

October 1, 2013

This is Erin Dunn from the Fortuna Chamber of Commerce with a Community Comment.

I just got back in to town after a week away with business and civic leaders from the western United States.

In that setting, saying you are from Humboldt County is not something that brings about immediate admiration. In fact, I had to endure a couple of days of the usual jokes about pot and the laid back culture.

I worked diligently to represent my area in a positive way at this conference and by the end of the week the pot jokes were almost nonexistent.

It's odd coming back to Humboldt County after being gone for a week. It seems like we've been wrapped up in a "smart growth is no growth" attitude for at least as long as the 10 years I have lived here and that hurts us in the long run.

My cynical side thinks that the no-growthers are concerned that their pot growing lands will be discovered or diminished if any growth is allowed. I'm not saying that's the case, I'm saying sometimes that's what it feels like.

I was catching up on local news on Sunday evening and tuned in to Access Humboldt and there was a rerun of the Supervisors talking about the general plan update.

Second District Supervisor Estelle Fennell wanted the Board to consider adding a couple of words to the section that addressed big box retail. Admittedly, there may have been more to it before I tuned in. In any event, in the section of the plan that talked about development and *environmental impacts*, Estelle wanted the board to consider adding the words "and economic benefit." Any future plan would take into consideration BOTH factors—environmental impact and economic benefit.

In just those few minutes, Estelle brought into focus what we as a county—in my opinion--have been missing—positive economic consideration for projects that are being presented for our county. A balance of both environmental and economic needs.

Once pot is legalized we will need more than that economy to survive in Humboldt County. We need to consider balancing environmental impact with economic benefit. Balance will be key to a successful future for our County.

Richardson Grove is a great example of this process. In spite of what the opposition tried to tell us about regarding the horrifying impact that the realignment would have on Richardson Grove, the taking out less than 30 relatively young trees is worth the economic benefit to our area's exporters. It will bring economic growth with very little change to the environment at Richardson Grove.

That is the kind economic vs. environmental impact that we need to consider. Smart growth is NOT no growth. Smart growth is balance.

There are many beautiful places in California and the United States that manage to balance natural splendor with a vibrant economy. Why can't we?

This has been Erin Dunn with a Community Comment.