

## OCBC's new boss foresees real estate challenges ahead



Ball

Recently, I had the privilege of participating in a panel of commercial real estate professionals at the Cal State Fullerton economic forecast luncheon at the Disneyland hotel.

Moderating the panel was Jeffrey K. Ball, CEO of the Orange County Business Council and the former chief executive of Friendly Hills Bank.

Our conversation was followed by my invitation for Jeff to attend a group meeting of business professionals with whom I network. We meet monthly and discuss trends in our respective fields of commercial real estate, banking, law, human resources, information technology, accounting, peer-to-peer coaching, investment banking and fractional C-suite interaction.

You might wonder, why such meetings? In my experience, my clients (owners of closely held manufacturing and logistics businesses) are touched by all these professions and yet we don't compete, we complement. I've found great value in understanding their worlds.

In this most recent meeting, Jeff as our guest described his mission at the Orange County Business Council. If you're unfamiliar with OCBC, here's a brief overview I curated from its website:

“Orange County Business Council works to enhance Orange County’s economic development and prosperity to preserve a high quality of life. For more than 125 years, it has promoted economic development and served as the voice of business in America’s sixth-largest county. OCBC serves pro-business interests so that the region’s vibrant economy continues to expand, bringing the benefits of prosperity to every corner of the county.”

Jeff is quite engaging and passionate about his role. He described the tenets of the group: advocacy, research and networking events — of which the economic forecast was one.

With economic development serving as an overarching umbrella from which our county grows and prospers, we spent time discussing the retention of business within the county, attracting new companies and expanding existing companies here in Orange County.

Some of Jeff’s suggestions included showcasing Orange County during the upcoming Olympics by offering a tour package including beachfront hotel stays and passes to our local amusement parks and museums.

We also talked about how the 34 cities within our county can use the council and its available data as a repository for available manufacturing and warehousing space.

Finally, Jeff said he plans to place much emphasis on the council’s role in economic development through leadership, strategy and execution.

All of this doesn't come without its share of challenges, he noted.

He said the county, which long has struggled with affordable housing, will have to wrestle with how to keep the best and brightest of our young people. The council and county leadership will have to figure out how to add new housing while dealing with NIMBYism and the regulatory maze of getting new housing entitled and built.

He said OCBC will help with these efforts by focusing on pro-business candidates. Advocacy in the areas of clean water, cutting-edge technology, safe streets and highways are just a few ways he said OCBC is taking charge.

Our business roundtable found Jeff to be knowledgeable, resourceful and well-qualified to set the vision and execute the strategy of the OCBC.

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