# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>National and State Economic Setting</td>
<td>ED-1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purpose of the Economic Development Element</td>
<td>ED-1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic Development Goals, Policies, and Actions</td>
<td>ED-2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1: Attract Employers That Pay Higher Wages</td>
<td>ED-5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2: Encourage Entrepreneurship</td>
<td>ED-5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3: Encourage Sustainable Development Practices</td>
<td>ED-6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.4: Create More Shovel Ready Industrial Sites</td>
<td>ED-6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.5: Continue to Attract Shoppers From Mexicali and Neighboring Communities</td>
<td>ED-8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.6: Improve Community Amenities That Make El Centro a Better Place to Visit and Reside</td>
<td>ED-8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.7: Transform Downtown El Centro Into a Mixed-Use Neighborhood</td>
<td>ED-9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.8: Reduce the Inventory of Vacant Commercial Space</td>
<td>ED-10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.9: Encourage More Intensive Development at Underutilized Shopping Center Sites</td>
<td>ED-10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.10: Upgrade the Appearance of Abandoned and Underutilized Commercial Properties Until They are Revitalized</td>
<td>ED-11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.11: Convert a Portion of Vacant Industrial Land Into Business Park or General Commercial Uses</td>
<td>ED-11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.12: Complete the Development of the Imperial Valley Commons Site</td>
<td>ED-12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Goals, Policies and Actions for Targeted Opportunity Areas** ED-12

**Imperial Avenue Corridor**

4.1 Valley Plaza Shopping Center                                      | ED-18|
4.2: Former Heilig Meyers Center                                      | ED-18|
4.3: Bowling Alley Site                                               | ED-18|
4.4: Valley Centerpoint Plaza (Former El Centro Shopping Center)     | ED-18|
4.5: Former Wal-Mart Store Site                                       | ED-18|
4.6: El Centro Town Center Phase II                                   | ED-18|
SECTION

Center City District ........................................................ ED-18
4.7: Adams Avenue Corridor ............................................. ED-18
4.8: Downtown Main Street Corridor ................................... ED-19
4.9: Highway 86 Railroad Properties ................................... ED-19

Industrial Areas ................................................................ ED-19
4.10: 8th Street Industrial Park Subdivision ...................... ED-19
4.11: Danenberg Industrial Area ......................................... ED-19
4.12: South of El Centro Industrial Park ......................... ED-19
4.13: Abatti Property (South of Centerpoint Business Park) ...... ED-19

New Shopping Areas Along South Dogwood Avenue .......... ED-20
4.14: Plaza @ Imperial Valley ........................................... ED-20
4.15: Imperial Valley Mall and Surrounding Pads ............... ED-20
4.16: Imperial Valley Commons ....................................... ED-20

LIST OF TABLES

TABLE Page
ED-1 Title Economic Development Goals, Policies and Actions ...................... ED-3
ED-2 Title Opportunity Area Goals and Policies ...................................... ED-13

LIST OF FIGURES

FIGURE Page
ED-1 El Centro's Key Economic Development Opportunity Sites .............. ED-17

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NATIONAL AND STATE ECONOMIC SETTING

The Lehman Brothers collapse in September 2008 caused a chain of events that led the United States into the great recession and a reset of the national economy. A number of the nation’s most important financial institutions became insolvent and were bailed out by Congress and the Federal Reserve. Since that time, housing prices have dramatically declined; 5.8 million private sector jobs disappeared; trillions of dollars of household net worth were lost; up to 30 percent of homeowners are underwater; and housing foreclosures became a significant economic and social problem since 2008. These events have reduced consumer demand for goods and services as households cut costs to reduce debt, causing a decline of state and local government retail tax receipts.

Despite the national and state economic constraints, the City has included an Economic Development Element of the General Plan in order to strengthen local economy that provides needed services and employment opportunities for local residents. This Element focuses on promoting a healthy local economy that allows for a fiscally balanced community with a high quality of life. The Economic Development Element outlines the approach that the City will continue to implement, maintain, and build upon the community’s strengths.

PURPOSE OF THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ELEMENT

The General Plan Economic Development Element update provides an opportunity for El Centro to strategically position the City to resume growth by taking advantage of the larger globalization forces that are shaping the economy of Southern California and the US Mexico border area. The challenge will be to establish land uses that support the start-up and recruitment of businesses that will pay higher wages and reverse the declining incomes among households.

This Economic Development Element update, which replaces the 2004 ED Element, will help the City adjust to the changing economy with a strategy to reuse or redevelop the underutilized industrial and commercial sites, and to improve downtown by encouraging
new investment and a mix of commercial, residential and office uses. The other General Plan elements will also be replaced as funds become available in future years.

The goals, policies and actions described below are an outcome of more than one year of work to prepare an Economic Development Strategy that includes an ED Element. Readers who want more thorough information about the analysis and background information should download the Economic Development Strategy from the City’s website.

**Economic Development Goals, Policies, and Actions**

The economic development goals describe the outcomes that the City seeks the Economic Development Element to accomplish with its economic development initiatives. The policies and actions present various approaches towards achieving the goals (Table ED-1). Note that the policy and action numbers do not correspond with any type of prioritization.

