



CEDS ANNUAL PERFORMANCE REPORT



Submitted by:

County of Imperial, California

SUBMITTED TO:

U.S. Department of Commerce

Economic Development Administration

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1. Introduction

This document provides a five-year Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) for Imperial County, California. It is organized as a countywide CEDS covering the County of Imperial and participating constituent jurisdictions. As described later in the CEDS, each of the local jurisdictions (i.e., cities) has unique niches in the Imperial County economy and different areas of strategic focus for economic development. The CEDS is not intended to replace their individual economic development programs. It is instead designed to strengthen city-level initiatives while providing a framework for enhanced collaboration between the County and local entities on development issues of regional significance.

For unincorporated areas – where the County supplies both countywide government services and the municipal functions typically provided by cities, the CEDS creates a framework for delivery of community-level economic development in tandem with County-led regional initiatives. This “dual” function within unincorporated areas is especially important to ensure adequate allocation of services and resources to smaller, rural communities with unique economic development challenges.

Key Themes Addressed in this CEDS

The CEDS Action Plan is designed to leverage Imperial County’s existing and emerging economic strengths, while systematically addressing current and longstanding challenges to the region’s prosperity. During the course of the CEDS planning process, the following key themes emerged as significant drivers of the strategic vision outlined in the CEDS:

- Maximizing “next level” opportunities related to the region’s longstanding mainstay industry (agriculture);
- Expanding the region’s leadership in the renewable energy cluster, including existing/emerging opportunities in geothermal and biofuels (including hydrogen) production;
- Supporting aggressive implementation of the new Lithium Valley initiative, which seeks to maximize supply chain development around anticipated lithium recovery in Imperial County (potentially generating new manufacturing and R&D activities in the County);
- Connecting the presence of military/defense installations in the Imperial County (and adjacent Yuma County, Arizona) to potential R&D and manufacturing investment in targeted industries such as aerospace;
- Capitalizing on Imperial County’s established status as a destination for both domestic and bi-national visitation and recreation; and
- Leveraging Imperial County’s strategic location within the California-Baja California (“CaliBaja”) border region, which supports tremendous opportunities for international trade, “onshoring” of manufacturing, and border-related tourism.

Economic Resilience and the CEDS

This CEDS strongly aligns with the Economic Development Administration’s focus on building resiliency in local and regional economies. In addition to including a specific series of action items under the

program objective labeled “Foster Sustainability and Economic Resiliency,”¹ the overall CEDS reflects a complete spectrum of strategic themes that relate directly to the concept of economic resiliency. These themes include:

- Diversification of the region’s industry/employment base (including growing opportunities for international trade and foreign direct investment);
- Focus on strengthening existing and emerging industry clusters;
- Focus on retention/expansion of existing businesses;
- Creating a business environment conducive to entrepreneurial and small business development;
- Infrastructure investments that leverage local, state and federal funding;
- Integration of economic development programming with broader planning, land use and environmental initiatives; and
- Improving the fiscal wherewithal of local governments.

Evaluation Framework

The CEDS Action Plan includes a set of performance measures that will be utilized to evaluate implementation of the CEDS and its impact on the regional economy. The chosen performance measures focus on metrics that can be readily tracked over time (and compared across different geographies and jurisdictions). The focus on commonly available data sources (including the Census Bureau, Bureau of Labor Statistics, and various State sources) is intended to facilitate the preparation of Annual Performance Reports in future years.

¹ See Major Theme C (“Sustaining Existing Economy”), Goal 1 in the Action Plan (Chapter 8 of the CEDS); also see Chapter 9 of the CEDS.

CEDS Committee

Preparation of this CEDS was guided by the following Strategy Committee:

Name (Title)	Affiliation
Tyler Salcido (City Manager)	City of Brawley
Camilo Garcia (Mayor)	City of Calexico
Juan Contreras (Acting City Manager)	
Laura Gutierrez (Administrative Services Director)	City of Calipatria
Adriana Nava (Community Services Director)	City of El Centro
Cedric Cesena (City Manager)	
Nick Wells (City Manager)	City of Holtville
Dennis H. Morita (City Manager)	City of Imperial
Jenell Guerrero (Assistant to the City Manager)	
Miguel Figueroa (County Executive Officer)	County of Imperial
Rosa Lopez (Budget and Program Administrator)	
David Aguirre	Imperial County Transportation Commission
Katie Luna	
Stephanie Martinez	County of Imperial Department of Social Services
Enrique Nunez	
Efrain Silva (Dean, Economic and Workforce Development Division)	Imperial Valley College
Victor Torres (Associate Dean, Economic and Workforce Development Division)	Imperial Valley College
David Salgado (Regional Affairs Officer)	Southern California Association of Governments
John McMillan (Assistant Vice President of Economic Development)	San Diego State University
Tim Kelly (President)	Imperial Valley Economic Development Corporation
Sean Wilcock (Vice President)	
Oscar Cruz	
Alex Perrone	Real Estate Professional
Mark Gran	BHE Energy
Felipe Irigoyen	Ametza LLC
Jose Lopez (Executive Director)	Campesinos Unidos, Inc.
Guadalupe L. Ponce (CSBG Director)	
Yvonne Bell (President/CEO)	Innecare
Sara Sanders (Vice President)	
Jim Turner (President)	Controlled Thermal Resources
Elena Lopez	
Paola Garcia	
Lauren Rose	
Robert Rubio (Co-owner)	Imperial Printers
Rudy Rodriguez (CEO)	

Summary of Public Participation/Input

Preparation of this CEDS included the following public/stakeholder participation:

CEDS Strategy Committee

The CEDS Strategy Committee met four times during the CEDS preparation process (all dates were in 2024):

- June 20 (project orientation, identification of initial SWOT issues, preliminary discussion of target industries)
- August 12 (additional discussion of SWOT issues, review of preliminary outline of CEDS Action Plan, prioritization of target industries)
- August 30 (finalization of SWOT analysis and CEDS Action Plan)
- September 19 (approval of draft CEDS after completion of 30-day public comment period)

In addition to the above meetings, the Strategy Committee had the opportunity to provide input via two online surveys:

- Survey on target industries and strategic priorities for the CEDS
- Online nomination form for “candidate” CEDS projects

The Strategy Committee’s input is synthesized in the following sections of the CEDS:

- SWOT summary (Chapter 4, pages 10-14)
- Identification of high-priority industry clusters (page 71)
- Action Plan (Chapter 8)
- Candidate CEDS Projects (Chapter 11)

General Public

The CEDS process included the following opportunities for the general public to provide input to the CEDS:

- Workshop-style community meetings were held early in the process (May 20-21) in the unincorporated communities of Seeley and Heber. These meetings included an orientation to the CEDS, identification of SWOT issues, and identification of community-level strategic priorities for the CEDS. These in-person meetings were conducted in English and Spanish. The participants suggested a range of priorities related to community-level infrastructure and services; target industries (mostly focused on local retail and services); and overall quality of life. These priorities are reflected throughout the major themes and goals of the CEDS Action Plan.
- The draft CEDS was widely circulated and available online for public comment between August 15 and September 16, 2024. No public comments were received.

The CEDS was approved by the Imperial County Board of Supervisors on September 24, 2024, during a public meeting which provided opportunities for public comment. No public comments were received.

2. Executive Summary – SWOT Assessment

Infrastructure for Economic Development

In this CEDS, infrastructure is addressed in the SWOT analysis (e.g., shortage of EV charging stations as a weakness, strengths in various transportation systems), including incentives available in the County, in the Action Plan (specifically within Major Theme B, with a focus on mobility, broadband, and providing services to commercial and industrial sites), and in candidate CEDS projects identified by Imperial County jurisdictions and qualifying nonprofit organizations, including roadway improvements, water management, and industrial park improvements.

Key infrastructure elements in Imperial County supporting economic development include the following:

- A strong position in renewable energy production.
- Interstate Highway 8 and proximity to I-10.
- Recently improved border crossings (greatly expanded capacity for both freight and passengers).
- Key airports such as Imperial County Airport and Brawley Municipal Airport, including improvements at Brawley and completion of the SR-111/SR-78 “Brawley Bypass.”
- Multiple Union Pacific Railroad lines.

Energy production, airport, interstate highway, and rail line assets are additionally described, in detail along with other infrastructure elements, in the *Lithium Valley Specific Plan Final Baseline Report*, dated February 2024, prepared by Rick Engineering Company and others for Imperial County.² The document also addresses specific initiatives related to the Lithium Valley concept, including infrastructure issues in the context of a proposed industrial/commercial community to be located on the shores of the Salton Sea.

Infrastructure-related capital improvements are addressed in multiple Imperial County city and County documents, including project descriptions prepared by the Imperial County Transportation Commission (e.g., Intermodal Transportation Center at Calexico), and in capital improvements sections in city budgets in Brawley, Calexico, and El Centro, and in the Imperial County budget. County transportation projects are also addressed by Caltrans (e.g., Imperial Valley Pavement and Bridge Rehabilitation Improvements: I-8 in Winterhaven and SR-78 at Palo Verde³).

² https://lithiumvalley.imperialcounty.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/LithiumValley_Final-Baseline-Report_2.15.24_wAppendices-1.pdf

³ <https://dot.ca.gov/caltrans-near-me/district-11/current-projects/iv-rehabimp>

Action Plan Summary

In this CEDS, strategies are organized under the following four major themes:

Major Theme A. Public sector operational capacity and readiness

Major Theme B. Infrastructure

Major Theme C. Sustaining existing economy

Major Theme D. Supporting emerging economic opportunities

Within each theme is a series of Goals, shown below, each accompanied by a set of Action Items (not shown here):

Major Theme A. Public sector operational capacity and readiness

Goal 1

Establish leadership role for County across multiple strategic objectives: quality of life, collaboration with regional partners, economic development, environmental issues, improved customer service, etc.

Goal 2

Address multiple aspects of public sector operational capacity and readiness, including fiscal soundness, critical transportation services, institutionalized economic development, crime, etc.

Goal 3

Recognizing that suitable housing is a key component of successful economic development in Imperial County, continue to support local efforts to implement the Housing Element policies aimed at ensuring an adequate supply of workforce, or middle income, housing

Goal 4

Adopt a comprehensive approach to supporting and coordinating multiple programs that enhance the region's quality of life

Major Theme B. Infrastructure

Goal 1

Improve regional mobility

Goal 2

Prioritize efforts, and improve and provide services to industrial and commercial sites

Goal 3

Support long-range transportation plan strategies involving mitigation of bottlenecks, truck safety, etc.

Goal 4

Continue to support programs related to the Southern Border Broadband Consortium

Major Theme C. Sustaining existing economy

Goal 1

Integrate all CEDS programs to promote economic resiliency in Imperial County

Goal 2

Strengthen Imperial County's economy by promoting a balanced, yet diversified, regional economic base

Goal 3

Promote/support agricultural production and diversification

Goal 4

Promote and expand tourism in Imperial County, to see that visitors' needs are accommodated, and recognizing tourism's ties to residents' quality-of-life and to other industries such as agriculture

Goal 5

Sustain and promote expansion of international/ bi-national trade

Major Theme D. Supporting emerging economic opportunities

Goal 1

Fully implement Lithium Valley concept – combining geothermal projects and lithium recovery to develop a full-fledged lithium industry cluster

Goal 2

Support appropriate and efficient promotional and development efforts related to The CaliBaja Bi-National Mega-Region, as a concept and emerging reality

Goal 3

Establish and maintain close coordination between training programs accessible to the Imperial County workforce, and the County's emerging/expanding industries

The CEDS strategies and action items are intended to address a comprehensive range of challenges and opportunities, and are based on: 1) input from stakeholders, and 2) on prior strategic and informational documents, prepared by the County and others, which identified issues that are still relevant today. A key overriding point of view in the Action Plan is the sense that the County's relative isolation is not just geographic but also economic, and also social and socio-economic – consequently the challenges as well as opportunities have a local (countywide) focus by nature. An interesting upside to this situation is that the County can be understood to be a source of focus for change.

The Goals and Action Items are mutually reinforcing in many cases, and respond to the industry targeting analysis, SWOT assessment, and many conditions underlying the data reported in this CEDS – all of which are core principles of CEDS strategic planning.

SWOT Analysis

During the course of the CEDS planning process, the following Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats relative to Imperial County's economic potentials have been identified:

STRENGTHS

- Significant economic incentives available to qualifying businesses and development projects (see box on next page for highlights of incentives currently offered in Imperial County)
- Abundant and competitively priced natural resources (land, water and energy) create substantial capacity for new development (there is currently over 10,000 acres of developable industrial land within adopted Specific Plans, and an additional 51,000 acres of industrially zoned land proposed in the Lithium Valley Specific Plan)
- Industrial development capacity is enhanced by excellent rail infrastructure
- Relatively affordable housing (can be attractive to households relocating from much more expensive coastal counties)
- County has strong position in renewable energy production, which can be attractive to numerous other industries
- Recently improved border crossings (greatly expanded capacity for both freight and passengers)
- Excellent institutions of higher education (Imperial Valley College received the prestigious Aspen Prize for Community College Excellence in 2023; San Diego State University will open a STEM campus in Brawley in 2025; Baja California State University – just south of the border – is recognized as one of the premier institutions in Northern Mexico)
- Improvements at Brawley airport and completion of the SR-111/SR-78 “Brawley Bypass” have opened new areas for potential business development.
- Imperial is a Self-Help County, also having passed Measure D for supplemental transportation infrastructure funding
- Small town “feel” and related quality-of-life attributes
- Bilingual/bicultural population creates a range of border-related and other business opportunities
- Local government and communities have a culture of multi-disciplinary/multi-agency collaboration on economic development and related issues
- In addition to its border location, Imperial County’s direct connection to the global economy is enhanced by major infrastructure in the larger southern California region (including access to two major interstate freeways, rail infrastructure, and proximity to the Ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach)

WEAKNESSES (some of which are currently being mitigated through existing programs, but which nevertheless remain weaknesses at the present time)

- Low educational attainment levels among resident workforce (creates a barrier to attraction of technology-oriented industries)
- Low labor force participation rates and high unemployment rates; seasonal employment
- Language barriers as impediments to public and private sector endeavors reaching their full potential (whereas Imperial County's bilingual population is a definite strength, language barriers are still a challenge for some and additional resources are needed for public agencies to effectively serve all constituents)
- Shortfall of financial resources needed for a county like Imperial; for example, public transportation services are limited relative to the County's large geographic area
- Although Imperial County and its constituent cities are generally recognized as being business friendly and pro-growth, staffing constraints can at times cause permitting processes to be cumbersome (this issue is also addressed under "opportunities" below)
- Although a nascent "ecosystem" (including SBDC resources) is in place to support entrepreneurial startups, there is currently a lack of coordinated "messaging" about entrepreneurial development opportunities and resources in the County; existing incubator/accelerator facilities (though making great strides) are currently underdeveloped relative to needs
- Currently (as of 2024), there is no local (4-year) degree program in engineering/STEM fields (SDSU AND IVC programs are under development and will be operational in 2025 and 2027)
- California's (statewide) regulatory environment places local jurisdictions at a competitive disadvantage relative to jurisdictions in other states
- Current lack of electric vehicle (EV) charging infrastructure for both cars and trucks
- Infrastructure deficiencies throughout the County for various facility types (including water/wastewater treatment facilities, undergrounding/relocation of utilities, roads/bridges, broadband infrastructure)
- Lack of development history/records in unincorporated areas (can trigger pre-development environmental issues and impede efforts to remediate brownfield sites)

OPPORTUNITIES

- Expanded promotion of the CaliBaja Binational Mega Region (San Diego and Imperial Counties, with Baja California) can create many opportunities for business development, workforce/educational system investments, and overall cross-border collaboration (an EDA-supported effort to create a "Cluster Map" has been completed and now serves as a powerful marketing tool for the region); as a marketing selling point, the Mega Region also can claim to be a "North American manufacturing powerhouse" in certain industries⁴
- Related to the mega region concept, there is a significant opportunity for the region to pursue "near shoring" manufacturing (and related) activities

⁴ Knauss School of Business, San Diego State University; the Ahlers Center for International Business. *The Calibaja Regional Economy – Production, Employment, Trade & Investment*. 2022 (assumed, document is undated).

- Local workforce board has multiple partners for job training, etc., including resources in San Diego; potential to implement a “career pathway” programs around emerging growth industries; potential to expand focus on trades within the local workforce development system
- High volumes of shipments from Mexico into the US through Imperial County and great opportunities for additional capture of this activity
- High levels of retail spending by Mexican nationals could potentially be increased through development of additional retail outlets in the County; overall retail development environment in Imperial County is strong (despite global transitioning of the industry) for both local and border-related shopping facilities, in part due to a much larger than typical trade area
- A number of active transportation-improvement projects will increase cross-border and other operational efficiency in the County, including the Calexico East POE Bridge Expansion, the Calexico Intermodal Transportation Center (ITC), Forrester Road Improvements from I-8 to SR78/86 (near El Centro), and SR-86 Border Patrol Checkpoint Expansion
- Aggressive implementation of the “Lithium Valley” initiative, potentially including a campus for incubation of R&D and manufacturing activities connected to the lithium supply chain; forthcoming completion of the Program Environmental Impact Report (PEIR) for the lithium cluster can create significant competitive advantages for attracting lithium-related investment
- Continue ongoing efforts to improve/streamline city and County development approval and business permitting systems, consistent with Imperial County’s strong reputation for business and development friendliness; these efforts could potentially include implementation of software solutions to enable public agency staff to “work smarter”

THREATS

- State and Federal regulatory policies that are business un-friendly and beyond the direct control of local decisionmakers
- Competition from other states (in both U.S. and Mexico) that offer superior economic incentives (e.g., for battery manufacturing firms), lower costs of doing business (including labor rates), and shorter/streamlined permitting processes
- Inadequate local, State and Federal resources to address impacts on government services (all law enforcement agencies, social services, emergency services, etc.) associated with Imperial County’s proximity to the border (i.e., extraordinary demand for public services associated with immigration and asylum seekers)
- Shortfall of medical specialists (federally designated Health Care Provider Shortage Area)
- Healthcare district is financially strained due insufficient Medi-Cal reimbursement rates for medical services)
- Reduction in size and degradation of the Salton Sea embodies certain health threats, for example from toxic chemical residues (current mitigation projects between local jurisdictions and agencies are at risk of ceasing due to limited funding availability)
- Environmental impacts caused by emissions and water pollution from Mexico, including impacts on the New River (current mitigation projects between local jurisdictions and agencies are at risk of ceasing due to limited funding availability)
- Vulnerability of trade and other industries to border-related policies in both Mexico and the US, including potential for pandemic-related slowdowns, value of the Mexican peso, etc.
- Fluctuations in dollar/peso exchange rate

- Challenges collecting data to fully document the strength of the Imperial County market for retail trade and other industries (this challenge in part stems from inconsistencies in data availability and quality between the U.S. and Mexico)

3. Summary of Performance Measures

This chapter of the report outlines the metrics that will be utilized to evaluate implementation of the CEDS in future years (in the Annual Performance Reports to be submitted to EDA). The evaluation framework focuses on standard economic performance measures utilizing official government (state and federal) data sources.

