It takes vision to pull together the components of prosperity

It’s almost impossible to read the news and not find a story about a community in trouble. We hear about high unemployment rates and low graduation percentages, empty storefronts and crowded food banks.

And yet, at the same time we hear about communities that are making it—expanding and attracting businesses, providing activities for their youth, and developing resources for their older population.

How do some areas prosper in hard times, but others wither away? And most importantly—how can you make sure your town is one that flourishes? The questions are of such importance to our rural communities that we are devoting this entire issue of Community Vitality to the answers. We will look at what it takes to create a healthy, economically thriving community, from supporting local businesses to attracting new ones, from training the work force to building infrastructure and quality of life.

Begin with the end

Imagine building a house without knowing what you want it to look like. It’s impossible. Steven Covey, in his signature book, The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People, describes the second habit, “Begin with the end in mind,” as the habit of vision. This habit teaches that mental creation precedes physical creation.

In my work with The Ford Family Foundation, I have traveled throughout our region, and I have seen first hand

Continued on page 13
Community building blocks

As roads have become better and vehicles more reliable, the ease of travel has promoted consolidation of many important rural services to regional centers. Stores and clinics in small towns have closed, and it is common for rural residents to travel great distances to shop for groceries or receive health care. Similarly, small schools are being consolidated into large, regional schools supported by an expansive bus service.

So should we care if a small town loses its grocery store, clinic or school? Yes. These three services are building blocks of community vitality. They provide a core of jobs, keep dollars and talent in the community, and make the community a better place to live. They make it possible for older generations to stay in town and are important in bringing younger generations back.

Of course, the size of a community matters, and there are thresholds below which it is very difficult to support these services. However, there are communities that are exploring ways to keep these services alive in their town; through Community Vitality and the RIPPLE website (www.ripplenw.org) we continue to share the practices that work.

— Tom Gallagher

Each of us plays a role, from great to small, in how a community creates jobs

During the 1992 presidential campaign, Bill Clinton’s campaign advisor James Carville coined the phrase “It’s the economy, stupid.” Carville wanted to keep Clinton and the staff focused on what was important to people. Today, the phrase rings true to many rural people and communities, where living-wage jobs or new businesses would solve many problems.

My own variation, “It’s the people, stupid,” is on the whiteboard in my office at the Ford Institute, reminding me, our staff and contractors that people are the common denominator of all that we do. We sometimes need to remind ourselves: Organizations and collaborations don’t make decisions; people within them make decisions.

For the Institute, we expect to strengthen a community’s economy by developing the capacity of people in the community.

At first glance that may seem naïve — there are so many factors such as world markets and federal land regulations that influence communities. Factors such as these, however, are often out of a community’s control. One of the bits of wisdom I’ve learned over the years is “life ain’t fair.” We don’t all get the same resources and opportunities, but
People to develop jobs

We do get luckier the harder and smarter we work. The one variable in the equation that leads to a strong economy is \textit{us} — what we do to make good things come our way.

We cannot wait to be rescued, and we cannot go back to the past when things may have been better. Fortunately, there are many external resources available; however, there is competition among communities for those resources.

Increasingly, outside investors direct their resources to those communities that already are helping themselves, that have a shared vision and priorities. A key word is “shared,” as the vision needs to be that of the whole community, not a select few.

External resources matter, but how community members act is even more important. Citizens need to support actions that attract and sustain businesses — such as infrastructure and quality-of-life features. It might be by voting for the right candidate, serving on a board or volunteering. Each of us plays a role, from great to small, in how a community creates jobs.

\textbf{Attitude matters}

Another way people help the economy is through attitude. My family hails from a small town in North Dakota that has more than its share of naysayers who are quick to bet that a new business won’t make it, and no doubt are part of the reason why. One of the most important impacts people can have on their economy is creating a positive environment. As Henry Ford said, “If you think you can do a thing or think you can’t do a thing, you are right.”

People can help their economy by being entrepreneurial and making their own job and, perhaps, jobs for others. Small towns thrive on small business, and many have entrepreneurs who might make it with some community cheering.