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1 The economic Development Element is an optional element under California law, rather than a mandatory element of the General Plan.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT GOALS</th>
<th>POLICIES AND ACTIONS</th>
<th>GEOGRAPHIC FOCUS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1. Attract employees that pay</strong>&lt;br&gt;<strong>higher wages</strong></td>
<td>1.1 Collaborate with the regional business attraction efforts led by the Imperial Valley EDC&lt;br&gt;1.2 Assign staff or a consultant to be El Centro’s business attraction lead point of contact&lt;br&gt;1.3 Continue to fund the IVEDC and participate in the Board meetings</td>
<td>Entire City with no geographic focus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2. Encourage entrepreneurship</strong></td>
<td>2.1 Improve access to small business financing and technical assistance&lt;br&gt;2.2 Ensure that El Centro can offer the full range of telecommunication services and support infrastructure&lt;br&gt;2.3 Support the development of home businesses provided they do not adversely impact the surrounding neighborhood</td>
<td>Entire City with no geographic focus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>3. Encourage sustainable development practices</strong></td>
<td>3.1 Partner with the IVEDC, Imperial County and other regional partners to attract renewable energy investment to El Centro&lt;br&gt;3.2 Evaluate the potential to attract green technology firms&lt;br&gt;3.3 Create incentives to encourage property owners to adopt renewable energy technologies</td>
<td>Entire City with no geographic focus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>4. Create more shovel ready industrial and business park sites</strong></td>
<td>4.1 Use tax increment financing and the City’s Capital Improvement Fund to partner with industrial property owners and developers to finance infrastructure improvements needed to create shovel-ready industrial sites&lt;br&gt;4.2 Seek federal and state grants to fund the infrastructure improvements needed to create shovel-ready industrial sites</td>
<td>Goal applies to undeveloped sites that are zoned for industrial or business park uses.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>5. Continue to attract shoppers from Mexicali and neighboring communities</strong></td>
<td>5.1 Partner with magnet retailers and the Chamber to promote El Centro as a regional shopping destination&lt;br&gt;5.2 Establish a business retention program to track and monitor shopping patterns</td>
<td>Goal applies to shopping centers with destination stores that attract shoppers from Mexicali and the neighboring communities. Destinations include the Plaza @ Imperial Valley, the Imperial Valley Mall, IV Commons, and the big box stores along Imperial Avenue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>6. Improve community amenities that make El Centro a better place to live and visit</strong></td>
<td>6.1 Attract other tourism support businesses such as resorts, lodging facilities, restaurants, and recreational facilities such as golf courses and water parks&lt;br&gt;6.2 Upgrade and maintain City parks and recreational facilities such as Stark Field</td>
<td>Entire City with no geographic focus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT GOALS</td>
<td>POLICIES AND ACTIONS</td>
<td>GEOGRAPHIC FOCUS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------</td>
<td>-----------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Transform Downtown El Centro into a mixed use neighborhood that attracts people to live, work and play in the area</td>
<td>7.1 Encourage the development of new housing and live/work space that will be attractive to people who may not have previously considered living downtown.</td>
<td>Goal applies to the Main Street Corridor between 4th and 8th, and Broadway and State Street.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.2 Continue to invest in downtown urban design and streetscape improvements</td>
<td>7.3 Encourage a mix of different sizes and types of downtown businesses.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.3 Encourage a mix of different sizes and types of downtown businesses.</td>
<td>7.4 Provide financial support in the form of reduced rents to attract artists and non-traditional uses to occupy vacant space</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Reduce the inventory of vacant commercial space</td>
<td>8.1 Encourage and allow vacant and underutilized shopping centers to be transitioned into a mix of commercial retail, office and/or residential uses in the downtown area</td>
<td>Goal applies to the vacant and underutilized commercial sites at the Valley Plaza Shopping Center, the El Centro Shopping Center, the former Wal-Mart site, the Adams Avenue corridor and the Highway 86 Railroad property site.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.2 Encourage infill development and the redevelopment of undeveloped sites along the Adams Avenue corridor</td>
<td>8.3 Encourage the planned redevelopment of the Highway 86 railroad properties</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Encourage more intensive development at underutilized shopping center sites</td>
<td>9.1 Collaborate with property owners to attract new uses with more building space and reduced parking</td>
<td>Goal applies to underutilized shopping center sites along Imperial Avenue including the Valley Plaza Shopping Center, the former Heilig Meyers Center, the El Centro Shopping Center and the former Wal-Mart store site.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.2 Collaborate with the property owners to transition underutilized shopping center sites into pedestrian-friendly areas</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Upgrade the appearance and maintenance of abandoned and underutilized commercial properties until they are revitalized</td>
<td>10.1 Expand code enforcement and require property owners to maintain the sites</td>
<td>Goal applies to the underutilized shopping center sites along Imperial Avenue including the former Heilig Meyers Center, the El Centro Shopping Center and the former Wal-Mart store site.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.2 Encourage property owners to improve the appearance of boarded up buildings by collaborating with local artists</td>
<td>10.3 Collaborate with property owners to attract temporary uses to the acres of unused parking fronting Imperial Avenue</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.3 Collaborate with property owners to attract temporary uses to the acres of unused parking fronting Imperial Avenue</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Convert a portion of industrial land into business park or general commercial uses</td>
<td>11.1 Encourage and allow some industrially zoned vacant land to be developed for general commercial or business park uses</td>
<td>Goal applies to the vacant industrial land on the Abatti Property and at the El Centro Town Center Phase II. The goal also guides the redevelopment of the Highway 85 railroad properties.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.2 Proposals to convert industrially zoned land to residential uses should be discouraged, recognizing that the opportunity areas have some residentially-zoned land that has yet to be developed</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Complete the development of the Imperial Valley Commons site</td>
<td>12.1 Encourage and allow the site to be developed for a mix of commercial retail and business park uses</td>
<td>Goal applies to the Imperial Valley Commons site.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.2 Partner with the property owner to complete the infrastructure improvements required for site build out</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

