

Over the past five years the economy of the Reno-Sparks region has transformed. You have certainly noticed the increased traffic and bustle in our community, but you may not realize that this is not the return of our old economy, but the growth of a new economy. The gaming, tourism, logistics and construction economic drivers are returning, but they are no longer the primary drivers of our economic activity. With the addition of more than 150 new advanced manufacturing, e-commerce and technology companies over the past five years, we are on a path to realize our vision of having a true knowledge-based economy. This evolution began with our push to attract advanced manufacturing, data centers and start-ups (technology based). However, the best may be yet to come with the recent formation of The Institute for Health Innovation (IHI), a partnership between Renown Health and the Desert Research Institute (DRI) that will advance the concept of “population health”. Their efforts could accelerate our amazing economic transformation and revolutionize the entire health care industry – Right here in Reno-Sparks!

**So what is “population health”?** Population health looks at other determinates of health, like socio-economic, environmental and genetic, in addition to current health factors, like blood pressure, weight and cholesterol. This holistic view of health is really the next level of health care and enables health care providers to better diagnose and deliver a precision response to an individual’s unique health care needs. Think of it as if you were a house – the current (health care) inspector walks through the house and notes any obvious problems, like a broken window or a cracked wall. You fix the problem and think all is fine until the water damage from the leaking roof or a spark from old or improper wiring causes major damage. Areas of your house that may not be visible to a cursory inspection can be lethal in the long run. The same is true for health.

**San Diego as a model:** IHI’s efforts to research population health could change our community in an incredible way. Let’s use San Diego as an example. In the late 70’s the Cold War was winding down, defense spending had been drastically slashed and aerospace companies that were the primary drivers of their economy were closing. The local economy essentially collapsed and unemployment spiraled to nearly 10 percent. As the city searched for a solution, Ivor Royston, a professor studying immunology at UC San Diego, believed his research into monoclonal antibodies could be the future of disease diagnosis. He wanted to start making the antibodies commercially, for things such as hepatitis testing. A San Francisco venture capitalist gave them \$300,000 and Hybritech, along with San Diego’s multibillion-dollar biotechnology industry, was born. San Diego is now home to the third largest concentration of biotechnology companies in the world, with over 1,100 biotech companies and more than 60,000 biotech jobs that pay over \$80,000 on average.

**Why not here in Reno-Sparks?** San Diego’s explosive transformation of their economy could happen here! There is no other community that is as far along in exploring population health as we are. We have some real “first mover” advantages such as: our proximity to the Bay Area; our somewhat insulated multigenerational population; Renown’s focus on “health” rather than health

care; the research expertise of the Desert Research Facility, the UNR School of Medicine and its biomedical research; the recent 23andMe sign up of over 10,000 residents for genetics testing; the growth of technology in the region; our outdoor quality of life; and our access to Switch, the largest data center in the world – all make us uniquely qualified to lead the efforts to change the health care model for the world!

**Population Health is part of the New Nevada!** This is really happening. One of the largest Bio Conferences in the world, expecting over 3,500 attendees, is being held in San Diego next month and little old Reno-Sparks and the Renown-DRI team has been asked to speak about this pioneering approach to population health and data-driven health science solutions. The excitement is building as the Renown Foundation is seeking funding support to grow the test group from 10,000 to over 100,000. And the word is getting out as dozens of life science companies and a number of top scientists in the area of genetics and medicine have contacted DRI and Renown to see how they can get involved in this initiative. The potential of this opportunity is unbelievable and an exciting part of the continued diversification of our economy.