



Beatrice Spreadmoore's Financial World

Numbers Tell The Story

It is not only people that fail in this economy

States fail, counties fail, and towns fail. This is a story of a town that is struggling.

Sonora the county seat of Tuolumne County, California had a population of 8,906 in 2000. Sonora currently has a population of 4,423, showing a steady decline since 2003. The population is 91% white, 38% male. Sonora's property crime levels tend to be much higher than California's average level, but violent crime levels tend to be lower than the California average.

Home ownership rate in Sonora is about 39.3%. The average household is 2.04 people. The majority of housing is three bedroom or less with a median value of \$136,000. Average market time to sell a house in Sonora is 140 days.

The most common occupations in Sonora by percent are: 28% management, professional and related occupations, 21% service occupations and sales and 20% office occupations. Approximately 58% of workers in Sonora work for companies, 25 percent work for the government and 9 percent are self-employed. Currently, the most commonly listed Sonora jobs are physical therapist, occupational therapist, general dentist, speech therapist, rn - icu, and clinical lab scientists. Sonora proper has 27 chiropractors, 1 for every 163 residents. Life is a real pain here.

76 percent of the population has some college or less education and according to government data, the average salary for jobs in Sonora, California is \$33,534, and the median income of households in Sonora is \$28,858. The most significant employers are Staples, Starbucks, and a Hospital.

The unemployment rates in Tuolumne county have taken a big jump. Tuolumne County's rate sits at **15.4** percent, up from December's 13.9 percent, the highest since 1993. The state's unemployment rate is 12.2 percent. One nearby town, Soulsbyville, has an unemployment rate of **28.3%**. Though out Tuolumne county unemployment rates are higher than the state average. Lawmakers do not have an explanation.

Recovery

New and fresh ideas are great if you have an understanding of what and why hasn't worked in the past. tackle the complicated state financial crisis, record unemployment, cutbacks in education and other county departments, etc. affecting Tuolumne County. long term consequences as well as short term results.

At this time there is no *economic recovery*, only the presumption of one.

During the recent election period many residents wrote letters to the local newspaper, expressing their concerns about the economy and what the candidates needed in the way of background and skills to fix the problems. The principle concerns were to maintain the quality of life, police officers driving brand new Ford Expeditions, safety, elimination of "illegals" and improving the schools. Most felt that having served in the military, being a God-fearing man or women who believes in our Ten Commandments and being a long-term resident were often mentioned key qualities for office.

Some have suggested that the paper not allow Letters to the Editor to reflect people's opinion about individual candidates. "Leave the Letters to the Editor open for people (former candidate), like me for instance, to vent their spleen on the issues of the day".

There are some businesses that are going to bring jobs and more tax money to Sonora. A lumber mill that is

starting up again and Lowe's. Lowe's is a good demonstration of how difficult it can be to bring growth to a town that seems determined not to let that happen. The Lowe's project, stalled by litigation leveled by a community group, has been almost six years in the making over the terms of three mayors. The group "Citizens for Responsible Growth" opposes big box stores in Sonora. Their strategy is to have a no-growth community.

At a recent board meeting one resident spoke out stating that "we should release and export illegal aliens from our jails so there would be more room to jail our citizens". This same reasoning seems to apply to the Lowe's project where the community group believes that the addition of the jobs Lowe's will bring and the tax money will result in more jobs lost from local businesses and more traffic causing more expense, resulting in a net loss for the town.

Not all citizens of Sonora are represented here. There are many very talented, knowledgeable people with progressive ideas to help the county and town(s) grow. They need to step forward and find a way to take some leadership roles.

Stay tuned as we follow the life and times of this small town. The elections are over and the new lawmakers in place.

Happy Trails,

B.S.
