussions have taken place regarding two very different rail lines that could significantly impact North San Diego County. The first proposal involves double tracking the rail lines along the coastal transportation corridor. The current rail facilities are being used at or near their capacity, offering very little room for growth. Double tracking would increase rail capacity along the coastal corridor. This, in turn, would allow more passengers and cargo to be shipped by rail and relieve traffic congestion. The second proposal involves construction of a high-speed rail line that would run up the I-15 corridor and connect to other major transportation nodes, such as major airports. The high-speed rail line would offer commuters from Riverside and surrounding areas a fast commute to work. The proposed line would also be used to deliver cargo to a variety of airports, which would remove trucks from the highways. Finally, the line could potentially improve the efficiency of the connected airports, which would increase capacity without the need to build an additional airport.

Support and access to resources for entrepreneurs will also be important to ensuring their own long-term success. While all of these factors are important, they will also need to be supported by prudent management of risks and opportunities. Carlsbad and Oceanside are expected to add new businesses and job opportunities from existing businesses in biomedical, biotechnology and recreational products. San Marcos, Vista and Escondido are expected to add jobs and new businesses in environmental technology, medical and financial services. Newer growth industries are expected to include entertainment, casino gambling and wineries, primarily in the unincorporated communities of North County.

"SANDAG has an important role in sustaining the economic future of the

"In cooperation with its many partners in the region, SANDAG has produced and implemented a number of plans and strategies designed to prevent problems, meet challenges and sustain economic growth in the region."