

SUPERVISOR KEITH CARSON'S OP-ED

As a young man, I had a job working the graveyard shift at the assembly line for Del Monte Foods in Emeryville, and I remember a lot of middle-class families with fathers and mothers who worked in other manufacturing companies in the East Bay. Perhaps they made glass products at Owens-Illinois, potato chips at Granny Goose, hand soldered “daisy wheels” at Diablo Systems, or made metal parts in one of the many fabrication companies in our region. They operated machines, used hand tools and watched goods come down a conveyor belt for quality inspection.

While some of these companies are no longer part of the East Bay business community, they have been replaced by Tesla, Premier Organics, Fathom, AsteelFlash, Bio-Rad and other companies integrating advanced manufacturing in their operations - which requires employing the use of robotics, computers, complex software and well-trained employees. The use of 3D printers is increasing and new forms of technology are helping us “make” quality, precision and specialty products. Advanced manufacturing has expanded our capability to support health care, packaging and biomedical fields – all in a manner that is more eco-friendly and sustainable. Emerald Packaging in Union City is able to grow their business because they invested in technology that practically eliminates paint emissions, keeps production costs low and increases company market share by introducing improved products. Today, there are almost 2,000 advanced manufacturing companies in the East Bay.

The East Bay Economic Development Alliance (East Bay EDA), a regional economic development organization, knows that major changes in manufacturing also require adjustments and present challenges to our economic support system. Advanced manufacturing requires workers with different skill sets than the production lines of a few decades ago. Auto mechanics must be computer technicians as cars are now more than 85% computer controlled. Biotech technicians must learn the exacting process of growing pharmaceuticals in vats rather than the process of mixing chemicals together. Game design requires sophisticated software and artistic skills. Creative thinking and working in teams are highly valued. As technology evolves, manufacturing skill demands will only get more, not less, complex.

East Bay EDA champions efforts to prepare East Bay students and job seekers for this new world of work. That means ensuring that our education resources are aligned with business and providing essential curriculum for foundational skill sets and new work environments. That means exposing our young people to sustainable employment opportunities in manufacturing that leads to middle class living. The outcome means bringing young people to work sites so they can learn from employees who have made their careers in a manufacturing environment and see the technology that is part of their daily work schedule.

On October 3, 2014, the nation will be celebrating “Manufacturing Day.” In the East Bay, we will be recognizing the contributions manufacturing companies provide to our regional economy in the areas of job creation, the supply chain ecosystem, and the reinvestment of their profits into our region. It is our hope that on October 3, through events, open houses and discussions - relationships will be formed and there will be a better understanding of today’s advanced manufacturing and the need to grow a competitive, talented and local workforce.

To learn more about Manufacturing Day and the open houses in the East Bay region, go to:
www.mfgday.com

Keith Carson is Chair of the East Bay EDA, President of the Board of Supervisors, and Supervisor of District 5 in Alameda County. East Bay EDA is a public/private partnership serving Alameda and Contra Costa Counties, working to establish the East Bay as a world-recognized place to grow businesses, attract capital and create quality jobs. www.eastbayeda.org