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FORUM: Open door to local jobs, credible companies

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FORUM: Open door to local jobs, credible companies

By OLDEN ("O.B.") JOHNSON North County Times - Californian | Posted: Thursday, August 26, 2010 12:00 am | [\(7\) Comments](#) | [Print](#)

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I hate the signs of local economic recession evident in our community.

In Southwest Riverside County, both jobs and revenue are leaving our area. Riverside County took a \$20 million hit in lost revenue just last year. Unemployment hovers around 15 percent countywide and foreclosures are double the national average.

My experience as a local Realtor tells me that the broader economy will eventually turn around, but I also know that the national recovery will take longer than people realize and more pain lies ahead. The best thing we can do while we wait for the national economy to right itself is focus on what we can do right here at home to create jobs and investment.

When a private, credible company wants to invest tens of millions of dollars of private money in our region, we should not only listen, we should focus on whatever we can do to help them create jobs and invest in our community now. We need jobs and local private investment now more than ever.

I first heard a presentation to a Murrieta-Temecula group about the proposed Liberty Quarry in 2005. As a group, we investigated the proposal and considered the pros and cons before eventually formally adopting a resolution of support for the project. As local business leaders, we all have made a significant investment in our communities, raised our families here and want to ensure that our local quality of life is preserved and protected. We believe that the Granite Construction Company investment in our community will create needed jobs and local investment that will help strengthen our local economy.

The Riverside County environmental review of the quarry project clearly shows that the region will be better off with Liberty Quarry than without it. There will be no significant impacts because of the operations. The residents of Temecula and Murrieta will not see it, hear it, feel it or otherwise know that the project is there. Monitoring of the Rosemary's Quarry in Northern San Diego County further demonstrates no impacts to neighboring communities.

Critics shout about how the project will destroy local tourism and property values but such fears are simply not supported by facts or experience elsewhere. Tourism thrives in other regions where there are far more quarries in operation. The Palm Springs resorts region has 14 operating quarries, most of which are plainly visible from the I-10 highway through the Coachella Valley. And hundreds of upscale homes have sprung up within a few hundred yards of Granite's Indio Quarry.

I have been involved in the real estate industry for over 30 years. I know what impacts property values and it isn't a project that you can't see or hear. Property values are impacted by street location, quality of schools, size, condition, economic cycles and interest rates. Property values in Temecula and Murrieta will not be impacted by Liberty Quarry. They have been hit by the recession, and it will take a turn in the local economy for them to recover dramatically. To have a positive impact on property values in our area, we must turn our attention to job creation and economic recovery.

Wisdom is only a curse for the man who does nothing with it. Open the door to local jobs and investment now.

Olden "O.B." Johnson is a commercial real estate broker in Murrieta.

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