We also can look inside the community for ideas and resources. Young people may have talents that create a new business and access a world market. Retirees not only bring stable income from an outside source, but they may have substantial experience in an industry, important contacts to make things happen, some latent ideas they would enjoy developing and funds to make them happen. There will be 80 million baby boomers retiring in the next 16 years; economists estimate that half of us will want to live a rural lifestyle.

It is because people make the economy that we want a broad and diverse base of community leaders to support a diverse economy.

The Ford Institute is not in the business of economic development in a direct way, but it is very much involved through the decisions each of you makes to help your community.
Websites provide resources

Information is the key to success when it comes to making good decisions about economic development. The websites below offer a rich and varied assortment of resources.

Superior California Economic Development
http://www.scedd.org/
From business start-up assistance to success stories, this site has Northern California covered.

Siskiyou County Economic Development
http://www.siskiyoucounty.org
Specific statistics and information on Siskiyou County, Calif.

Rural Communities Explorer
http://oregonexplorer.info/rural/
This site, developed by Oregon State University’s Rural Studies Program, features data from many sources for all communities in Oregon (and eventually Siskiyou County). The information is helpful for assessing the vitality of communities and for pursuing grants and other resources.

Oregon Regional Economic Analysis Project
http://oregon.reaproject.org/
Interactive regional economic tools of analysis allow visitors to conduct their own research.

Oregon State Employment Department
http://www.qualityinfo.org/olmisj/OlmisZine
The slogan for the Employment Department’s home page is “Quality information, Informed Choices,” and it’s chock full of county and town-specific data.

Rural Development Initiatives’ Ripple blog
http://www.ripplenw.org/
Learn about economic development from your peers.

Oregon Agriculture and County Information System
http://osu.prognoz.com/
Check out agricultural data and select monthly indicators.

Northwest Area Foundation Indicators
http://toolbox.nwaf.org/
The site offers practical guides, case studies, public policy papers, interactive tools and resources for sustainable prosperity.

Oregon’s Economic Development Districts
http://www.oedd.org/
Everything you want to know about Oregon’s 12 economic development districts, which cover the state’s 36 counties.

Small Business Administration
http://www.sba.gov/localresources/district/or/index.html
The site offers a wealth of online resources to help the small business owner grow and succeed.

A historical

Economic development in the United States has evolved through three major waves

By Mallory Rahe
Extension Community Economist - Western Oregon
Oregon State University

Our knowledge about what drives economic change continues to evolve, but knowing where we’ve been is essential to figuring out where we are going. Economic development practice in the United States has seen three fundamental waves of policies, each one creating new tools for communities to use in their quest to build thriving local economies.

First wave: industrial attraction or “smokestack chasing”

For many years, economic development strategies focused solely on business at-

Background

The rising concern about the environment is providing opportunities for industries such as solar power. This focus could drive a new wave of economic development.
traction. The theory was that economies grew by exporting goods to bring money into a local economy. Large manufacturing firms were seen as the most desirable community employers. However, this attraction strategy can often be a “zero-sum” game, pitting one region against another and creating rivals between neighboring towns. The argument is that often no new jobs are created nationally; jobs are simply shifted around geographically. This strategy was particularly useful in the American South, which captured manufacturing jobs from the Northern states with non-unionized workforces. Over time, businesses have become increasingly adept at exacting higher subsidies from state and local governments. However, these subsidies are only secondary factors in business location decisions, which are still driven by the factor costs of inputs, transportation and available labor.

Second wave: technology and existing businesses

As it became harder and more expensive to recruit large manufacturers, economic developers started to devote resources to growing and retaining existing firms. They also began to focus on the benefits of technology to increase local productivity. Second-wave strategies included a policy shift supporting the use of enterprise zones, entrepreneurship programs, minority business programs and small business development. Local economic developers began to incorporate more partnerships and new knowledge into their local economies, as evidenced by small business development ties to community colleges. Closer partnerships were also formed with local universities to increase technology transfer as the U.S. economy began to produce high-tech employment opportunities. Second-wave strategies do not replace first-wave strategies, but they do complement them. Still seeking to increase exports, overseas trade missions became popular as a strategy to support the growth of an economy’s exports by focusing on creating new demand.

