

# Eagle & Times

## South County EDC Hosts Critical Redevelopment Forum



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From left: National City Mayor Ron Morrison, former San Diego City Councilman Fredrick Schnaubelt, and Imperial Beach Mayor Jim Janney. Submitted photo

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The South County Economic Development Council (SCEDC) recently hosted a forum to discuss Governor Jerry Brown's proposed financial cutbacks to California's community redevelopment agencies and the potential effects of cutbacks in South County cities, including Imperial Beach, National City and San Ysidro. Panelists included Mayor of Imperial Beach Jim Janney, Mayor of National City Ron Morrison and former San Diego City Councilman Fredrick Schnaubelt.

The forum focused on the costs and benefits of redevelopment in South County cities, business communities, the job market, effectiveness of redevelopment agencies and possible solutions to the state budget crisis. The event took place at the South County Regional Education Center, a former gentleman's club turned education center as a result of redevelopment efforts.

Panelists expressed diverse views on the effects of redevelopment in South County. Imperial Beach mayor Janney and National City mayor Morrison spoke in support of redevelopment and criticized Governor Brown's recent proposal that would take money away from redevelopment agencies in South County cities. Mayor Janney cited recent redevelopment efforts in Imperial Beach that have made the beach more accessible to residents, and discussed how residents of Imperial Beach deserve public amenities made possible by the work of redevelopment agencies. "I believe anything we can do to keep things [funds] as local as possible is what we have to do. The more local, the better," said Mayor Janney.

Conversely, Mr. Schnaubelt argued against many of the "unseen" costs of redevelopment, and argued for reduced zoning restrictions, taxes and regulations as a more efficient way to promote economic growth rather than the use of redevelopment. He discussed the need for increased "legitimate" oversight of redevelopment agencies and the funding allotted to them. "Buildings constructed with redevelopment money serve as showcases but only consume money. There are some beautiful places, but a lot of abuse of redevelopment funds as well," said Mr. Schnaubelt.

Despite their general differences of opinion, all panelists agreed on shared frustration over California's budget crisis and concurred funding for redevelopment agencies should put to use locally, rather than in Sacramento. Mayor Morrison, in closing, echoed the need to keep monies local, proclaiming, "It's not Sacramento's money." He addressed the Governor by stating, "Mr. Governor, the voters have spoken [in support of redevelopment funding], you just haven't heard them!"

The panel discussion concluded with a brief question and answer session with audience members. In his closing remarks, Cindy Gompper-Graves, CEO of SCEDC, thanked the panelists and audience members for coming together to discuss important issues in the South County community.