

West is Best: *Business Leaders and Development Experts on the Economic Value of Protected Public Lands*



November 2012

ARIZONA

"Once we meet a company's business case for relocating to Phoenix, they next look at our workforce and quality of life, which are interrelated. Phoenix attracts an educated, healthy workforce of 18-34 year olds because of our immediate proximity to diverse outdoor recreation such as mountain biking, hiking, skiing and more. They can live, work and play here. Consequently, companies moving locating to Phoenix enjoy an economic advantage in workforce productivity."

--Barry Broome, President & CEO, Greater Phoenix Economic Council

CALIFORNIA

"As the largest county in the nation, the County of San Bernardino is bigger than some states and provides unrivaled access to local and global markets, a diverse workforce of nearly one million people, and an affordable quality of life. The County's geographic diversity includes deserts, mountains, and arid valleys that enjoy an average 340 plus days of sunshine each year. This has proven to be a strong attraction factor for many businesses. The high desert region includes the vast expanse of Joshua Tree National Park, known for its namesake Joshua Tree formations and as a rock climbing mecca along with the Mojave National Park. Employees appreciate the desert region for both its natural quiet beauty and opportunity for off-road enthusiasts seeking plenty of open space and sand dunes to explore."

--Kelly Reenders, Deputy Director, San Bernardino County Economic Development Agency

"When it comes to quality of life and outstanding weather, San Diego usually is top of mind for companies looking to relocate. What is less obvious to many is that as a result of our outstanding natural resources, San Diego is home to a top tier talent pool- something that we found is an essential, long-term economic driver in the region. One of the most important components of attracting young talent is understanding that for the millennial generation, 'place matters'. Millennials tend to move to a location and then find a job. With the ability to surf in the morning, hike in the afternoon and ski at night, San Diego has established itself as not only an outdoor enthusiast's dream destination, but also a national talent capital. As we look towards the future, the region will continue to leverage its natural assets to attract businesses."

--Jared Aaker, Manager, Economic Development, San Diego Regional Economic Development Corporation

“We work in a very competitive industry – software development for mobile platforms. You have to be creative to succeed here. You have to be a company where talented people want to work to succeed. For our employees, taking time to get outdoors is reenergizing. It builds passion and commitment, and is critical to creativity and innovation this is where the best work happens. It’s also a competitive edge for us since not all companies work this way.”

--Santiago Becerra, Chairman & CEO of Roambi

“Businesses in California get a great workforce, amazing infrastructure and top notch facilities. But after work, their employees get our beautiful weather, diverse cultural experiences, top arts & entertainment and amazing recreational opportunities on over 1.3 million acres of land and 1,658 miles of waterfront run by California State Parks. It is hard to beat the ability to snow ski in the morning and then to sit on the beach in the afternoon! CEO’s and business owners recognize that people with quality lifestyles make more satisfied, long-term employees. And quality of life matters in California.”

--Leslie McBride, Deputy Director of Business Investment Services, Governor's office of Business and Economic Development

COLORADO

"In our efforts to attract companies from high cost states like California, we find that one of the top relocation criteria is our excellent quality of life in Colorado, especially as it relates to our outdoor lifestyle and natural assets."

--David White, Executive Vice President, Marketing, Colorado Springs Regional Economic Development Corp.

“Because of the nature of our work, Numerica could be located anywhere in the United States. But we choose to grow our business in Northern Colorado because of the quality of life it offers our employees.”

--Jeff Poore, President, Numerica

“For DaVita, the outdoors is an unambiguous and fundamental competitive advantage. The kind of people with a passion for the outdoors are likely to succeed at our company, and our company is likely to succeed when staffed by people with a passion for the outdoors. Another big pick up for us: we are able to hire a lot of talented individuals that other companies want.”

—Kent Thiry, CEO, DaVita

IDAHO

“Consistently ranked by The Wall Street Journal, Kiplinger’s, Forbes and others as one of the top 10 locations for business and family in the U.S., the Boise Valley is the ideal setting for companies in search of an affordable, pro-business environment and a superior quality of life for employees and prospective employees.”