ED-4
Ed Goal 3.1: Attract Employers That Pay Higher Wages

El Centro’s economic development efforts should attempt to reverse the steep decline of household incomes caused by a job mix that is dominated by low wage paying retail trade, leisure, and personal service business establishments. The income decline has occurred despite El Centro’s very strong job growth rates relative to the region and State. The City’s inventory of undeveloped industrial land and vacant shopping centers should be promoted as available business sites. A good promotional effort may require an improved website and trade show booth, with information about the available business sites and a description of available business incentives.

Policies and Actions

ED Policy/Action 3.1.1: Collaborate with the regional business attraction efforts led by the Imperial Valley EDC

The IVEDC has an ongoing effort to attract new investors and business prospects to Imperial County. However, it is up to El Centro to compete with neighboring communities for IVEDC-generated leads. The City should assign a single staff person to collaborate with the Imperial Valley Economic Development Corporation (IVEDC) at trade shows and other business recruitment tasks in order to strengthen its partnership with the IVEDC.

ED Policy/Action 3.1.2: Assign staff or a consultant to be El Centro’s primary point of contact for business attraction leads

A single person should be assigned to lead El Centro’s business attraction efforts. El Centro’s single point of business contact would also respond to leads generated by the IVEDC.

ED Policy/Action 3.1.3: Continue to fund IVEDC and participate in its Board of Director Actions

The City of El Centro should continue its financial support of IVEDC pending the availability of sufficient revenues. The funding should be expanded if fiscally viable. Funding the IVEDC should provide El Centro with a seat on the Board of Directors and a say in the direction of the regional business attraction efforts.

Geographic Focus

Economic Development Goal #1 and the policies apply to the entire City and are not limited to any specific opportunity site.

ED Goal 3.2: Encourage Entrepreneurship

Efforts to expand small businesses and support new business startups are a proven strategy that can reduce unemployment and increase incomes. The City currently operates a small business loan fund, but improved access to technical assistance can also help El Centro expand employment opportunities that increase household incomes.
Policies and Actions

ED Policy/Action 3.2.1: Improve access to small business financing and technical assistance

A staff person or a consultant should be assigned to inform self-employed entrepreneurs and small businesses about available financing from private banks: Imperial Valley SBDC, the SBA, the City’s revolving loan fund, and other small business lenders.

ED Policy/Action 3.2.2: El Centro should offer the full range of telecommunication services for business and households

El Centro should have the necessary infrastructure to allow for high quality broadband service for business and residents. A citywide wi-fi service would make a positive contribution to the City’s image and its attractiveness to new business investment.

ED Policy/Action 3.2.3: Support the development of home businesses, provided they do not adversely impact the surrounding neighborhood

Supporting the establishment of small home-based business encourages entrepreneurs to generate their own income sources. Firms with fewer than 20 employees accounted for 18 percent of private sector jobs in 2006, and nearly 25 percent of net employment growth from 1992 to 2005.2

Geographic Focus

Economic development goal #2 and the policies apply to the entire City and are not limited to any specific opportunity site.

ED Goal-3.3: Encourage sustainable Development practices

El Centro must comply with California’s greenhouse gas reduction legislation that will affect land use, transportation, buildings and energy, waste reduction, water conservation, and green infrastructure (AB 32 and SB 375). The State’s climate change requirements create an opportunity for El Centro to capitalize on recent investments in geothermal energy plants and solar energy farms. The General Plan update can encourage energy efficient systems, waste and water saving technologies, more compact land-use patterns, and other sustainable practices that will create new jobs.

Policies and Actions

ED Policy/Action 3.3.1: Partner with the IVEDC, Imperial County and other regional partners to attract renewable energy investment to El Centro

El Centro can benefit from investment in geothermal power plants, as well as wind and solar power facilities. The construction activities can generate new jobs and a sustainable source of energy for business activities. Operating and maintaining the renewable energy facilities can create long term, permanent jobs.