In addition to the standardized metrics, specific programmatic accomplishments of the CEDS jurisdictions will be summarized in a separate narrative discussion in each Annual Performance Report.

Statistical Performance Measures

Tables A through F below highlight the following key performance measures to be considered in each year's Annual Performance Report:

- One-year **population growth** compared to State benchmarks (2024-2025 data);
- One-year and two-year changes in **resident unemployment** rates (2023-2025 data);
- One-year and longer-term (10-year) change in **sales tax revenue** compared to State benchmarks (2014-2024 data);
- Five-year trends for key Census ACS data (cities, county, state, U.S.) (2021-2024 data) for the following measures
 - **Educational attainment**
 - **Labor force participation rate**
 - **Home ownership rate**
 - **Median household and average per capita income levels**

The data on the tables are for the most recent years available and will be utilized as baseline benchmarks in subsequent years (each of the data sources is updated on an annual basis). Key findings for these measures are summarized immediately below.

COMPARISON OF IMPERIAL COUNTY TO STATE AND NATIONAL BENCHMARKS

Measure	Period	Imperial County Performance Relative to California/U.S. Benchmarks	Economic Favorability Rating
Population growth	2024-2025	Population in the county increased at a higher rate (0.8%) than the state benchmark (0.3%).	Favorable
Change in resident unemployment rate	2023-2025	The change in unemployment rates in the county were higher than the state and national benchmarks.	Less Favorable
Growth in sales tax revenue	2024-2025	The county (4.3%) experienced a notable decrease in sales tax revenue from the previous year, with the county underperforming the state (-0.2%) benchmark.	Less Favorable
Labor force participation	2021-2024	Labor force participation in the county (1.6%) experienced a notable increase from the previous year, outperforming both the state (-0.1%) and national (-0.1%) benchmarks.	More Favorable
Home ownership rate	2021-2024	Home ownership in the county (-1.2%) decreased, and was outperformed by both the state (0.4%) and national (0.6%) benchmarks.	Less favorable
Median household and average per capita income levels	2021-2024	Increases occurred across all geographies evaluated. The state outperformed the county in Median household income. Overall, the county outperformed the state in Per Capita and outperformed the national benchmarks in both measures.	Favorable

COMPARISON OF CITIES TO COUNTY, STATE, AND NATIONAL BENCHMARKS

Measure	Period	Imperial County Performance Relative to California/U.S. Benchmarks	Economic Favorability Rating
Population growth	2024-2025	Population in Imperial County CEDS cities, overall, increased at similar or higher rates than both the county (0.8%) and state (0.3%) benchmarks. Calipatria (-5.1%), Westmorland (0.4%), and Holtville (0.6%) were the only cities that did not outperform the county benchmark.	Favorable (conditions vary by city)
Change in resident unemployment rate	2023-2025	In general, the change in unemployment rates in the Imperial County CEDS cities were higher than the county, state, and national benchmarks. Calexico, Imperial, and Holtville were the only cities to outperform county benchmark.	Less Favorable (conditions vary by city)
Growth in sales tax revenue	2024-2025	Sales tax revenues vary across the geographies evaluated. Several Imperial County cities experienced a decline from the previous year in sales tax revenue, with Holtville (-50.1%), Westmorland (-11.9%), and Brawley (-7.8%) experiencing the most notable decline in sales tax revenue from the previous year. The county (-29.2%) experienced a notable decrease in sales tax revenue from the previous year, with the county underperforming all the cities, except Holtville (-50.1%).	Less favorable (conditions vary by city)
Labor force participation	2021-2024	Labor force participation in Imperial County CEDS cities vary in performance. Overall, most of the cities outperformed the state (-0.1), and national (-0.1) benchmarks. Westmorland (-3.4%), Holtville (-2.8%), and El Centro (-0.5%) were the only cities that decreased at higher rates than the county, state, and national benchmarks.	Favorable (conditions vary by city)
Home ownership rate	2021-2024	Home ownership in Imperial County CEDS cities vary in performance. Overall, most of the cities decreased at higher rates than the nation (0.6%), the state (0.4%) benchmarks. Westmorland (6.7%), Imperial (4.1%), and El Centro (0.8%) were the only cities that outperformed the county, state, and national benchmarks. Additionally, Holtville (-0.1%) outperformed the county (-1.2%) benchmark.	Somewhat favorable (conditions vary by city)
Median household and average per capita income levels	2021-2024	While the performance of income measures varied among Imperial County CEDS cities, increases occurred across all geographies evaluated. The only exception was the decline of the Median household income for Westmorland (-13.8%). Calipatria and Holtville had the highest rates of increase among all geographies, outperforming the county, state, and the nation for both measures. Brawley increased at rates just slightly less or comparable with the county, state and the nation for both measures.	Favorable (conditions vary by city)

Table A Total Population by Year Imperial County Cities and Reference Areas 2024-2025			
Place	2024	2025	% Change 2024-25
Brawley	28,710	28,952	0.8%
Calexico	39,762	40,073	0.8%
Calipatria	6,387	6,061	-5.1%
El Centro	45,497	46,007	1.1%
Holtville	5,653	5,685	0.6%
Imperial	22,422	22,866	2.0%
Westmorland	2,076	2,084	0.4%
Imperial County	184,994	186,499	0.8%
California	39,420,663	39,529,101	0.3%
Notes: 1. The current year and historical population estimates have been modified to reflect the DOF Estimates as of January 1 for each year. Note that published population estimates from previous years are sometimes changed between updated reports. Source: California Department of Finance, Table 2, E-4 Cities, Counties, and State, January Years 2024 – 2025.			

Table B Resident Unemployment Rates 2023 – 2025 Imperial County Cities and Reference Areas										
Date	Brawley	Calexico	Calipatria	El Centro	Holtville	Imperial	West-morland	Imperial County	California	United States
July 2023	15.0%	29.9%	18.1%	14.3%	14.2%	12.6%	24.8%	18.2%	4.8%	3.5%
July 2024	16.5%	31.6%	19.7%	15.2%	15.5%	13.8%	26.8%	19.8%	5.9%	4.3%
July 2025	17.2%	31.3%	20.2%	16.9%	15.9%	14.2%	27.4%	20.3%	6.1%	4.2%
2-year change in the unemployment rate	2.2%	1.4%	2.1%	2.6%	1.7%	1.6%	2.6%	2.1%	1.3%	0.7%
1-year change in the unemployment rate	0.7%	-0.3%	0.5%	1.7%	0.4%	0.4%	0.6%	0.5%	0.2%	-0.1%
Notes: 1. 1 and 2-year changes are percentage point changes. 2. Unemployment rates are not seasonally adjusted. 3. Note that published unemployment rates of previous years are sometimes changed between updated reports. Sources: United States Bureau of Labor Statistics; California Employment Development Department										

Table C Annual Percentage Change Total Sales Tax Revenue¹ Imperial County Cities, Imperial County, and California Most Recent Year & Past 10 Years		
Place	Fiscal Year 2024-2025	Average Annual Change, Past 10 Years²
Brawley	-7.8%	7.1%
Calexico	2.1%	4.5%
Calipatria	7.6%	-
El Centro	5.5%	8.1%
Holtville	-50.1%	4.1%
Imperial	8.2%	8.8%
Westmorland	-11.9%	16.3%
Imperial County	-29.2%	2.2%
California	-0.2%	7.3%
Notes: (1) Underlying data are State distributions of 1% local tax. (2) Compound Annual Growth Rate Source: California State Board of Equalization; California Department of Tax and Fee Administration (CDTFA) ⁵		

⁵ Although the California Department of Tax and Fee Administration (CDTFA) now compiles the 1% local sales and use tax payment distributions data, some of the historical data were collected by the California State Board of Equalization.

Table D Comparison of Demographic Trends by Place % Change 2021 – 2024											
Subject	Brawley	Calexico	Calipatria	El Centro	Holtville	Imperial	Westmor-land	Imperial County	California	United States	Type of Change
Total population	3.2%	-0.5%	-9.6%	-0.2%	-1.0%	7.2%	-19.4%	0.1%	-0.4%	1.6%	PC
Educational attainment											
High school diploma	2.5%	-0.7%	-5.1%	2.4%	-2.8%	-2.2%	8.4%	0.1%	0.1%	-0.5%	PPC
Bachelor's degree	1.3%	0.5%	1.8%	-1.4%	7.2%	2.7%	2.4%	0.5%	0.8%	1.0%	PPC
Graduate degree	0.2%	0.4%	1.8%	0.2%	-1.2%	0.0%	0.9%	0.4%	1.0%	1.0%	PPC
Labor force participation	3.5%	0.2%	5.9%	-0.5%	-2.8%	5.3%	-3.4%	1.9%	-0.1%	-0.1%	PPC
Unemployment rate	-5.2%	1.8%	-7.7%	-2.5%	-6.2%	0.6%	-5.2%	-1.4%	0.1%	-0.3%	PPC
Home ownership rate	-2.0%	-2.3%	-4.2%	0.8%	-0.1%	4.1%	6.7%	-1.2%	0.4%	0.6%	PPC
Median household income	16.4%	5.0%	35.9%	7.8%	42.1%	10.5%	-13.8%	17.5%	17.9%	17.0%	PC
Per capita income	26.7%	10.9%	79.1%	19.3%	29.5%	34.0%	35.7%	23.9%	20.0%	18.7%	PC
Note: The following abbreviations are used for the type of change indicated above: Percentage Change (PC); Percentage Point Change (PPC) Source: U.S. Census Bureau – American Community Survey (5-year surveys ending in 2021, and 2024). ⁶											

⁶ In order to maintain consistency with data reported in previous Annual Performance Reports, this table utilizes data from the latest available (2024) American Community Survey.

4. State and Regional Economic Conditions

This chapter provides an overview of published research and statistical data that characterize existing statewide and regional economic conditions relevant to Imperial County. Given Imperial’s strategic location within the dynamic California/Arizona border region, the following geographic areas are considered in this summary:

- California (as a whole)
- Southern California
- The California Border Region (San Deigo and Imperial Counties)
- Imperial County

Where appropriate, observations and data specific to Imperial County are provided for purposes of comparisons to the larger reference areas. Chapter 5 provides more detailed data for Imperial County and its constituent cities.

The statewide and regional economic overviews are based on information extracted (in most cases, verbatim) from the following key documents:

1. California Economic Forecast published by the Los Angeles County Economic Development Corporation, Institute for Applied Economics (February 2025).
2. 2025 Southern California Economic Update by the Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG) (December 2025).
3. Binational Trade & Competitiveness Report – Harnessing Opportunity in the Cross-border Economy by the World Trade Center San Diego (November 2025).
4. 2025 Southern California Economic Update, *Economic Brief: Imperial County* by the Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG) (December 2025).

CALIFORNIA ECONOMIC FORECAST FOR 2025 (LAEDC)

In 2024, California’s economic growth was surprisingly strong, exceeding the national growth, however projections for the next two years (2025-2026) suggest that state’s economic growth is expected to track more closely with the nation in GSP growth. While job creation in 2024 was notable, especially in sectors such as education & health services, government, and leisure & hospitality, the growth rate is expected to decrease in the upcoming years. Certain industries, including manufacturing, are expected to see job declines. Despite the State’s unemployment rate having previously returned to pre-pandemic levels, it is now on the rise again, continuing the trend from the previous year.

At the beginning of 2024, California state government faced a severe budget shortfall, resulting from a combination of factors, such as a notable decline in the stock market that drove down revenues in 2022, and the inability to correct overly optimistic revenue assumptions because of tax deadline extensions that obscured the state’s actual cash collections. These shortfalls were expected to continue, with multi-billion dollar operating deficits projected through the 2027-28 fiscal year. However, stronger economic performance in 2024 (coupled with budget actions taken last year by the Governor and Legislature) have

improved the budget outlook for 2025-26. The Governor's 2025-26 proposed budget projects a small General Fund surplus.

The pandemic in 2020 exacerbated the decline in natural population growth, while at the same time, challenges such as declining housing affordability, an elevated cost of living, heavy tax burdens, and other economic and social concerns have led to an increasing number of people leaving the state and continuing to leave the state. Although California saw a slight population increase in 2024 after three years of decline, several factors suggest that state's recent population growth might be short-lived. First, short-term domestic migration remains negative, indicating that more Californians continue to move to other states than those relocating to California. Second, 2024's population growth was largely driven by an increase in foreign immigration. However, with the uncertainty surrounding immigration policies under the federal administration, the future trajectory of international migration remains unclear. Additionally, while natural population growth has been positive in California for decades, long-term demographic projections from the Department of Finance suggest that the rate of natural increase will decline and turn negative by 2038.

Major Economic Indicators

Gross State Product (GSP)

Economic growth in California was remarkably strong in 2024. Real GSP growth for California reached 3.6 percent, exceeding the national rate of 2.8 percent and more than doubling the forecasted rate for the year (1.7 percent). GSP growth is anticipated to track more closely to national levels over the next two years, with a 1.9 percent growth rate in 2025 and a 1.6 percent growth rate in 2026.

Employment

Nonfarm employment increased by adding 224,600 wage and salary jobs in 2024, reaching just over 18 million jobs. This represented an increase of 1.3 percent, and an improvement over the prior year's 154,300 job gains (0.9 percent). Most of the growth in 2024 occurred in Education & Health services (163,500 jobs), Government (65,200 jobs), and Leisure & Hospitality (27,400 jobs). Only three major industry sectors experienced losses last year, namely Information (33,200 jobs), Manufacturing (28,200 jobs), and Financial Activities (5,700 jobs).

In 2025 and 2026, California is projected to experience slower job growth consistent with a slowing economy. The projected annual growth rate for 2025 is 0.9 percent and 0.7 percent for 2026, or 162,300 additional jobs and 124,700 additional jobs, respectively. Over the next two years, Education & Health Services (145,500 jobs), Government (47,700 jobs), Leisure & Hospitality (44,100 jobs), and Professional & Business Services (36,900 jobs) are expected to experience the most employment gains. By contrast, only Manufacturing (24,200 jobs) is expected to lose employment.

Personal Income

The growth in personal income in California residents jumped to 4.0 percent in 2024, consistent with the state's GSP growth for the year. This was up from 1.5 percent in 2023 and surpassed the national average growth rate of 2.9 percent. Projections indicate that the growth in personal income will slow considerably over the next two years (2.2 percent in 2025 and 2.1 percent in 2026), but still remain at healthy levels.

Unemployment Rate

The unemployment rate in California continued its steady rise from 2022. In 2024 it reached 5.3 percent, up from 4.8 percent the previous year. In comparison, the United States experienced an unemployment rate of 4.0 percent in 2024. California's unemployment rate is predicted to increase to 5.5 percent in 2025 as the economy slows, but it should plateau at this level in 2026.

State of California Budget Issues

Volatility of Tax Revenues

At the beginning of 2024, California state government faced a severe budget shortfall of \$37.9 billion for the year. This resulted from a combination of factors, which included a considerable decline in the stock market that drove down revenues in 2022, and the inability to correct overly optimistic revenue assumptions due to tax deadline extensions that obscured the state's actual cash collections. These shortfalls were expected to continue, with multi-billion dollar operating deficits projected through the 2027-28 fiscal year.

However, stronger economic performance in 2024 (coupled with budget actions taken last year by the Governor and Legislature) have improved the budget outlook for 2025-26. The Governor's 2025-26 proposed budget, which was released on January 10, projects a small General Fund surplus of \$363 million. This is largely due to an estimated \$16.5 billion increase in revenues compared to earlier projections and a planned withdrawal of \$7.1 billion from state reserves. That said, the nonpartisan Legislative Analyst's Office (LAO) presents a more cautious assessment, estimating a \$2.0 billion deficit instead. The discrepancy arises from the governor's more optimistic revenue assumptions and the differences in expenditure assumptions.

The state's improved revenue outlook is primarily driven by an expected \$12.6 billion increase in personal income tax revenues over the three-year budget period (2023-24 through 2025-26). This increase stems from stronger-than-anticipated tax collections, higher wages in the technology sector, and a booming stock market. Note that these factors do not necessarily reflect stable revenue from broader economic growth. Stock market volatility poses a considerable risk to revenue stability given that the state relies heavily on capital gains taxes from high-income earners.

Despite the roughly balanced budget in the short term, the state faces considerable structural deficits in the coming years. The governor's multiyear forecast projects annual deficits ranging from \$13.0 billion to \$19.0 billion through 2028-29. The LAO warns that these figures may be understated, as their own estimates suggest even larger shortfalls due to more conservative revenue assumptions.

Governor's Plan to Address Budget Deficit

The proposed General Fund spending plan for 2025-26 totals \$228.9 billion, prioritizing the protection of existing programs in areas such as healthcare, behavioral health, food assistance, and universal transitional kindergarten, rather than introducing new investments. The budget does not include new allocations for addressing homelessness and low-income housing. However, it does propose to expand the film tax credit cap from \$330.0 million to \$750.0 million through the fiscal year 2029-30, which will help bolster the entertainment industry by attracting and retaining film production activities.

The LAO supports the governor's proposal to raise the Budget Stabilization Account (BSA) cap from 10.0 percent to 20.0 percent of General Fund tax revenues in order to strengthen the state's financial

resilience over the long term. In addition, the LAO has advised to conduct program performance reviews to ensure the effectiveness of existing programs and the efficient allocation of resources.

