

Fremont, CA, like many cities in the US in recent economic times, has been impacted by rising local unemployment and regional company downturns. Among the economic hard luck stories in this technology rich region, the closing of the **New United Motor Manufacturing, Inc. (NUMMI)** gets particular attention and a collective heart tug.

NUMMI was a joint venture between GM and Toyota that successfully brought a significant automobile manufacturing base to this Northern California city. Starting 1984 until the plant closure in early 2010, NUMMI produced best selling flagship vehicle lines like the Toyota Corolla sedan and Tundra trucks. Over the years the thriving NUMMI plant provided and sustained well paying jobs for many of the area residents. These were indeed economic good times.

The impact of recent economic recession was wide spread and touched all manufacturing sectors in the nation. The economic downturn also eroded the much needed public consumer confidence that was necessary to keep the automobile market buoyant. The day the NUMMI plant closed was an indelible sad event in the city's, region's and even state's economic history.

However, not all was gloom and doom for the city of Fremont. The sad mood over the factory closure was soon eclipsed by the good news that a new manufacturing partnership had been forged between Toyota and Tesla Motors. The NUMMI would now be producing Tesla's line of electric cars in Fremont. The plant future production would also include Toyota's own comparable line of electric cars. There has been much speculation and often doubt on the viability of the green economy to create jobs in California and certainly in the US. The Toyota and Tesla partnership, though in its infancy, has provided emerging evidence that there is commercial interest in large scale clean tech opportunities and consequently, potential engine for job creation. There is a glimmer of hope among those that care about the economy, as well as advocacy for the development of clean technology and environment.

Historically, growth spurts in the national and worldwide economy have been driven by revolutionary shifts in thinking of how the nexus of technology and commerce can propel new markets and societal needs. Certainly economic history can attest to the global economic shifts with the advent of agricultural and manufacturing technologies. The automobile lifestyle and space exploration stirred not only our imagination but also our ability to create new core technologies to sustain supporting economic sectors. In recent history, we've also been witness to the digital revolution with its far and deep reaching impact to our personal lives, society and global economy. At the core of the digital revolution and the related economic opportunities propelled is the realization that information will liberate and empower individuals, society and the world. That is, build and lay the technology to put the right information in the right hands at the right time and good things will come of it. For one and for all.

As old industries start to ebb or recent innovations start to fall short of its full and far reaching promise, there is an opportunity again to seize on the very revolutionary elements that brought rise to new technologies, markets and labor opportunities. Yes- even with profit driven, and capitalistic self serving endeavors there is an underlying spirit to realize markets that serve the need to be better humans, the need to serve society and the need to sustain our ever decreasing shared space and resources.

The rise of “sustainability” or “green” consciousness and how it translate to our consumer prerogatives, public policy or private industry opportunities is not a phenomena of recent times. After all, environmental organizations like the EPA or Sierra Club are over 40 years old and the alternative energy and clean technologies are not recent endeavors. High profile anti-pollution campaigns have been ubiquitous in the last couple of decades. Historically, as a society, we have always been taking stock of our impact on the environment for quite some time. However, the difference today is better quality information, better means to disseminate and access critical findings, and broader sensibilities with an appreciation for the sense of urgency.

Any clear eyed individual will not stake claim to the green economy as a far reaching panacea to service all our labor and economic needs. However there is fresh proposition worth considering. If we are to mend our labor needs, rejuvenate our ailing economies and reinvent ourselves in the process why not aspire to serve at the grandest levels. Choices and opportunities to seek and deliver what is good for all and what is right for all is evident in the rise of technologies and industries in the alternative and clean energy sectors, carbon abatement, and green buildings and similar initiatives. The city of Fremont has chosen to seize the opportunity to revive the city’s manufacturing job loss on a clean tech bet.

It is too early to tell if the Toyota/Tesla partnership and its electric car will be successful down the road and offset the job loss from the legacy manufacturing base in Fremont. There is also the promising solar company sector that’s sprouting across the local region that includes parts of this city. How many of those start-up companies will survive and establish itself in the renewable energy market? Time will tell. Beyond the promise, indeed it is still exciting times just the same as we envision job creation and economic revival through the lens of transformative and noble opportunities.