Third wave: government and capacity

The third wave has emphasized two things: a role for government in economic development and building local capacity. State and federal governments began investing in job training, education and other second-wave strategies. Economic theory focused on the importance of industrial modernization and expanded thoughts about growth and innovation to emphasize the role of human capital and interrelated businesses. Cluster strategies and building value chains became popular business growth strategies. Local community-development corporations also began to be involved in economic development as more people saw the advantages of creating an economic system ready for employment. This wave has focused attention on using leadership and collaboration to make the most of a town’s resources encouraging the development and marketing of local amenities. Human capital and social capital are also now considered important contributors to the innovation potential and business efficiency in a local region.

A fourth wave?

Today we are still in the third wave, although the rising concern with the environment could become the distinct focus of a fourth wave. Each successive wave has created new tools for developers, but despite the many strategies, the recruitment of large manufacturing businesses still remains a dominant strategy in many regions. Local practitioners should strive for a balanced approach and a diversified strategy that considers economic, social and environmental impacts.

Regardless of which strategy a local community pursues, relevant data and indicators can provide the type of information that, when combined with open communication between businesses, local leaders, workforce development and educational systems, can help communities make well-informed decisions.
Don’t underestimate live

An area’s liveability is one of its most precious assets when trying to attract new business.

When Stuart and Chris Freedman decided to move their thriving bead business from Southern California in the early 1980s, they knew what they wanted their new home to look like. “The first criteria was that it had to be a place where the people were inherently friendly,” remembers Stuart Freedman. “Our model was friendly service, and we didn’t know how to train that. The second was we wanted to live in a place that is just like where you would go on vacation.”

Over the next five years, the couple took a series of trips throughout the United States, “from the Hawaiian Islands to Virgin Islands and many places in between,” Freedman says. They ended up in Oregon—first in Cave Junction, then, as their business expanded rapidly, in Grants Pass. Today, Fire Mountain Gems and Beads is an international direct-marketing company that produces one of the best-known jewelry making catalogs in the world. It is also one of Grants Pass’ largest companies, employing 500 workers.

Economic development experts realize that there are many factors influencing a business’ decision to relocate. For some, it’s a favorable business climate, characterized by generous tax incentives, friendly zoning laws and a qualified workforce.

But for many business owners like the Freedmans, the decision to relocate is a more personal one.

From urban to rural

More than 18 million people moved from metropolitan areas into small cities or rural counties during the 1990s, says Jack Shultz, author of Boomtown USA. “The bottom line can be summed up in three words: quality of life.”

In the early 1980s, Chris and Stuart Freedman wanted to relocate their Southern California bead business to a place “just like where you would go on vacation.” They ended up in Southern Oregon.

In a Central Oregon study often cited in tourism circles, more than 70 percent of new businesses that moved to the Bend area in the early 1990s came after business owners first visited the area on vacation.
Five years ago, the Chehalem Cultural Center was just another abandoned building. A former school, the 40,000-square-foot building sits smack dab in the middle of downtown Newberg.

In 1997, the Newberg School District, having built a new school, sold the empty Central School to the Newberg Parks and Recreation District for one dollar. The only stipulation was that the building had to remain in the public domain.

And there it sat for the next eight years, until a community visioning process identified the need for an arts and recreation center, and a group of community leaders stepped up. “We spent the next five years getting the doors open,” says Loni Parrish, one of a handful of Newberg-area residents driving the project. An assistance grant from The Ford Family Foundation proved pivotal in the planning stages. Later, a $400,000 grant helped “open doors everywhere,” Parrish says.

The refurbished wood and brick building opened in early 2010. The second phase of the $8 million project will see renovation of Central’s old theater, which seats 240, as well as the addition of a dance studio, conference center, ballroom and kitchen.