There are several uncertainties and challenges that could further strain the state’s budget. For example, the recent Los Angeles wildfires have led to an initial \$2.5 billion in emergency appropriations, and the full cost of fire suppression, disaster recovery, and economic disruptions could be considerably higher, especially if federal disaster aid falls short of expectations. In addition, federal policies on tariffs, trade, and immigration could pose risks to the state’s economy and revenue outlook. Higher tariffs could raise costs, reduce disposable income, and negatively impact trade-dependent sectors such as trade, logistics, and manufacturing. Stricter immigration policies may worsen labor shortages in industries such as agriculture, construction, and hospitality, thus driving up costs and lowering tax revenues. The most concerning federal policy, however, is potential cuts to federal programs that do not align with the current administration’s policy priorities. A notable share of federal funding for California flows through the state budget. The Governor’s proposed state budget for 2025-26 includes more than \$170.0 billion in federal funds, or over one-third (34.6 percent) of the total state budget.

CALIFORNIA HEADLINE ECONOMIC STATISTICS AND FORECAST

	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025f	2026f
Real GSP Growth	-1.2%	7.5%	0.9%	2.0%	3.6%	1.9%	1.6%
Real Personal Income Growth	7.2%	4.4%	-7.0%	1.5%	4.0%	2.2%	2.1%
Nonfarm Employment (000s)	16,187.0	16,752.5	17,670.9	17,825.2	18,049.8	18,212.1	18,336.8
Unemployment Rate	10.1%	7.3%	7.3%	4.8%	5.3%	5.5%	5.5%
CPI Change	1.7%	4.2%	4.3%	3.9%	3.1%	2.6%	2.9%

Source: LAEDC Institute for Applied Economics (February 2025).

2025 SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA ECONOMIC UPDATE (DECEMBER 2025)

Highlights and Study Findings

Regional Economic Performance and Labor Market Challenges

The Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG) region experienced notably weak economic growth in 2025, with only 22,000 new jobs created. This was the lowest annual job growth outside of a recession year since the Great Recession. This represents a stark contrast to previous years and signals concerning trends in the regional labor market. While the region's real Gross Domestic Product (GDP) grew by an estimated 1.9 percent in 2025, this growth occurred without corresponding employment gains, suggesting increased productivity per worker. The unemployment rate has crept upward to 6.0 percent (5.5 percent seasonally adjusted), with the region now experiencing its highest unemployment level in ten years, since September 2015.

Despite these elevated unemployment rates, the labor market shows relatively little “trauma”—there have been no notable waves of layoffs or mass unemployment insurance claims. Instead, the burden falls disproportionately on younger workers entering the job market. For workers aged 25 and older, unemployment remains below 5.0 percent, but for those aged 16-19 and 20-24, unemployment rates reach 21.3 percent and 9.9 percent respectively. This suggests that entry-level positions are being most affected by recent technological changes, particularly the widespread adoption of artificial intelligence systems.

The AI Disruption Across Industries

The emergence and rapid adoption of AI technologies, particularly following ChatGPT's launch in December 2022, has fundamentally disrupted multiple sectors across the SCAG region. High-tech services employment peaked in late 2022 and has been declining since. Software development, one of the heaviest users of AI, has been experiencing considerable job losses. Manufacturing, financial activities, and the entertainment industry have all seen employment decline coinciding with AI adoption. In financial services, AI now handles fraud detection, credit evaluations, and risk assessment, reducing the need for human workers in these traditionally well-paying positions.

Healthcare: The Bright Spot in Job Creation

Healthcare stands as the primary source of job growth in the region, representing nearly 9.0 percent of total regional employment. The healthcare and social assistance sector added 261,000 jobs, which is a 21.0 percent increase since 2021 and is projected to add 74,000 jobs in 2025 alone. This growth is driven by demographic factors including an aging population, technological advances in medical equipment and treatments, and the expansion of hospital and clinical facilities throughout Southern California. Major new healthcare developments include UC Irvine's 350,000 square foot medical campus, California Hospital Medical Center's new Grand Tower in downtown Los Angeles, and Cedars Sinai's Marina del Rey community hospital scheduled for 2026 completion.

Trade, Tourism, and Consumer Spending

Despite tariff uncertainties and policy volatility in 2025, cargo volume at the San Pedro Bay Ports rose 18.0 percent in 2024 and is projected to increase another 3.1 percent in 2025. This resilience demonstrates that consumer demand has remained relatively stable despite trade tensions. However, the tourism sector shows mixed results. International visitors to California airports declined 4.8 percent through August 2025, with Canadian arrivals down 16.6 percent and European arrivals down 6.2

percent. Domestic air travel at LAX decreased 4.0 percent, while Disneyland attendance slipped from record 2024 levels, and Universal Studios Hollywood saw a 10.0 percent attendance drop in 2024.

Consumer spending, measured through real taxable sales, declined 13.4 percent from its late 2022 peak when adjusted for inflation. Retail and restaurant sales showed similar patterns, contributing to modest employment declines in retail trade. This spending reduction reflects multiple pressures, including higher borrowing costs, slower job growth, gradually rising unemployment, and elevated housing costs constraining household budgets. However, the UCLA Anderson Forecast predicts retail sales will rebound in 2026 and 2027 as Federal Reserve interest rate reductions continue, and wage growth gradually improves.

Housing and Real Estate Markets

Housing production has remained remarkably stable between 45,000-50,000 units annually for over a decade, though 2024 and 2025 production fell several thousand units below this range. Los Angeles County consistently leads with 45.0 percent of regional housing permits, followed by Riverside County at 20.0 percent. Since January 2020, 68.0 percent of new units have been concentrated in just three categories, which include multi-family units in Los Angeles County, Accessory Dwelling Units (ADU) in Los Angeles County, or single-family units in Riverside County. Major developments include the Valencia project in Santa Clarita Valley (21,000 homes planned), Silverwood in Hesperia (15,000 homes approved), and the \$2.9 billion Bristol development in Santa Ana (3,750 apartments plus mixed-use components).

LA28 Olympics

The upcoming 2028 Summer Olympic and Paralympic Games are projected to generate between \$13.6 and \$17.6 billion in additional GDP for the SCAG region over 2024-2029. While 37 of 41 competition venues are located in Los Angeles County, an estimated 33 percent of economic impacts will accrue to the region's other five counties through visitor spending and regional supply chains. The LA28 Committee's relatively low construction costs reduce taxpayer risk, while the region's concentration of professional services, administrative functions, and sports/recreation industries enables high levels of local sourcing. The 2028 deadline has also accelerated transportation infrastructure investments that will benefit the region for decades beyond the Games themselves.

Outlook for 2026-2027

The SCAG region is projected to see modest economic improvement with 0.8 percent job growth in 2026, rising to potentially higher levels in 2027. However, slow population growth due to restrictive federal immigration policies will limit labor force expansion to 1.1 percent, keeping unemployment near or above 6.0 percent through 2026. The commercial real estate market faces continued challenges, with office vacancy rates remaining elevated due to hybrid work arrangements and lack of job growth in office-using sectors, though industrial real estate demand should strengthen as tariff policies stabilize.

Binational Trade & Competitiveness Report – Harnessing Opportunity in the Cross-border Economy by the World Trade Center San Diego (November 2025)

Highlights and Study Findings

For more than three decades, the Cali Baja region (San Diego County, Imperial County, and Baja California) has embodied the promise of North American integration initially under the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and now through its successor, the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA).

What began as a framework for reducing tariffs has evolved into one of the world's most dynamic cross-border supply chains, where more than 2.3 billion in goods cross the U.S.-Mexico border every day, fueling industries from aerospace and medical devices to electronics and clean energy. However, growing geopolitical pressures, shifting trade alliances, and rising costs threaten to fragment this interconnected ecosystem. Supporting and strengthening the USMCA framework is urgent to ensure that North America remains globally competitive, resilient, and secure, while also protecting jobs, innovation, and prosperity on both sides of the border.

Trade Growth: Mexico is the U.S.'s top trading partner, with capital goods imports from Mexico up 43% (vs. 3% from China, 2017-2022). Services trade hit \$50.4B U.S. exports to Mexico (up 54%) and \$45.1B imports (up 46%). San Diego/Imperial Counties export \$34.5B in goods (97% to Mexico), supporting 95,000 jobs in aerospace, medical devices, semiconductors, and automotive.

Industry Ecosystems: Cali Baja excels in binational supply chains—e.g., Mexico's #1 medical device hub (Tijuana), aerospace exports (\$8.1B to U.S., 2022), automotive parts, and emerging semiconductors (e.g., Qualcomm's Tijuana R&D). Baja's manufacturing (98% of exports, 95% to U.S.) has diversified from electronics to higher-value goods. Nearshoring of services (IT, R&D) complements manufacturing.

Strategic Benefits: Reduces China reliance, supports 17M North American jobs, leverages talent (e.g., Baja's engineering workforce), and aligns with reshoring trends amid U.S. manufacturing job losses.

Challenges: Policy uncertainty, infrastructure gaps (ports, energy, water), trade volatility (especially for 97% small business exporters), and perceptions of Baja's capabilities.

Outlook: AI, cybersecurity, and workforce partnerships (e.g., UC San Diego, CETYS University) position Cali Baja for growth in knowledge-driven economies.

Recommended Actions (for Federal, State and Local Governments on U.S side of border)

U.S. Government

Bolster USMCA Framework: Safeguard IP, labor, and environmental standards; modernize rules for digital trade, AI, and clean energy. Promote trilateral incentives to nearshore strategic industries (semiconductors, aerospace, medical devices) and counter China reliance.

Fund Infrastructure: Accelerate investments in cross-border ports (e.g., Otay Mesa East Port opening 2027) via programs like CTPAT; prioritize energy, water, and road upgrades to cut congestion and freight delays.

Workforce and Innovation Support: Expand CHIPS Act/CHIPS for America funding for binational semiconductor training (e.g., ATP in Baja); grant more awards like UC San Diego's pilot for advanced manufacturing/engineering talent pipelines.

California

Incentives and Policy Alignment: Align tax credits (e.g., GO-Biz programs) with USMCA rules to encourage nearshoring; expand AB 91 (in-state tuition for Baja students) to more workforce initiatives, fostering binational hubs like UC San Diego's Binational Innovation Hub.

Industry Collaboration: Promote state-level partnerships for aerospace, medical devices, and clean energy clusters; fund R&D grants tying San Diego's life sciences/semiconductor strengths to Baja manufacturing.

Talent Development: Invest in joint university-industry programs (e.g., with CETYS/Autonomous University of Baja California) for AI, digital engineering, and reskilling, targeting small businesses' needs.

San Diego & Imperial Counties

Infrastructure Priorities: Advocate for and co-fund port expansions (e.g., San Ysidro, Cross Border Xpress) and local connectors; partner on energy/water projects to support industrial parks and daily cross-border logistics.

Economic Development: Support small businesses (98% of firms) via trade stability programs, nearshoring guides, and USMCA navigation workshops; expand hubs like ITJ for IT/services nearshoring.

Workforce and Ecosystem Building: Collaborate with industry (e.g., Qualcomm, GKN Aerospace) on binational talent pipelines; launch local pilots for AI/cybersecurity training, leveraging military/R&D assets and Baja's manufacturing base to attract investments.

2025 SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA ECONOMIC UPDATE, *ECONOMIC BRIEF:* IMPERIAL COUNTY (DECEMBER 2025)

The Imperial County economy is beginning to wane compared to last year. The year 2024 marked the start of the Imperial Irrigation District Deficit Irrigation Program (DIP), which resulted in a loss of about 172,000-acre feet of water impacting the production of field crops (alfalfa, Bermuda grass, and Klein grass). Additionally, vegetable and seed/nursery crop saw production acres decrease by 22.6 percent and 20.53 percent from 2023. This resulted in unemployment climbing by 3.1 percentage points, from 18.4 percent in 2024 to an (August 2025 unemployment rate of 21.5 percent. The unemployment rate is expected to increase further in 2026, as the recent loss of more than 700 direct/indirect jobs tied to sugar beet production and processing is absorbed due to the recent closure of the Spreckels Sugar Plant.

Population increased by 0.8 percent year over year from 184,994 to 186,499, continuing to reverse the trend seen during the pandemic when population in the county declined. The overall labor force has increased by about 1,600 workers year over year from 74,800 to 76,400.

Gross Domestic Product for the county continues to grow with estimated GDP for 2023 reaching an astonishing \$10.47 billion, a 23 percent year over increase between 2022 and 2023. This is largely based on an increase in renewable energy spending in preparation for production.

Agricultural production in 2024 totaled \$2.489 billion, a decrease of 7.57 percent from 2023. The pullback was based on implementation of the DIP and decreases in total acres in production of both vegetables and seed/nursery products. Overall, vegetables/melons accounted for \$1.03 billion, while livestock (mostly cattle) totaled \$705.76 million, and field crops totaled \$519.73 million. Total acres in production fell by 8.93 percent to 526,967.

The region continues to see investment in solar production and battery storage. For 2024, Imperial County was the third-largest generator of renewable power (by county) in California, producing 9.395 million MWh, behind only Kern County at 20.199 million MWh and Riverside County at 10.106 million MWh. Imperial County is currently processing another 20 renewable energy projects that, if built, will utilize another 22,175 acres of land and produce 2,972 MW of solar energy and 3,612 MW of battery storage. There are 13 total geothermal/lithium extraction projects currently being permitted within Imperial County, which will account for an additional 870 MW of renewable energy generation and 355,000 metric tons per year of lithium extraction. These projects equate to more than \$16.8 billion of new economic investment. Project construction is predicted to start in early 2026.

The median home price in Imperial County is currently about \$457,000. Based on the median household income of \$62,400, it costs 7.32 times the median household income to purchase the median home, a price-to-income ratio higher than in the SCAG region's other two inland counties: Riverside and San Bernardino. The average two bedroom apartment currently costs about \$1,600 per month.

Continued pressure on Imperial County water rights by coastal communities, coupled with notorious drought conditions, likely mean demand for agriculture land will reduce over time. This increases the need for the region to diversify itself into other industries that are land and natural resource dependent, including solar energy production, battery storage, and development of additional geothermal energy generation facilities coupled with lithium and other rare-mineral extraction and ancillary industries.

COMPARISON OF POPULATION AND EMPLOYMENT GROWTH RATES BY REGION

Tables 1 through 6 compare recent historic and longer-term population and employment growth trends for California, southern California, the Border Region and Imperial County.

Table 1 Percent Changes in Regional Economic Setting State of California 2015 – 2025			
Category	Average Annual Percent Change 2015-25	1-Year Percent Change 2023-24	1-Year Percent Change 2024-25
Total Population	0.2%	0.5%	0.3%
Non-farm Employment	1.3%	1.4%	0.1%
Source: CA DOF Table 1: E-4 Counties and State, January Years 2015 - 2025; CA EDD Current Employment Statistics (CES) January 2015-2025.			

Table 2 Percent Changes in Regional Economic Setting Southern California (10-County Area) 2015 – 2025			
Category	Average Annual Percent Change 2015-25	1-Year Percent Change 2023-24	1-Year Percent Change 2024-25
Total Population	0.1%	0.4%	0.3%
Non-farm Employment	1.2%	1.6%	-0.2%
Source: CA DOF Table 1: E-4 Counties and State, January Years 2015 - 2025; CA EDD Current Employment Statistics (CES) January 2015-2025.			

Table 3 Percent Changes in Regional Economic Setting Border Region (Imperial/San Diego Counties) 2015 – 2025			
Category	Average Annual Percent Change 2015-25	1-Year Percent Change 2023-24	1-Year Percent Change 2024-25
Total Population	0.3%	1.5%	0.2%
Non-farm Employment	1.4%	0.5%	0.5%
Source: CA DOF Table 1: E-4 Counties and State, January Years 2015 - 2025; CA EDD Current Employment Statistics (CES) January 2015-2025.			

Table 4 Percent Changes in Regional Economic Setting Imperial County 2015 – 2025			
Category	Average Annual Percent Change 2015-25	1-Year Percent Change 2023-24	1-Year Percent Change 2024-25
Total Population	0.4%	2.0%	0.8%
Non-farm Employment	1.6%	2.8%	0.5%
Source: CA DOF Table 1: E-4 Counties and State, January Years 2015 - 2025; CA EDD Current Employment Statistics (CES) January 2015-2025.			

Table 5 Comparison of Population Growth Rates California, Southern California, Border Region and Imperial County 2015 – 2025 Average Annual Change by Period				
Time Period	California	Southern California	Border Region	Imperial County
2015-2025 (average annual growth rate)	0.2%	0.1%	0.3%	0.4%
2023-2024 (1-year change)	0.5%	0.4%	1.5%	2.0%
2024-2025 (1-year change)	0.3%	0.3%	0.2%	0.8%
Source: DOF Table 1: E-4 Counties and State, January Years 2015 - 2025.				

Table 6 Comparison of Employment Growth Rates (Nonfarm Jobs) California, Southern California, Border Region and Imperial County 2015 – 2025 Average Annual Change by Period				
Time Period	California	Southern California	Border Region	Imperial County
2015-2025 (average annual growth rate)	1.3%	1.2%	1.4%	1.6%
2023-2024 (1-year change)	1.4%	1.6%	0.5%	2.8%
2024-2025 (1-year change)	0.1%	-0.2%	0.5%	0.5%
Source: CA EDD Current Employment Statistics (CES) January 2015-2025.				

5. Local (County and City-Level) Economic Performance

Tables 7 through 13 provide key measures of economic performance for individual cities within Imperial County CEDS area for the period 2010 through 2024 (the latest year for which Census data are available through the American Community Survey program). Tables 14 through 16, respectively, provide the same data for Imperial County, the state of California and the United States. Table 17 provides comparative summaries for all these reference areas.

