

SATURDAY SPECIAL

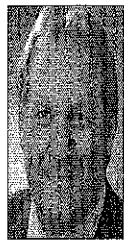
# Everyone wants prosperity

**Cities in the Okanagan have remained in good shape during recession**

By STEVE MacNAULL  
The Okanagan Saturday

It's a city's job to set the stage for business, then get out of the way to let it happen.

"The city's primary role is infrastructure — the roads, water,



Arsenault



Poole

commercial and industrial land, environment, culture and recreation that is all part of the quality of life and economic package that keeps and attracts business here," said City of Kelowna manager Ron Mattiussi.

"In that respect, economic development is tied into everything the city does."

Mattiussi was at the city's Economic Prosperity Framework breakfast on Friday at the Coast Capri Hotel.

It was a gathering of 50 business and civic leaders to brainstorm what prosperity framework should be included in the city's official community plan.

"This is the first time we've done this format for inclusion in the official community plan," said Kelowna Mayor Sharon Shepherd.

"Although there's always been recognition that a strong economy is part of Kelowna, just as quality of life and the environment is."

While the mayor is all for a vibrant economy, she pointed out an important criteria for the framework exercise: We will not negatively impact our quality of life



STEVE MacNAULL/The Okanagan Saturday

City of Kelowna community sustainability manager Jim Paterson, Downtown Kelowna Association manager John Perrott, Kelowna Mayor Sharon Shepherd, Kelowna Chamber of Commerce CEO Weldon LeBlanc, Central Okanagan Economic Development Commission manager Robert Fine and City of Kelowna manager Ron Mattiussi met on Friday at the Economic Prosperity Framework breakfast in Kelowna.

through the pursuit of economic growth.

The most progressive and livable cities know how quality of life and economy make the perfect marriage.

Okanagan cities seem to have figured that out.

While the economy has suffered the past year amid the global financial meltdown, the Okanagan has remained well-positioned.

As a lifestyle destination with great weather and scenery, business has followed to create a strong and diversified economy that retains its agricultural roots, naturally contains tourism and has expanded into manufacturing, high technology and the knowledge economy.

"Quality of life attracts talent.

business, culture, art and education," said Central Okanagan Economic Development Commission manager Robert Fine.

"The city has set that great backdrop. This event recognizes that, but is also being held knowing that things can always be done better."

For example, Fine said the city's website will soon have a link to the commission's investkelowna.com website for anyone interested in moving or doing business in the Central Okanagan.

While Kelowna is formalizing prosperity into its official community plan, so are Penticton and Vernon.

"Penticton is effectively repositioning and rebranding itself," said economic development officer David Arsenault.

"We'll build on our quality of life and community to create a city that business wants to be a part of."

Penticton has outlined its plans for manufacturing attraction, tourism promotion and Okanagan College expansion in a new website, imaginepenticton.ca.

Vernon's 2010-15 community strategy recognizes that during the boom of 2002-08, the city saw tremendous housing and retail growth.

"Now there's the need to strengthen our industrial and commercial base," said Kevin Poole, Vernon's economic development officer.

"We need to balance lifestyle with good business and industry so there are jobs for our kids and a balance in taxation (between residential and industry)."

QUICK FACTS

The City of Kelowna's Economic Prosperity Framework identified four fundamentals critical to urban success.

1. Being an innovative city (fostering innovation and entrepreneurship).
2. Being a connected city (fostering connections that link people with ideas to talent, capital and markets; cities to regions; and regions to the global economy).
3. Being a talented city (developing, maximizing, attracting and retaining talent).
4. Being a distinctive city (capitalizing on local differences to build local economic opportunity).

There was a lot of discussion about youth at the Kelowna session.

As the huge baby boom generation retires, the smaller pool of youth are the precious labour, brains and community resources of the future.

"Kelowna's lifestyle and knowledge economy is perfect for retaining and attracting youth who can be based here and work globally via technology," said Downtown Kelowna Association manager John Perrott.

"While we still have agriculture and manufacturing, the production of ideas rather than hard goods is the future. That includes everything from architects and accountants to high-tech workers and consultants."

Mattiussi pointed to UBC Okanagan and Okanagan College as institutions that are turning out youth — either from the Valley or elsewhere in the world — who likely want to stay, work and contribute to the economy and the community.

"It's a cycle that means the industry that wants youth will grow here," he said.

"That will only make our knowledge economy bigger."