



## *Regional Approaches to Economic Development*

- In this Issue: . . . Regional Layers 3
- Regionalism in the Four Corners Area 5
- Resources for Regional Approaches 12
  
- Perspectives 14

# COMMUNITY REINVESTMENT

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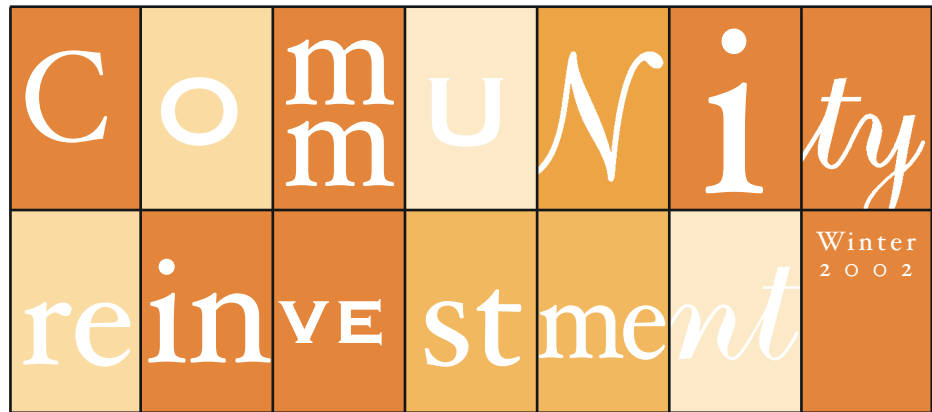
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3



## IN THIS ISSUE . . .

### Regional Layers

Water and transportation and education and governance and trade markets all overlap in intermingling layers of cooperation and competition. How does the balance between community independence and interdependence work to create healthy regional economies?

5



### REGIONALISM IN THE FOUR CORNERS AREA Culture: Try to See it My Way

Merchants, environmentalists, commercial energy producers, ranchers, farmers, tourists, loggers, federal land managers, "amenity immigrants," retirees, and members of four Indian tribes in the Four Corners create a rich diversity of perspectives and interests.

### Politics: Partnership and Stepchild Strategies

Counties, towns and people in the Four Corners area often find more in common with one another than with the states in which they're located. How can partnerships across political boundaries overcome the barriers to collaboration?

### Economic Essentials: Markets and Infrastructure

Communities in the Four Corners area cooperate and compete to develop markets and build infrastructure

### Learning Connections

The San Juan Forum helps forge and reflect a regional vision for the Four Corners area. Local colleges play a key role in offering lifelong learning opportunities—in and out of classrooms.

12

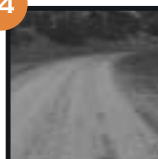


## RESOURCES

### Regional Resources

Both traditional wisdom and new approaches to regionalism are included in a range of references and resources.

14



## PERSPECTIVES

### Regional Angles

The Fed's Community Development Advisory Council brings different perspectives to questions about what's important in regional approaches to community economic development.

### AfterWord

What are the lessons learned? Are there keys in the Four Corners area and angles from other places that can help people create and sustain healthy regional economies in their own communities?

# IN THIS issue . . .

## Regional Layers

**R**egions define themselves through geography and culture and by the occupations of the people who live in them—growing wine or generating dot.coms or raising horses. Regional borderlines can be difficult to discern, with overlapping layers and intricately interwoven relationships. They are influenced but not defined by politics and, while the existence of a region may be clear, its exact nature may be elusive.

Our interest in regions grew out of our observations of the factors that influence community success. In urban areas, a shared sense of vision and direction gives metropolitan regions a competitive edge that draws and keeps people there. In rural communities, survival can depend on neighboring communities collaborating to define an area large enough to provide jobs and cost-effective goods and services.

In both urban and rural areas, it's a regional identity that often gives people a sense of place, with a loyalty to it that goes beyond the practical

requirements of work and access to goods and services. For example, when outside of the area, Kansas Citians identify themselves as being from Kansas City, regardless of whether they live in Blue Springs, Missouri, Lenexa, Kansas, or one of the other 114 municipalities in the seven-plus counties and two states that make up the metropolitan area. An image of jazz and barbecue and fountains goes with the region, not just

with one municipality.