Table 7 Key Measures of Local Economic Performance 2010-2024 City of Brawley								
Subject	2010 Census	2020 Census	2021 ACS	2022 ACS	2023 ACS	2024 ACS	% Change 2021-2024	Type of % Change
Total population	24,953	26,416	26,431	26,509	26,934	27,283	3.2%	PC
Educational attainment								
High school diploma	N/A	N/A	23.7%	24.0%	25.9%	26.2%	2.5%	PPC
Bachelor's degree	N/A	N/A	11.0%	12.5%	10.7%	12.3%	1.3%	PPC
Graduate degree	N/A	N/A	3.4%	2.7%	3.1%	3.6%	0.2%	PPC
Labor force participation	N/A	N/A	54.1%	56.0%	54.4%	57.6%	3.5%	PPC
Unemployment rate	N/A	N/A	20.7%	18.2%	15.4%	15.5%	-5.2%	PPC
Home ownership rate	52.1%	51.8%	53.6%	53.1%	53.4%	51.6%	-2.0%	PPC
Median household income	N/A	N/A	\$50,964	\$56,229	\$60,370	\$59,311	16.4%	PC
Per capita income	N/A	N/A	\$21,057	\$25,017	\$25,729	\$26,681	26.7%	PC
Note: The following abbreviations are used for the type of change indicated above: Percentage Change (PC); Percentage Point Change (PPC) Source: U.S. Census Bureau – 2010 and 2020 Census, and American Community Survey (5-year surveys ending in 2021, 2022, 2023, and 2024). ⁷								

⁷ This table utilizes data from the latest available (2024) American Community Survey, and the data available from the releases of the 2010 and 2020 Decennial Census.

Table 8 Key Measures of Local Economic Performance 2010-2024 City of Calexico								
Subject	2010 Census	2020 Census	2021 ACS	2022 ACS	2023 ACS	2024 ACS	% Change 2021-2024	Type of % Change
Total population	38,572	38,633	38,798	38,599	38,476	38,585	-0.5%	PC
Educational attainment								
High school diploma	N/A	N/A	20.8%	19.3%	19.6%	20.1%	-0.7%	PPC
Bachelor's degree	N/A	N/A	13.8%	16.1%	16.2%	14.3%	0.5%	PPC
Graduate degree	N/A	N/A	4.2%	4.1%	5.0%	4.6%	0.4%	PPC
Labor force participation	N/A	N/A	53.4%	54.4%	54.2%	53.6%	0.2%	PPC
Unemployment rate	N/A	N/A	17.6%	18.1%	18.3%	19.4%	1.8%	PPC
Home ownership rate	53.7%	50.9%	52.5%	50.6%	51.4%	50.2%	-2.3%	PPC
Median household income	N/A	N/A	\$47,390	\$51,667	\$50,021	\$49,783	5.0%	PC
Per capita income	N/A	N/A	\$18,573	\$19,676	\$20,185	\$20,600	10.9%	PC
Note: The following abbreviations are used for the type of change indicated above: Percentage Change (PC); Percentage Point Change (PPC) Source: U.S. Census Bureau – 2010 and 2020 Census, and American Community Survey (5-year surveys ending in 2021, 2022, 2023, and 2024). ⁸								

⁸ This table utilizes data from the latest available (2024) American Community Survey, and the data available from the releases of the 2010 and 2020 Decennial Census.

Table 9 Key Measures of Local Economic Performance 2010-2024 City of Calipatria								
Subject	2010 Census	2020 Census	2021 ACS	2022 ACS	2023 ACS	2024 ACS	% Change 2021-2024	Type of % Change
Total population	7,705	6,515	7,247	6,579	6,549	6,548	-9.6%	PC
Educational attainment								
High school diploma	N/A	N/A	32.3%	33.0%	30.1%	27.2%	-5.1%	PPC
Bachelor's degree	N/A	N/A	0.5%	1.0%	1.9%	2.3%	1.8%	PPC
Graduate degree	N/A	N/A	0.4%	0.4%	1.5%	2.2%	1.8%	PPC
Labor force participation	N/A	N/A	19.1%	22.9%	24.7%	25.0%	5.9%	PPC
Unemployment rate	N/A	N/A	15.0%	14.5%	12.5%	7.3%	-7.7%	PPC
Home ownership rate	53.2%	51.5%	68.3%	63.9%	63.6%	64.1%	-4.2%	PPC
Median household income	N/A	N/A	\$39,217	\$43,095	\$52,672	\$53,299	35.9%	PC
Per capita income	N/A	N/A	\$7,153	\$9,080	\$10,640	\$12,811	79.1%	PC
Note: The following abbreviations are used for the type of change indicated above: Percentage Change (PC); Percentage Point Change (PPC) Source: U.S. Census Bureau – 2010 and 2020 Census, and American Community Survey (5-year surveys ending in 2021, 2022, 2023, and 2024). ⁹								

⁹ This table utilizes data from the latest available (2024) American Community Survey, and the data available from the releases of the 2010 and 2020 Decennial Census.

Table 10 Key Measures of Local Economic Performance 2010-2024 City of El Centro								
Subject	2010 Census	2020 Census	2021 ACS	2022 ACS	2023 ACS	2024 ACS	% Change 2021-2024	Type of % Change
Total population	42,598	44,322	44,322	44,184	44,186	44,240	-0.2%	PC
Educational attainment								
High school diploma	N/A	N/A	24.7%	24.9%	26.0%	27.1%	2.4%	PPC
Bachelor's degree	N/A	N/A	10.7%	10.5%	10.0%	9.3%	-1.4%	PPC
Graduate degree	N/A	N/A	5.4%	5.6%	5.8%	5.6%	0.2%	PPC
Labor force participation	N/A	N/A	57.6%	58.0%	59.9%	57.1%	-0.5%	PPC
Unemployment rate	N/A	N/A	12.4%	10.2%	9.9%	9.9%	-2.5%	PPC
Home ownership rate	49.5%	47.2%	48.7%	50.7%	50.0%	49.5%	0.8%	PPC
Median household income	N/A	N/A	\$49,244	\$54,922	\$56,093	\$53,082	7.8%	PC
Per capita income	N/A	N/A	\$19,767	\$22,039	\$23,781	\$23,590	19.3%	PC
Note: The following abbreviations are used for the type of change indicated above: Percentage Change (PC); Percentage Point Change (PPC) Source: U.S. Census Bureau – 2010 and 2020 Census, and American Community Survey (5-year surveys ending in 2021, 2022, 2023, and 2024). ¹⁰								

¹⁰ This table utilizes data from the latest available (2024) American Community Survey, and the data available from the releases of the 2010 and 2020 Decennial Census.

Table 11 Key Measures of Local Economic Performance 2010-2024 City of Holtville								
Subject	2010 Census	2020 Census	2021 ACS	2022 ACS	2023 ACS	2024 ACS	% Change 2021-2024	Type of % Change
Total population	5,939	5,605	5,672	5,620	5,606	5,617	-1.0%	PC
Educational attainment								
High school diploma	N/A	N/A	28.4%	29.0%	23.6%	25.6%	-2.8%	PPC
Bachelor's degree	N/A	N/A	5.3%	6.6%	8.2%	12.5%	7.2%	PPC
Graduate degree	N/A	N/A	5.3%	5.0%	3.7%	4.1%	-1.2%	PPC
Labor force participation	N/A	N/A	54.4%	50.8%	51.4%	51.6%	-2.8%	PPC
Unemployment rate	N/A	N/A	15.6%	11.2%	9.6%	9.4%	-6.2%	PPC
Home ownership rate	50.3%	55.4%	50.0%	51.7%	51.9%	49.9%	-0.1%	PPC
Median household income	N/A	N/A	\$45,759	\$44,939	\$63,438	\$65,039	42.1%	PC
Per capita income	N/A	N/A	\$18,440	\$22,444	\$22,831	\$23,880	29.5%	PC
Note: The following abbreviations are used for the type of change indicated above: Percentage Change (PC); Percentage Point Change (PPC) Source: U.S. Census Bureau – 2010 and 2020 Census, and American Community Survey (5-year surveys ending in 2021, 2022, 2023, and 2024). ¹¹								

¹¹ This table utilizes data from the latest available (2024) American Community Survey, and the data available from the releases of the 2010 and 2020 Decennial Census.

Table 12 Key Measures of Local Economic Performance 2010-2024 City of Imperial								
Subject	2010 Census	2020 Census	2021 ACS	2022 ACS	2023 ACS	2024 ACS	% Change 2021-2024	Type of % Change
Total population	14,758	20,263	19,982	20,430	20,943	21,430	7.2%	PC
Educational attainment								
High school diploma	N/A	N/A	23.4%	24.3%	25.7%	21.2%	-2.2%	PPC
Bachelor's degree	N/A	N/A	13.4%	13.7%	12.8%	16.1%	2.7%	PPC
Graduate degree	N/A	N/A	6.6%	6.6%	7.5%	6.6%	0.0%	PPC
Labor force participation	N/A	N/A	55.3%	58.5%	56.8%	60.6%	5.3%	PPC
Unemployment rate	N/A	N/A	7.6%	10.7%	8.5%	8.2%	0.6%	PPC
Home ownership rate	71.1%	69.6%	65.4%	65.8%	65.5%	69.5%	4.1%	PPC
Median household income	N/A	N/A	\$81,657	\$83,029	\$83,214	\$90,195	10.5%	PC
Per capita income	N/A	N/A	\$22,293	\$25,203	\$28,599	\$29,877	34.0%	PC
Note: The following abbreviations are used for the type of change indicated above: Percentage Change (PC); Percentage Point Change (PPC) Source: U.S. Census Bureau – 2010 and 2020 Census, and American Community Survey (5-year surveys ending in 2021, 2022, 2023, and 2024). ¹²								

¹² This table utilizes data from the latest available (2024) American Community Survey, and the data available from the releases of the 2010 and 2020 Decennial Census.

Table 13 Key Measures of Local Economic Performance 2010-2024 City of Westmorland								
Subject	2010 Census	2020 Census	2021 ACS	2022 ACS	2023 ACS	2024 ACS	% Change 2021-2024	Type of % Change
Total population	2,225	2,014	2,289	2,010	1,734	1,844	-19.4%	PC
Educational attainment								
High school diploma	N/A	N/A	22.9%	24.9%	23.8%	31.3%	8.4%	PPC
Bachelor's degree	N/A	N/A	3.7%	5.0%	6.7%	6.1%	2.4%	PPC
Graduate degree	N/A	N/A	0.6%	1.2%	1.4%	1.5%	0.9%	PPC
Labor force participation	N/A	N/A	55.0%	46.5%	53.5%	51.6%	-3.4%	PPC
Unemployment rate	N/A	N/A	19.4%	20.0%	17.5%	14.2%	-5.2%	PPC
Home ownership rate	47.4%	47.4%	42.0%	47.8%	47.2%	48.7%	6.7%	PPC
Median household income	N/A	N/A	\$33,444	\$31,827	\$28,929	\$28,839	-13.8%	PC
Per capita income	N/A	N/A	\$12,120	\$12,474	\$14,375	\$16,447	35.7%	PC
Note: The following abbreviations are used for the type of change indicated above: Percentage Change (PC); Percentage Point Change (PPC) Source: U.S. Census Bureau – 2010 and 2020 Census, and American Community Survey (5-year surveys ending in 2021, 2022, 2023, and 2024). ¹³								

¹³ This table utilizes data from the latest available (2024) American Community Survey, and the data available from the releases of the 2010 and 2020 Decennial Census.

Table 14 Key Measures of Local Economic Performance 2010-2024 Imperial County								
Subject	2010 Census	2020 Census	2021 ACS	2022 ACS	2023 ACS	2024 ACS	% Change 2021-2024	Type of % Change
Total population	174,528	179,702	180,051	179,578	179,319	180,202	0.1%	PC
Educational attainment								
High school diploma	N/A	N/A	25.6%	25.3%	25.9%	25.7%	0.1%	PPC
Bachelor's degree	N/A	N/A	11.1%	11.8%	11.5%	11.6%	0.5%	PPC
Graduate degree	N/A	N/A	4.1%	4.1%	4.6%	4.5%	0.4%	PPC
Labor force participation	N/A	N/A	51.1%	52.3%	52.7%	53.0%	1.9%	PPC
Unemployment rate	N/A	N/A	13.9%	13.2%	12.6%	12.5%	-1.4%	PPC
Home ownership rate	55.9%	55.0%	58.0%	57.7%	56.8%	56.8%	-1.2%	PPC
Median household income	N/A	N/A	\$49,078	\$53,847	\$56,393	\$57,681	17.5%	PC
Per capita income	N/A	N/A	\$19,005	\$21,216	\$22,702	\$23,552	23.9%	PC
Note: The following abbreviations are used for the type of change indicated above: Percentage Change (PC); Percentage Point Change (PPC) Source: U.S. Census Bureau – 2010 and 2020 Census, and American Community Survey (5-year surveys ending in 2021, 2022, 2023, and 2024). ¹⁴								

¹⁴ This table utilizes data from the latest available (2024) American Community Survey, and the data available from the releases of the 2010 and 2020 Decennial Census.

Table 15 Key Measures of Local Economic Performance 2010-2024 California								
Subject	2010 Census	2020 Census	2021 ACS	2022 ACS	2023 ACS	2024 ACS	% Change 2021-2024	Type of % Change
Total population	37,253,956	39,538,223	39,455,353	39,356,104	39,242,785	39,287,377	-0.4%	PC
Educational attainment								
High school diploma	N/A	N/A	20.4%	20.4%	20.4%	20.5%	0.1%	PPC
Bachelor's degree	N/A	N/A	21.9%	22.1%	22.4%	22.7%	0.8%	PPC
Graduate degree	N/A	N/A	13.4%	13.8%	14.1%	14.4%	1.0%	PPC
Labor force participation	N/A	N/A	63.9%	63.8%	63.9%	63.8%	-0.1%	PPC
Unemployment rate	N/A	N/A	6.5%	6.4%	6.4%	6.6%	0.1%	PPC
Home ownership rate	55.9%	54.5%	55.5%	55.6%	55.8%	55.9%	0.4%	PPC
Median household income	N/A	N/A	\$84,097	\$91,905	\$96,334	\$99,122	17.9%	PC
Per capita income	N/A	N/A	\$41,276	\$45,591	\$47,977	\$49,513	20.0%	PC
Note: The following abbreviations are used for the type of change indicated above: Percentage Change (PC); Percentage Point Change (PPC) Source: U.S. Census Bureau – 2010 and 2020 Census, and American Community Survey (5-year surveys ending in 2021, 2022, 2023, and 2024). ¹⁵								

¹⁵ This table utilizes data from the latest available (2024) American Community Survey, and the data available from the releases of the 2010 and 2020 Decennial Census.

Table 16 Key Measures of Local Economic Performance 2010-2024 United States								
Subject	2010 Census	2020 Census	2021 ACS	2022 ACS	2023 ACS	2024 ACS	% Change 2021-2024	Type of % Change
Total population	308,745,538	331,449,281	329,725,481	331,097,593	332,387,540	334,922,499	1.6%	PC
Educational attainment								
High school diploma	N/A	N/A	26.5%	26.4%	26.2%	26.0%	-0.5%	PPC
Bachelor's degree	N/A	N/A	20.6%	20.9%	21.3%	21.6%	1.0%	PPC
Graduate degree	N/A	N/A	13.1%	13.4%	13.7%	14.1%	1.0%	PPC
Labor force participation	N/A	N/A	63.6%	63.5%	63.5%	63.5%	-0.1%	PPC
Unemployment rate	N/A	N/A	5.5%	5.3%	5.2%	5.2%	-0.3%	PPC
Home ownership rate	65.1%	63.1%	64.6%	64.8%	65.0%	65.2%	0.6%	PPC
Median household income	N/A	N/A	\$69,021	\$75,149	\$78,538	\$80,734	17.0%	PC
Per capita income	N/A	N/A	\$37,638	\$41,261	\$43,289	\$44,673	18.7%	PC
Note: The following abbreviations are used for the type of change indicated above: Percentage Change (PC); Percentage Point Change (PPC) Source: U.S. Census Bureau – 2010 and 2020 Census, and American Community Survey (5-year surveys ending in 2021, 2022, 2023, and 2024). ¹⁶								

¹⁶ This table utilizes data from the latest available (2024) American Community Survey, and the data available from the releases of the 2010 and 2020 Decennial Census.

Table 17 Comparison of Demographic Trends by Place % Change 2021 – 2024											
Subject	Brawley	Calexico	Calipatria	El Centro	Holtville	Imperial	Westmor- land	Imperial County	California	United States	Type of Change
Total population	3.2%	-0.5%	-9.6%	-0.2%	-1.0%	7.2%	-19.4%	0.1%	-0.4%	1.6%	PC
Educational attainment											
High school diploma	2.5%	-0.7%	-5.1%	2.4%	-2.8%	-2.2%	8.4%	0.1%	0.1%	-0.5%	PPC
Bachelor's degree	1.3%	0.5%	1.8%	-1.4%	7.2%	2.7%	2.4%	0.5%	0.8%	1.0%	PPC
Graduate degree	0.2%	0.4%	1.8%	0.2%	-1.2%	0.0%	0.9%	0.4%	1.0%	1.0%	PPC
Labor force participation	3.5%	0.2%	5.9%	-0.5%	-2.8%	5.3%	-3.4%	1.9%	-0.1%	-0.1%	PPC
Unemployment rate	-5.2%	1.8%	-7.7%	-2.5%	-6.2%	0.6%	-5.2%	-1.4%	0.1%	-0.3%	PPC
Home ownership rate	-2.0%	-2.3%	-4.2%	0.8%	-0.1%	4.1%	6.7%	-1.2%	0.4%	0.6%	PPC
Median household income	16.4%	5.0%	35.9%	7.8%	42.1%	10.5%	-13.8%	17.5%	17.9%	17.0%	PC
Per capita income	26.7%	10.9%	79.1%	19.3%	29.5%	34.0%	35.7%	23.9%	20.0%	18.7%	PC
Note: The following abbreviations are used for the type of change indicated above: Percentage Change (PC); Percentage Point Change (PPC) Source: U.S. Census Bureau – American Community Survey (5-year surveys ending in 2021, 2022, 2023, and 2024). ¹⁷											

¹⁷ This table utilizes data from the latest available (2024) American Community Survey.

Whereas the population estimates shown on the preceding tables are derived from ACS survey processes (and are therefore understood to include a margin of error), Table 18 below shows 6-year population trends based on estimates from the California Department of Finance.