The building has done more for the town of Newberg than simply offer classes and meeting space, Parrish says. “It will literally change the downtown by its presence. People will visit as they drop people off to classes, they will shop, we’ll hold weddings here.”

Craig Smith, the executive director of Rural Development Initiatives, identifies the revitalization of downtown as one of the key ways rural towns can grow their economies. “A healthy and vibrant downtown boosts the economic health and quality of life in a community,” Smith says. “A healthy downtown creates jobs, incubates small businesses, reduces sprawl, retains a community’s heritage, and is a symbol of community pride and history.”

The Chehalem Center Association’s plans to construct a large plaza connected to the cultural center and the downtown library are moving forward, buoyed by enthusiastic buy-in by community groups.

“The really cool thing about the plaza is that there are so many partners—the library, the city of Newberg, the parks and recreation district, the Newberg Downtown Coalition,” Parrish says. “They all believe the plaza will change and enhance the downtown core. And it all started because of the cultural center.”
Catherine and Wes Caudle knew it wouldn’t be easy starting their own Bend-based business in the middle of a recession, with the region’s unemployment rate hovering above 14 percent. But their dream had always been to open a bakery, and they weren’t about to let the economy stop them.

Catherine Caudle, a Ford Scholar, graduated from University of Oregon’s Cascades Campus in 2003 with a bachelor’s degree in social science. A year later, she began working for the Social Security office in Bend as a customer service representative. “I just love people, and this job is all about helping people,” says the 43-year-old.

But opening a bakery had always been in her plans. Wes Caudle’s family was in the baking industry when he was a child, and he had a lot of experience. It was Wes who noticed that a lot of the baked goods sold at convenience stores, such as doughnuts and muffins, came to the store frozen.

“We did a market analysis of the area and found a need for fresh products that don’t have preservatives,” Caudle says. And so, the idea for the Bend Bakery—offering always-fresh, never-frozen baked goods—was born.

The couple had two goals for the endeavor: to provide a job for Wes, a disabled vet who was underemployed; and to do their part to help the area’s economy.

One hire leads to another

“We thought a wholesale business would help the economy more efficiently than if we opened a retail bakery,” Caudle explains. “We hire our own employees, and maybe, if our product brings in more customers for the retailers, they can hire more people, too.”

A year ago last August, the Caudles began buying equipment as their finances allowed. By October 2009, they were looking for the right bakery site. They leased a catering kitchen at the beginning of May, secured approval from the state and opened three weeks later.

The bakery supplies retail clients with Danish pastries.
Fresh products

In its first week of operation, the bakery made $200; in its fifth, $1,700.

Although the bakery has only been operating a few months, business is steadily increasing. If it keeps up as projected, Caudle says the bakery is on track with its business plan, which calls for hiring two new employees before the end of the year.

Entrepreneurs key to economic recovery

Small business resources help increase the odds for success and lessen risks

“The explorers of the modern era are the entrepreneurs, [men and women] with vision, with the courage to take risks and faith enough to brave the unknown.”

—President Ronald Reagan

Many people are looking to entrepreneurs to rally the economy. A recent poll by the Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation found that more than 70 percent of participants said the health of the economy depends on the success of entrepreneurs. Unfortunately, only 26 percent said they would actually consider starting a business within the next five years.

Entrepreneurs see opportunities that others don’t and know when to take calculated risks.

Catherine and Wes Caudle maximized their chances of business success by thoroughly doing their homework. In Catherine’s case, that meant actually doing homework, as she worked her way through several U.S. Small Business Association online courses. The SBA website (www.sba.gov) offers a wealth of free information for small business owners—ones just starting out and also those looking to expand. Beginning a year before they planned to open their bakery, Caudle took online SBA courses in finance and accounting, business planning and business management. She got a certificate in accounting, developed a business plan and did market research.

The couple considered pursuing an SBA loan, but decided to buy equipment piecemeal as their budget allowed. Once they found a catering kitchen to lease, they received certification from the state as a wholesale bakery and opened for business.

Door to door

The next step was to woo the clients. “Once we opened,” Caudle says, “our marketing plan was to go door to door with our target vendors and give them free product.” The reaction was good, particularly from the mini markets in the area, and the Caudles were on their way.