We know about the Napa Valley, or the Silicon Valley, whether we can identify specific place names or not. And most people have probably heard of the Four Corners area, where Arizona, Colorado, New Mexico and Utah come together.

In this issue of *Community Reinvestment*,

we explore regionalism, primarily by using the example of the Four Corners area. The reality of how this region works is much less clearly defined than are the 90-degree angles on the map—and much more

interesting. People there have found ways to cooperate across the boundaries of multiple jurisdictions. They've found ways to build on their cultural diversity.

The leadership of a key regional organization in the Four Corners area, the San Juan Forum, is changing. This added an interesting dimension to our interviews, as people considered how to expand ways to support the forum in its work of creating



### SAN JUAN FORUM

The San Juan Forum is a nonprofit corporation whose goal is to enhance economic development in the Four Corners region while preserving and enhancing the quality of life for area residents.

The forum serves as a unifying force for local, state and tribal governments from Colorado, New Mexico, Arizona and Utah to collectively address the needs of the region, not simply the needs of individual communities.

It strongly supports the concept of regional cooperation across the somewhat arbitrary federal, state, tribal and county boundaries currently existing in the San Juan Basin.

For more information about the San Juan Forum, see Lines in the Sand: Four Corners Regional Cooperation in the "Regional Resources" section on page 12. This paper, which includes an overview of the San Juan Forum and the Four Corners region, was presented in May 2002 at the Federal Reserve Bank of Kansas City's "The New Power of Regions: A Policy Focus for Rural America" conference by business owner Greg Anesi, San Juan Forum executive director David Eppich, and New Mexico state representative Tom Taylor. Also see the San Juan Forum website, listed on page 13.

# IN THIS ISSUE . . .

*A shared sense of vision and direction gives regions a competitive edge.*

regional networks and solutions.

We also discussed regional approaches to community economic development with members of the Federal Reserve Bank of Kansas City's Community Development Advisory Council. Our belief in the importance of finding regional approaches to community economic development was confirmed. We were also reminded, however, that regional organizations sometimes just create one more bureaucracy and one more way to divide already-confusing layers of interest. And we were reminded that we need to be careful about definitions as we consider the common goals that bring people together in regional approaches, because "one person's sprawl is someone else's growth."

"When will other regions learn from the Four Corners area?" was the comment of one person during the council's roundtable



*An improved New Mexico Highway 550 affects transportation in the Four Corners region.*

discussion. "They understand that their future is together."

Whatever the decisions are about regional approaches may be, we agree with that comment. Our futures are together.

# Regionalism in the 4CoRNErs Area

## Culture: Try to See it My Way

**“T**his is a community that attracts interesting people,” said Richard Ballantine, publisher of *The Durango Herald*. “They’re brought here by the lifestyle, the outdoors, the arts, the college, and by the people already here—interesting people like being with other interesting people.”

That mix of interesting people in Durango, Colorado and other communities in the Four Corners area produces lively debates about issues and priorities. The viewpoints of recent “lifestyle amenity immigrants” often differ from those of the descendants of people who settled in the area in the middle of the 19th century. And their viewpoints in turn differ from those of members of the four Indian tribes, whose ancestors have been there hundreds of years longer than any of these “newcomers.”

“We think of ourselves as the Navajo Nation, not as part of Arizona or New Mexico,” said Sharlene Begay-Platero, who is director of industrial development for the Navajo Nation and chair of the San Juan Forum. “We live in the same landscape, but our legal process and our land status different.”

Many Native Americans struggle with holding on to cultural traditions and at the same time being players in a contemporary economy. “Assimilation has been imposed on us,” said President Claudia Vigil-Munoz of the Jicarilla Apache Tribe. “Our people want to be self-reliant, but if we don’t understand where we came from, we can’t begin to help ourselves. We have to over-

come historic trauma.”

“Tribes haven’t been considered an economic force in the area,” said Troy Ralstin, economic development planner for the Ute



Mountain Ute Tribe. “But the Ute Mountain Ute Tribe is the largest employer in Montezuma County [Colorado]. The labor force of this region is primarily Native American, with people working in the oil and gas industry, agriculture, and tourism.”

