



Business boosters say economic future bright

Robert Moreno | Sat, Oct 08 2016 12:00 PM

South County is booming.

That was the central theme at the 26th annual South County Economic Development Summit, which took place at the San Diego Convention Center Sept. 30.

Hundreds of people were in attendance including South County leaders, elected officials and heads of nonprofits to hear about the economic progress South County is making.

The city of Chula Vista has several plans in the works that should drive South County's economy.

Chula Vista Councilwoman Pamela Bensoussan, who participated on the elected officials panel, said the county's second largest city continues to be one of the safest cities in the nation so people can feel safe when they shop in Chula Vista.

Bensoussan also said the future is bright for Chula Vista as long-awaited city projects such as the bayfront and university development projects are closer to becoming a reality.

The councilwoman said the city is in the final phase of negotiations with RIDA Development Corporation regarding financing the bayfront plans.

Plans are also in the works to bring the first ever bi-national university to the South Bay.

"We want a major American university to anchor along with a major Mexican university," Bensoussan said.

Bensoussan also touted the redevelopment that is happening on the west side of the city, particularly in downtown Chula Vista. She said downtown Chula Vista now has more of an urban feel.

"It's a new age really because we're changing the demographics to a younger population in western and downtown Chula Vista." It's a new kind of environment for us."

San Diego District 8 Councilman David Alvarez, whose district includes the South County portion of south San Diego, said addressing his area's housing problem is his chief concern.

Alvarez said there is not that much access to affordable housing with the high cost of living in his region and he is trying to fix that.

"The common theme here is California is becoming a very, very difficult place to live because of the high cost to live here," he said. "We are addressing these issues by increasing wages because people can't afford to live here with what they earn now."

Alvarez said he would like to see the topic of housing be addressed at all levels of government. He said once this problem is addressed it would attract more people to South County.

Alvarez said he is also working to add more customs and Border Patrol officers on the ground so people can get processed more quickly and improve the flow of business.

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