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2 See President’s Council of Economic Advisors, The Economic Effects of Health Care Reform on Small Business. July 25, 2009
ED Policy/Action 3.3.2: Evaluate the potential to attract “green” technology firms to El Centro, explore particular niches in the industry that El Centro may be able to attract, and formulate a strategy to attract new green tech firms.

Many southern California cities are aggressively pursuing green technology companies. The City should develop and implement a strategic plan that examines industry trends, catalogs existing green technology companies in Imperial County, and identifies the particular type of firms that El Centro would best serve with its ample industrial land. Competition from other jurisdictions should also be considered.

ED Policy/Action 3.3.3: Create incentives to encourage residential and commercial property owners to retrofit existing buildings with energy efficient and renewable energy technologies

Other southern California cities have adopted programs to encourage property owners to retrofit their buildings, and require renewable energy technologies be incorporated into new commercial and residential buildings. The City should identify examples of successful programs adopted elsewhere, and replicate other communities’ successful case studies.

Geographic Focus

Economic Development Goal #3 and the policies apply to the entire City and are not limited to any geographical area.

ED Goal 3.4: Create more shovel ready industrial sites

El Centro has a large inventory of undeveloped industrially zoned land, but very few improved industrial lots with streetlights, sidewalks, landscaping, and other amenities. The Centerpoint Business Park is an example of an improved industrial area that has successfully attracted businesses and allowed El Centro to compete with the cities of Imperial and Calexico.

ED Policy/Action 3.4.1: Utilize public/private partnerships to help finance the infrastructure improvements needed to create shovel ready business sites

It is often not feasible for property owners to privately finance water, sewer and other infrastructure improvements that are needed to create shovel ready industrial sites. Public/private partnerships can leverage additional investment that may be needed to implement industrial improvement projects. The Centerpoint Industrial Park is an example of a public/private partnership that financed a successful industrial park.

ED Policy/Action 3.4.2: Apply for federal and state grants and loans to fund the infrastructure improvements

Despite severe Federal and State fiscal constraints, a few grants and lending sources remain to help finance infrastructure improvements. The Economic Development Administration (EDA) offers grants to fund infrastructure improvements, but require applicants to demonstrate a commitment from a business to locate on the site. State CDBG offers grants with similar requirements.
Geographic Focus

Economic development goal #4 and the associated policies applies to vacant industrially zoned land at the El Centro Town Center Phase II, 8th Street Industrial Park Subdivision, Danenberg Industrial Site, South of El Centro Industrial Park, and the Azatti Property.

ED Goal 3.5: Continue to attract shoppers from Mexicali and neighboring communities

The City should initiate a promotional effort that continues to attract thousands of Mexicali shoppers to El Centro every day. The number of Mexicali shopping visitors may be expanded by a coordinated effort to promote the regional shopping center and El Centro’s other retail stores.

Policies and Actions

ED Policy/Action 3.5.1: Partner with anchor store retailers and the Chamber to promote El Centro as a regional shopping destination

The City should explore ways to expand promotional opportunities that attract shoppers from neighboring Imperial County communities and Mexicali. Continuation of El Centro’s role as a regional shopping destination is critical to the City’s fiscal health.

ED Policy/Action 3.5.2: Establish a business retention program to track and monitor shopping patterns

The City should establish a direct line of communication with the major retailers and shopping center owners regarding their business expansion and retention needs. Improved communications could facilitate City assistance with business expansion and retention issues such as traffic flow, construction management, signage, and other urban design topics.

Geographic Focus

Economic Development Goal #5 focuses on the destination retailers and shopping centers that include the Imperial Valley Mall, the Plaza at Imperial Valley, and the big box destination stores along Imperial Avenue. Smaller shopping centers and downtown El Centro are not regional shopping attractions.

ED Goal 3.6: Improve community amenities that make El Centro a better place to visit and reside

El Centro can become a more attractive visitor destination by improving the City’s physical attractiveness and upgrading community amenities

Policies and Actions

ED Policy/Action 3.6.1: Attract tourism support to businesses such as resorts, lodging facilities, restaurants, golf courses, water parks, and other recreational facilities

El Centro can attract businesses that support snowbirds and other visitors who enjoy the area’s desert climate and natural and recreational resources. Resorts, lodging facilities,
restaurants, golf courses and water parks are examples of tourism-support businesses that could locate in El Centro. However, competition with higher-end, more attractive visitor support facilities in Yuma and the Coachella Valley have constrained El Centro’s ability to attract new tourism support facilities.

ED Policy/Action 3.6.2: Upgrade and maintain City parks and recreational facilities

Continued maintenance and improvements of the public parks and sports fields (i.e. Stark Field) makes El Centro a better place to live and a more attractive community to visit.

Geographic Focus

Economic Development Goal #6 and the policies apply to the entire City and are not focused on any specific opportunity site.

ED Goal 3.7: Transform downtown El Centro into a mixed-use neighborhood

Downtown El Centro should be transitioned into a high-density neighborhood with a mix of retail, general commercial, office, and residential uses that attract people to live, work and play in the area. The former goal of revitalizing downtown as a retail-shopping destination should be abandoned.