Some tribal members feel discriminated against and indicated that non-Indians need to make the first move to build relationships. Some non-Indian people said

*Tribal business contributes to the regional economy.*



# Regionalism in the 4CoRnERs AReA

tribal members keep to themselves, and that they don't come when they're invited to participate in meetings. And some Indian and non-Indian people persist in



*“We need to learn to think about growth not in numbers but in skills.”*

focusing on the issues, keeping the invitation open, and developing partnerships across the cultural boundaries.

One of the “newcomer” perspectives we heard was from Ali Sabeti, who came to the Four Corners area after retiring from doing international economic development for the World Bank. Sabeti lives near Durango, teaches at Fort Lewis College, and is actively involved with the economic development organization in LaPlata County.

“When I worked in other countries that needed economic development, the central government would direct that it happen, and it did,” Sabeti said. “Here, the system of government is decentralized and decision making is an arduous process. It’s difficult because of individualism—people don’t feel they are part of the village. We have a lot of single-interest people and groups here.”

One of the factors that creates conflict in the Four Corners region is control by the federal government of more than half the land in the area. Between the trust land of

Indian reservations, national forests, national parks, and mineral rights controlled by the government, there is an ongoing tension between federally defined public interest and multiple local interests and priorities.

Another point of contention comes from different perspectives about growth in the Four Corners area and opinions about whether growth is positive or negative. “We need to learn to think about growth not in numbers but in skills,” said Ballantine. “How can we grow in our concern for one another, in our health care, in how we fund our schools?”

It’s this diversity of opinions and cultures that intensifies the need and the challenges for an organization like the San Juan Forum, which was formed as an organization of public, private and nonprofit leaders in the Four Corners region in 1991.

The forum invites people to come to the table to learn about issues, discuss options and priorities, and potentially to form partnerships to take action. It helps create a regional culture in which different perspectives are valued and respected, and it reinforces recognition of the strength that diversity brings to communities.

“We may not agree with one another,” said Begay-Platero, “but when we know one another and have talked about the issues, we can understand why people think as they do.”

## Politics: Partnership and Stepchild Strategies

**“W**hen it comes to emergencies, all of a sudden the boundaries just evaporate,” said Dave Eppich, executive director of the San Juan Forum and assistant to the president of Fort Lewis College in Durango. Between fires and drought in the summer of 2002, opportunities to test the political boundaries were abundant.

On the everyday issues, however, jurisdictional lines can be problematic. “The political boundaries tend to get in the way and to tear us apart as a region,” said Eppich.

People from communities in all four states of the Four Corners area said they have more in common with one another than with their state governments. Denver, Phoenix, Salt Lake City and Santa Fe are all more than 200 miles away, and citizens in the Four Corners area generally see the interests of state legislatures as being focused elsewhere. “We do have an advantage with the U.S. Senate,” we were told. “Between our four states, we have eight senators, and we’ve been able to leverage that power.”

“Sometimes we call ourselves the southernmost city in Colorado,” said Keith Haugland, publisher and editor of *The Daily Times of Farmington*, New Mexico. “We’re not like the rest of the state of New Mexico. We don’t have the Hispanic population that other regions of the state have. We’re relatively affluent.”

It was Ed Scherick in Monticello, Utah who first told us about a proposed solution to the problem of being forgotten by the state governments. “We’ve decided to secede and form our own Four Corners state,” was his—perhaps—tongue-in-cheek pronouncement. “And we’ll elect Dave Eppich governor.”

Scherick is director of economic development for Monticello, and has worked for the city for 15 years. Before that he was a land manager for the Bureau of Land Management for the U.S. Department of the Interior for 30 years. He finds his earlier experience especially useful



*Agriculture is a strong economic engine in the Four Corners region.*

# Regionalism in the 4CoRnERs Area

*“When it comes to emergencies, all of a sudden the boundaries just evaporate.”*

in this region. “I know how to operate with the federal agencies,” he said, “and I can tell them, ‘don’t try to snow me!’”

Hal Shepherd has been city manager of Cortez, Colorado for four years and was previously manager of a city in Ohio. He talked about the challenges for businesses in Cortez when they have to deal with four different commissions for utility services. He also talked about the current difficulties in the economy because of a decrease in tourism, a continuing drought, and major forest fires—and about the hantavirus scare in the Four Corners area a few years ago.