Table 18 Total Population by Year Imperial County Cities, Imperial County, and California 2020-2025							
Place	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	% Change 2020-25
Brawley	26,507	26,760	27,141	27,934	28,710	28,952	9.2%
Calexico	38,772	39,079	38,987	39,022	39,762	40,073	3.4%
Calipatria	6,664	6,406	6,458	6,101	6,387	6,061	-9.0%
El Centro	44,879	45,067	44,805	44,799	45,497	46,007	2.5%
Holtville	5,536	5,529	5,605	5,572	5,653	5,685	2.7%
Imperial	20,187	20,850	21,668	21,815	22,422	22,866	13.3%
Westmorland	2,024	2,026	2,018	2,015	2,076	2,084	3.0%
Imperial County	180,036	180,496	180,753	181,361	184,994	186,499	3.6%
California	39,535,623	39,369,530	39,179,680	39,228,444	39,420,663	39,529,101	-0.02%
1. The current year and historical population estimates (2020-2025) have been modified to reflect the DOF Estimates as of January 1 for each year. Note that published population estimates from previous years are sometimes changed between updated reports. Source: California Department of Finance, Table 2, E-4 Cities, Counties, and State 2020-2025.							

Table 19 summarizes 2-year trends in unemployment rates for all of the reference areas. Although it is understood that unemployment rates typically vary on a seasonal basis, the data points below are intended to provide year-to-year comparisons by showing “snapshots” of the unemployment rates during the month of July.

Table 19 Resident Unemployment Rates 2023 – 2025 Imperial County Cities and Reference Areas										
Date	Brawley	Calexico	Calipatria	EI Centro	Holtville	Imperial	West- morland	Imperial County	California	United States
July 2023	15.0%	29.9%	18.1%	14.3%	14.2%	12.6%	24.8%	18.2%	4.8%	3.5%
July 2024	16.5%	31.6%	19.7%	15.2%	15.5%	13.8%	26.8%	19.8%	5.9%	4.3%
July 2025	17.2%	31.3%	20.2%	16.9%	15.9%	14.2%	27.4%	20.3%	6.1%	4.2%
2-year change in the unemployment rate	2.2%	1.4%	2.1%	2.6%	1.7%	1.6%	2.6%	2.1%	1.3%	0.7%
1-year change in the unemployment rate	0.7%	-0.3%	0.5%	1.7%	0.4%	0.4%	0.6%	0.5%	0.2%	-0.1%
Notes: 1. 1 and 2-year changes are percentage point changes. 2. Unemployment rates are not seasonally adjusted. 3. Note that published unemployment rates of previous years are sometimes changed between updated reports. Sources: United States Bureau of Labor Statistics; California Employment Development Department										

Table 20 shows 10-year trends for total sales tax revenue distribution for the CEDS cities and comparative data for California as a whole. It should be noted that sales tax revenues are received by the local jurisdictions (from the State) approximately three months after actual taxable sales occur. In addition, data for the most recent year is subject to revision (by the State). Thus, these numbers should not be regarded as definitive, but represent a reasonable gauge of general trends.

Table 20 Annual Percentage Change Total Sales Tax Revenue¹ Imperial County Cities, Imperial County, and California 2015 – 2025 (selected years)				
Place	Fiscal Year 2022-2023	Fiscal Year 2023-2024	Fiscal Year 2024-2025	Average Annual Change, Past 10 Years²
Brawley	5.3%	5.7%	-7.8%	7.1%
Calexico	-2.8%	8.3%	2.1%	4.5%
Calipatria	6.5%	-22.8%	7.6%	-
El Centro	-2.1%	3.8%	5.5%	8.1%
Holtville	-3.7%	102.7%	-50.1%	4.1%
Imperial	-3.9%	-5.2%	8.2%	8.8%
Westmorland	12.1%	-7.4%	-11.9%	16.3%
Imperial County	8.6%	91.5%	-29.2%	2.2%
California	3.1%	-1.3%	-0.2%	7.3%
Notes: (1) Underlying data are State distributions of 1% local tax. (2) Compound Annual Growth Rate Source: California State Board of Equalization; California Department of Tax and Fee Administration (CDTFA)				

6. Status Updates on Candidate Projects Listed in 2024 CEDS

Project nomination process

A key element of the 2024 CEDS was a list of “candidate projects” for potential future grant applications to the U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA). Imperial County jurisdictions and qualifying nonprofit organizations were invited to submit projects to be included on this list. Submitting entities were asked to provide the following information about nominated projects:

- Total estimated project cost
- Estimated amount and source of local share of project cost
- Project description and elements
- Jurisdiction’s level of site control for the proposed project site
- Anticipated timeline for project completion (pending availability of funding)
- Status of any required environmental clearance(s)
- Estimated job creation
- Estimated private investment that project would attract

The table below summarizes the status of each nominated project as of 2025. New projects have been included as noted.

Nominating Agency	Project Name/Description	Estimated Total Cost	Identified Local Share	Potential EDA Assistance Requested	Project Status as of 2025
City of El Centro	Imperial Avenue/Wake Avenue Improvements (street widening and stormwater improvements to accommodate commercial growth north and south of Wake Avenue)	\$3,000,000	TBD	TBD	
City of El Centro	Dogwood and Villa Avenue Site (road widening to improve viability of 224-acre industrial site targeted for manufacturing development)	\$20,000,000	TBD	TBD	
City of El Centro	Southern Pump Station (new regional pump station that would increase capacity and reliability of wastewater system; would increase El Centro’s capacity and attractiveness for both commercial and residential development)	\$15,000,000	TBD	TBD	
City of Imperial	Dahlia Drain Undergrounding (undergrounding of open irrigation drain, to make ingress/egress for future developments along	\$2,200,000	TBD	TBD	

Nominating Agency	Project Name/Description	Estimated Total Cost	Identified Local Share	Potential EDA Assistance Requested	Project Status as of 2025
	adjacent segment of Highway 86 possible; industrial development is pending)				
City of Calipatria	Airport Industrial Park Improvement (subdivision and infrastructure improvements to facilitate commercial and industrial development on City-owned property proximate to the airport)	\$6,820,000	\$620,000	\$6,200,000	
Innecare Imperial	All-Inclusive Care for the Elderly (PACE) Healthcare Facility (construction of new integrated 40,000 square foot Health Center and PACE Senior Care Center providing primary care, women's care, pediatrics, chronic disease management, dental, radiology, integrated behavioral health, pharmacy and free transportation services)	\$2,500,000	\$500,000	\$2,000,000	
San Diego State University-Imperial Valley (SDSU-IV)	Imperial Valley Lithium Innovation Center (will house a lithium purity testing laboratory, a lithium-ion battery recycling facility, and research & development business accelerator)	\$4,500,000	\$1,000,000 (plus land)	\$3,500,000	
San Diego State University-Imperial Valley (SDSU-IV)	Artificial Intelligence, Cybersecurity & Homeland Security High Performance Computing Cluster (development of Visualization & Collaboration Center and associated computer hardware)	\$2,000,000	TBD	TBD	
San Diego State University-Imperial Valley (SDSU-IV)	Imperial County Nursing Project (expanded/ retrofitted space for nursing program and training infrastructure/equipment)	\$4,000,000	TBD	TBD	
County of Imperial	Menvielle Road Widening and Signalization Project (will facilitate the commercial growth that is now occurring as well as reduce border	\$6,500,000	\$750,000	\$5,750,000	

Nominating Agency	Project Name/Description	Estimated Total Cost	Identified Local Share	Potential EDA Assistance Requested	Project Status as of 2025
	wait times on the local road network)				
County of Imperial	Extension of Gateway Roadway (extension and overcrossing will provide direct access to SR 98, which will facilitate development and provide improved regional circulation in the Gateway of Americas border area)	\$10,000,000	\$1,500,000	\$8,500,000	
Imperial Valley Economic Development Corporation / City of Brawley	Clean Water Ventures Water-Energy Plant in Brawley, CA (will utilize tertiary water to produce clean energy and green hydrogen for the City of Brawley; public sector investment will leverage committed private sector investment of \$24 million and create and least 25 local jobs)	\$6,000,000 (public sector) \$30,000,000 (total)	\$250,000	\$5,750,000	

7. Strategic Direction / Action Plan (from 2024 CEDS)

Note: The full Action Plan from the approved 2024 CEDS is repeated below (without modification) for reference. Chapter 8 documents the County's 2025 progress/accomplishments for each numbered action item (A.1.1, etc.) in the Action Plan.

The CEDS Action Plan is designed to leverage Imperial County's existing and emerging economic strengths, while systematically addressing current and longstanding challenges to the region's prosperity. During the course of the CEDS planning process, **the following key themes emerged as significant drivers of the strategic vision outlined in the CEDS:**

- Maximizing “next level” opportunities related to the region’s longstanding mainstay industry (agriculture);
- Expanding the region’s leadership in the renewable energy cluster, including existing/emerging opportunities in geothermal and biofuels (including hydrogen) production;
- Supporting aggressive implementation of the new Lithium Valley initiative, which seeks to maximize supply chain development around anticipated lithium recovery in Imperial County (potentially generating new manufacturing and R&D activities in the County);
- Connecting the presence of military/defense installations in the Imperial County (and adjacent Yuma County, Arizona) to potential R&D and manufacturing investment in targeted industries such as aerospace;
- Capitalizing on Imperial County’s established status as a destination for both domestic and bi-national visitation and recreation; and
- Leveraging Imperial County’s strategic location within the California-Baja California (“CaliBaja”) border region, which supports tremendous opportunities for international trade, “onshoring” of manufacturing, and border-related tourism.

Relationship of major themes and goals to prior documentation and to current conditions and considerations

Strategic plan goal or topic heading, by broad category	Also addressed in:	Update on how goal/topic relates today
Major Theme A. Public sector operational capacity and readiness		
<u>Goal 1.</u> Establish leadership role for County across multiple strategic objectives: quality of life, collaboration with regional partners, economic development, environmental issues, improved customer service, etc.	C	The size, diversity, dispersal of various activities and population centers, and unique environmental opportunities and challenges, all add to the complexity of management practices in the County, which together require extra efforts to bolster operational efficiency
<u>Goal 2.</u> Address multiple aspects of public sector operational capacity and readiness, including fiscal soundness, critical transportation services, institutionalized economic development, crime, etc.	A	A strong foundation in the goods and services provided by government is critical to support and encourage the multitude of existing activities and emerging initiatives within the private sector
<u>Goal 3.</u> Recognizing that suitable housing is a key component of successful economic development in Imperial County, continue to support local efforts to implement the Housing Element policies aimed at ensuring an adequate supply of workforce, or middle income, housing	A	Although housing is relatively affordable in Imperial County compared to other California regions, availability and, especially, access to reasonably priced housing, is still crucial to maintaining a functioning economy, given the dispersal of the County's population
<u>Goal 4.</u> Adopt a comprehensive approach to supporting and coordinating multiple programs that enhance the region's quality of life	A	Quality-of-life measures cut across many aspects of successful economic development, including appeal of the area for current and potential future employees (and employers), support for tourism, and overall residents' satisfaction
Major Theme B. Infrastructure		
<u>Goal 1.</u> Improve regional mobility	C	Mobility is an especially critical component of a functional economy in Imperial County, from multiple perspectives: border crossings, multiple corridors and modes for through traffic from California to the rest of the US, and internal circulation throughout a large geographic area
<u>Goal 2.</u> Prioritize efforts, and improve and provide services to industrial and commercial sites	A	Various transportation infrastructure improvements in the County tend to increase access to properties, making them more developable once other infrastructure is also made available. Revitalizing areas also require this kind of attention, and project prioritization needs to consider the benefits from improving services to new or revitalizing areas comprehensively

Strategic plan goal or topic heading, by broad category	Also addressed in:	Update on how goal/topic relates today
<u>Goal 3.</u> Support long-range transportation plan strategies involving mitigation of bottlenecks, truck safety, etc.	D	Transportation planning also needs to align systems at the local to the national scale, with the added complication of cross-border travel infrastructure and freight modes
<u>Goal 4.</u> Continue to support programs related to the Southern Border Broadband Consortium	A	Broadband services and upgrades are an ongoing challenge for most regions, and the dispersion of employment activity (existing and planned/anticipated) and population throughout Imperial County only complicates this.
Major Theme C. Sustaining existing economy		
<u>Goal 1.</u> Integrate all CEDS programs to promote economic resiliency in Imperial County	A, C, D	See Chapter 9 of the CEDS.
<u>Goal 2.</u> Strengthen Imperial County's economy by promoting a balanced, yet diversified, regional economic base	A	The County's potential for economic growth and diversification cannot be expected to be realized organically, given the complexities of the County as addressed throughout this strategic plan
<u>Goal 3.</u> Promote/support agricultural production and diversification	A	As a core economic activity in Imperial County, agriculture is also important because it particularly susceptible to pressures to evolve in response to climate change and changing environmental regulations and concerns, plus there are potential emerging opportunities for agriculture, and related activities such as food processing, in Imperial County
<u>Goal 4.</u> Promote and expand tourism in Imperial County, to see that visitors' needs are accommodated, and recognizing tourism's ties to residents' quality-of-life and to other industries such as agriculture	A	Visitors' accommodation and other services in Imperial County can respond to both border-related activity and to the region's natural and other attractions, plus innovations such as agri-tourism
<u>Goal 5.</u> Sustain and promote expansion of international/bi-national trade	A	Numerous resources are available for encouraging international trade activities, and the presence of maquiladora industries helps leverage this kind of activity, and vice versa
Major Theme D. Supporting emerging economic opportunities		
<u>Goal 1.</u> Fully implement Lithium Valley concept – combining geothermal projects and lithium recovery to develop a full-fledged lithium industry cluster	B	Lithium Valley, as a concept and strategic approach, can leverage multiple pathways to economic expansion in Imperial County, in ways that also promote environmentally responsive development and its resulting unique benefits
<u>Goal 2.</u> Support appropriate and efficient promotional and development efforts related	A	As with Lithium Valley, this concept also promotes expansion of efficient, mutually supportive

Strategic plan goal or topic heading, by broad category	Also addressed in:	Update on how goal/topic relates today
to The CaliBaja Bi-National Mega-Region, as a concept and emerging reality		economic activity in which benefits are shared throughout the binational region
<u>Goal 3.</u> Establish and maintain close coordination between training programs accessible to the Imperial County workforce, and the County's emerging/expanding industries	A	Maintaining close relationships among industry and educational partners is a challenge for every region, so to the extent these kinds of interactions can be institutionalized, the benefits are essentially tripled, shared by employers and employees alike, but also the educational/training institutions themselves

Legend for preceding

- A. Prior CEDS
- B. Imperial County Economic Forecast
- C. County Strategic Plan
- D. Long-Range Transportation Plan

Major themes, goals, and action items

Strategic plan goal or topic heading, by broad category
Major Theme A. Public sector operational capacity and readiness

Goal 1.

Establish leadership role for County across multiple strategic objectives: quality of life, collaboration with regional partners, economic development, environmental issues, improved customer service, etc.

Action Item a.

Develop an internal management plan with a comprehensive focus on coordinating individual agency activities toward a set of mutually reinforcing common objectives, tying job-creation aspects of economic development to foundational frameworks by which industries can be sustained within environmental considerations, enhancing the County's overall appeal to workers through quality-of-life improvements, and similar considerations

Action Item b.

Strategically address how the interrelationships of key assets within the County – water, land, etc. – can be maximized, attention among these assets prioritized, or other means applied so that resources work together in mutually supportive ways

Action Item c.

Strengthen regional partnerships with the intent of ensuring, to the extent possible, unified positions on matters of regional interest, especially those subject to state or federal regulation, funding, etc.

Action Item d.

Promote high-quality customer service, including a business-friendly structure for regulatory measures and operating procedures

Action Item e.

Structure economic development activities to include resources and actions that highlight the County's multiple aspects of having a competitive edge within the broader Southern California/Arizona border region

Action Item f.

Within the economic development function (and perhaps as part of a broader countywide initiative), recognize the need and potential for enhancing inclusion and equity for all citizens, especially those in remote areas and disadvantaged communities, being mindful of the potential leverage economic development activities have in this regard

Key Performance Measures (KPI's)	
Theme A: Public sector operational capacity and readiness	
Goal 1: Establish leadership role for County across multiple strategic objectives: quality of life, collaboration with regional partners, economic development, environmental issues, improved customer service, etc.	
Implementation Checklist (priority activities)	Tracked Outcomes ¹⁸
• Develop Internal Management Plan (succinct memorandum to be updated annually) for coordination of (non-economic development) County and partner roles relevant to the CEDS • Post public-friendly summary on County's economic development website (update annually) highlighting the many County functions and programs that create value from an economic development perspective • Conduct annual coordination meeting with partner organizations to review progress on CEDS actions of mutual interest • Implement customer satisfaction survey for County's development and business permitting functions and track satisfaction ratings over time	• Number of County departments and external partner organizations referenced in Internal Management Plan each year • Number of County departments and external partner organizations participating in annual coordination meeting • Annual customer satisfaction score (derived from survey of developers and businesses subject to County approval/permitting processes) • Recommended customer service improvements for County approval/permitting functions (list of recommendations derived from customer satisfaction survey)

¹⁸ Note that references to periodic reporting as components of Tracked Outcomes include the notion of showing trends in numerical values over time.

Goal 2.

Address multiple aspects of public sector operational capacity and readiness, including fiscal soundness, critical transportation services, institutionalized economic development, crime, etc.

Action Item a.

Establish a program to address multiple aspects of expanding retail centers in the County, to maximize capture of retail demand by Mexican nationals: market feasibility at various locations, addressing risk management issues such as peso devaluation, border closures due to pandemics, etc., appropriate incentives, supporting the availability of retail sites, etc.

Action Item b.

Document revenue shortfalls in relation to County programs, review all funding sources, including fees for services, to ensure their potential is maximized, and explore new potential funding opportunities

Action Item c.

Identify and implement efficiency improvements that have the potential to both reduce costs and improve services

Action Item d.

Investigate the fiscal implications of economic development strategic initiatives, including targeted industries and specific actions that affect costs and revenues

Action Item e.

