

EDC Speech-6-28-06

I know that I speak for El Paso County by offering my sincere appreciation for the confidence that Mike Kazmierski, Julie Boswell, Pam Keller, the EDC Board and the staff of the Economic Development Corporation have shown by giving us the opportunity to share our perspective on Economic Development.

As I've been preparing this presentation, I've been thinking about the age-old question, "What is Economic Development?" Ed Barlow, who recently presented a workshop sponsored by the Pikes Peak Workforce Center, references creating the future's purpose: "To enhance an understanding of the future and the influences which will affect personal, professional, organizational, and community settings." During his presentation, he also advocated for the term Community Development. So, with that statement in mind, let's focus on the word "Community".

Being someone who came into government through small-business and neighborhood roots, I approach economic development through community and neighborhood development. It's been said that people generally take a one-dimensional approach to Economic Development. Economic Development is mostly understood with strategies such as business recruitment techniques, buy-local campaigns, and main street improvements, with business people as the only or primary movers and shakers. Unfortunately, not much attention goes to goals taking longer than five years to achieve. And, locally, we've seen this approach succeed in such issues as Open Space preservation, Community Improvements, Public Safety, TABOR refund projects like the refilling of Prospect Lake and the construction of the Humane Society building, and most recently, the formation of the Pikes Peak Rural Transportation Authority. And, these single projects or series of projects do improve our community. However, a one-dimensional approach can become quickly outdated in a time when our counties, cities, towns and our neighborhoods find their way of life literally disintegrating around them. Today in this day and age, we must undertake something much bigger and more powerful: **COMMUNITY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT.**

We should all agree that Community Economic Development is about process. It's not something handed-down from an administration and our internal governmental departments. It's about engaging the community by providing better access to resources and information, and by showing how to access and use those resources. Community Economic Development is about education and communication. It's the cornerstone in building a community, providing strength through the support of our existing assets, including government. The statement, "Invest in the people and they will invest in you" Is absolutely essential to the future vitality of El Paso County.

And now, I'm going to share with you how El Paso County Government has participated, is participating and will continue to participate in the future of our Community Economic Development for years to come. I'm also going to share with you just a few of our Strategic Planning goals that will set the road map for growing our regional economy and share with you the challenges we face at the county level in maintaining adequate upkeep of our facilities and continuing to provide a basic level of government services.

In closing, the development of specific community areas, infrastructure, systems and local support contributes to the enhancement of our local community. The EDC plays an important role in creating a community council which brings together a diverse and representative group thereby establishing a truly community economic development strategy. El Paso County is a willing and grateful partner in their efforts.

It was Lon Matjczyk who said in a recent Colorado Springs Business Journal editorial, "We are all in the economic development business and I challenge you all to engage more and make a difference."

That is so important. In America, often times we amplify our shortcomings so loudly that they drown out the steady hum of a system that's in fine working order. The most difficult part of an undertaking is getting started. It's not about all of us sitting around a table that makes community economic development, it's about each and everyone of us taking a message out to the community, one by one. Whether from the business community, arts community,

government, or neighborhood association, we all have a role in community economic development and stating our message.

Change is inevitable, except from a vending machine. So, let's work toward changes that preserve our heritage and also move along with the times. And I know that I speak for my fellow commissioners and county elected officials here today, that El Paso County is working to provide the foundation of a community with the efforts of the Economic Development Corporation.

Thank you.