Given the challenges of Cortez and the region, we asked him if he was glad he had come here. The answer was an emphatic yes. “The issues here aren’t necessarily the same ones I dealt with in Ohio,” he said. “But working with a budget and other processes are the same. There are challenges anyplace. This is a great place to be!”

The Indian tribes in the area have a strong voice at the federal level that local government officials often don’t have, said Troy Ralstin. “The chairman of a tribe can pick up the telephone and call the Secretary of the Interior or the Assistant Secretary. We know our senators and representatives, and we

bring the strength of that government-to-government relationship to the San Juan Forum.”

We could understand the frustrations of people in the Four Corners



*More than half the land in the Four Corners region is owned by the federal government.*

area, and we appreciated their initiative in finding ways to cross political barriers. However, we were left pondering other questions.

Would a new state of “Four Corners” make it easier for people in the area to achieve their goals? Or, as the past seems to indicate, when we create a new governmental unit, does it take on the characteristics of all those other governmental units we love to criticize?

If the people in the Four Corners area formed another state, how long would it take to become...just another state?



## *Economic Essentials: Market and Infrastructure*

**“W**e need to capitalize on the individuality of our different communities,” said Dave Eppich. “We need to focus on improvement of the infrastructure that we all need to share, such as highways and telecommunications.”

Regional discussions about how to improve infrastructure are sometimes heated, as communities compete with one another for resources. Everyone agrees that air service is essential to the region, but there’s been a long tug-of-war among Cortez, Colorado, Durango and Farmington over air services. Farmington’s airport has the “Four Corners Regional Airport” name, but because of its location on top of a butte, larger planes can’t land there. Durango’s airport has the capacity to handle large jets. No one wants to give up their own community’s airport.

“The reality is that we’ll continue to have airports in Durango and Farmington,” said one observer. “Because of its capacity, Durango will be the primary regional airport. We may compete with one another, but we’ve also worked together to increase air access to the region.”

“The economy in the Four Corners region is complementary but not interdependent,” said Dick Ledbetter, chairman of the board of Wells Fargo Bank in Farmington. People shop in Farmington for necessities, we were told. They browse the shops and eat in the restaurants in Durango. They go to Bloomfield, New Mexico for building supplies.

In the winter, people go to Durango to ski. In the spring and fall, they go to Utah to hike the canyons, ride all-terrain vehicles and have jeep rallies. “Durango’s personality is as different from ours as the front and back side of the moon,” said Keith Haugland, publisher of *The Daily Times of Farmington, New Mexico*.

“We get a lot of amenity migration,” said Ed Morland, director of the Colorado Region Nine Economic Development Area. “Most of our businesses are small, and their owners come here for the quality of life. Businesses move here because they like the area.”

Agriculture, oil and gas production, and tourism are the primary economic engines in the Four Corners area. “Agriculture used to be our strongest regional industry,” said Troy Ralstin. “But ag isn’t competitive unless we add value. The Ute Mountain Ute Tribe is thinking about manufacturing juice, and we’re looking at a niche in producing organic products.”

“This is a large, sparsely populated geographic area,” said Ed Scherick. “If we can bring people together to talk about the issues and ways to solve problems, we don’t have to reinvent the wheel every time.”



*“If we can bring people together to talk about the issues and ways to solve problems, we don’t have to reinvent the wheel every time.”*

# Regionalism in the 4CoRnERs AReA

## Learning Connections

**T**he networks that make the Four Corners area a region are clearly present but difficult to define. The San Juan Forum, with its structure that includes government, civic and tribal leaders, has served as a catalyst for bringing people together to learn about issues, discuss solutions and generate action to achieve goals.

The forum has addressed issues of transportation, telecommunications and economic development. “The San Juan Forum has helped us get past our parochialism,” said Keith Haugland. “It’s issue and idea oriented, and there are plenty of issues to contend with. It helps cut through the bureaucratic red tape.”

“It helps us see that we’re all in this together,” said Sharlene Begay-Platero. “We get so caught up in our own little world, with our bureaucracies, it’s hard to maintain our perspective. Each community in the Four Corners area is diverse in its own way, but we have commonalities. When we know people, when we know each others’ names and that they have the same kinds of issues we do, we can work together.”

Not everyone in the Four Corners area is an advocate of the San Juan Forum. “What we need are more practical projects and fewer grandiose schemes,” said one person. “The forum is good, but I haven’t participated in it,” said another. “I’ve got plenty to do just in my own community.”

