Chapter 6

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ELEMENT

Chapter 6: Economic Development Element

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I. Background

Purpose

In a market-based and private sector-led system, the primary driver of overall development in a given area is its economy. This economy is affected by local, regional and to a certain extent, national and global factors. This Economic Development Element of the Area Plan contains Goals and Policies to anticipate and plan for these factors in order to ensure that sustainable economic development is achieved throughout the Antelope Valley in the years to come. This Element also aims to balance economic growth with the preservation of the unique rural character and rich environmental resources of the Antelope Valley.

Issues

The Antelope Valley has a number of competitive advantages that can help it become the premier destination for high tech manufacturing firms in aerospace and other cutting-edge industries. These include the abundance of large, flat and relatively less expensive land; availability of a variety of transportation options such as truck, rail and air; close proximity to renewable energy sources; and other such factors. One issue facing the Antelope Valley in terms of Economic Development is its physical distance from the major urban areas of Los Angeles County. Thus, people who live in the area but work elsewhere or vice versa, may have very long home-work commutes. An improved jobs-housing balance will provide a vibrant economy in the Antelope Valley.

Vision and Strategy

The Area Plan's Vision Statement requires this Element to address the growing population's need for employment opportunities. This Area Plan provides for a jobs-to-household ratio of approximately 1.3 jobs for every household in the unincorporated Antelope Valley, a far improvement from the ratio of approximately one job for every five households established by the previous 1986 Antelope Valley Areawide General Plan.

The primary strategy of this Area Plan is to identify more areas appropriate for light and heavy industrial uses. These are areas in close proximity to major transportation corridors; and/or provide renewable energy, raw materials such as those from surface mining, a high concentration of skilled labor force, or other such important components for a successful and sustainable economy.

II. Goals and Policies

Goal ED1: A healthy and balanced economic base in the Antelope Valley that attracts a wide range of industries and businesses and provides high-paying jobs for local residents.

High-tech Manufacturing

With the availability of land, easy access to transportation corridors and proximity to renewable energy resources, the Antelope Valley is a prime destination for high-tech manufacturing to relocate to as they are more and more crowded out of their current urban locations. One of the main drivers of economic development in the Antelope Valley will be the relocation of high-tech industries to appropriate locations in the unincorporated Antelope Valley

- Policy ED 1.1: Promote the continued development of regional commercial and industrial employment centers in economic opportunity areas in the Antelope Valley.
- Policy ED 1.2: Allow the development of commercial and industrial uses at the Palmdale Regional Airport site, provided that those uses are compatible with airport operations and do not restrict or prohibit future expansion of the airport.
- Policy ED 1.3: Support the growth of "high-tech" industries to employ the Antelope Valley population's highly educated workforce.

Transportation and Logistics

As manufacturing and other industrial activities in the Antelope Valley increase, so will the demand for transportation and logistics services. With a wide expanse of relatively flat terrain and the availability of a variety of transport options such as by truck, rail or air, the Antelope Valley is poised to attract a number of companies specializing in logistics services.

- Policy ED 1.4: Support the development of the High Desert Corridor and the Northwest 138 Corridor Improvement projects to improve the east-west movement of goods, particularly between the Antelope Valley and the industrial areas of Kern and San Bernardino counties and beyond.
- Policy ED 1.5: Promote the development of an "Inland Port" in the Antelope Valley, providing additional employment in the trade and logistics sectors.
- Policy ED 1.6: Support the development of a range of travel options that better connect the Antelope Valley to existing regional trade and employment in other regions, including the High Desert Corridor and the Northwest 138 Corridor Improvement Projects.

Agriculture

The AV has vast expanses of land that are suitable for large-scale farming and other agricultural activities. The AV Area Plan will encourage and continuation and possible expansion of such activities in order to ensure that agriculture continues to be one of the main economic drivers of growth in the area.