Policies and Actions

ED Policy/Action 3.7.1: Encourage the development of new housing and live/work space that will attract people who may not have previously considered living downtown.

Market rate and affordable housing should be developed on vacant infill sites. Underutilized buildings should be redeveloped with a mix of residential and commercial uses. Space could be converted into live/work studios in order to attract people who may not have previously considered living downtown.

ED Policy/Action 3.7.2: Continue to invest in downtown urban design and streetscape improvements

The urban design and streetscape improvements that were started during the 1990s should be resumed with new investments to make the area more attractive.

ED Policy/Action 3.7.3: Encourage a mix of different sizes and types of downtown businesses

Attracting people and businesses back into the downtown will require flexibility and creativity. The City should encourage a variety of businesses that may need different types of spaces. Flexible zoning rules should be adopted to attract business and residents into the vacant downtown spaces.

ED Policy/Action 3.7.4: Provide financial support in the form of reduced rents to attract artists and non-traditional uses to occupy vacant space

The City could acquire some vacant downtown space, and lease it out to artists for a very low lease rates.
**Geographic Focus**

Economic Development Goal #7 and the policies are focused on the Main Street corridor between 8th and 4th Street, and between Broadway and State.

**ED Goal 3.8: Reduce the inventory of vacant commercial space**

El Centro should reduce the inventory of vacant shopping centers and other commercial space.

**Policies and Actions**

**ED Policy/Action 3.8.1:** Encourage and allow vacant and underutilized shopping centers to be transitioned into a mix of commercial retail, office, and/or other business uses

The City should encourage and consider proposals to redevelop the vacant shopping centers into alternative uses.

**ED Policy/Action 3.8.2:** Encourage mixed use infill development and the redevelopment of underutilized sites along the Adams Avenue corridor

The City should encourage vacant and underutilized infill sites to be developed or redeveloped with a mix of uses.

**ED Policy/Action 3.8.3:** Encourage the planned redevelopment of the Highway 86 railroad properties

The City should collaborate with the property owner to redevelop the abandoned railroad buildings for general commercial or office uses. The site could benefit from a planned approach, as some buildings may be able to be saved, but other buildings will need to be demolished.

**Geographic Focus**

Economic Development Goal #8 is focused on a limited number of sites along Imperial Avenue, the Adams Avenue corridor, and the Highway 86 railroad properties.

**ED Goal 3.9: Encourage more intensive development at underutilized shopping center sites**

El Centro should encourage proposals to more intensively develop vacant and underutilized shopping centers. Proposals to add more building square footage and reduce off-street parking requirements should be encouraged.

**Policies and Actions**

**ED Policy/Action 3.9.1:** Collaborate with the property owners to attract new uses with more building space and reduced parking

More intensive development can be achieved by redeveloping sites with a mix of uses.
ED Policy/Action 3.9.2: Collaborate with the property owners to transition underutilized shopping center sites into pedestrian friendly areas

The design and amenities incorporated into the redevelopment of underutilized sites should promote pedestrian movement, including shade and walking areas that separate pedestrians from moving vehicles.

Geographic Focus

Economic Development Goal #9 is focused on a limited number of sites along Imperial Avenue including the Valley Plaza Shopping Center, the former Heilig Meyers Center, the Valley Centerpoint Plaza, and the former Wal-Mart store.

ED Goal 3.10: Upgrade the Appearance of Abandoned and Underutilized Commercial Properties Until They are Revitalized

The appearance of the vacant and underutilized shopping centers should be improved in the short-term, and in advance of redevelopment or revitalization.

Policies and Actions

ED Policy/Action 3.10.1: Expand code enforcement and require property owners to maintain vacant and underutilized commercial sites

A number of underutilized shopping center sites have become blighted with graffiti, broken windows and unmaintained parking lots. The owners should be required to maintain the properties, which will make the sites more attractive to new investors and improve the City’s appearance.

ED Policy/Action 3.10.2: Encourage property owners to improve the appearance of boarded up buildings by collaborating with local artists

The City should encourage property owners to improve the look of the vacant and underutilized shopping center sites by allowing local artists to create murals, sculptures, and other public art.

ED Policy/Action 3.10.3: Collaborate with property owners to utilize the vacant parking lots with temporary activities

People could be attracted to return to the vacant sites by establishing temporary activities on the unused parking lots such as cook offs, art shows, farmer’s markets and other similar activities.

Geographic Focus

Economic Development Goal #10 is focused on a limited number of sites along Imperial Avenue.

ED Goal 3.11: Convert a Portion of Vacant Industrial Land Into Business Park or General Commercial Uses

The current General Plan land-use designations leave El Centro with a 64-year inventory of undeveloped industrial land, some of which can be converted to other business uses.
Essentially, El Centro has an oversupply of undeveloped industrial land, and a lack of land designated for office and business-park uses outside of the Main Street corridor.

**Policies and Actions**

**ED Policy/Action 3.11.1:** Encourage and allow some industrially zoned vacant land to be developed for general commercial or business park uses.

Alternative business uses for undeveloped industrial land should be considered because the absorption of industrial land is very slow, and it is difficult to finance the needed infrastructure improvements is difficult.