“When we can get people involved,

they usually find the San Juan Forum a good concept,” said former board president Ed Scherick. “It’s important that people understand complex issues. For example, water influences everything that happens here, and people think they understand it, but they don’t.”

“Regionalism in large part boils down to education and future visioning,” said Dave Eppich. “The San Juan Forum helps us look at how the region fits in the national and global picture. It’s a way to build personal relationships and to help us understand the strength of our diversity.”

The San Juan Forum is housed in offices at Fort Lewis College in Durango, and Eppich is also assistant to the president of the college. However, he emphasizes that the forum is a shared initiative and not just a Fort Lewis project effort.

The breadth of involvement has been reinforced in the past few months by a change at Fort Lewis College from being controlled by a state board to self-governing status. Eppich, who is consistently described as a central guiding force for the forum, will be spending less time with it and more on other college responsibilities. “Our commit-

*“When we know people, when we know each others’ names and that they have the same kinds of issues we do, we can work together.”*



*The Quality Center for Business at San Juan College in Farmington, New Mexico provides assistance to regional businesses.*

ment to the San Juan Forum remains as strong as ever,” said interim president Robert Dolphin, “but we have some other priorities to which we have to commit resources.”

“The change is healthy for the San Juan Forum,” said Eppich. “An organization like this shouldn’t depend too much on one person. We have a strong board, and other good leadership. The forum will continue, whatever my own level of involvement. And the Four Corners area would be a region whether there was a San Juan Forum or not.”

Plans have been made to hire an executive assistant to take over many of the administrative tasks for the forum. The office for this additional staff will continue to be housed at Fort Lewis College, and salary will be funded through increased membership fees and contributions.

The San Juan Forum is one aspect of an attitude in the Four Corners region that embraces lifelong learning. The colleges in the region work closely with one another to provide learning opportunities, in and out of the classroom.

The Quality Center for Business at San Juan College in Farmington is known in the region for its expertise in providing assistance to businesses and organizations in training, business planning, office support and economic development.

“We take our role as a community college seriously,” said president emeritus James Henderson. “We look for

ways to serve the community we’re a part of, and to respond to the needs of businesses in the area.”



*The Four Corners area attracts “amenity immigrants.”*

The colleges in the region have agreements to charge in-state tuition to students from the Four Corners, even if they live outside of the taxing jurisdiction in which the institution is located. They offer free or low-cost education to students from Indian tribes.

The colleges also provide workforce training, concerts and both practical and esoteric adult education and non-credit courses.

“I learn from my colleagues,” said Sharlene Begay-Platero. In the Four Corners area, lifetime learning opportunities are widely available.

*“Regionalism is a way to build personal relationships and to help us understand the strength of our diversity.”*

# RESOURCES

## Regional Resources

**S**ome regional organizations have been around for generations, while others are new. Both traditional wisdom and new approaches to regionalism offer a range of references and resources.

*Alliance for Regional Stewardship.* A relatively new organization working to foster alliances within metropolitan regions and information-sharing among them. The resources page includes examples of alliances based on the new economy, livable community, social inclusion and government reform. <http://www.regionalstewardship.org>.

*Better Together: Report of the Saguario Seminar on Civic Engagement in America.* John F. Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University. Cambridge, Massachusetts, 2000. An exploration by a diverse group of people of how to rebuild social capital in America, with guiding principles and recommendations on how to turn around civic decline. <http://www.bettertogether.org/report.php3>.

*Citistates.* Neil Peirce and Curtis Johnson coined this term for “historic central cities surrounded by cities and towns that have a shared identification; function as a single zone for trade, commerce and communication; and are characterized by social, economic and environmental interdependence. Their website includes reports on their analysis of citistate regions around the country, along with other publications and links to regional resources. <http://www.citistates.com/whatis.html>.