Caudle has some advice for those who want to open their own business but are waiting for the right time. “If you follow your dreams and if you are earnest about them, you will succeed,” she says. “You need to put your foot out and do it. If you do that, it will pay you back 100 percent.”
Rethinking the way we grow jobs

Let’s pay more attention to germinating businesses already here

By Brent Barton, Bob Jenson and Jefferson Smith
Oregon House of Representatives

“In the long run, between the hunters and the farmers, the farmers always win.”
—Anonymous

We often ask how to attract businesses to locate here. But what about growing businesses that already call Oregon home?

The current economic crisis requires us to hone and rethink business development. Attention often focuses on reeling in big fish. In addition to being increasingly competitive and costly, this mindset reflects an era when Fortune 500 companies employed a larger share of workers. Recently, “stage-two” businesses — often defined as having from 10 to 100 employees — have emerged as the top job creators and drivers of growth. We can capitalize on this trend by paying more attention to germinating businesses already here. In other words, in addition to “economic hunting,” we need “economic gardening.”

The story of economic gardening began in Littleton, Colo., in 1987 when a major employer laid off several thousand workers. Economic development director Chris Gibbons looked at luring in another major manufacturer, but he took a different route when he realized that any company chasing lower costs might soon leave for better offers elsewhere.

Having seen research from MIT’s David Birch contending most new jobs came from a community’s small and medium-size businesses, Gibbons set out to grow Littleton’s economy from within. Twenty years later, Littleton’s job base has grown twofold, while population has grown less than 25 percent.

Economic gardening is now the subject of a chapter in the Small Business Administration’s book, entrepreneurial foundations promote it heavily and a number of communities have launched economic gardening strategies.

Axiom Electronics, a high-tech company based in Beaverton, is a homegrown example

Rather than working harder to make Oregon the cheapest date with tax breaks and incentives, we should do more to nurture local businesses.”
creating jobs and revenue that stay in Oregon.

Through Business Oregon efforts such as Oregon Inc. and others, our state works to encourage startups and make Oregon hospitable to bigger companies. As we build a high-road economy, economic gardening presents an opportunity to amplify our work. Rather than working harder to make Oregon the cheapest date with tax breaks and incentives, we should do more to nurture local businesses.

A bill [HB 3644] we helped pass with a bipartisan super-majority in the recent special session will establish a task force of business leaders, economic developers and agency representatives to assess Oregon's continuum of business services and recommend an economic gardening strategy. This small bill about a bigger thing [which was signed by the governor in March] will help push Oregon forward as a leader in homegrown business development.

Brent Barton, a Democrat, represents Clackamas; Bob Jenson, a Republican, represents Pendleton; and Jefferson Smith, a Democrat, represents Portland in the Oregon House of Representatives.

Want to learn more about economic gardening? Start here

The concept of economic gardening is gaining favor in many community development circles as an alternative to the traditional practice of recruiting—or hunting—businesses. Find out more about economic gardening at these sites.

**Economic Gardening: An Entrepreneurial Approach to Economic Development**
http://www.littletongov.org/bia/economicgardening/

In 1987, the City of Littleton, Colorado pioneered a daring new strategy in an effort to infuse its faltering economy with new life. The approach resulted in a 71 percent increase in employment and a tripling of sales tax revenues since 1989 while providing no incentives or tax breaks. This website was developed in response to all the inquiries the town has received by communities that want to duplicate Littleton’s success. The site features a comprehensive essay by Christian Gibbons, the town’s director of Business/Industry Affairs, who conceived of the idea in the early 1980s.

**The Oregon Economics Blog**

OSU professor Patrick Emerson offers a contrarian view of the economic gardening strategy. “The problem in Oregon is not the bureaucratic environment—in most measures of business friendliness Oregon scores near the top,” Emerson writes. “The problem is in the fundamentals, like education, where Oregon scores near the bottom.”