Establish a program for comprehensively reviewing and documenting fiscal conditions and potential remedies related to public facilities/services that are traditionally challenging from a funding standpoint, such as public transportation and healthcare

Key Performance Measures (KPI's)	
Theme A: Public sector operational capacity and readiness	
Goal 2: Address multiple aspects of public sector operational capacity and readiness, including fiscal soundness, critical transportation services, institutionalized economic development, crime, etc.	
Implementation Checklist (priority activities)	Tracked Outcomes
• Commission feasibility studies to define opportunities for new retail development in unincorporated communities (evaluate at least one community each year) • Define strategy to enhance feasibility of retail commercial development in underserved areas and/or areas that are especially well-positioned to attract cross-border shopping; this strategy should include prioritization of infrastructure investments and business assistance/funding resources • Require fiscal impact analyses for major commercial/industrial development projects benefiting from County financial incentives	• New commercial/industrial development in CEDS-targeted areas (track dollar amount of investment and total building square footage of new development) • Increase in County sales tax revenue • Changes in crime rates by relevant reporting areas • Changes in County staff retention and performance evaluation scores • Periodic fiscal cost-revenue reports showing the extent to which figures trend toward balanced costs and revenues (this summary should be derived from the County's annual budget documents)

(including any infrastructure funded by EDA grants) • Inventory efficiency measures already identified in the County Strategic Plan (County SP) that directly address reducing costs and improving services, through recruiting, hiring, training, etc. County staff; explicitly incorporate the County SP measures into economic development operations, and support dissemination of these practices within the County with the intent to both improve services and to market such improvements as part of County attributes, including how these practices create a model for private sector businesses (e.g., County SP Goal 4, Strategies 4B, 4G) • Generate a “fiscal health monitoring” model, in coordination with the County Auditor-Controller Department, for continuous tracking of the relationship between fiscally influential development, related policies, and the overall fiscal status of the County, from the standpoint of both costs and revenues over time and other relevant considerations. This model would incorporate funding from relevant state and federal programs, as addressed in Action Item C, Goal 1, Major Theme B (Infrastructure)	
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Goal 3.

Recognizing that suitable housing is a key component of successful economic development in Imperial County, continue to support local efforts to implement the Housing Element policies aimed at ensuring an adequate supply of workforce, or middle income, housing

Action Item a.

Coordinate job-generating activities with community Housing Element and other planning frameworks, to help ensure that housing is available to meet the needs of employees, and also integrated into other community functions

Action Item b.

Support the development of a variety of housing types (apartments, condominiums, cluster housing, etc.), appropriately geographically distributed, to maximize options for working and other households

Action Item c.

Within the context of the preceding housing-related action items, implement policies favorable to housing development, e.g., general and specific plans, zoning, first-time buyer support, etc.

Key Performance Measures (KPI's)

Theme A: Public sector operational capacity and readiness

Goal 3: Recognizing that suitable housing is a key component of successful economic development in Imperial County, continue to support local efforts to implement the Housing Element policies aimed at ensuring an adequate supply of workforce, or middle income, housing

Implementation Checklist (priority activities)	Tracked Outcomes
- Establish communication protocol and memo format intended to keep County Community Development/Planning personnel informed about employment (and related housing) impacts of economic development expansion/ recruitment prospects, including numbers, wage levels, etc. – addressing the information dissemination generically and with appropriate timing to preserve confidentiality, etc. - Establish and maintain ongoing documentation of any identified mismatches between current and anticipated employees in County industry sectors and the County housing market and market conditions, based primarily on data gained through business retention activity (of County and its partner organizations), focus of recruitment efforts, and other formal and informal sources	- Number housing units entitled, approved, or constructed that align with needs identified through the communication protocol - Number of units identified as employment-housing market mismatches, and documented operational responses from Community Development/Planning personnel

Goal 4.

Adopt a comprehensive approach to supporting and coordinating multiple programs that enhance the region's quality of life

Action Item a.

Working with the Imperial County Transportation Commission's (ICTC) *Regional Active Transportation Plan* (ATP) and relevant local plans, support the development and preservation of alternative transportation and their related recreation opportunities, including multi-use trails, which also can support access to jobs

Action Item b.

Coordinate with Imperial County Parks and Recreation Division, Imperial County Office of Education, and relevant local plans to support the development of sports/activity centers, regional parks, and other recreational facilities, as part of promoting the linkage between quality-of-life and employment opportunities and their locations

Action Item c.

Support arts and cultural activities, in collaboration with local arts organizations, as both a component of enhancing quality-of-life and a critical element of a balanced regional economy, with specific links to tourism

Key Performance Measures (KPI's)	
Theme A: Public sector operational capacity and readiness	
Goal 4: Adopt a comprehensive approach to supporting and coordinating multiple programs that enhance the region's quality of life	
Implementation Checklist (priority activities)	Tracked Outcomes
Generate an interdepartmental memo intended to explicitly document the relationship between planned quality-of-life enhancements and how and why these enhancements would be particularly relevant to the personnel associated with key existing and targeted industry sectors, and the locations within which they are likely to occur. This document would be based on the results of retention interviews and other information available to the ED staff (of the County and key partner organizations), and be positioned as a "best guess" advisory communication	Number and nature of quality-of-life enhancements (proposed or undertaken each year), by location, relevant to the enhancement/employment memo

Major Theme B. Infrastructure

Goal 1.

Improve regional mobility

Action Item a.

Support the improvements outlined in the Imperial County Transportation Commission's *Long Range Transportation Plan*, as key foundational components for supporting economic development, from the standpoint of both expanding opportunities (adding to the accessibility of development sites, for example) and increasing the efficiency of business activity in the County

Action Item b.

Support the integration of motorized transportation improvements with alternative, personal transportation modes, as an aspect of a comprehensive approach to enhancing quality-of-life, as noted in a preceding strategy

Action Item c.

Maintain monitoring and coordination efforts with state and federal infrastructure funding programs to maximize intergovernmental project support for Imperial County

Key Performance Measures (KPI's)	
Theme B: infrastructure	
Goal 1: Improve regional mobility	
Implementation Checklist (priority activities)	Tracked Outcomes
• Generate memo intended to explicitly document the relationship between planned transportation improvements and how and why these improvements would be particularly relevant to key existing and targeted industry sectors (from both workforce and business operational standpoints), and the locations within which they are likely to occur. Incorporate topics relating to subsequent Goals 2 and 3. This memo would build on other documents described in preceding implementation checklists, which embody assumptions related to employment/ employment impacts associated with key existing and targeted industry sectors • Monitor the implications of state and federal infrastructure funding programs within the context of the “fiscal health monitoring” model described within the Implementation Checklist of Theme A, Goal 2 (public sector operational capacity and readiness)	• Number and nature of planned transportation improvements with relationships to potentially relevant firms and employees, updated at least as frequently as transportation plan updates • (Refer to output of fiscal health monitoring model, previously referenced, as also relevant to this goal)

Goal 2.

Prioritize efforts, and improve and provide services to industrial and commercial sites

Action Item a.

Coordinate closely with transportation improvement projects that will increase the supply of developable sites, working with utility providers to bring other infrastructure to those locations in a timely and efficient manner

Action Item b.

Coordinate the development of infrastructure needed to maximize the development potential of existing areas (some of which may have been designated for revitalization in various planning documents), including specific underserved properties, working with Capital Improvement Plans and other plans of relevant jurisdictions and utility providers

Key Performance Measures (KPI's)	
Theme B: Infrastructure	
Goal 2: Prioritize efforts, and improve and provide services to industrial and commercial sites	
Implementation Checklist (priority activities)	Tracked Outcomes
(Refer to preceding Goal 1 Implementation Checklist item, memo on the relationship between planned transportation improvements and key existing and targeted industry sectors, and ensure that the topics of these Goal 2 Action Items are reflected therein)	(Refer to preceding Goal 1 Tracked Outcomes item, number of transportation improvements responding to expected employment patterns)

Goal 3.

Support long-range transportation plan strategies involving mitigation of bottlenecks, truck safety, etc.

Action Item a.

Support the coordination of logistics problems inherent in border areas, generally involving coordination of border crossing infrastructure with other transportation elements, as a critical aspect of supporting economic development through efficient movement of goods

Action Item b.

Support the coordination of transportation planning and improvements from the standpoint of land use compatibility among multiple users, residential neighborhoods, etc. and truck safety, to minimize potential future conflicts

Key Performance Measures (KPI's)	
Theme B: Infrastructure	
Goal 3: Support long-range transportation plan strategies involving mitigation of bottlenecks, truck safety, etc.	
Implementation Checklist (priority activities)	Tracked Outcomes
(Refer to preceding Goal 1 Implementation Checklist item, memo on the relationship between planned transportation improvements and key existing and targeted industry sectors, and ensure that the topics of these Goal 3 Action Items are reflected therein)	(Refer to preceding Goal 1 Tracked Outcomes item, number of transportation improvements responding to expected employment patterns)

Goal 4.

Continue to support programs related to the Southern Border Broadband Consortium

Action Item a.

Support expansion and quality-upgrade of broadband access, from the standpoint of its multiple benefits related to economic development: business functionality and competitiveness (including broadband's critical role in certain targeted industries), quality-of-life for residents including access to educational/training resources, work-from-home capability for workers, and a wide range of public-sector operations

Action Item b.

Define an appropriate role to work within organizations and programs related to broadband, given the multiple efforts involved, the need for appropriate involvement at the local level, equity aspects of securing broadband access, and similar considerations

Key Performance Measures (KPI's)	
Theme B: Infrastructure	
Goal 4: Continue to support programs related to the Southern Border Broadband Consortium	
Implementation Checklist (priority activities)	Tracked Outcomes
Prepare memo summarizing an assessment of the relationship between areas in the County that are broadband-deficient and also either already or likely to be the location for employment activity, drawing on information prepared for other Implementation Checklist items described above for preceding Themes/Goals	Areas of expanded broadband availability (proposed or developed each year), and/or upgraded speed, by appropriate geographic unit/dimension within the County

Major Theme C. Sustaining existing economy

Goal 1.

Integrate all CEDS programs to promote economic resiliency in Imperial County

This goal is detailed in Chapter 9 of the CEDS.

Goal 2.

Strengthen Imperial County's economy by promoting a balanced, yet diversified, regional economic base

Action Item a.

Establish a comprehensive approach to business support in the County through the three pillars of economic development: retention, expansion, and recruitment – designed to achieve overall objectives of continuing to diversify the economy while maximizing industry interrelationships and leveraging emerging opportunities

Action Item b.

Review and select target industries for focused economic development attention, based on research for this Strategic Plan and other considerations, including the potential for selected industries to be mutually supportive and also complement other Strategic Plan initiatives

Action Item c.

Recognizing that access to clean energy can be a particularly attractive proposition for innovative industries, prioritize support for geothermal development, and include collaboration with academic organizations that can receive R&D funding for industry innovation

Action Item d.

Implement coordinated regional marketing and promotional activities, working with regional partners in the US as well as Mexico. Promote unique assets, opportunities, and value proposition of Imperial County

Action Item e.

Investigate the potential for and feasibility of additional financial and other incentives for business expansion and product development, exporting, and nearshoring, given the existence of available programs both locally and through state and federal agencies. If warranted, establish new programs, reinstate prior programs no longer active, coordinate with Go-Biz on developing incentive packages specific for battery manufacturing, and generate materials for marketing all incentives to prospects

Action Item f.

Determine the status of the startup ecosystem in Imperial County – programs specifically to support expansion of small businesses and micro-enterprises, at local and higher levels of government and through public and private funding sources, and support creation of new programs as warranted, recognizing this activity's important role in attraction of talent and overall economic diversification

Action Item g.

Working with existing institutions, increase educational opportunities in the County, including degrees in engineering and other STEM programs

Key Performance Measures (KPI's)	
Theme C: Sustaining existing economy	
Goal 2: Strengthen Imperial County's economy by promoting a balanced, yet diversified, regional economic base	
Implementation Checklist (priority activities)	Tracked Outcomes
• Prepare operational plan for departmental BRE and prospect-recruitment activities • Compile finalized list of industry targets for incorporation into operational plan, vetted as appropriate with relevant stakeholders and partners • Prepare "options assessment" white paper describing the scope of possibilities and addressing alternative approaches to supporting geothermal development, based on potential partners, cost-effectiveness, and similar considerations • Initiate separate or joint meeting(s) with regional/international partners to define common objectives, messages, materials, etc.	• Annual compilation of number of firms contacted through BRE processes, and number of firms supported, by type of assistance • Annual compilation of number of targeted industries contacted, and to-date results of such contacts • Periodic compilation of number of geothermal projects at each stage of development: investigations of feasibility, area selection or other negotiations for development, funding secured, development in progress, etc. • Periodic report on number of prospects identified as coming about based on joint

related to marketing economic development in ways that mutually benefit the parties involved • Prepare white paper outlining the need for and potential options related to additional financial and other incentives for business expansion and product development, exporting, and nearshoring, considering relevant partners' activities and their capabilities, cost-effectiveness of alternative support options, etc.	marketing materials and methods, and their current status • Number and type of incentives initiated based on white paper review of options
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Goal 3.

Promote/support agricultural production and diversification

Action Item a.

Encourage the continued development of agricultural activities by adopting a “cluster” approach, in which the potential for related industries such as food processing, cold storage, transportation services that support shipment of agricultural products, and innovative crop development is promoted through mechanisms that encourage communication and coordination among the variety of entities that are representative of the cluster – with the intent of ensuring that an optimal mix of agriculturally related activities are both present and mutually supportive in terms of operations, locations, etc.

Action Item b.

Develop, support, and market agri-tourism opportunities by conducting outreach to farm operators, organizations such as the Coalition of Labor, Agriculture, and Business (COLAB), Imperial County Farm Bureau, and Imperial Valley Vegetable Growers Association. The initial purpose of the outreach would be to disseminate information about how agri-tourism can fit into other agricultural activities, through functions such as agricultural festivals, on-farm dining events, farm tours, etc. if sufficient interest can be generated, economic development entities can support a consortium of organizations to further advance this concept

Key Performance Measures (KPI's)	
<i>Theme C:</i> Sustaining existing economy	
<i>Goal 3:</i> Promote/support agricultural production and diversification	
Implementation Checklist (priority activities)	Tracked Outcomes
• Prepare white paper addressing the rationale for and key aspects of an agricultural cluster in Imperial County: existing cluster components and their potential for expansion, existing synergies among these components, mechanisms for strengthening cluster member interrelationships, and the like • Compile inventory of agri-tourism activities in Imperial County, and agri-tourism support functions that serve the County and their roles	• Periodic update on number of cluster members (firms), by type: existing and additions • Annual report summarized from other sources on production/shipments of agricultural products • Periodic report on number of establishments engaged in agri-tourism in the County, either as primary or secondary activity

Outline an approach by which agri-tourism marketing materials can be most cost-effectively produced and disseminated, recognizing potential partner roles in this effort	
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Goal 4.

Promote and expand tourism in Imperial County, to see that visitors' needs are accommodated, and recognizing tourism's ties to residents' quality-of-life and to other industries such as agriculture

Action Item a.

Promote tourism within a comprehensive framework that recognizes Imperial County as a gateway for both Americans visiting Mexico, and vice versa, with each group having some different but also complementary objectives (for example, medical tourism in Mexico) and needs and desires – all of which need to be understood in order to maximize the capture of business activity these visitors require. Goods and services provided for tourists also benefit the local population and non-touristic visitors such as business travelers, so the economic development implications are extensive

Action Item b.

Support and initiate as necessary tourism campaigns that promote the County's amenities and destinations such as the sand dunes, agricultural resources, Fossil Canyon, Painted Gorge, wildlife viewing, etc., and also arts and cultural events could appeal to visitors as well as locals

Action Item c.

Coordinate with private enterprise to encourage development of new businesses that support visitors to Imperial County attractions and at border crossings. As part of this support, consider sponsoring the generation of a high-level investigation into the feasibility of such development, including how the needs of different visitor market segments can be met simultaneously under certain circumstances of location, etc. This investigation could also address possible amendments to land use policies to remove barriers to and otherwise expedite visitor-oriented development

Action Item d.

Investigate options for crafting policies to incentivize hotel development in strategic locations in Imperial County.

Key Performance Measures (KPI's)	
Theme C: Sustaining existing economy	
Goal 4: Promote and expand tourism in Imperial County, to see that visitors' needs are accommodated, and recognizing tourism's ties to residents' quality-of-life and to other industries such as agriculture	
Implementation Checklist (priority activities)	Tracked Outcomes
Prepare white paper outlining options for documenting visitation to Imperial County, by the multiple purposes driving such visitations, recognizing the existing processes for visitation-tracking by various state and other entities, and how these processes could be	- Annual report on number of visitors, by purpose of visit, and how these figures relate to visitor documentation by other entities such as Visit California - Using data generated by Visit California, prepare annual summary of visitation to

supplemented by activities initiated by the County • Prepare memo outlining the tourism marketing campaigns pertaining to Imperial County, by each local-to-state entity involved, including the audiences to which such campaigns are primarily directed. Identify gaps in information, audiences, etc., including gaps in visitation data, and prepare recommendations for resolving any such deficiencies • Prepare outline of options for addressing the feasibility of additional visitor-support projects at key locations throughout the County, as an initial step in subsequent in-depth investigations	Imperial County by measures that demonstrate economic impacts
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Goal 5.

Sustain and promote expansion of international/bi-national trade

Action Item a.

Increase international awareness of United States/Mexico cross-border opportunities related to NAFTA and the maquiladora industries, by developing bi-national marketing strategies and complementary actions (in coordination with concepts such as The CaliBaja Bi-National Mega-Region) that would also involve strengthening economic trade relationships between Mexico and Imperial County

Action Item b.

Design a comprehensive approach to investigating and monitoring strategies to maximize efficiency of international trade and related activities among the County's multiple border crossings and their facilities

Key Performance Measures (KPI's)	
Theme C: Sustaining existing economy	
Goal 5: Sustain and promote expansion of international/bi-national trade	
Implementation Checklist (priority activities)	Tracked Outcomes
• Prepare memo documenting the current status of bi-national marketing programs, key materials, and target audiences, on the part of entities in Imperial County and the surrounding bi-national region, identifying any gaps and other opportunities that could be addressed by supplemental marketing efforts • Prepare memo identifying: 1) the full range and scope of strategies that deal with border crossings and other border-access issues, within Imperial County (including state and federal strategies) and adjacent in Mexico, and	• Periodic report on number of firms, in Imperial County or adjacent in Mexico, taking advantage of cross-border opportunities (by virtue of location or other indicators as identified) • Annual report compiling data prepared by others, on number of border crossings by conveyance, wait times, and other aspects of border activity

2) how border-related policies in the US and Mexico interface with these strategic approaches. The memo would also provide commentary on what this information reflects in terms of border efficiencies, etc.

Major Theme D.

Supporting emerging economic opportunities

Goal 1.

Fully implement Lithium Valley concept – combining geothermal projects and lithium recovery to develop a full-fledged lithium industry cluster

Action Item a.