*Lines in the Sand: Four Corners Regional Cooperation,* by Greg Anesi, David Eppich and Tom Taylor. An overview of the Four Corners region and the San Juan Forum in a paper presented at the Federal Reserve Bank of Kansas City’s conference on “The New Power of Regions: A Policy Focus for Rural America.” PowerPoint slides from the presentation are available at [http://www.kc.frb.org/RuralCenter/Conference/02prelim/LinesinSand\\_present.pdf](http://www.kc.frb.org/RuralCenter/Conference/02prelim/LinesinSand_present.pdf). Lines in the Sand is available at [http://www.kc.frb.org/RuralCenter/Conference/02prelim/LinesinSand\\_paper.pdf](http://www.kc.frb.org/RuralCenter/Conference/02prelim/LinesinSand_paper.pdf).

*MetaFund.* MetaFund’s vision is to create a collaborative Oklahoma environment of financial and social capital, citizenship and civil society in which virtually any viable community, economic, and/or workforce development initiative can be realized. Or, in the words of the Better Together report (see above), “a virtual community development corporation [that] serves as a connector and broker, linking civic leaders in counties statewide with bankers who will provide start-up capital for economic development projects. The founders created the fund in the recognition that, in forging a prosperous community, whom you know—your social network—matters more than what you know.” <http://www.metafund.org/>.

***Metro Outlook***, Mid-America Regional Council. A report that measures progress in the metropolitan Kansas City area and investigates the relationships between economic, social and environmental data. August 2001.  
<http://www.marc.org/Metro%20Outlook.pdf>.

***National Association of Regional Councils***. The official organization of America's regional councils of government. This is also the home site for NARC's Institute for the Regional Community, which conducts research, and the Association of Metropolitan Planning Organizations. <http://www.narc.org>.

***The New Power of Regions: A Policy Focus for Rural America***, Federal Reserve Bank of Kansas City. Papers and presentations from this conference, sponsored in May 2002 by the Center for the Study of Rural America and the Community Affairs Department of the Federal Reserve Bank of Kansas City, highlight regional efforts and explore policy issues.  
<http://www.kc.frb.org/RuralCenter/Conference/02program.htm>.

***Reflections on Regionalism***, edited by Bruce Katz. A compilation of essays that explore environmental, social and governance problems and the regional relationships that can help solve them. Brookings Institute Press, Washington, D.C., 2000.

***San Juan Forum***. Information about this Four Corners regional organization and issues it has addressed.  
<http://wrii.fortlewis.edu/sjf/>

***Skinwalkers***, by Tony Hillerman. One of a series of mysteries (and a recent PBS television show) that creates a sense of place and insight into Navajo traditions in the Four Corners area. Harper Paperbacks, 1990.

***This Sovereign Land: A New Vision for Governing the West***, by Daniel Kemmis. Challenging questions about how to resolve land use issues and how to determine public policy interests are explored by Kemmis, who is director of the Center for the Rocky Mountain West in Missoula, Montana. Island Press, 2001.

***When City and Country Collide: Managing Growth in the Metropolitan Fringe***, by Tom Daniels. An exploration of issues, land use strategies and managing growth in the metropolitan fringe. The author is a professor of geography and planning at the State University of New York at Albany. Island Press, Washington, D.C., 1999.



*Fort Lewis College in Durango, Colorado houses the San Juan Forum.*



## Regional Angles

**“E**veryone I surveyed said we need more regional approaches to community economic development,” said Peter Merrill, who is active with the Santa Fe Homebuilders Association and the New Mexico State Homebuilders Association.

“Every community we work in is already part of too many regional jurisdictions,” said Flo Raitano, executive director of the Colorado Rural Development Council. “We have regional councils of government, business districts, education districts, health districts, transportation planning districts—all with different, artificial, geopolitical boundaries. Instead of talking about more regions, we need to look at how to cut across the silos we’ve created with all these regions. We need to

approach the concept of regions with caution.”

These comments were part of a lively discussion by members of the Community Development Advisory Committee of the Federal Reserve Bank of Kansas City, a diverse group of representatives from the seven states in the Tenth Federal Reserve District.

At their fall meeting, guest speaker Frank Lenk, an economist with the Mid-America Regional Council of the metropol-

itan Kansas City area, presented information about the content and the process of developing Metro Outlook, a MARC study completed in 2000. “Sometimes we just need to change the whole conversation,” Lenk said. “When we talk about progress, we need to ask, ‘Progress toward what?’ ‘What’s our goal?’