**Growing Local Economies**
http://growinglocaleconomies.com/economic_gardening

This site offers several useful resources, including a white paper titled “10 Tips for Implementing an Economic Gardening Project.” Several other articles offer an in-depth look at different aspects of the strategy, including case studies and advantages for small business.

**Your Economy**
http://youreconomy.org/

An economic gardening project typically focuses its main initiatives on entrepreneurial second stage companies. The YourEconomy.org website provides an explanation of the different company stages, as well as comprehensive statistics on entrepreneurial activity in the United States. The site, produced by the Edward Lowe Foundation, offers an interactive resource center that allows users to explore economic activity across the country.
Infrastructure offers building blocks to rural prosperity

The economic prosperity of a community depends heavily on a strong infrastructure including roads, utilities, waterways, healthcare facilities and airports. Without these essential components, communities cannot prosper. Here’s a look at three rural areas leveraging their infrastructure to promote economic development.

Biking rural roads

In rural areas of Oregon, roads are more than a way for local motorists to get from Point A to Point B. Some of Oregon’s largest, most sparsely populated counties are proving an irresistible draw for travelers on two wheels.

“Cyclists and motorcyclists from all over the world like coming here,” says Yolanda Lennon, tourism promotions director for Travel Pendleton. “They say our roads aren’t busy, and they are in very good shape.”

The surge in bicycle tourism has meant a corresponding surge in events, such as the annual Cycle Oregon, which this year included a two-day stop in Pendleton. It also has supported a new sideline for Joseph Hardware—a repair shop that employs two full-time bicycle mechanics.

For its class project, members of the Ford Institute Leadership Program spring 2009 class in Wallowa County installed 73 bicycle racks throughout the county.

Today, bicycle tourism is a strong component of the outdoor recreation industry in all parts of rural Oregon. Wallowa County, for example, served as the pilot for Oregon Rural Tourism Studio, a four-month training program for rural leaders interested in sustainable tourism development.

“In Wallowa County, bicycle tourism was identified as a niche product,” says Kristin Dahl, Travel Oregon’s tourism development and sustainability manager.

Telecom takes hold

When the city of Ashland rolled out a fiber-optic network way back in 1988, its high-speed Internet connection was among the fastest in the country.

“Ashland is predominately tourism- and education-based,” said then-city administrator Mike Freeman. “The Ashland Fiber Network will help us diversify and bring in high-tech, smaller companies.”

The strategy worked, as high-tech companies flocked to the area. Jackson County alone recorded a 500-percent increase in computer-related firms in the late 1980s.

While the fever pitch of Internet-related business growth has abated, telecommunication is still an essential component of a healthy infrastructure.

Broadband capabilities allow people to work from rural areas as if they were located in large cities. Businesses are able to flourish from remote corners of the state via electronic storefronts. And companies that need high-speed Internet connections to operate are no longer limited to locating in urban areas.

Working with water

When the Ford Institute Leadership Program fall 2008 class in north Curry County chose its project, members recognized the importance of the coastal waterways.

“We have an active near-shore fishery for things like salmon, tuna and crab,” says class member Harry Hoogestege. “We wanted to make the point that all of our water, clean or otherwise, ends up in the near-shore ocean, and we eat things from the sea.”

Class members chose to construct three bioswales, or constructed landscape features that remove silt and pollution from runoff water.

The swale, basically a shallow drainage ditch, is planted with select vegetation to help filter the slowly moving water before it is absorbed into the sand and, eventually, the ocean. Class members spent a year planning and constructing the bioswales. Besides helping build healthy waterways, the bioswales’ very public presence helps inform the public that the community cares about its environment.
Economic vitality

Continued from page 1

the power that people have to shape their future when they share a vision for their town.

“The first step for creating economic vitality is developing a community vision and a plan,” says my colleague, Craig Smith, the executive director of Rural Development Initiatives. And he’s right—coming to a shared understanding of what defines your community is the vital first step toward planning your future.

Some may argue that we’re doing just fine, and everyone knows where we’re going. However, when I ask rural citizens where their community is headed, they often don’t know. If we don’t know what we’re trying to create, then how can we create it?

