Beginning to trickle back to the United States, but it takes time for businesses to make adjustments to the new economic realities.

John Blank (Kyser Center for Economic Research of the Los Angeles Economic Development Corp.) pointed out the many advantages California has to attract business, demonstrating that California boasts high-wage and skilled jobs. He also noted that California is number one in access to capital, with 50 percent of venture capital in the United States coming from the state.

William Roberts (San Fernando Valley Economic Research Center at CSU, Northridge) said that housing is an important factor to consider on the local level, noting that the L.A. area is so overbuilt that it will take time for the population to catch up. He added that little would change economically due to the upcoming elections that he referred to as “the silly season.”

Don St. Clair of Woodbury University served as the panel moderator.

National Retail Federation President & CEO Matthew Shay said that despite the recent years of economic struggle, he still remains hopeful that the economy can be turned around. During the luncheon portion of VICA’s 23rd Annual Business Forecast Conference, Shay said that we need only to look to the past to see signs of hope and overcoming obstacles.

The Conference was presented in partnership with The Valley Economic Alliance.

Don St. Clair (Woodbury University), National Retail Federation President & CEO Matthew Shay and Marla Vasquez (Wells Fargo)

Shay used the illustration of Steve Jobs’ return to Apple in the late 1990s, noting that at the time the company was on the verge of collapse. He said that Jobs used innovative ideas for new products to bring the company back, not just to solvency, but to unprecedented success. Shay added that this type of innovation and creativity is what will bring back our economy.

Shay has hopeful message about economic recovery

“We can prove that our best days are still ahead. And we can turn The Big Economy That Should into The Big Economy That Can."

-Matthew Shay

Expert economists all agreed that it would take time to see significant improvements in our current economic climate during the breakfast forecast panel. Gary Schlossberg (Wells Capital Management) said that jobs were beginning to trickle back to the United States, but it takes time for businesses to make adjustments to the new economic realities.

John Blank (Kyser Center for Economic Research of the Los Angeles Economic Development Corp.) pointed out the many advantages California has to attract business, demonstrating that California boasts high-wage and skilled jobs. He also noted that California is number one in access to capital, with 50 percent of venture capital in the United States coming from the state.

William Roberts (San Fernando Valley Economic Research Center at CSU, Northridge) said that housing is an important factor to consider on the local level, noting that the L.A. area is so overbuilt that it will take time for the population to catch up. He added that little would change economically due to the upcoming elections that he referred to as “the silly season.”

Don St. Clair of Woodbury University served as the panel moderator.
Breakout Sessions

Keeping Pace with Technology

Moderated by Coby King, The MWWW Group

- Will Aldrich, SurveyMonkey (above, left)
- Scott Kramer, Multibrain (center)
- Howard Miller, L/B/W Insurance & Financial Services, Inc. (far right)

Digital experts helped ease some fear around new technologies and gave attendees advice for leveraging social media for their business needs. Attendees learned that almost all business activities can be done from a smart phone and the panelists agreed that it is the most important piece of technology a business should have. Panelists also discussed the importance of using social media as a tool to listen to customers and clients.

Touchdown for Tourism

Moderated by Catharine Hamm, Los Angeles Times

- Sean Dee, AEG Worldwide
- Leron Gubler, Hollywood Chamber of Commerce
- L.A. City Councilmember Paul Krekorian
- Mark Liberman, LA INC. - Los Angeles Convention and Visitors Bureau

Tourism is a significant economic driver in Los Angeles. Expert panelists discussed tourism in Los Angeles and the potential impact of an NFL stadium in downtown. Gubler noted the positive economic impact of shows like Cirque du Soleil and Wicked and Dee emphasized the number of jobs that would be created by the Convention Center/Farmers Field projects. Councilmember Krekorian raised concerns about traffic issues surrounding the stadium project and logistical issues that would result from a Monday Night Football game.

Is Anybody Buying It?

Moderated by Jaclyn Giovis, San Fernando Valley Business Journal

- Richard Bright, CBRE Group Inc.
- Paul Habibi, UCLA Anderson Graduate School of Management
- Steve Johnson, MetroStudy
- Kirk M. Lesh, Center for Economic Research and Forecasting at California Lutheran University

Real estate industry experts discussed the many challenges facing the housing market. Bright said that the current market was best for renters and buyers. The panel also addressed the struggles to build in California, pointing to strict regulations and community opposition as the major obstacles to development.

The Pursuit of Capital

Moderated by Felipe Fuentes, Assembly Banking & Finance Committee

- Troy Bosch, Bank of America
- Daniel J. Lykken, US Bank
- Euhoe A. Park, U.S. Small Business Administration-L.A. District Office
- Dennis Santiago, Institutional Risk Analytics

Banking and finance insiders shared tips with business owners about how to get access to capital. Expert panelists told attendees that banks do have money to lend, but that it is important to build a relationship with your bank before you begin seeking a loan. The group also stressed the necessity of having all paperwork, including tax documents and financial reports, in order. Park said that businesses must be prepared to make a strong case for why a financial institution should invest.

Measure R We There Yet?

Moderated by Dario Frommer, California Transportation Commission

- Joseph Aiello, Meridiam Infrastructure North America
- Jon Graff, Reason Foundation
- Art T. Leahy, Metro (pictured, right)
- L.A. County Supervisor Zev Yarosky (left)

Transportation experts addressed several questions about mobility in the Los Angeles region, ranging from lessons from the 405 closure to the viability of bike lanes. Panelists explored how the management of what has become known as “Carmageddon” can be used as a model to reduce traffic throughout the city. The panel also discussed the most effective ways congestion pricing and public-private partnerships could be used in Los Angeles.

Too Green to Fail?

Moderated by Rhiannon Bailard, Pepperdine University

- Felicito Cajayan, Los Angeles Community College District
- Alex Fay, Quallion
- John Husing, Economics & Politics Inc.
- Alejandro Islas, Eco-Safe Systems USA Inc.

A diverse group of panelists discussed the viability and future of green jobs. The way of defining green jobs was called into question by the panelists with little agreement from the group about a definition. Fay said that as the new sector grows the definition will evolve and expects all jobs to include a green component, just as all jobs now use computers but are not necessarily considered technology jobs. Islas also saw problems with the definition of green jobs, but noted that his company’s growth in the green sector was not indicative of the entire emerging industry. Regulation and its hindrance of green jobs was also discussed.

Matchmaker, Matchmaker, Find me a Job

Moderated by Cynthia Kawa, New Horizons

- Lennie Ciuflo, Los Angeles Valley College
- Janelle Etchepare, Manpower
- Gregg Irish, City of Los Angeles Workforce Investment Board
- Dana Martin, ITT Technical Institute

Panelists on the employment panel found a disconnect between what higher education is teaching and the job market’s needs, agreeing that more on-the-job experience is necessary to properly develop the workforce. This discussion emphasized the need for employers and educators to work together in order to ensure their goals are aligned. Irish said there are simply not enough jobs to meet employment demands.

Last One Out, Get the Lights

Moderated by Tony Strickland, California State Senator

- Don Alecock, REM Eyewear
- Austin Beutner, Mayoral Candidate for the City of Los Angeles (above, left)
- James A. Thompson, Mayor of Sugar Land, Texas (left)

California has a reputation for being unfriendly to business and continues to lose companies to neighboring states. The panel, addressed this issue from the perspective of a local business, representative from a competing state, and California state and local officials. Regulatory burdens and difficult permitting processes are hurting business growth in the state. Strickland noted that Carl’s Jr. is not opening new franchises in California because it takes two years to do so, compared to three months in Texas.