



Official: Economic development 'does take all of us'

By Jeff Matthews • jmatthews@thetowntalk.com • June 4, 2010

Economic development is not magic. It's just common sense.

Those were the words of Rick Ranson who, in his capacity with Central Louisiana Economic Development Alliance, organized an economic development seminar Thursday titled "Economic Development: It's Your Business!"

More than 100 people got a heaping helping of that common sense at the Pineville Convention Center during the four hour-plus program, an interactive presentation that addressed things such as defining economic development and what communities have to do to sell themselves to businesses.

"It's time for this in Central Louisiana," said Mitzi Gibson, a marketer with Home Health Care 2000. "It was very worthwhile for people to hear. Hopefully we can have more of these meetings of the minds."

The presentation was led by Tim Chase, president and chief executive officer of the Wichita Falls (Texas) Chamber of Commerce and Industry, and Ronnie Bryant, president and CEO of the Charlotte Regional Partnership, based in Charlotte, N.C.

"Whether you think you're involved in economic development or not, you are," Ranson said. "It does take all of us. That 140 people were willing to come this morning in the rain gives me hope that many people are interested in this stuff."

"Charlotte was Cenla 20 years ago," said Reldon Owens, director of sales and marketing with the Bossier Group. "Here's a guy (Bryant) who can say, 'We've been what you are, here's what we did.' Any time someone comes at you from that standpoint, it hits home."

Some of the high points Bryant and Chase hit Thursday were:

uCommunity development

Community development and economic development do not go hand-in-hand, Bryant argued. Community development must come first.

Without the advantages of transportation and infrastructure and quality of life components such as education, health care, recreation and entertainment, your community will lose out when it comes time to recruit business.

"If you don't have a good product and you jump out there and try to sell it in the marketplace, you're going to fail," Chase said. "You might get lucky, but in the long run you're going to fail."

uRetention and expansion of current business

Businesses will leave your area or close down, Chase said, and sometimes there is nothing you can do about it. Which makes it even more important to do what you can to help existing local businesses.

"It's not sexy," Chase said. "It doesn't get above-the-fold headlines. But it's the meat and potatoes of economic development. You've got to hold on to what you have."

uHaving attractive and ready sites

Companies come into the process of searching for a

Advertisement

Print Powered By FormatDynamics

place to locate on tight deadlines, Bryant said. If you don't have what they're looking for, they will look somewhere else.

"Companies have options," Bryant said. "They have choices where they can go. The communities that have sites ready to go and can provide a choice of sites are the ones that are going to be successful."

uCollaboration

Bryant oversees economic development initiatives for counties in North and South Carolina. Removing lines and thinking regionally is key, he said, as well as having a clear structure of who companies should come to when they are interested in your area.

It was a sentiment that hit home with several in the audience.

"One of the big words, the buzzwords out of this was collaboration," Gibson said. "Collaboration and leadership. What individual, private business or organization is going to be that leader in economic development? So we can rally around that leader. We have wonderful potential here. The sky's the limit. It's a great place to live, we want to make it a great place to work."



Ronnie Bryant, president and CEO of the Charlotte Regional Partnership, speaks about the site selection process during Thursday's Central Louisiana Chamber of Commerces summit titled "Economic Development: It's Your Business!" at the Pineville Convention Center.

Advertisement

Mom Dilemma #36:
Your daughter insists on wearing her princess costume to the grocery store. Allow it or not?

YES, at least she's dressed!

NO, I have some rules!

momslike.me.com
where Local moms meet