

Community Comment, May 11<sup>th</sup> 2015

By Jon Sapper  
System Thinking

How many of us want a quick fix to problems in our community? I do. You probably do, too. You might even have the perfect answer in how to deal with homelessness, deal with our health care system, deal with safety in our communities, deal with those who suffer from mental illness or deal with our economy so folks who want to work can have a good paying job that puts food on the table and a roof over their head. In the last two weeks, I've had conversations with three different people about what we need to do to improve our economy. And guess what.... three different thoughts. Are you surprised?

The first conversation was with a successful small business owner. They started a new business years ago and said, "We need to support new business start-ups. That's what our economy is built on. Not all of these ventures will be successful, but a few of them will and the more people we can get thinking about being a small business owner and having the courage to take the first step in becoming their own boss, the better off we'll be." They were passionate that this is what we need to do. I walked away saying to myself, "Yea, that's what we should do."

My second conversation was with another successful businessperson in our community and they said, "The easiest way to build and grow a stronger economy is to work with the existing businesses that are already successful and help them grow even more by tapping new markets, expanding or developing new products or services, etc.. Trying to start new businesses is just plain hard and so many of them never really get off the ground, so it's clear in my mind this is where resources need to be spent....build on successful existing businesses." I walked away saying to myself, "Yea, that's what we should do."

The third individual looked at this completely differently. They said, "Find businesses that could fit our area and are successful elsewhere and go after them. Give them incentives to relocate here. We haven't done that and I can't figure out why not." I walked away thinking, "Why haven't we done that?"

When you really think about it, all three of these folks are right. We need to support those risk takers who want to start businesses. We need to support

those successful business owners that have the potential to grow. We need to attract businesses that would be a good fit for our area. And the role of government should be to provide red carpet treatment for our business community with staff whose job ~~is~~, is to help them through the regulatory process of starting, growing or relocating a business.

A prosperous community depends on it.

This has been Jon Sapper for Community Comment.