**ED Policy/Action 3.11.2:** Proposals to convert industrially zoned land to residential uses should be discouraged.

Conversion to residential land use will remove sites from job creating business uses, and may set the stage for future land use conflicts.

**Geographic Focus**

Economic Development Goal #11 applies to the 120-acre Abatti site and the 18 acres of industrially zoned land within the El Centro Town Center Phase II site. The goal also applies to the built out Highway 86 railroad site that needs to be redeveloped.

**ED Goal 3.12:** Complete the development of the Imperial Valley Commons site

A new Kohl’s was recently attracted to the Imperial Valley Commons site, which will encourage additional new investment for commercial uses. The buildout of the partially completed site is an important economic development goal.

**Policies and Actions**

**ED Policy/Action 3.12.1:** Encourage and allow the site to be developed for a mix of general commercial, retail and business park uses

The General Plan update should allow and encourage the site to be built out as a mix of uses. The City should partner with the landowner and developers to implement infrastructure improvements needed to complete the site buildout.

**Geographic Focus**

Economic Development Goal #12 applies to the Imperial Valley Commons site.

**Goals, Policies And Actions For Targeted Opportunity Areas**

Table ED-2 below re-sorts the economic development goals, policies, and action steps for the 16 opportunity areas identified in Figure ED-1. The re-sort allows the reader to connect the goals, policies, and action steps with the individual opportunity areas. The number of each goal and policy is consistent with the citywide goals.
### Table ED-2
**Opportunity Area Goals and Policies**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>OPPORTUNITY AREA</th>
<th>ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT GOALS</th>
<th>ACTIONS &amp; POLICIES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Imperial Avenue Corridor</td>
<td>Reduce the inventory of vacant commercial space (ED Goal #8)</td>
<td>Encourage and allow the shopping center to be transitioned into a mix of commercial retail, office and/or residential uses (ED Policy 8.1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Encourage more intensive development at underutilized shopping centers (ED Goal #9)</td>
<td>Attract new uses with more building space and reduced parking (ED Policy 9.1)</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Transition the shopping center into a pedestrian friendly area (ED Policy 6.2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Imperial Valley Plaza</td>
<td>Reduce the inventory of vacant commercial space (ED Goal #8)</td>
<td>Add new uses with more building space and reduced parking (ED Policy 9.1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Encourage more intensive development at underutilized shopping centers (ED Goal #9)</td>
<td>Expand code enforcement and require property owner to maintain the site and the appearance of dilapidated buildings (ED Policy 10.1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Upgrade the appearance and maintenance of the shopping center until the property is revitalized or redeveloped (ED Goal #10)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Former Heilig Meyers Center</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Bowling Alley Site</td>
<td>Encourage the vacant parcel to be developed for recreation or entertainment related uses</td>
<td>Collaborate with the property owner to facilitate development of the vacant site</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Valley Centerpoint Plaza</td>
<td>Reduce the inventory of vacant commercial space (ED Goal #8)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Encourage more intensive development at underutilized shopping centers (ED Goal #9)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Encourage the property owner to attract new uses with more building space and reduced parking (ED Policy 9.1)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Transition the shopping center into pedestrian friendly areas (ED Policy 9.2)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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<td>Expand code enforcement and require property owner to maintain the site and the appearance of dilapidated buildings (ED Policy 10.1)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Collaborate with property owners to attract temporary uses to the unused parking in front of Imperial Avenue (ED Policy 10.2)</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
### TABLE ED-2 (continued)
**Opportunity Area Goals and Policies**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>OPPORTUNITY AREA</th>
<th>ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT GOALS</th>
<th>ACTIONS &amp; POLICIES</th>
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</table>
| 5. Former Wal-Mart Store | ▪ Reduce the inventory of vacant commercial space (ED Goal #8)  
▪ Encourage more intensive development at underutilized shopping centers (ED Goal #9)  
▪ Upgrade the appearance and maintenance of the shopping center until the property is revitalized or redeveloped (ED Goal #10) | ▪ Encourage the property owner to attract new uses with more building space and reduced parking (ED Policy 9.1)  
▪ Transition the shopping center into pedestrian friendly areas (ED Policy 9.2)  
▪ Expand code enforcement and require property owner to maintain the site and the appearance of dilapidated buildings (ED Policy 10.1)  
▪ Collaborate with property owners to attract temporary uses to the unused parking in front of Imperial Avenue (ED Policy 10.2) |
| 6. El Centro Town Center Phase II | ▪ Create more shovel ready industrial and business park sites (ED Goal #4)  
▪ Convert land zoned for regional airport (RAP) into business park uses (ED Goal #11) | ▪ Use tax increment financing and the City’s Capital Improvement Fund to finance the infrastructure improvements needed to create shovel ready sites (ED Policy 4.1)  
▪ Seek federal and state grants to fund the infrastructure improvements needed to create shovel ready industrial sites (ED Policy 4.2)  
▪ Encourage and allow some vacant RAP zoned land to be developed for business park uses (ED Policy 11.1) |
| Center City District | | |
| 7. Adams Avenue Corridor | ▪ Reduce the inventory of vacant commercial space (ED Goal #8)  
▪ Encourage and allow more intensive development at underutilized shopping center sites (ED Goal #9)  
▪ Upgrade the appearance and maintenance of abandoned and underutilized commercial properties until they are revitalized (ED Goal #10) | ▪ Encourage infill development and the redevelopment of underutilized sites along the Adams Avenue corridor  
▪ Collaborate with property owners to attract new uses with more building space to vacant and underutilized sites (ED Policy 9.1)  
▪ Expand code enforcement and require property owners to maintain the sites and the appearance of dilapidated buildings (ED Policy 10.1) |
### Table ED-2 (continued)
**Opportunity Area Goals and Policies**