To the moon

President John F. Kennedy understood the power of vision. Prior to 1961, the U.S. scientific community was engaged in extensive but disconnected efforts to beat the Russians into space. Then, in a speech on May 25, 1961, Kennedy shaped a vision:

“I believe this nation should commit itself, to achieving the goal, before this decade is out, of landing a man on the moon and returning him safely to the earth.”

Suddenly, everyone knew what we as a nation were going to do and when. Communities as well can galvanize action by creating a common vision.

The coastal town of Astoria gives us an excellent example.

In the early 1990s, town leaders began developing the Riverwalk along two blocks fronting the Columbia River. “Astoria is defined by being at the mouth of the Columbia River,” Skip Hauke, executive director of the Astoria Warrenton Chamber of Commerce, told the Oregonian. “The river is Astoria. The plan was to show off the working waterfront. I don’t think they’ve wavered from it at all.”

Today, a five-mile section features restaurants, hotels, parks, a museum and a restored trolley line, attracting thousands each year (see photo, page 16). At one point, developers were clamoring to build multilevel condos along the waterfront. Town leaders instead produced the Riverfront Vision Plan, which formalized their vision by protecting the working waterfront at the expense of private development. It is a vision that is paying off for Astoria.

Each region has its own “sense of place” with different strengths. Some are defined by natural resources. Others may define themselves by a focus on sustainability or food availability for all. The most important thing is that the community comes together in dialog and defines its vision. Only by beginning with the end in mind can one choose the right path to get there.

Community colleges focus on workforce

Skill development, support services bolster economic development

A lot of businesses wish their production and administrative processes were more efficient. In Douglas County, a trio of disparate companies did more than wish—they teamed up with Umpqua Community College and sent their managers and hourly workers back to school.

After identifying the interested companies — a book distributor, a chip hauler and a lumber mill — the college obtained a grant that funded the cost of training, with the businesses contributing their employees’ time.

The six-month program was an intensive on-site and off-site training in the principles of Lean Manufacturing, a set of processes designed to increase efficiency and decrease waste.

It was a quality training aimed at improving the productivity of several key businesses in the county, and it couldn’t have happened without the resources of the community college.

“Community colleges play a really critical role in economic development,” says Pete Bober, director of UCC’s Small Business Development Center and Workforce Training. “They are one of the few entities in rural areas that have enough size and substantial resources to bear, and they have a lot of bright people in them.”

Besides developing the skills of county residents through education programs and as-needed instruction for area businesses, community colleges can act as catalysts for regional development.

UCC’s new viticulture and enology program, for example, does a lot more than prepare students for entry into Oregon’s
Three books provide perspective on economic issues

Get the tools you need to help make a difference in your community with the Ford Institute for Community Building Select Books. We provide these resources at no charge. Keep them, share them. The only requirement is providing us with your feedback on the publication ordered.

Here are details on three of the books on the Select List:


The time has never been riper for small communities to prosper, says this author, but that prosperity doesn’t happen on its own. What are the necessary ingredients? Solid and visionary leadership, a “can-do” attitude, and a willingness to take risks. Schultz lays out seven and a half keys to enjoying that prosperity in a highly engaging book that reads more like a good novel than a blueprint for economic success (see complete review on page 16).


Bigger isn’t always better. In fact, says author Michael Shuman, small, locally owned businesses often outperform their “big box” competitors, benefiting both themselves and their communities. His argument is that these businesses — the Small-Marts — are the key to a local community’s economic future, rather than the “death star” chain stores. “The more we nurture and support Small-Marts, the more likely we will bring prosperity to all Americans,” Shuman says.


Buying local isn’t just a good idea. For a group of young agri-businessmen in the small northern Vermont town of Hardwick, it could be a ticket to economic stability. The book describes their efforts to nurture a healthy local food system, which has drawn national attention, along with the ire of some of the former mining town’s residents.

You can receive one of these books for free. Simply complete the form at far right. The full list of Select Books offers more than 25 other books. View the list at [www.tfff.org](http://www.tfff.org) or call (541) 957-5574 to receive a copy of the list and request form.

