

[Print Article](#)[Print This Story](#)

GSDC speaker paints optimistic economic future

By [Bethany Fuller](#) | Statesville R&L

After months in a recession, business owners should look the economy to get better in late 2009, said the guest speaker for the Greater Statesville Development Corporation's annual meeting.

Don McNeeley, president of the Chicago Tube and Iron Corporation, said the economy should start shaping up by the second half of the year.

"We have a year of this crap behind us," he said. "The future is going to be fine."

McNeeley was particularly adamant about the government staying out of the free market and allowing businesses to be competitive. He said the banking and automotive bailouts are just delaying the inevitable.

"The market is recovering," he said. "One has to go out for the others to survive."

Most of the businesses that opened 10 years ago have already weathered economic crises, such as the housing and the dot-com markets crashing.

"The illusion is that these bubbles can go on forever," McNeeley said.

Companies should look for ways to succeed, but should constantly reshape their focus to build long-term sustainability, he said.

The media is more likely to talk about the decrease in employment rather than the efficiency, McNeeley said.

McNeeley said this sounded like one of the GSDC's goals after listening to Director Mike Smith's presentation of the group's 2008 achievements.

Smith said commercial and industrial development is a consistent investment of the taxpayers' money. He said the continued partnerships between Iredell County and the City of Statesville help to lure new businesses into the area.

Two of the biggest announcements in 2008 included Kooks Custom Headers, which recently broke ground in the Statesville Business Park, and Brazilian-based nonwoven fabrics manufacturer Companhia Providência announcing it was locating its first North America site in the West Farm Industrial Park.

Smith said new inquiries were up nearly 10 percent in 2008, and site visits also increased.

GSDC Business Retention and Expansion Coordinator John Marek said he also increased his site visits to manufacturers in 2008. These visits helped companies like King Machinery, KECO Coating and Eddie's Welding expand.