

OPINION

EDITORIAL

*Triad approach may prove to be a winner*

Some Ventura County business leaders think they have stumbled across a model for economic development. It might just be replicable across the tri-county region.

The model is called "Triad" and it is focused on using the electronic warfare and information systems expertise at Naval Base Ventura County, where thousands of tech savvy baby boomers will be retiring in the coming years.

The idea is to bootstrap new businesses and attract new facilities in three areas—defense, homeland security and emergency preparedness.

The Triad concept was derived from a trip that VCEDA Chair Howard Smith and Chief Executive Officer Bill Burrato made to the Pautuxent Naval Air Station in St. Mary's County Maryland last year. That semi-rural county at the edge of the Washington, D.C. metroplex has made a mantra out of leveraging its technology-based military workforce into spin off industries.

Having healthy private-sector spin-offs creates a natural buffer against job cuts at the base itself.

Triad, which was formally unveiled at the VCEDA annual meeting on Jan. 18 seems a natural for Ventura County because of the Naval Base's electronics expertise but also because its Center for Asymmetric Warfare is focused on homeland security threats and emergency preparedness.

Given our region's history of earthquakes, fire and flooding, emergency preparedness seems a natural focus for any organization in the Tri-Counties. It's also true that any major homeland security threat or terror attack in either Los Angeles or San Francisco would likely lead to a mass migration of people to our region.

Which brings us to the question of replication. Vandenberg Air Force Base is just up Highway 101 in Lompoc and under the leadership of Jack Weinstein, the base has unveiled some ambitious plans of its own. The California Space Authority in Santa Maria has a nascent economic development strategy that's related to Vandenberg's activities.

The nexus between military technology and issues such as homeland security and space exploration hold a lot of promise for steering the region's economy into the future.