Coordinate with other initiatives and documentation related to the Lithium Valley concept, including the Lithium Valley baseline report and other materials related to the Lithium Valley Specific Plan, also helping to ensure ongoing consideration of the full range of economic development implications embodied in the initiative

Action Item b.

Adopt a cluster approach (in which the potential for related industries is promoted through mechanisms that encourage communication and coordination among the variety of entities that are representative of the cluster) to maximizing the potential for both lithium production and leveraging that production to increase the attractiveness Imperial County for related industries such as battery manufacturing, being mindful as well of the spectrum of support industries required by the major activities

Action Item c.

Review the need for targeted incentives and the specific roles they can play in furthering the multiple opportunities embodied in Lithium Valley, and structure incentives accordingly

Key Performance Measures (KPI's)

Theme D: Supporting emerging economic opportunities

Goal 1: Fully implement Lithium Valley concept – combining geothermal projects and lithium recovery to develop a full-fledged lithium industry cluster

Implementation Checklist (priority activities)

- Prepare a white paper on the status of lithium initiatives in Imperial County, updating previous reports as relevant and also addressing the rationale for and key aspects of a lithium cluster in Imperial County: existing cluster components and their potential for expansion along with the general trajectory of lithium development, existing and potential emerging synergies among these components,

Tracked Outcomes

- Documentation of new (proposed or implemented) investments (public or private) related to the Lithium Valley concept
- Periodic report on number of lithium-related businesses (and associated employment) in the County, existing and in some stage of pending activation

mechanisms for strengthening cluster member interrelationships, and the like	
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Goal 2.

Support appropriate and efficient promotional and development efforts related to The CaliBaja Bi-National Mega-Region, as a concept and emerging reality

Action Item a.

Determine and adopt an appropriate role for Imperial County within this initiative, considering other entities involved, their potential roles and commitment to the concept, their capacity to support the concept, and similar considerations

Action Item b.

Coordinate other economic development marketing materials with the messages embodied within this initiative, to ensure consistency and to reflect advantages inherent within the CaliBaja Bi-National Mega-Region in communications with relevant prospects generally

Key Performance Measures (KPI's)	
Theme D: Supporting emerging economic opportunities	
Goal 2: Support appropriate and efficient promotional and development efforts related to The CaliBaja Bi-National Mega-Region, as a concept and emerging reality	
Implementation Checklist (priority activities)	Tracked Outcomes
• Prepare memo on the Mega-Region that summarizes Imperial County's key opportunities related to: strengthening the County's marketing position, expanding networking opportunities relative to economic development contacts, expanding data access, and the like • Draft revisions to existing economic development marketing materials to reflect messaging related to the Mega-Region as a component of the Imperial County economic development environment	• Number of business prospects (i.e., new firms considering locating in Imperial County), by prospect status, directly or indirectly attributable to Mega-Region interrelationships

Goal 3.

Establish and maintain close coordination between training programs accessible to the Imperial County workforce, and the County's emerging/expanding industries

Action Item a.

Support the job training and education programs represented by the multiple institutions in Imperial County (and adjacent areas as relevant), which are coordinated to some extent through the Local

Workforce Development Plan; advocate for expansion of educational/training capabilities as per Goal C-1, Action Item g.

Action Item b.

Ensure that the Workforce Development Plan and other periodically updated training/education program materials remain consistent with current and emerging industry opportunities in Imperial County

Action Item c.

Support the continued operational health of education/training institutions, in part by communicating the vital economic development connection represented by these organizations, and also by helping to coordinate general and specific industry training needs with these entities – taking advantage of relevant programs available to the state of California

Action Item d.

Continue the offer of providing job training as an incentive to appropriate prospects

Action Item e.

Improve the availability and usefulness of labor force data, especially with respect to occupational skills, in part through enhanced working relationships with the State Employment Development Department, the Workforce Development Board, and local universities and community colleges

Action Item f.

Coordinate with local school districts to enhance overall academic achievement of K-12 students, including students with limited English proficiency

Key Performance Measures (KPI's)	
Theme D: Supporting emerging economic opportunities	
Goal 3: Establish and maintain close coordination between training programs accessible to the Imperial County workforce, and the County's emerging/expanding industries	
Implementation Checklist (priority activities)	Tracked Outcomes
• Prepare a working document intended for continuous updates, categorizing all aspects of job-readiness in Imperial County, including areas of training that will be particularly relevant to emerging sectors in the County, any existing gaps and anticipated gaps in future years, as well as appropriate roles for County job-training incentives and other support that will help ensure alignment with economic development objectives • Prepare a white paper on the potential role of STEM-focused education within the K-12 system in Imperial County, supplementing the resources of existing school systems and providing an additional avenue for academic achievement of K-12 students	• Annual report on number of workers receiving training in the County, by institution, program, and achievement levels

8. Implementation Progress/Accomplishments in 2025

The tables beginning on the next page show the County’s progress/accomplishments related to each CEDS action item during 2025. On the **“KPI Action Item Matched Accomplishments”** table, the righthand column (“2025 Aligned Accomplishments”) provides short descriptions of the County’s programmatic accomplishments for each action item.

List of Abbreviated Terms

Abbreviation	Term	Abbreviation	Term
ADA	Americans with Disabilities Act	ISDRA	Imperial Sand Dunes Recreation Area
ASA	American Sand Association	ITC	Intermodal Transportation Center
BLM	Bureau of Land Management	IVT	Imperial Valley Transit
CalSTA	California State Transportation Agency	LVSP	Lithium Valley Specific Plan
CEDS	Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy	NADBank	North American Development Bank
COA	Comprehensive Operations Analysis	OHV	Off-Highway Vehicle
CRIAs	Community Revitalization and Investment Authorities	PA/ED	Project Approval and Environmental Document
CTR	Controlled Thermal Resources	PEIR	Program Environmental Impact Report
CTC	California Transportation Commission	PMV	Peirson's Milk-vetch
DOI	Department of the Interior	POE	Port of Entry
EDA	Economic Development Administration	PS&E	Plans, Specifications and Estimates
EIFDs	Enhanced Infrastructure Financing Districts	PVC	Patton Valley Corridor
EV	Electric Vehicle	RAMP	Recreation Area Management Plan
FERC	Federal Energy Regulatory Commission	ROW	Right-of-Way
FID	Final Investment Decision	SDORC	San Diego Off-Road Coalition
FY	Fiscal Year	SIP	Strategic Implementation Plan
GW	Gigawatt	STIP	State Transportation Improvement Program
ICSAC	Imperial County Sand Access Coalition	TIF	Tax Increment Financing
ICSC	International Council of Shopping Centers	TIRCP	Transit Intercity Rail Capital Program
ICTC	Imperial County Transportation Commission	USMCA	United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement
IID	Imperial Irrigation District	WTCSD	World Trade Center San Diego

KPI Action Item Matched Accomplishments

Theme	Goal	#	Implementation Checklist (priority activities)	2025 Aligned Accomplishments
Theme A: Public sector operational capacity and readiness	Goal 1: Establish leadership role for County across multiple strategic objectives (quality of life, collaboration with regional partners, economic development, environmental issues, improved customer service, etc.)	A.1.1	Develop Internal Management Plan (succinct memorandum, updated annually) for coordination of (non-economic development) County and partner roles relevant to the CEDS.	Binational Logistics Council (See D.2.1) Regional Leadership & Coordination: The County plays a central role in convening and coordinating with regional partners, such as the IVEDC, educational institutions, and state agencies, to align strategies across workforce development, infrastructure, and industry growth. Through these partnerships, the County supports key regional initiatives, such as the Lithium Valley development, binational trade, and sector-based workforce strategies, ensuring a unified approach to advancing shared economic development priorities. Restoring the PVC: Quality-of-life and public-land-access initiative advancing throughout 2025 to reopen OHV recreation lands south of Hwy 78 (closed by 2013 RAMP). Coordination with DOI and BLM El Centro Field Office established in January 2026 and the coalition expanded in March 2026 with new partners.
		A.1.2	Post public-friendly summary on County's economic development website (update annually) highlighting County functions and programs that create value from an economic development perspective.	Calexico ITC (See B.1.1) LVSP & PEIR (See D.1.1) Restoring the PVC (See A.1.1) Value Capture via TIF (See A.2.1)
		A.1.3	Conduct annual coordination meeting with partner organizations to review progress on CEDS actions of mutual interest.	Binational Logistics Council (See D.2.1) IVT COA (See B.1.1) Restoring the PVC (See A.1.1)
		A.1.4	Implement customer satisfaction survey for County's development and business permitting functions and track satisfaction ratings over time.	IVT COA (See B.1.1)

Theme	Goal	#	Implementation Checklist (priority activities)	2025 Aligned Accomplishments
	Goal 2: Address multiple aspects of public sector operational capacity and readiness (fiscal soundness, critical transportation services, institutionalized economic development, crime, etc.)	A.2.1	Commission feasibility studies to define opportunities for new retail development in unincorporated communities (evaluate at least one community each year).	Retail Connections: Various professionals met at the ICSC Las Vegas 2025 met in May 2025 establishing retailer and developer connections for Imperial County. Value Capture via TIF: Kosmont Companies presented at the IVEDC Economic & Energy Summit of 2025 in June 2025 discussing their 2025 Econ Dev Playbook strategies adapted from their Land Use and Development Playbook for Value-Capture that focused on TIF districts (EIFDs, CRIAs) to attract public and private capital without new taxes.
		A.2.2	Define strategy to enhance feasibility of retail commercial development in underserved areas and/or areas well-positioned to attract cross-border shopping (include prioritization of infrastructure investments and business assistance/funding resources).	Calexico East POE ITC (See B.1.1) Calexico ITC (See B.1.1) Retail Connections (See A.2.1) Value Capture via TIF (See A.2.1)
		A.2.3	Require fiscal impact analyses for major commercial/industrial development projects benefiting from County financial incentives (including any infrastructure funded by EDA grants).	LVSP & PEIR (See D.1.1) Value Capture via TIF (See A.2.1)
		A.2.4	Inventory efficiency measures already identified in the County Strategic Plan (County SP) that directly address reducing costs and improving services, through recruiting, hiring, training, etc. County staff; explicitly incorporate the County SP measures into economic development operations, and support dissemination of these practices within the County with the intent to both improve services and to market such improvements as part of County attributes, including how these practices create a model for private sector businesses (e.g., County SP Goal 4, Strategies 4B, 4G)	IVT COA (See B.1.1)
		A.2.5	Generate a “fiscal health monitoring” model, in coordination with the County Auditor-Controller Department, for continuous tracking of the relationship between fiscally influential development, related policies, and the overall fiscal	Operational Efficiency: The County has implemented strategic measures to improve operational efficiency and enhance service delivery across workforce and economic development programs. These efforts include consolidating services to reduce duplication, leveraging

Theme	Goal	#	Implementation Checklist (priority activities)	2025 Aligned Accomplishments
			status of the County, from the standpoint of both costs and revenues over time and other relevant considerations. This model would incorporate funding from relevant state and federal programs, as addressed in Action Item C, Goal 1, Major Theme B (Infrastructure)	the Business Development Center as a centralized hub for coordinated activities, and deploying mobile service units to maintain access in rural and underserved communities. Through these approaches, the County has optimized the use of limited resources, improved interdepartmental coordination, and maintained service levels despite staffing and funding constraints, demonstrating a commitment to fiscal responsibility and effective program delivery.
	Goal 3: Recognizing that suitable housing is a key component of successful economic development in Imperial County, continue to support local efforts to implement the Housing Element policies aimed at ensuring an adequate supply of workforce, or middle income, housing.	A.3.1	Establish communication protocol and memo format intended to keep County Community Development/Planning personnel informed about employment (and related housing) impacts of economic development expansion/ recruitment prospects, including numbers, wage levels, etc. – addressing the information dissemination generically and with appropriate timing to preserve confidentiality, etc.	Housing & Workforce Linkages: The County continues to strengthen the connection between workforce development and housing planning by incorporating labor market insights into broader economic and community development discussions. Workforce activities, including employer engagement and sector-based initiatives, provide valuable information on hiring demand, wage levels, and occupational growth, particularly in emerging industries such as lithium, healthcare, and logistics.
		A.3.2	Establish and maintain ongoing documentation of any identified mismatches between current and anticipated employees in County industry sectors and the County housing market and market conditions, based primarily on data gained through business retention activity (of County and its partner organizations), focus of recruitment efforts, and other formal and informal sources.	emPower Lithium Valley Workforce Initiative (See D.1.1) Housing: In 2025, there were a total of 145 SFR building permits issued and 29 MFR building permits issued. The total number of existing occupied housing units in Imperial County as of January 2025 include 36,836 SFR units and 15,531 MFR units. LVSP & PEIR (See D.1.1)

Theme	Goal	#	Implementation Checklist (priority activities)	2025 Aligned Accomplishments
	Goal 4: Adopt a comprehensive approach to supporting and coordinating multiple programs that enhance the region’s quality of life.	A.4.1	Generate an interdepartmental memo intended to explicitly document the relationship between planned quality-of-life enhancements and how and why these enhancements would be particularly relevant to the personnel associated with key existing and targeted industry sectors, and the locations within which they are likely to occur. This document would be based on the results of retention interviews and other information available to the ED staff (of the County and key partner organizations), and be positioned as a “best guess” advisory communication.	Calexico East POE ITC (See B.1.1) Calexico ITC (See B.1.1) Patriot Games Satellite Event (See C.4.2) Restoring the PVC (See A.1.1)
Theme B: Infrastructure	Goal 1: Improve regional mobility.	B.1.1	Generate memo intended to explicitly document the relationship between planned transportation improvements and how and why these improvements would be particularly relevant to key existing and targeted industry sectors (from both workforce and business operational standpoints), and the locations within which they are likely to occur. Incorporate topics relating to subsequent Goals 2 and 3. This memo would build on other documents described in preceding implementation checklists, which embody assumptions related to employment/ employment impacts associated with key existing and targeted industry sectors.	Calexico East POE ITC: Awarded \$12.6 million from CalSTA/TIRCP. Master Agreement with Caltrans approved April 2025. The right-of-way acquisition was approved by CTC June 2025 (\$1.5 million allocated for property acquisition). Construction completion estimated for 2030. Calexico ITC: \$19 million project for the intermodal facility on 3rd Street between Rockwood and Hefferman Avenues. Provides transit connections, EV charging, ADA-compliant sidewalks/crossings, and passenger amenities. Construction began on February 28, 2025 and has been ongoing. Construction should be complete by mid-2026 to late 2026. Forrester Road Improvements: 2026 STIP Recommendations sought; \$4.385 million for PA/ED phase in FY2028/29 and \$6.08 million for PS&E in FY2030/31. IVT COA: Active countywide bus system improvement study throughout 2025 (December 2024 – March 2026) to identify improvements for the regional bus system, incorporating community survey feedback. NADBank Border Projects: \$12.3 billion in certified financing for border crossing infrastructure, directly supporting goods movement and binational trade. As of December 31, 2024 there were 23 projects certified with financing within Imperial County and 9 located on the border.

Theme	Goal	#	Implementation Checklist (priority activities)	2025 Aligned Accomplishments
		B.1.2	Monitor the implications of state and federal infrastructure funding programs within the context of the “fiscal health monitoring” model described within the Implementation Checklist of Theme A, Goal 2 (public sector operational capacity and readiness).	Calexico East POE ITC (See B.1.1) Forrester Road Improvements (See B.1.1) NADBank Border Projects (See B.1.1) Transmission and Interconnection Reforms (See B.2.1)
	Goal 2: Prioritize efforts, and improve and provide services to industrial and commercial sites.	B.2.1	(Refer to preceding Goal 1 Implementation Checklist item, memo on the relationship between planned transportation improvements and key existing and targeted industry sectors, and ensure that the topics of these Goal 2 Action Items are reflected therein)	Calexico ITC (See B.1.1)CTR - Hell's Kitchen (See C.2.3) LVSP & PEIR (See D.1.1) Transmission and Interconnection Reforms: During the IVEDC 2025 Economic Energy Summit of June 2025, the IID provided updates on adopting FERC Order No. 2023, moving to a cluster study process starting in January 2026 to strengthen reliability and infrastructure investment.
	Goal 3: Support long-range transportation plan strategies involving mitigation of bottlenecks, truck safety, etc.	B.3.1	(Refer to preceding Goal 1 Implementation Checklist item, memo on the relationship between planned transportation improvements and key existing and targeted industry sectors, and ensure that the topics of these Goal 3 Action Items are reflected therein).	Forrester Road Improvements (See B.1.1) IVT COA (See B.1.1) NADBank Border Projects (See B.1.1)
	Goal 4: Continue to support programs related to the Southern Border Broadband Consortium.	B.4.1	Prepare memo summarizing an assessment of the relationship between areas in the County that are broadband-deficient and also either already or likely to be the location for employment activity, drawing on information prepared for other Implementation Checklist items described above for preceding Themes/Goals.	EV Charging Station Feasibility Study: While focused on EV infrastructure, the countywide planning process for underserved areas provides a parallel model for broadband gap analysis in employment zones. RFP issued in May 2025.

Theme	Goal	#	Implementation Checklist (priority activities)	2025 Aligned Accomplishments
Theme C: Sustaining existing economy	Goal 1: Integrate all CEDS programs to promote economic resiliency in Imperial County. This goal is detailed in Chapter 9 of the CEDS.	C.1.1		Economic Resiliency: The County strengthens regional economic resiliency through coordinated workforce and business engagement, including Rapid Response for dislocated workers, job fairs, and employer services that address both immediate disruptions and long-term economic shifts. These efforts connect workers to reemployment opportunities, training, and supportive services while helping businesses with recruitment, retention, and workforce solutions aligned with regional industry needs. Together, they form a responsive framework that supports workforce transitions, stabilizes local businesses, and advances CEDS priorities.
	Goal 2: Strengthen Imperial County's economy by promoting a balanced, yet diversified, regional economic base.	C.2.1	Prepare operational plan for departmental BRE and prospect-recruitment activities.	Binational Logistics Council (See D.2.1) Retail Connections (See A.2.1)
		C.2.2	Compile finalized list of industry targets for incorporation into operational plan, vetted as appropriate with relevant stakeholders and partners.	AI-Ready Manufacturing Workforce Initiative (See D.3.1) Binational Logistics Council (See D.2.1) CTR - Hell's Kitchen (See C.2.3) LVSP & PEIR (See D.1.1) Ormat Project Pipeline: During the IVEDC 2025 Economic Energy Summit of June 2025, the Dogwood Geothermal Project was reported as currently in development and the exploration progress for the Truckhaven project was reported as approved and underway, but overall is still in the ongoing development phase for the construction of the two plants and a parasitic solar field. ¹⁹ Retail Connections (See A.2.1) XGS Energy (See C.2.3)

¹⁹ The primary difference between a solar photovoltaic (PV) field and a "parasitic" solar setup lies in their purpose and energy flow. A solar PV field generates electricity for external consumption (the grid), while parasitic solar refers to energy generated and immediately consumed by the solar system itself to operate its own components.