- Policy ED 1.7: Promote farming and other agricultural activities that contribute to the Antelope Valley economy.
- Policy ED 1.8: Promote alternative sources of income for farmers, including commercial and industrial activities, to supplement their income during low production years and encourage them to continue farming in the Antelope Valley.

- Policy ED 1.9: Support water management projects, including the use of modern technology to increase available water supply in the area, in conjunction with the Integrated Regional Water Management Plan.

Renewable Energy

The demand for renewable energy in California is expected to dramatically increase in the near future. The AV has one of the most abundant sunshine in the country. This, along with the availability of undeveloped open spaces, gives the AV a lot of potential for solar energy development as well as other forms of renewable energy sources.

- Policy ED 1.10: Promote small-scale, household based renewable energy systems to enable Antelope Valley residents to become energy independent.
- Policy ED 1.11: Encourage the development of utility-scale renewable energy projects at appropriate locations and with appropriate standards to ensure that any negative impacts to local residents are sufficiently mitigated.
- Policy ED 1.12: Adopt regulations that ensure that local residents receive a fair share of the benefits of utility-scale renewable energy projects that are commensurate to their impacts.
- Policy ED 1.13: Ensure early discussions with Edwards Air Force Base and U.S. Air Force Plant 42 regarding new industries, such as utility-scale renewable energy production facilities, to limit potential impacts on mission capabilities.

Construction and Housing

The growth of the cities of Palmdale and Lancaster, as well as the increase in economic activity in the AV as a whole, will spur demand for new housing and other construction projects. The Antelope Valley Area Plan identifies the appropriate areas for this residential growth to occur and promote a variety of different types of residential development to occur there.

- Policy ED 1.14: Promote appropriate types of residential development in the vicinity of existing communities and town centers that are in reach of existing infrastructure and utilities.
- Policy ED 1.15: Where appropriate, promote residential development as part of a wider mixed-use strategy in communities that desire such uses in their areas and where plans for major infrastructure and facilities are currently underway. These areas have been identified as economic opportunity areas as shown in the Land Use Policy Map (Map 2.1) of this Area Plan.

Recreation, Tourism and Filmmaking

The vast open spaces, unique landscape and natural resources of the AV make it an ideal destination for recreational activities, tourism, filming and other industries that put a premium on preservation of the natural environment. The Antelope Valley Area Plan aims to protect and preserve these resources, while promoting compatible activities that allow landowners to derive economic benefit from their properties.

- Policy ED 1.16: Preserve the scenic resources of the Antelope Valley, including Scenic Drives, Significant Ridgelines and Significant Ecological Areas, in such a~~s~~ way that can contribute to the economic activities in the area.
- Policy ED 1.17: Promote uses and activities that rely on the natural state of the environment to take advantage of the vast areas of relatively undisturbed natural areas in the Antelope Valley. These include recreational, tourism and film-making uses.

Regional Economic Development Strategies

The Antelope Valley is the largest Planning Area in Los Angeles County. Thus, there is a need to develop comprehensive and long-term economic development plans, not just at the local, but also the regional level. This will help ensure the orderly and sustainable economic development of the area in the long-term.

- Policy ED 1.18: Coordinate with the Los Angeles County Economic Development Corporation, the Greater Antelope Valley Economic Alliance, and other organizations to create and implement regional economic development strategies.
- Policy ED 1.19: Promote the creation of a four-year public university in the Antelope Valley to provide opportunities for continuing education and workforce development.
- Policy ED 1.20: Support the development of a range of travel options that better connect the Antelope Valley to existing regional trade and employment centers in other regions, including the High Desert Corridor and the Northwest 138 Corridor Improvement Project, as directed in the policies of the Mobility Element.
- Policy ED 1.21: Ensure early discussions with Edwards Air Force Base and U.S. Air Force Plant 42 regarding new industries, such as utility-scale renewable energy production facilities, to limit potential impacts on mission capabilities.