



Publisher's Notebook

April 2020 Matt Winters

Preserve our brilliant people to rebuild post-covid

The dire emergency spawned by a need to shut down wide swaths of the world economy will play out for years. How well we cope in the communities on the Columbia estuary and the surrounding seashore will depend as much on our own actions as from any outside aid.

We've had such pride in recent years as entrepreneurs have fixed up old buildings and spaces, and building new ones — going on to launch specialty stores, restaurants and other enterprises.

The comparison that's often come to mind are scenes from "It's a Wonderful Life" in which Jimmy Stewart's character provides the gumption and ideas to lift Bedford Falls out of a deep funk, and then gets to see what it would have become without him. In our local communities, it wasn't one person but many who have brought dreams to life. Their courage and creativity have made these small fishing, logging and old seashore resort towns into successful economic hubs, attracting hometown kids and urban pioneers to pursue unique paths to success.

We must do everything in our power to hold onto the gains we've made. We are in some ways well positioned to do so. We don't live in a place where anonymous corporate investors might zealously squeeze top dollar from every square foot of space. While in some cases limited by their own need to pay the mortgage, landlords here can and should try to accommodate lease adjustments to keep alive the potential for businesses to reopen after this immediate crisis has passed. The lending institutions here can and must avail themselves of federal programs designed to create lifelines to small business.

With flexibility and ingenuity, we can keep the aspirational businessmen and women here in our communities, ready to pick up the pieces. Make no mistake — some were under-capitalized or too deep in debt to begin with. This disaster will only hasten their financial ruin. But for many or most enterprises, we should endeavor to make this painful time a hibernation, not corporate demise.

Will the economy come roaring back after a vaccine is put into wide use? Many have their doubts. A long economic expansion was beginning to sputter before this came along. It might already have

stalled had it not been for enormous corporate tax cuts — money that sure would have been useful to have as a rainy-day fund in the U.S. treasury today.

Almost no matter what happens elsewhere in the nation and the world, if we're smart and conserve our human assets through this

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tough time, our area's toughness and resiliency can see us through to the other side. We will be well positioned to once again host vacationers, provide delicious seafood, produce high-quality wood products and inspire dreams about what it must be like to live in such a beautiful, friendly and vibrant place.

“If you ever wanted solar, now is the time!”
-Stan the Solar Man

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