“We did research to learn what people value in this metropolitan region,” said Lenk. “The results were humbling for me as an economist, because ‘adequate income’ was number eight on the list. But income is a tool to get the other things that people want. Land, labor and capital are part of a cylinder of progress. We no longer find communities being defined as good places if they have business that provides jobs. They attract businesses if they’re good places to live.

“We made quality of life the organizing principle of the Metro Outlook report,” Lenk said. “When we try to isolate the problems in one geographic area, they only get worse and spread. Our goal is to create a system that helps us invest more wisely in all three of the things that people want—a just society, a healthy environment and a sound economy.”

Advisory council member Tom Loy, founder and president of a unique, bank-funded, state-wide community develop-



*“When we talk about progress, we need to ask, ‘Progress toward what?’ ‘What’s our goal?’”*

ment merchant banking venture capital firm in Oklahoma, is another advocate of changing the conversation. “We need ways to see beyond geographic regions to the larger picture,” he said. “We need incentives for banks to collaborate on community projects, rather than the disincentives that the Community Reinvestment Act now provides. Banks can get credit for doing a micro project that doesn’t make a difference in their community, but they may get no points for collaborating with five other banks on a macro project that has a significant impact.”

Loy’s MetaFund organization reflects his beliefs about how to approach community issues. Metafund partners with others to use existing resources and looks for ways around the barriers—in other words, ways to finance unbankable deals. “Community development lending and investment isn’t something that bankers are traditionally trained or conditioned or given incentives to do,” he said. “But they’re much more comfortable doing it when an organization such as ours can identify the larger need and provide the missing financial pieces to enable banks to participate.”

Not everyone finds it easy to be part of a broader picture. “When we were asked to think about regional approaches to community economic development I thought, ‘This will be easy,’” said Mary Randolph, executive director of for the Wyoming Rural Development Council. “The Wyoming Business Council is a privately managed, state-funded organization with regional districts. That would seem to lead to regional cooperation and collaboration.

“But the more I looked at how we func-

tion, the more I realized that Wyoming is not just a western state, it’s a frontier state,” said Randolph. “People still have that attitude of rugged individualism that spurred westward migration 150 years ago. It is difficult for communities to work together, but we are finding that out of necessity for survival, they must find ways to cooperate.”

Dan Clark, another member of the advisory council, a former banker, and owner of “the company that makes the best fly fishing reels in the world,” reminded us that regional approaches work differently in different areas. “I have businesses in several communities, and the situation differs in each of them,” he said. “It’s difficult to set major policies, because effective regional approaches are very different in different places.” He suggested involving already-connected groups such as Rotary, Kiwanis, 4-H and local manufacturing and trade associations in regional initiatives.

Michael Martinez, with Vectra Banks in Denver, saw the primary obstacle to regional cooperation as a need to change mind-sets. “We can look at regional approaches and at the state of the economy in the same ways,” he said. “There’s an old way, based on fear and anxiety, and a new way, based on innovation and creativity. We need to pay attention to the roles the private and public sectors have and recognize and play to their strengths,” Martinez said.

“I suggest we tie in with extensive research to find ways to organize around the artificial boundaries,” said Steve Roling, senior vice president for the Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation. “Our biggest obstacles can also be our biggest opportunities.”

*“Our goal is to create a system that helps us invest more wisely in all three of the things that people want—a just society, a healthy environment and a sound economy.”*

## After Word

**T**he Four Corners area has a monument, a place where visitors from all over the country and the world come to stand in a place where they can be in Arizona, Colorado, New Mexico and Utah—all at the same time. People are drawn to the Four Corners area by the uniqueness of that spot, and by the nearby mountains, canyons, desert, lakes, towns and Indian reservations. They come for the culture and the history and the beauty of the place.

But when travelers come to the Four Corners Monument itself, they've been known to complain. The toilets are the portable kind. The availability of food or drink depends on the weather and whether the vendors think business might be good

spot. Some tourists expect more.

The monument isn't directly on the route to any particular place, but many of the people who come there travel through Arizona, where they've visited the Grand Canyon or Canyon de Chelly or other world-famous attractions.

Complaints about the lack of facilities caught the attention of Arizona officials, but they didn't want to make improvements by themselves.