---

**Community colleges**

Continued from page 13

The burgeoning wine industry. “It was really created not as an education program but as an economic development initiative,” Bober says. **An economic magnet**

By concentrating efforts in the winery-related sector, the program serves as an economic development magnet that draws related business to the area, Bober says. A new campus-based wine-testing lab will employ two or three people. It provides services to local wine growers who previously had to send samples away. An area farm store now carries specialized viticulture equipment. Realtors specializing in vineyard properties are beginning to make an appearance.

“That program is a great example about how a community college in a rural area can have a tremendous impact on skill development, and also an economic impact in the community,” Bober says.

---

**Read us online**

Now you have two ways to read Community Vitality: here on the printed page or online at [www.tfff.org/cv](http://www.tfff.org/cv). If you would like to receive email notification of new issues online, subscribe at [www.tfff.org/cvs](http://www.tfff.org/cvs). To unsubscribe from the print copy mailed to your postal address, send an email to communityvitality@tfff.org with the word “unsubscribe” in the subject line. Please include your name and mailing address in the body of your email.
Know your strengths

Continued from page 16

than a blueprint for economic success. From “Key #1: Adopt a Can-Do Attitude,” to “Key #7½: Embrace the Teeter-Totter Factor,” he takes readers through pages stuffed with examples.

Several towns in the Pacific Northwest earn mention in Boomtown USA. Grants Pass is mentioned as a good example of a town that is leveraging its natural resources (Key #3). Astoria, which turned a mill clean-up project into an economic development opportunity, is featured in “Key #6: Maintain local control.” City officials worked with state agencies to clean up the downtown site, and then marketed it to a development group.

Schultz devotes many pages to Leavenworth, Wash., a logging town in the foothills of the Cascades. After the railroad left town in the 1960s, the town’s population dwindled to less than a thousand. A group of townspeople, searching for a way to keep their town alive, decided to promote a Bavarian theme to attract tourists. The Chikamin Hotel was transformed into the Hotel Edelweiss, and boarded-up buildings on Main Street were refurbished with Bavarian village facades. A variety of festivals added to the attraction of the nearby mountains, and today nearly two million visitors a year come to Leavenworth.

“People in towns like Leavenworth have the ability to quell the panic in their stomachs and assess their situation from a different perspective,” Schultz writes. “Even as the moving vans are pulling away, they see new opportunities behind the current challenges.”

Several towns in the Pacific Northwest earn mention in Boomtown USA including Grants Pass, Astoria and Leavenworth.

A parade moves down Main Street in Leavenworth, Wash., where buildings sport Bavarian facades.
Author provides blueprint for economic success in rural America

Why do some communities thrive while others fail? Writer Jack Schultz takes a close look at small-town America as he searches for answers in *Boomtown USA: The 7½ Keys to Big Success in Small Towns*.

Schultz says that the time has never been riper for small communities to prosper. Telecommunication capabilities, lower operating costs for businesses, a willing labor force and quality-of-life issues such as less crime, shorter commutes and beautiful environs all set the stage for rural towns’ success.

“But that prosperity doesn’t happen on its own,” Schultz warns. “It happens through solid and visionary leadership, having a ‘Can-Do’ attitude and exhibiting a willingness to take risks.” It also takes knowledge of your town’s strengths and resources, knowing how to leverage them, and building a brand.

Schultz lays out seven (plus one half) keys to enjoying that prosperity in a highly engaging book that reads more like a good novel. Continued on page 15

Get this book for FREE. See page 15.

A restored trolley along Astoria’s riverfront connects restaurants, hotels, parks and a museum, attracting thousands each year.

**MISSION**
Successful citizens and vital rural communities

**CORE VALUES**
- **Integrity**: Promoting and acknowledging principled behavior
- **Stewardship**: Responsibility to give back and accountability for resources and results
- **Respect**: Valuing all individuals
- **Independence**: Encouraging self-reliance and initiative
- **Community**: Working together for positive change