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<tr>
<td>8. Downtown Main Street Corridor</td>
<td>• Transform Downtown El Centro into a mixed use neighborhood that attracts people to live, work and play in the area (ED Goal #7)</td>
<td>• Encourage the development of new housing and livework space that will be attractive to people who may not have previously considered living downtown. (ED Policy 7.1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Continue to invest in downtown urban design and streetscape improvements (ED Policy 7.2)</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Encourage a mix of different sizes and types of downtown businesses (ED Policy 7.3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Provide financial support in the form of reduced rents to attract artists and non-traditional uses to occupy vacant space (ED Policy 7.4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Implement Project Shape recommendations for improved parking, landscaping, and land use changes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Highway 86 Railroad Properties</td>
<td>• Reduce the inventory of vacant commercial space (ED Goal #8)</td>
<td>• Encourage and allow the site to be transitioned into a mix of commercial retail, general commercial or office uses (ED Policy 8.1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Upgrade the appearance and maintenance of abandoned and underutilized commercial properties until they are revitalized (ED Goal #10)</td>
<td>• Expand code enforcement and require property owners to maintain the sites and the appearance of dilapidated buildings (ED Policy 10.1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Industrial Areas</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. 8th Street Industrial Park Subdivision</td>
<td>• Create more shovel ready industrial and business park sites (ED Goal #4)</td>
<td>• Use tax increment financing and the City's Capital Improvement Fund to finance the infrastructure improvements needed to create shovel ready sites (ED Policy 4.1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Convert the industrially zoned land into business park or general commercial uses (ED Goal #11)</td>
<td>• Seek federal and state grants to fund the infrastructure improvements needed to create shovel ready industrial sites (ED Policy 4.2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Encourage and allow some vacant industrially zoned land to be developed for general commercial or business park uses (ED Policy 11.1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Danenberg Industrial Site</td>
<td>• Create more shovel ready industrial and business park sites (ED Goal #4)</td>
<td>• Use tax increment financing and the City's Capital Improvement Fund to finance the infrastructure improvements needed to create shovel ready sites (ED Policy 4.1)</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Seek federal and state grants to fund the infrastructure improvements needed to create shovel ready industrial sites (ED Policy 4.2)</td>
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| 12. South of El Centro Industrial Park | - Create more shovel ready industrial and business park sites (ED Goal #4) | - Use tax increment financing and the City's Capital Improvement Fund to finance the infrastructure improvements needed to create shovel ready sites (ED Policy 4.1)  
- Seek federal and state grants to fund the infrastructure improvements needed to create shovel ready industrial sites (ED Policy 4.2) |
| 13. Abatti Property | - Create more shovel ready industrial and business park sites (ED Goal #4) | - Use tax increment financing and the City's Capital Improvement Fund to finance the infrastructure improvements needed to create shovel ready sites (ED Policy 4.1)  
- Seek federal and state grants to fund the infrastructure improvements needed to create shovel ready industrial sites (ED Policy 4.2)  
- Encourage and allow some vacant industrially zoned land to be developed for general commercial or business park uses (ED Policy 11.1)  
- Proposals to convert industrially zoned land to residential uses should be discouraged (ED Policy 11.2) |
| **New Shopping Areas Along South Dogwood Road** | | |
| 14. The Plaza @ Imperial Valley | - Continue to attract shoppers from Mexicali and neighboring communities (ED Goal #5)  
- Reduce the inventory of vacant commercial space (ED Goal #8) | - Promote the shopping center in Mexicali (ED Policy 5.1) |
| 15. Imperial Valley Mall | - Continue to attract shoppers from Mexicali and neighboring communities (ED Goal #5) | - Promote the shopping center in Mexicali (ED Policy 5.1)  
- Encourage and allow the site to be developed for a mix of commercial retail, business park uses (ED Policy 12.1)  
- Partner with the property owner to complete the infrastructure improvements required for site buildout (ED Policy 12.2) |
| 16. Imperial Valley Commons | - Complete the development of the Imperial Valley Commons site (ED Goal #12) | |
FIGURE ED-1
El Centro’s Key Economic Development Opportunity Sites