Ironically, the Four Corners Monument is a typical regional story. Arizona wants to do it, and Utah is also interested. Colorado might participate, but only if New Mexico does. The New Mexico legislature was supportive, but the governor was opposed. Federal money is available, but it needs matching state and local funds. The Ute Mountain Ute and Navajo Tribes are actively



*Agricultural producers are looking for ways to add value to their products.*

that day. The tables where tribal members sell jewelry and crafts have been described as “shabby shacks.” Flagpoles hold state and tribal flags, and a bronze plaque on a cement pad marks the official Four Corners

involved, but others need to participate also. Everyone has a stake, but no one can or will do it alone.

The vision is to have facilities that provide education and comfort at the Four

Corners Monument, and to make it an attraction that helps bring people and income to the states and the tribes.

The practicality is that improvements to the monument require the cooperation and support of numerous people and multiple governmental bodies. It's of interest to many, but it hasn't been an easy top priority. Helping to shepherd the complex partnership for this regional effort is a priority for the San Juan Forum over the next year.

The Four Corners Monument process illustrates larger questions: What value does a regional approach bring to community economic development, to issues of access to credit and capital and to creating and sustaining healthy local economies?

As with most of our favorite topics, we found that there are no simple answers. In fact, we heard some seemingly contradictory answers that may all be correct.

It seems clear that cooperation between jurisdictions significantly increases the ability to create an environment in which businesses can thrive, and prosperous businesses



contribute to thriving communities. On the other hand, it's true that layers of regional jurisdictions can lead to voluminous red tape that gets in the way of healthy business and prosperous communities.

However, it's difficult to measure the results of education, networking and cooperative problem-solving in quantifiable terms. "The San Juan Forum has focused on projects a couple of times," said Ed Scherick, "but its greatest value to me is in exploring regional issues, sharing ideas, and being able to work with a group to find solutions to problems that I could never find on my own."

From people in the Four Corners area, a central message we heard was that having a forum through which people can come together to address

*With a population of 38,000, Farmington, New Mexico is a regional trade center.*



# PerSPeCTiVES



issues has been an invaluable—if sometimes elusive to define—benefit for the region.

James Henderson, a co-founder of the San Juan Forum, said his basic question is always, “What’s the purpose of what we’re doing if it’s not to build a better community, a better quality of life, and better opportunities for people?”

We also liked the Mid-America Regional Council’s approach of asking people fundamental questions about what they value as a way to help determine economic development goals for a region.

If we can ask those questions, and answer them thoughtfully, we’re more likely

to be able to create the quality of life we want. We choose to work together, or separately, in our local communities. We act in our communities, and we adopt informal and formal policies that affect regional economic development, intentionally or not.

*Cooperation between jurisdictions significantly increases the ability to create an environment in which businesses can thrive.*

What we’ve seen and heard indicates that effective approaches to community economic development include local practices and public policies that recognize and support the need for local communities, counties and states—and countries—to work with one another.



# Someone Said . . .

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This country turns its bones to the sky. Ancient turmoils scrawl across every expanse, and hidden energies heave at its tough hide.

— Adriel Heisey, Photographer, “Hawk High Over Four Corners,”  
*National Geographic*, September 1996

If you are not putting seriously to the test the forms of government you have inherited, if you are not occasionally replacing them with something more suited to changing conditions, it is probably because you have lost your democratic edge.

— Daniel Kemmis  
*This Sovereign Land: A New Vision for Governing the West*, 2001

In most cases, the region is nobody’s community. In most cases this means that getting any action at the regional scale requires creating new collaborative alignments among interests who previously either didn’t believe that they shared interests in common, or knew it but felt no compelling reason to act on it.

— Ethan Seltzer  
As quoted by Bruce Katz in *Reflections on Regionalism*, 2000

It is not necessary to have a regional government or a well-ordered organization chart for very large, multijurisdictional, and multistate regions . . . while bold political leadership is essential, of equal importance to the success of these places is patient, persistent and effective civic leadership.

— Robert D. Yaro  
“Growing and Governing Smart: A Case Study of New York Region,”  
in *Reflections on Regionalism*, edited by Bruce Katz, 2000

I have spent several years exploring this western landscape . . . [This exploration] stems from a deeply held conviction that the Four Corners country has something essential to offer us, both as individuals and as a society of human beings trying to balance what we want and what the earth has to give.

— T.H. Watkins, “Hawk High Over Four Corners,”  
*National Geographic*, September 1996



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