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Being able to live here

Guest editorial

By **Kevin Owyang**
Chairman, Economic Development Committee of the Teton Valley Chamber of Commerce

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The Teton Valley Chamber of Commerce started an Economic Development Committee at the end of 2008. At the time, businesses were expecting a downturn in visitors and some Chamber members believed the Chamber was too focused on tourism. The Economic Development Committee was formed to help build a diverse economy that leverages resources other than tourism so people can make a living here.

We wrote a grant application to the Bonneville Environmental Foundation for a solar panel installation at Driggs City Center for use as an educational tool. We also facilitated an economic analysis by BYU-Idaho for alternatives at the Teton County transfer station, such as composting. As an area blessed with great scenic beauty and multiple outdoor activities while still close to the Idaho Technology Corridor, this is a great place to create jobs around the development, installation, and marketing of green technologies.

We facilitated the creation of a Regional Planning Organization (RPO), an interagency task force bringing together city, county, and state transportation planning staff, because growth in this valley creates planning challenges that typify much larger populations that use Metropolitan Planning Organizations to manage them. In a survey conducted by the Chamber, people highlighted roadways as a priority for economic development.

We hosted two seminars to help small businesses deal with a tighter credit market. The first brought together area banks who provide tips on how to present a business in its best light when applying for a loan. The second brought a speaker from the Idaho E-Center who spoke about the difference between working in your business and working on your business. Day to day, it is easier to choose the first over the second, but ignoring it completely can make the every day more difficult.

We need your help because there is more that can be done. One idea is developing a multipurpose conference facility that could serve local needs as well as attract small conventions to the valley. Another is staffing an economic development office as an information resource for local and outside businesses. And another is accessing the part-time residents of this valley — like the community of physicists, fund managers, and executives — for ideas on how to make this more than just a place to

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visit, but a place to live.

For us, Economic Development is about being able to make a living here — for those who grew up here and chose to stay as well as those that moved here because they share the same values. There's a lot of good ideas that we haven't included here and we want to hear them! Please join us by calling the Teton Valley Chamber at (208) 354-2500, tvcc@tetonvallychamber.com.

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