

There is no doubt that many of the jobs lost during the pandemic will not return. The spread of the virus "has accelerated the use of robotics and other technologies ...during the pandemic", said Elisabeth Reynolds, Massachusetts Institute of Technology. While our success in attracting advanced manufacturing and technology companies over the past decade has embedded many of these 4th Industrial Revolution (automation) jobs in our economy, where do we go from here? To attract or grow specific industries and sectors, we must look ahead to the jobs of the future and actively recruit them to our economy. Does this mean more growth for a community struggling to deal with growth? Yes, but it needs to be appropriate growth.

**Why attract more companies to our region when we are already having problems associated with growth?** A great question. Growth and company attraction are only worthwhile if the new companies bring jobs that will not be phasing out of our economy. According to McKinsey, by 2030, up to 50% of the jobs globally will be automated. If McKinsey is correct, that means up to 50% of our current residents (you, your family, and friends) ***could have their jobs eliminated by automation*** and artificial intelligence. Remember the last time just 14% of our economy was unemployed? It was during the great recession from 2007 to 2009. Imagine what 20% to 30% unemployment would look like! That is why it is crucial to work now to bring those jobs here. As existing jobs transition to automation, we can upskill and retrain our workforce to fill the new positions in existing companies and the new companies we are attracting.

**What are we targeting and why?** The EDAWN strategic plan, developed by our community board, and updated every three years, is on our website. This plan lays out the companies and industries, like advanced manufacturing, logistics, distribution, e-commerce, and technology, which give our economy the diversification needed to weather events like the current pandemic. This pandemic was a great "stress test" of our economy, and there is no doubt we passed the test. We are doing far better than Las Vegas (a mirror of our economy ten years ago) and most other communities in the nation. In December, our unemployment rate of 5% was half that of Vegas and well below the 6.7% national rate, while our sales and use tax for December was almost ***17% higher than last year!***

**Advanced manufacturing and logistics, distribution, and e-commerce give us a strong foundation.** The almost 80 new advanced manufacturing companies attracted to our region in the past nine years added tens of thousands of quality jobs with benefits. These advanced manufacturing jobs also added technology jobs associated with robotics and coding. While we can blame them for much of our growth, we must also credit them with filling these jobs primarily with Nevadan's and helping to raise our median household income by more than 45% in just seven years. Our success in attracting logistics, distribution, and e-commerce companies is mainly due to our strategic location. While we no longer actively recruit them, the average wages in this industry have more than doubled in the past nine years. So while we continue to work to grow our manufacturing base, our real focus is on technology.

**Technology is where it's at!** Many, if not most, of the future jobs, are in some way associated with technology. We are seeing real success in several growing technology sectors. Blockchain is an excellent example of a new technology that is getting traction here. At the same time, we see more data centers in our future, a great long-term play with the cloud computing explosion. There were no data centers in our region just seven years ago, and now we are home to Apple, Google, Switch, and many others. Even the biotech sector is starting to grow. More than 30 biotech companies are now expressing interest in our region, and a new biotech announcement is scheduled for later this month. Then there is nanotech, pharma, fintech, autonomous technology, green energy technology, all jobs of the future, and all on our prospect list.

So, as we continue to add quality jobs and growth to the region, we can expect growing pains and even opposition. However, as a community, we should embrace these companies and the quality jobs they will provide many of us, as well as our kids and grandkids, in the years ahead.