

Time is right to coordinate development outside airport

"Vision without action is a daydream. But action without a vision is a nightmare."

Nearly 100 heavy hitters from Southeastern Michigan gathered last week at the University of Michigan-Dearborn's Henry Ford estate to listen to John Kasarda, director of the Kenan Institute of Private Enterprise at the University of North Carolina and the world's leading authority on the ways airport complexes drive economic development.

Kasarda posed fundamental questions that go to the heart of economic policy for Michigan:

■ Will our economy remain rooted in traditional manufacturing or will it evolve into the new economy of high-tech, R&D and information-intensive business services?

■ How can both our manufacturing base and emerging high-tech and white-collar service industries compete effectively worldwide?

■ Will Michigan's job creation in the 21st century match in quantity and quality what we did in the first half of the 20th century, when the state was the envy of the nation?

His answer was simple. By treating the combined resources of Detroit Metropolitan Airport and Willow Run as an "aerotropolis," an integrated passenger and freight transit facility linked to a variety of business clusters, the region could successfully meet each of these challenges.

Kasarda has a history lesson in mind. Seaports were the great economic drivers in the 18th century, railroads in the 19th century and highways in the 20th century. With aviation, globalization and time-intensive competition all characterizing today's economic competition and business location, airports will be the key growth engines of the 21st century.

This isn't an academic fantasy. Consider some emerging "aerotropolis" around the world:

■ Los Angeles International Airport is responsible for 400,000 jobs in a five-county region and \$60 billion annually in regional economic activity.

■ Las Colinas, a development just east of the Dallas-Ft. Worth Airport has attracted 2,000 companies into 21 million square feet of office space, 9.5 million feet of light industrial space, 1.3 million feet of retail space and 3,700 high class hotel rooms.

■ Along the 26-mile corridor between Dulles International Airport and Reagan National Airport, employment grew from 50,000 jobs in 1970 to 600,000 in 1996, a 1,100 percent

increase compared to the 59 percent average U.S. suburban employment growth over the same period.

Other similar developments are now taking shape near Sao Paulo, Brazil, in Hong Kong, near Seoul, Korea and Paris, France. Kasarda ranks the potential of Detroit Metro/Willow Run "as equal to or better than any place else on earth."

Within the proposed ring road — running along I-94 and Ecorse Road to the north and Eureka Road to the south — lie 25,000 acres of development potential. The Pinnacle Aeropark, a 1,500-acre development just south of Detroit Metro, could over a 10-year period produce a total of 25,000 full-time jobs in office, research, technology, transportation, logistics and retail — a payroll in excess of \$500 million.

One of the hidden but fundamentally important aspects of the newly created Wayne County Airport Authority is that it oversees both Detroit Metro and Willow Run airports. This allows the authority to manage both in a coherent manner to maximize the region's development potential "inside the airport fence."

So what needs to happen now? Kasarda recommends creating a regional authority to coordinate development "outside the fence." All kinds of things need to be put together in an integrated way: land use planning, zoning, road and rail transit links, design, branding and promotion.

Kasarda is right. Vision without action is pointless, but action without an informing vision is chaos. The time is now to start planning for what could be the future of Michigan.

Phil Power is the chairman of the board of the company that owns this newspaper. He would be pleased to get your reactions to this column either at (734) 953-2047 or at ppower@homecomm.net.



Joni Hubred

MCMR seminar provides a look at life in conflict

Usually when the Multicultural Multiracial Community Council holds a seminar, there's plenty of time to have everyone in the audience introduce themselves.

Not so last Tuesday night, when more than 100 people showed up to learn more about how conflicts around the world affect their friends and neighbors. The MCMR provided a glimpse of life through the eyes of those who wonder every day whether their friends and relatives are safe.

The thought that struck me most was shared by Farmington Public Schools Superintendent Bob Maxfield. We all talk a lot about the fact that kids in our schools speak 85 languages and what a marvel of modern day diversity that represents.

We probably don't think much about what it's like to be that child.

"It's inevitable when some of these kids come to school tomorrow morning that they'll be dealing with some worry about a cousin or friend or family members who are still where they came from," Maxfield said.

Sohail Bala and Zain Rizvi represent the strength of those children. Both seniors at Farmington High School, they have volunteered to speak with their classmates in a formal setting about the conflicts in their homelands of India and Pakistan, respectively.

Bala's relatives live mostly in the southern part of India, away from the conflict over Kashmir, which began when India and Pakistan became independent in 1947. The United States has intervened in the border conflicts recently, Bala said, because both nations have nuclear capabilities.

"Within the countries, there is peace," Zain explained. "Along the borders, troops are lined up."

While he has never had direct experience with the fear that accompanies war, his father's grandfather and father had their homes burned. Over the past 50 years, India and Pakistan have fought three wars, two over control of Kashmir, whose population is largely Muslim.

Rana Khalaf and Clara Gaba are also from warring nations; Khalaf is Palestinian, Gaba, Israeli. In the U.S. 13 years, Khalaf is a stay-at-home mom with three children attending Farmington Public Schools. Gaba, a teacher, has been in the U.S. 30 years.

"I grew up in a country I always knew was supposed to be for two kinds of people, Arabs and Israelis," Gaba said, pointing out the Biblical patriarch Abraham is considered the father of both peoples.

Her family settled in Babylonia (modern day

Both women spoke passionately in favor of peace and starting early when it comes to educating children about living in harmony with one another, regardless of race, nationality or religious beliefs.

Iraq and Iran) after the destruction of the second Temple in Jerusalem in 70 C.E., and her parents moved back to Israel in 1950.

"It was no longer comfortable to be in an Arab state after the creation of the state of Israel," Gaba said.

Khalaf was born and raised in Jordan. When the Jewish state was declared in 1948, she said, many Palestinians were forced out of their homes.

"My father's family and my mother's family were forced to leave their home in Jerusalem and go to West Bank," she said, adding the conflict between the two nations is "the struggle for freedom and a struggle for land as well."

Both women spoke passionately in favor of peace and starting early when it comes to educating children about living in harmony with one another, regardless of race, nationality or religious beliefs. Khalaf stepped in to help her son's classmates understand Muslim holidays and feels more parents should offer to help whenever there is a lack of information.

"It should start (in school) from an elementary level," she said, "supported by the home."

Just having the opportunity to learn, as did those who attended the Tuesday night seminar, is a good beginning, Gaba felt. "I got up this morning with darkness in my heart. This evening has brought me the light of hope that people do want to learn and do want peace."

As Maxfield pointed out, a free and open dialogue about such hot topics couldn't happen just anywhere.

"I gotta believe only in America would this kind of conversation take place," he said.

"That's what makes this country so special."

If you ask me, it's also what makes Farmington and Farmington Hills so special.

Joni Hubred is editor of the Farmington Observer. She welcomes your comments by mail to 3341 Grand River, Farmington, MI 48335; by phone, (248) 477-5450; by fax to (248) 477-9722; or via e-mail, jhubred30c@homecomm.net

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