Area 1 - Valley Plaza Shopping Center
Area 2 - Former Heilig Meyers Center
Area 3 - Rowley Alley Site
Area 4 - El Centro Shopping Center
Area 5 - Former Wal-Mart Store
Area 6 - El Centro Town Center Phase II
Area 7 - Adams Avenue Corridor
Area 8 - Main Street Corridor
Area 9 - Plaza @ Imperial Valley
Area 10 - Imperial Valley Mall and Surrounded Pads
Area 11 - Imperial Valley Commons
Area 12 - 6th Street Industrial Park Subdivision
Area 13 - Abatti Property
Area 14 - Danenberg Industrial Site
Area 15 - Industrial Area South of El Centro Industrial Park
Area 16 - Industrial Area South of Centerpoint Business Park
Imperial Avenue Corridor

Area Goal 4.1: Valley Plaza Shopping Center

The Valley Plaza Shopping Center should transition into a mixed-use business center. The General Plan update should encourage the site to be more intensively developed with new business space, reduced parking, and amenities that encourage pedestrian activities.

Area Goal 4.2: Former Heilig Meyers Center

This underutilized shopping center should be more intensively developed with new business space and a reduced number of parking spaces. The site’s appearance should be upgraded and maintenance improved until the demand for new business space improves.

Area Goal 4.3: Bowling Alley Site

This area should encourage more recreation or entertainment-uses that complement the bowling alley. It is also important that the bowling alley remains a recreation and entertainment destination that is competitive in the regional marketplace.

Area Goal 4.4: Valley Centerpoint Plaza
(Former El Centro Shopping Center)

This underutilized site should be redeveloped or reused with a mix of uses that are compatible with the Imagine Charter School. The General Plan update should encourage the site to be more intensively developed with additional buildings and a reduced amount of land dedicated for parking. The vacant buildings should be properly maintained until the demand for new business space improves.

Area Goal 4.5: Former Wal-Mart Store Site

The former Wal-Mart site should be redeveloped with a mix of business uses. More intensive development on the site should be encouraged along with a reduced amount of land reserved for parking. The vacant building should be properly maintained until the demand for new business space improves.

Area Goal 4.6: El Centro Town Center Phase II

The General Plan should encourage the build out of this 30-acre area with a mix of office, business-park uses, recognizing that site buildout is constrained by the area’s location within the regional airport zone. A public-private partnership could help finance the infrastructure improvements needed to develop shovel-ready business sites.
**Center City District**

**Area Goal 4.7: Adams Avenue Corridor**

Vacant and underutilized sites within this corridor should be developed or redeveloped for higher and better uses. The attraction of new private investment can upgrade the appearance and economic vitality of the corridor.

**Area Goal 4.8: Downtown Main Street Corridor**

The downtown should be transitioned into a mixed-use neighborhood that includes retail, general commercial, office, and residential uses. Infill housing should be encouraged on vacant and underutilized lots. Flexible zoning should attract a diversity of people and businesses into the vacant downtown spaces. Project Shape recommendations for parking, landscaping and land use changes should be implemented.

**Area Goal 4.9: Highway 86 Railroad Properties**

This area should be transformed into general commercial or office uses. The dilapidated buildings should be maintained and the appearance improved until the site can be revitalized.

**Industrial Areas**

**Area Goal 4.10: 8th Street Industrial Park Subdivision**

Shovel ready business sites should be created for this 17 acres of vacant industrially zoned land. The effort will require a partnership between the private property owners, the City and federal and state agencies that may fund infrastructure improvements.

**Area Goal 4.11: Danenberg Industrial Area**

Shovel ready business sites should be created for the 27 acres of vacant industrially zoned land. The effort will require a partnership between the private property owners, the City, and federal and state agencies that may fund infrastructure improvements.

**Area Goal 4.12: South of El Centro Industrial Park**

Shovel ready business sites should be created for this 17-acre area of vacant industrial land. The effort will require a partnership between the private property owners, the City, and federal and state agencies that may fund Infrastructure Improvements.

**Area Goals 4.13: Abatti Property (South of Centerpoint Business Park)**

This 120-acre area should be developed with a mix of business uses. The General Plan update should allow the vacant industrially zoned land to be reclassified and developed for business park and/or office uses due to the weak demand for industrial space and strong demand for business park space. Shovel ready sites should be created for business park/office uses.
New Shopping Areas Along South Dogwood Avenue

Area Goal 4.14: Plaza @ Imperial Valley

The Plaza @ Imperial Valley Plaza should remain a competitive retail destination in the regional marketplace by a strong marketing effort that continues to attract corporate retailers to occupy the large spaces. Office and general commercial uses should be attracted to the newly built smaller spaces on the other side of the parking lot.

Area Goal 4.15: Imperial Valley Mall and Surrounding Pads

The covered mall should be promoted as Imperial County’s premier regional shopping destination by marketing the area to Mexicali shoppers, and improving the flow of traffic along Dogwood Avenue and at the Interstate 8 interchange.

Area Goal 4.16: Imperial Valley Commons

This area should complete the site built out by allowing the property owner to develop a mix of office, general commercial, and retail uses. The City should no longer require the property owner to develop another regional shopping center because of saturated demand for new retail space. The new Kohl’s should be promoted to Mexicali shoppers.

***