--Boise Valley Economic Partnership

MONTANA

“Montana has some of the best recreation the West has to offer and that plays a key role in attracting employers and their employees. Our open space and public lands add value to local businesses, whether retaining companies or attracting others to move to Montana. A high quality of life leads to a richer business environment and public lands are a big part of that.”

--Stuart Leidner, Executive Director, Prospera Business Network

“Great technology companies are built with great teams. Retaining and attracting top talent, across all roles, is the competitive advantage in today's tech sector. We believe that talent wants challenging opportunities and a high quality of life. At TicketPrinting.com & Ticket River we have been able to retain and attract top talent, which has enabled us to build a company that now spans across the US, Canada, Australia, and the UK. Our team loves to work hard and they love to play hard, which means recreating across Montana's public lands. It is our competitive advantage.”

--Lance Trebesch, CEO of Bozeman-based TicketPrinting.com

NEVADA

"The Greater Reno-Sparks-Tahoe area offers four seasons of outdoor recreation that attracts visitors, companies and entrepreneurs from across the globe. Beautiful Lake Tahoe and the surrounding Sierra Nevada mountains, national forests and other public lands are natural assets that set our region apart for companies seeking a quality of life for their employees that includes exceptional skiing, hiking, hunting, mountain biking, fishing and boating."

--Mike Kazmierski, President and CEO, Economic Development Authority of Western Nevada

NEW MEXICO

“For more rural areas, we still face the hurdles of a constrained workforce pipeline and access to certain resources you find in urban settings. That being said, our own SWOT analysis has identified how an outstanding outdoor quality of life can be attractive to cottage industries related to the recreational assets we have in abundance.”

--Eric Vasquez, Regional Development Corporation of Northern New Mexico

The outdoor amenities and quality of life here are a big part of what keeps us productive and how employees relate to each other—it's often what we talk about in break areas and over lunch or before meetings. I am proud of the work-life balance we can offer in southern New Mexico.”

--John Munoz, Director, Sitel

OREGON

“A can-do culture defines Central Oregon. Today, instead of the historical promise of land for homesteads or timber for harvest, businesses and individuals are attracted by our quality of life and human capital. Cost, efficiency, and productivity give our medium-sized region a leg up on larger urban areas, while our rich networks provide the connections and support growing businesses need.”

--Roger Lee, Executive Director, Economic Development for Central Oregon

WASHINGTON

“The North Central Washington Economic Development District is focused on fostering and facilitating regional entrepreneurship. One of the many attributes of the North Central Washington region is the diverse, accessible recreational landscape. Research has found that entrepreneurs, when given the opportunity, will bring businesses to locations where they choose to live. North Central Washington is no exception as there are a number of businesses that have chosen to locate in the region because of the immense recreational opportunities and outstanding landscape.”

--Jennifer Korfiatis, MBA, Administrator, North Central Washington Economic Development District

"Being good stewards of our natural resources and environment is critical to our region's continued international competitiveness. It gives us a leg up when encouraging business to grow here and create good jobs."

--Maud Daudon, President & CEO, Seattle Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce

"Moving to the Pacific Northwest 15 years ago, the decision to start and grow our workforce management software company in Washington State, in the Seattle- area, was very deliberate. Being located in a region brimming with natural resources – national and state parks, forests, and other wilderness areas – just makes good economic sense, especially when our appeal to a well-educated, health-conscious workforce could not be greater.

Ultimately, access to local natural resources such as our national park systems, outdoor recreational opportunities, and scenic landscapes help us attract competitive employees both nationally and internationally. Today, we see this trend in action; our employees want a healthy environment in which to work, live, play and raise their families. To our business, quality of life is key, and for us all, these assets lead to quality performance, both in our business and in our work-life satisfaction."

--Bryan Lhuillier, CEO, Shiftboard, Inc.

“Increasingly over the years, amenities have become more a part of the discussion with our clients and more important to candidates’ decisions about taking a job. It’s not just what the job is any longer, but where the job is that matters.”

--Ed Rogan, Vice President, Waldron & Co.