

San Diego, South County a mega region for success

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SAN DIEGO — Local elected officials and guest speakers at an economic summit Friday said San Diego and its neighbor Mexico represent a mega region with a bright future.

More specifically, innovation and entrepreneurship through small business would be key for the region to see impressive growth in the next five to 15 years.

The discussion took place at the San Diego Convention Center during the annual summit hosted by the South County Economic Development Council.

One recent accomplishment is a major decrease in border wait times.

Tijuana Mayor Jorge Astiazaran said it now can take just five minutes to cross the border with a Sentri fast-track pass.

He said the faster border times are because of the partnership between the U.S. and Mexico.

“Tijuanians— we spend \$6 billion a year in San Diego County, and with less border waits, we’re going to spend more,” Astiazaran said. “We have a lot in common, and we need to keep working together.”

San Diego Mayor Kevin Faulconer said collaboration is vital.

“When we are providing good, quality jobs on both sides of the border, we’re doing great things for our community,” he said. “It’s what a thriving region is all about. We have to have leadership and collaboration.”

Ultimately, Faulconer said, San Diego is poised to flourish.

“The sky is the limit, as we’re putting people to work to grow upon this entrepreneurship that we have,” he said.

Sen. Ben Hueso, D-San Diego, said water is essential to the economy. “It’s very important to our continued building of wealth,” he said.

During a panel discussion, Hueso and other elected officials discussed the effect of the water crisis and upcoming water bond. They spoke to the importance of voters approving the \$7.5 billion water bond known as Proposition 1 on the Nov. 4 ballot.

“Water is not going to increase so we have to find ways of using it as a scarce resource,” Hueso said. “This bond will get us to a much better place.”

Assemblywoman Lorena Gonzalez, D-San Diego, agreed. “We’re at the very end of the line, and water is such a core issue. I think the bond is a great start. I hope everybody votes for it.”

Assemblywoman Shirley Weber, D-San Diego, said getting the bond on the ballot is a huge step for California.

“It has to pass,” she said. “It was a major effort in terms of negotiations at the state level.”

Special guest speakers included Jay Williams, U.S. assistant secretary of commerce for economic development, and Mike Dee, president and CEO of the San Diego Padres.

Keynote speakers included John Reilly, CEO and president of SeaWorld San Diego, and Linden Blue, vice chairman of General Atomics.

The elected officials’ panel also included Rep. Susan Davis, D-San Diego, San Diego Councilman David Alvarez, Chula Vista Councilwoman Pamela Bensoussan, National City Mayor Ron Morrison and Imperial Beach Councilman Robert Patton, among others.

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