Theme	Goal	#	Implementation Checklist (priority activities)	2025 Aligned Accomplishments
		C.2.3	Prepare "options assessment" white paper describing the scope of possibilities and addressing alternative approaches to supporting geothermal development, based on potential partners, cost-effectiveness, and similar considerations.	CTR - Hell's Kitchen: CTR presented an update of the Hell's Kitchen project at the IVEDC 2025 Economic Energy Summit of June 2025. The project received approval of a Conditional Use Permit in 2024. The company has been in the process of moving toward a Final Investment Decision during 2025 and is slated to begin construction at some point in 2026. Ormat Project Pipeline (See C.2.2) Transmission and Interconnection Reforms (See B.2.1) XGS Energy: During the IVEDC 2025 Economic Energy Summit of June 2025, XGS Energy was presented as a next-generation geothermal technology that is targeting significant expansion in California. This project targets >1 GW of development in California, demonstrating the expansion of geothermal projects.
		C.2.4	Initiate separate or joint meeting(s) with regional/international partners to define common objectives, messages, materials, etc. related to marketing economic development in ways that mutually benefit the parties involved.	Binational Logistics Council (See D.2.1) Binational Trade & Competitiveness Report: The WTCSD released the report in November 2025. The key findings include: – Nearly 97% of San Diego and Imperial County's \$34.5 billion in goods exports go to Mexico, supporting 95,000 jobs in aerospace, medical devices, and semiconductors. – \$2.3 billion in goods cross the US–Mexico border every day. – Trilateral USMCA trade up 31%; Mexico is now the US's top trading partner. – U.S. services exports to Mexico reached \$50.4 billion in 2024 (54% under USMCA). – Baja California diversifying into higher-value exports (medical devices, transportation equipment). Retail Connections (See A.2.1)

Theme	Goal	#	Implementation Checklist (priority activities)	2025 Aligned Accomplishments
	Goal 3: Promote/support agricultural production and diversification.	C.2.5	Prepare white paper outlining the need for and potential options related to additional financial and other incentives for business expansion and product development, exporting, and nearshoring, considering relevant partners' activities and their capabilities, cost-effectiveness of alternative support options, etc.	NADBank Border Projects (See B.1.1) Small Business Support/SBDC: The Imperial Valley Small Business Development Center (SBDC) hosted by the County, has provided critical support to small businesses through technical assistance, training, and access to capital. During the reporting period, the program successfully leveraged additional grant funding to expand services and support entrepreneurship across the region. Value Capture via TIF (See A.2.1)
		C.3.1	Prepare white paper addressing the rationale for and key aspects of an agricultural cluster in Imperial County: existing cluster components and their potential for expansion, existing synergies among these components, mechanisms for strengthening cluster member interrelationships, and the like.	No new information.
		C.3.2	Compile inventory of agri-tourism activities in Imperial County, and agri-tourism support functions that serve the County and their roles.	No new information.
		C.3.3	Outline an approach by which agri-tourism marketing materials can be most cost-effectively produced and disseminated, recognizing potential partner roles in this effort.	No new information.
	Goal 4: Promote and expand tourism in Imperial County, to see that visitors' needs are accommodated, and recognizing tourism's ties to residents' quality-of-life and to other industries such as agriculture.	C.4.1	Prepare white paper outlining options for documenting visitation to Imperial County, by the multiple purposes driving such visitations, recognizing the existing processes for visitation-tracking by various state and other entities, and how these processes could be supplemented by activities initiated by the County.	ASA: Continuing the mission to 'Unite, Inform, and Mobilize' by focusing on ISDRA permit sales, lobbying, and maintaining recreational access infrastructure. IVT COA: Active countywide bus system improvement study throughout 2025 (December 2024 – March 2026) to identify improvements for the regional bus system, incorporating community survey feedback. PMV Monitoring Synthesis Study (2014–2024): Data demonstrates OHV damage affects <0.5% of observed PMV population, providing scientific basis for reopening recreational access and supporting tourism expansion arguments. The study was completed in 2025 and published in January 2026.

Theme	Goal	#	Implementation Checklist (priority activities)	2025 Aligned Accomplishments
		C.4.2	Prepare memo outlining the tourism marketing campaigns pertaining to Imperial County, by each local-to-state entity involved, including the audiences to which such campaigns are primarily directed. Identify gaps in information, audiences, etc., including gaps in visitation data, and prepare recommendations for resolving any such deficiencies.	ASA (See C.4.1) Patriot Games Satellite Event: Event at ISDRA to showcase American resilience and Desert Rats WWII history—supporting heritage tourism development at the Imperial Sand Dunes. This event is scheduled to take place on Veteran's Day (November 2026) to celebrate America's 250th Anniversary. Restoring the PVC (See A.1.1)
		C.4.3	Prepare outline of options for addressing the feasibility of additional visitor-support projects at key locations throughout the County, as an initial step in subsequent in-depth investigations.	ASA (See C.4.1) Calexico East POE ITC (See B.1.1) Calexico ITC (See B.1.1) Patriot Games Satellite Event (See C.4.2) PMV Monitoring Synthesis Study (2014–2024) (See C.4.1) Restoring the PVC (See A.1.1)
	Goal 5: Sustain and promote expansion of international/bi-national trade.	C.5.1	Prepare memo documenting the current status of bi-national marketing programs, key materials, and target audiences, on the part of entities in Imperial County and the surrounding bi-national region, identifying any gaps and other opportunities that could be addressed by supplemental marketing efforts.	Binational Logistics Council (See D.2.1) Binational Trade & Competitiveness Report (See C.2.4)
		C.5.2	Prepare memo identifying: 1) the full range and scope of strategies that deal with border crossings and other border-access issues, within Imperial County (including state and federal strategies) and adjacent in Mexico, and 2) how border-related policies in the US and Mexico interface with these strategic approaches. The memo would also provide commentary on what this information reflects in terms of border efficiencies, etc.	Binational Trade & Competitiveness Report (See C.2.4) Calexico East POE ITC (See B.1.1) Calexico ITC (See B.1.1) NADBank Border Projects (See B.1.1)

Theme	Goal	#	Implementation Checklist (priority activities)	2025 Aligned Accomplishments
Theme D: Supporting emerging economic opportunities	Goal 1: Fully implement Lithium Valley concept – combining geothermal projects and lithium recovery to develop a full-fledged lithium industry cluster.	D.1.1	Prepare a white paper on the status of lithium initiatives in Imperial County, updating previous reports as relevant and also addressing the rationale for and key aspects of a lithium cluster in Imperial County: existing cluster components and their potential for expansion along with the general trajectory of lithium development, existing and potential emerging synergies among these components, mechanisms for strengthening cluster member interrelationships, and the like.	CTR - Hell's Kitchen (See C.2.3) emPower Lithium Valley Workforce Initiative: The initiative is a 12-month program building local capacity to operationalize workforce strategies not requiring a 4-year degree. . The initiative was formally recognized and highlighted during the IVEDC 2025 Economic Energy Summit of June 2025 as one of the recipient projects awarded funding through the Southern Border Region Catalyst Pre-development Fund's 1st Round. Implementation Emphasis: Over the reporting period, the County has continued to advance from planning to implementation across key CEDS priority areas, especially Lithium Valley and emerging sectors, through coordinated workforce development, infrastructure planning, and regional collaboration. The County has also supported project advancement by aligning resources, engaging stakeholders, and integrating economic strategies. LVSP & PEIR: Comprehensive framework covering geothermal energy production, critical mineral recovery, and manufacturing—representing a major diversification of the regional economic base. The comprehensive planning framework explicitly includes workforce development and community investment strategies, which have direct implications for housing demand planning in the county. The initial LVSP review began in February 2025 and concluded in April 2025. The Draft PEIR and revised LVSP Review started in December 2025 and was originally set to conclude in March 2026. On February 27, 2026, Imperial County extended the public review period for the LVSP and PEIR to provide stakeholders more time to review and submit comments. The extended review period will now remain open until April 17, 2026. Ormat Project Pipeline (See C.2.2) Transmission and Interconnection Reforms (See B.2.1) XGS Energy (See C.2.3)

Theme	Goal	#	Implementation Checklist (priority activities)	2025 Aligned Accomplishments
	Goal 2: Support appropriate and efficient promotional and development efforts related to The CaliBaja Bi-National Mega-Region, as a concept and emerging reality.	D.2.1	Prepare memo on the Mega-Region that summarizes Imperial County's key opportunities related to: strengthening the County's marketing position, expanding networking opportunities relative to economic development contacts, expanding data access, and the like.	Binational Logistics Council: The Logistics Sector Activation Plan presented at the IVEDC 2025 Economic Energy Summit of June 2025. The plan includes the creation of the Binational Logistics Council which is intended to coordinate binational stakeholders to align workforce development across the logistics and warehousing sectors in the Cali-Baja region. The council is in the process of being established. Binational Trade & Competitiveness Report (See C.2.4) NADBank Border Projects (See B.1.1) Regional Leadership & Coordination (See A.1.1)
		D.2.2	Draft revisions to existing economic development marketing materials to reflect messaging related to the Mega-Region as a component of the Imperial County economic development environment.	Binational Logistics Council (See D.2.1) Binational Trade & Competitiveness Report (See C.2.4) Regional Leadership & Coordination (See A.1.1)

Theme	Goal	#	Implementation Checklist (priority activities)	2025 Aligned Accomplishments
	Goal 3: Establish and maintain close coordination between training programs accessible to the Imperial County workforce, and the County's emerging/expanding industries.	D.3.1	Prepare a working document intended for continuous updates, categorizing all aspects of job-readiness in Imperial County, including areas of training that will be particularly relevant to emerging sectors in the County, any existing gaps and anticipated gaps in future years, as well as appropriate roles for County job-training incentives and other support that will help ensure alignment with economic development objectives.	AI-Ready Manufacturing Workforce Initiative: The initiative addresses the SIP's focus on occupational skills by mapping shifting demands and creating transition strategies as employers adopt AI. The initiative was formally recognized and highlighted during the IVEDC 2025 Economic Energy Summit of June 2025 as one of the recipient projects awarded funding through the Southern Border Region Catalyst Pre-development Fund's 1st Round. emPower Lithium Valley Workforce Initiative (See D.1.1) LVSP & PEIR (See D.1.1) Workforce Development Alignment: Imperial County is actively aligning WIOA-funded services, sector-based training, and employer engagement strategies with CEDS priorities. This includes implementation of initiatives such as the emPower Lithium Valley Workforce Initiative (see D.1.1), High Road Training Partnerships in healthcare, and ongoing delivery of business services, Rapid Response activities, and hiring events that support both economic resiliency and emerging industry demand. The County's WIOA funded programs include Rapid Response events for businesses that may be going out business (e.g., Rapid Response events for Spreckels Sugar when they were transitioning out managed to capture hundreds of their employees). Those events connected the displaced employees with resources, guidance, training and education opportunities and employers. The County also hosted a large scale job fair in conjunction with Congressman Raul Ruiz with over 3,000 attendees. The County's three America's Job Centers (located in Calexico, El Centro, and Brawley) have full WIOA services for job seekers and businesses. The County also has a fully functioning Business Development Center, which houses WIOA business services, the County's Community and Economic Development Team, and the Imperial Valley Small Business Development Office.

Theme	Goal	#	Implementation Checklist (priority activities)	2025 Aligned Accomplishments
		D.3.2	Prepare a white paper on the potential role of STEM-focused education within the K-12 system in Imperial County, supplementing the resources of existing school systems and providing an additional avenue for academic achievement of K-12 students.	AI-Ready Manufacturing Workforce Initiative (See D.3.1) emPower Lithium Valley Workforce Initiative (See D.1.1)

9. Qualifying Census Tracts

The tables in Appendix A provide the latest available Census (ACS) data to identify the individual census tracts within the CEDS area that would potentially qualify for EDA investment based on unemployment rates and per capita income levels. These tables reflect the following qualifying criteria:

- 24-month unemployment rate is at least one percentage point greater than the national average unemployment rate
- Per capita income is not more than 80% of the national average per capita income

Appendix A – Census Data

NATIONAL OUTLOOK

U.S.			
Unemployment		Per Capita	
2023	4.30%	2023	\$43,313
2024	4.60%	2024	\$45,256
24 - Month Average	4.45%	24 - Month Average	\$44,285

California			
Unemployment		Per Capita	
2023	5.50%	2023	\$48,013
2024	5.90%	2024	\$49,934
24 - Month Average	5.70%	24 - Month Average	\$48,974

County of Imperial County			
Unemployment		Per Capita	
2023	9.30%	2023	\$24,447
2024	11.50%	2024	\$24,065
24 - Month Average	10.40%	24 - Month Average	\$24,256

Source: U.S. Census, 2023 and 2024 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates.

INCORPORATED CITIES WITHIN IMPERIAL COUNTY

Name of City	Population
City of Brawley	27,283
City of Calexico	38,585
City of Calipatria	6,548
City of El Centro	44,240
City of Holtville	5,617
City of Imperial	21,430
City of Westmorland	1,844

Source: U.S. Census, 2020-2024 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates.

INCORPORATED CITIES WITHIN IMPERIAL COUNTY

U.S.					
Population		Unemployment		Per Capita	
2024	334,922,499	2024	5.20%	2024	\$44,673

Brawley					
Population		Unemployment		Per Capita	
2024	27,283	2024	15.50%	2024	\$26,681

Calexico					
Population		Unemployment		Per Capita	
2024	38,585	2024	19.40%	2024	\$20,600

Calipatria					
Population		Unemployment		Per Capita	
2024	6,548	2024	7.30%	2024	\$12,811

El Centro					
Population		Unemployment		Per Capita	
2024	44,240	2024	9.90%	2024	\$23,590

Holtville					
Population		Unemployment		Per Capita	
2024	5,617	2024	9.40%	2024	\$23,880

Imperial					
Population		Unemployment		Per Capita	
2024	21,430	2024	8.20%	2024	\$29,877

Westmorland					
Population		Unemployment		Per Capita	
2024	1,844	2024	14.20%	2024	\$16,447

Source: U.S. Census, 2020-2024 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates.

CENSUS TRACTS WITHIN IMPERIAL COUNTY

U.S.	Unemployment 5.2%	Per Capita Income \$44,673	24 month unemployment rate is at least 1% point greater than the nat'l average unemployment	The per capita income (PCI) is not more than 80% of the national average PCI.
Census Tract	Unemployment	Per Capita	Qualifying	Qualifying
Census Tract 101.01	0.0%	\$6,011	FALSE	TRUE
Census Tract 101.02	4.9%	\$19,897	FALSE	TRUE
Census Tract 102	12.7%	\$18,300	TRUE	TRUE
Census Tract 103	14.9%	\$24,923	TRUE	TRUE
Census Tract 104.01	53.3%	\$18,735	TRUE	TRUE
Census Tract 104.02	7.8%	\$15,896	TRUE	TRUE
Census Tract 105	8.5%	\$27,138	TRUE	TRUE
Census Tract 106	6.9%	\$40,190	TRUE	FALSE

U.S.	Unemployment 5.2%	Per Capita Income \$44,673	24 month unemployment rate is at least 1% point greater than the nat'l average unemployment	The per capita income (PCI) is not more than 80% of the national average PCI.
Census Tract	Unemployment	Per Capita	Qualifying	Qualifying
Census Tract 107	15.5%	\$18,018	TRUE	TRUE
Census Tract 108	0.8%	\$37,466	FALSE	FALSE
Census Tract 109	8.7%	\$24,914	TRUE	TRUE
Census Tract 110.01	6.8%	\$24,894	TRUE	TRUE
Census Tract 110.02	6.9%	\$33,645	TRUE	TRUE
Census Tract 111	10.2%	\$29,607	TRUE	TRUE
Census Tract 112.01	9.6%	\$26,788	TRUE	TRUE
Census Tract 112.02	19.5%	\$16,411	TRUE	TRUE
Census Tract 113.01	7.7%	\$20,453	TRUE	TRUE
Census Tract 113.02	17.1%	\$21,316	TRUE	TRUE
Census Tract 113.03	7.1%	\$25,431	TRUE	TRUE
Census Tract 114	6.3%	\$16,884	TRUE	TRUE
Census Tract 115	16.0%	\$16,105	TRUE	TRUE
Census Tract 116	11.2%	\$19,740	TRUE	TRUE
Census Tract 117	8.2%	\$23,531	TRUE	TRUE
Census Tract 118.01	7.3%	\$39,525	TRUE	FALSE
Census Tract 118.02	5.6%	\$27,657	TRUE	TRUE
Census Tract 118.03	5.0%	\$32,653	FALSE	TRUE
Census Tract 119.01	8.6%	\$27,839	TRUE	TRUE
Census Tract 119.02	14.1%	\$15,907	TRUE	TRUE
Census Tract 119.03	10.4%	\$29,479	TRUE	TRUE
Census Tract 120.01	30.2%	\$13,390	TRUE	TRUE
Census Tract 120.03	21.0%	\$27,845	TRUE	TRUE
Census Tract 120.04	22.9%	\$22,157	TRUE	TRUE
Census Tract 121.01	24.6%	\$11,498	TRUE	TRUE
Census Tract 121.02	17.9%	\$17,247	TRUE	TRUE
Census Tract 122.01	19.1%	\$17,403	TRUE	TRUE
Census Tract 122.02	18.2%	\$20,632	TRUE	TRUE
Census Tract 123.01	24.6%	\$7,107	TRUE	TRUE
Census Tract 123.02	12.0%	\$20,501	TRUE	TRUE
Census Tract 124	4.0%	\$18,281	FALSE	TRUE
Census Tract 9400	28.8%	\$19,144	TRUE	TRUE

Source: U.S. Census, 2020-2024 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates.