



IMPERIAL COUNTY 2020 STRATEGIC PLAN

December 22, 2015

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Over the past nine months the consultants have collaborated with members of the Imperial County Board of Supervisors, the CEO's office, county department heads, county staff and other stakeholders in compiling this 2020 Imperial County Strategic Plan.

The intent of this plan is to provide the context within which the county and region can plan and carry out specific actions to achieve measurable results toward the strategic priorities – or goals.

Through this collaborate approach and effort, the Board of Supervisors' has established both a Mission and Vision Statement as well as endorsed four strategic goals that will serve as guiding principles for the implementation of strategies to achieve the shared Vision for Imperial County. The Vision for Imperial County is reflected as follows:

*“Building opportunity by leading California’s renewable energy future
while remaining true to our rich agricultural heritage”*

In addition, centric to the development of the implementing strategies was the Mission Statement which is articulated as follows:

*“To provide a five-year framework to improve
quality of life in Imperial County”*

Goal 1 -- Identity & Image:

Imperial County's policy is: To cultivate a strong sense of community pride by enhancing the environment, creating opportunity and articulating the county's issues and assets to the world.

Goal 2 -- Economic Development and Job Creation:

Imperial County's policy is: Develop mechanisms to foster a robust economy, solid educational opportunities and jobs.

Goal 3 -- Customer Service/Efficiency:

Imperial County's policy is: Create a culture of customer service excellence among all county departments and constituent agencies.

Goal 4 -- Infrastructure/Sustainability:

Imperial County's policy is: Foster efficient utilization of all resources in Imperial County: human, natural and environmental.

Specific objectives have been identified for each goal and more will be developed as this plan evolves. The plan is designed to be a flexible “live” document that can be adjusted depending upon the county’s needs through 2020.

This plan provides the context within which the county and region can plan and carry out specific actions to achieve measurable results toward the four identified strategic priorities. While this plan looks ahead five years, there have already been solid results as outcomes even as the process moves forward.

PROCESS

In early planning meetings with county officials it became clear that this would be a non-traditional strategic planning process in which a number of drivers would dictate its direction.

The Board of Supervisors, county administrative staff and department heads had a firm grasp of issues facing Imperial County as possible solutions to challenges ahead. Through a series of collaborative sessions, many additional creative ideas surfaced.

The process began with a special board workshop meeting on March 10, 2015, held in the County’s Public Health Department training room.

Attendees included the Board of Supervisors, the CEO and members of his staff, county department heads and some members of the public.

The Imperial County strategic planning workshop focused on both internal county operations and on broader regional issues in a modified SWOT (strengths/weaknesses/opportunities/threats) analysis. Ideas shared during the analysis, structured brainstorming and ensuing discussions were captured and given priority rankings by workshop participants.

Following the workshop, the consultants analyzed the comments and ideas recorded and identified four major areas of focus, which the Board of Supervisors on May 12 ratified as the goal areas for the County Strategic Report.

Since May, a series of collaborative sessions has been held with committees of supervisors, the CEO’s office, department heads and many others to further clarify objectives, strategies and specific projects aimed at meeting the goals established by the Board of Supervisors. Their discussions have been both visionary and grounded on the realities of finite budgets, staffing and ongoing responsibilities. As discussion and work on the draft plan continued, some departments followed the direction of the goals set by the Board to propose and implement programs.

Concurrently, the consultants conducted searches of existing databases to ensure the county’s strategic plan is grounded on a deep understanding of the demographic, economic and environmental issues that affect the region. In addition to a review of other existing strategic plans within Imperial County, the consultants searched state and federal statistics and studies about the region. That data is included as a backup to the Strategic Plan.

OUTCOMES

The Strategic Plan contains a mission statement for the plan and vision statement that encapsulates the magnitude of the Board of Supervisors' aspirations for the county. Those statements were discussed and refined at board meetings on Oct. 27 and Nov. 24, 2015.

Objectives have been proposed to meet the goals and an Action Tracker Tool has been developed that outlines the series of strategic actions and programs that have been developed through extensive discussions with committees of Board of Supervisors, and the county management team.

Meetings with committees of the Board of Supervisors and later meetings with the county CEO and his staff and department heads provided information key to the draft plan's development. Notes from those meetings are available for review as Attachment #1.

A complete list of the ideas offered during the Strategic Planning workshop, including the participant ratings, is available for review as Attachment #2.

While not every idea that came up during the workshop or in smaller group meetings is evident in the projects proposed, they all were essential steps in the process. Moreover, all the ideas are important to keep and consider as they may prompt the development of future programs or projects.

It is crucial to maintain this plan as a "live" document. The consultants have recommended that the following steps be taken to ensure its implementation results in the actions needed to realize the board's vision:

1. Link the budget process to the Strategic Plan by identifying and prioritizing projects and ties to the plan's goals;
2. Have Strategic Plan projects identified in regular agenda items and encourage department heads to include updates on their work on Strategic Plan related projects in their reports to the Board;
3. Expect and encourage department heads to propose additional projects that further the four Strategic Plan goal statements;
4. Have the Imperial County Strategic Plan 2020 posted on the county website to insure all county employees and the general public have access to the information;
5. Set time annually to evaluate and, when necessary, modify the Strategic Plan prior to the start of the county budget process.

2020 Imperial County Strategic Plan

Vision: *“Building opportunity by leading California’s renewable energy future while remaining true to our rich agricultural heritage”*

Mission: *“To provide a five-year framework to improve quality of life in Imperial County”*

Core Values:

Efficiency

Listening

Continuous Improvement

Professionalism

Caring

Collaboration

2020 Strategic Plan Goals and Policy Statements

Goal 1 -- Identity & Image

Imperial County’s policy is: *To cultivate a strong sense of community pride by enhancing the environment, creating opportunity and articulating the county’s issues and assets to the world.*

Goal 2 -- Economic Development and Job Creation

Imperial County’s policy is: *Develop mechanisms to foster a robust economy, solid educational opportunities and jobs.*

Goal 3 -- Customer Service/Efficiency

Imperial County’s policy is: *Create a culture of customer service excellence among all county departments and constituent agencies.*

Goal 4 -- Infrastructure/Sustainability

Imperial County’s policy is: *Foster efficient utilization of all resources in Imperial County: human, natural and environmental.*

2016-2019 Imperial County Strategic Plan Objectives

Goal 1: IDENTITY/IMAGE

- Objective 1.1: Develop mechanisms to enhance the appearance of Imperial County and cultivate community pride through beautification projects, elimination of blight and graffiti.
- Objective 1.2: Create a strong sense of community pride.
- Objective 1.3: Develop and implement a comprehensive, region-wide public relations program for Imperial County.
- Objective 1.4: Collaborate with other public and private agencies to advocate with one voice for the region at the state and federal level.
- Objective 1.5: Enhance educational attainment and higher education opportunities locally through collaboration with existing educational organization such as ICOE, IVC and SDSU-IV and other public and private educational institutions.
- Objective 1.6: Explore and enhance tourism activities that focus on unique attributes of Imperial County.
- Objective 1.7: Continue to promote rehabilitation of the Salton Sea.

Goal 2: ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT/JOB CREATION

- Objective 2.1: Collaborate with economic development organizations and agencies to update and implement strategies to stimulate development, including but not limited to, renewable energy, call centers, industrial parks and commercial centers.
- Objective 2.2: Cultivate proactive industrial development mechanisms to enhance new drivers for industrial development (i.e. Holtville Airstrip, Keystone Planning area).
- Objective 2.3: Continue collaborative efforts and leadership to create a sustainable solution for the Salton Sea that fosters economic development and protects the health and environment for the region.
- Objective 2.4: Continue and expand efforts to develop adequate housing for all segments of the community.

Goal 3: CUSTOMER SERVICE

- Objective 3.1: Use technology to enhance customer access to information and service from Imperial County.
- Objective 3.2: Enhance county services, and access to county services to remote, rural communities.
- Objective 3.3: Develop training to enhance customer service in all county departments.

Objective 3.4: Develop incentives to honor excellence in employee customer service.

Objective 3.5: Coordinate efforts to combine all county departments into one Operation Center Campus Plan.

Goal 4: INFRASTRUCTURE/SUSTAINABILITY

Objective 4.1: Examine Imperial County's infrastructure needs through 2020 and develop plan to address identified needs.

Objective 4.2: Enhance communication and cooperation with local, state and federal agencies to address mutual concerns and critical issues throughout Imperial County.

Objective 4.3: Preserve and enhance existing agricultural land and open space.

Objective 4.4: Continue maintaining and repairing the county's 2,600 miles of roads through the judicious use of Measure D funds and other funding opportunities.

Objective 4.5: Implement countywide measures to make maximum use of alternative energy resources.

**COUNTY OF IMPERIAL
2020 STRATEGIC PLAN
ACTION TRACKER TOOL**

FINAL 12-22-15

GOAL	POLICY	OBJECTIVE	STRATEGIC ACTION	TIME FRAME	RESOURCES / RESPONSIBLE PARTY	MEASUREMENT OF OUTCOME
Identity & Image	To cultivate a strong sense of community pride by enhancing the environment, creating opportunity and articulating the county's issues and assets to the world.	1.1: Develop mechanisms to enhance the appearance of Imperial County and cultivate community pride through beautification projects, elimination of blight and graffiti.	1.1.1: Continuously review competitive grant opportunities to finance cleanup and fund beautification projects.	Continuous	Community & Economic Development Department (CED)	Report to Board of Supervisors by March 2016
		1.2: Create a strong sense of community pride.	1.2.1: Develop pilot projects to build community centers in rural town sites that develop pride and ownership to encourage elimination of blight. Target one project at a time, such as a water slide at Wiest Lake.	June 2016	CEO's Office, Planning & Development and Community & Economic Development Department	Report to Board by June 2016 by Planning and Library on impact opening Heber Community Center has on community.
			1.2.2 Develop an award program to honor outstanding citizen contributions to the community.	March 2016	CEO/Board of Supervisors	Board adopt program March 2016.
			1.2.3 Create a code enforcement officer program to help keep properties up to code to help communities build and maintain a sense of pride.	Sept. 2016	CEO/Planning	
		1.3: Develop and implement a comprehensive, region-wide public relations program for Imperial County.	1.3.1: Hire a county Public Information Officer.	Completed	CEO's Office and HR Department	PIO hired Nov. 2015.
			1.3.2: Develop a county communication plan and policies including but not limited to social media and web content policies.	Aug. 2016	CEO's Office - Public Information Officer	Policies submitted to Board for approval Aug. 2016
			1.3.3: Install new county display in State Capitol.	Completed	CEO's Office	Dedication ceremony held by March 2016
		1.4: Collaborate with other public and private agencies to advocate with one voice for the region at the state and federal level.	1.4.1: Coordinate with IVEDC, SBDC, COLAB, Farm Bureau, the Work Force Development Board and County Economic Development to meet needs of business development.	Continuous	CEO's Office, Governmental Relations, PIO	Develop a plan and common messages for presentation to Board by Jan. 2017.
			1.4.2 Establish regular calendar of meetings with local agencies that have state and national advocacy efforts to develop consensus on approaches to articulate county issues to legislative bodies.	March 2016	CEO's Office, Governmental Relations	Incorporate outcomes of meetings into routine reports to Board by March 2016.
			1.4.3 Hold joint meeting with Board of Supervisors and IID twice a year.	March 2016	CEO's Office	
		1.5: Enhance educational attainment and higher education opportunities locally through collaboration with ICOE, IVC and SDSU-IV as well as other public and private educational institutions.	1.5.1: Appoint county representative to P-16 Council.	June 2016	CEO/Board of Supervisors appoint	
			1.5.2: Appoint County Educational liaison to local boards of education and the SDSU-IV advisory board.	June 2016	CEO/Board of Supervisors appoint	
			1.5.3 Hold joint meeting with the Board of Supervisors and the Imperial Community College District Board of Trustees.	By Dec. 2016	CEO's Office	
		1.6: Explore and enhance tourism activities that focus on unique attributes of Imperial County.	1.6.1 Develop a "Discover Imperial County" Tourism Campaign.	Nov. 2017	PIO, CEO's office	
			1.6.2 Coordinate with Chambers of Commerce and other local agencies, including the Desert Museum, in implementation of tourism promotional efforts.	June 2016	PIO	
			1.6.3 Develop program to preserve the history of Tumco mine and Gold Rock Ranch.	Jan 2017	PIO	
		1.7: Continue to promote the rehabilitation of the Salton Sea.	1.7.1 Work with the Salton Sea Authority, IID, and state/federal agencies to insure adequate funding and political support for various alternatives including, but not limited to, the Red Hill Marina shallow wetland project and the sea-to sea concept.	Continuous through 2020	CEO's Office	

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GOAL	POLICY	OBJECTIVE	STRATEGIC ACTION	TIME FRAME	RESOURCES / RESPONSIBLE PARTY	MEASUREMENT OF OUTCOME
Economic Development & Job Creation	Develop mechanisms to foster a robust economy, solid educational opportunities and jobs.	2.1: Collaborate with economic development organizations and agencies to update and implement strategies to stimulate economic development including, but not limited to, renewable energy resources, call centers, industrial parks and commercial centers.	2.1.1: Have all planning and permitting departments use the same software to improve efficiency of the process, give developers greater access to information online through a shared enterprise system.	Commencing in March 2016	Planning Lead all permitting departments	Have system in place by Dec. 2018.
			2.1.2: Establish relationships via an Adhoc Committee and MOU's with binational Economic Development Organizations in Mexico and Canada such as CDEM, CDI, IVEDC, SDE and CALIBAJA	June 2016	CEO's Office	
		2.2: Cultivate proactive industrial development mechanisms to enhance new drivers for industrial development (i.e. Holtville Airstrip, Keystone Planning area).	2.2.1 Intensify efforts to develop the Holtville Airstrip consistent with allowable uses through such efforts as a Request for Interest (RFI) to solicit developer interest countrywide.	June 2016	CEO's Office	
			2.2.2 Promote existing industrial campuses such as Gateway of Americas CSA and inventory existing sites and continue to seek grant funding to complete infrastructure.	Starting June 2017	CEO's Office/ PIO	
			2.2.3 Explore AB 2 (Community Revitalization Authority) and other public and private funding sources to complete infrastructure and enhance industrial development.	June 2017	CEO's office/CED	
			2.2.4 Review Keystone Planning Area development study and determine next steps for implementation, such as issuing bonds. Consider similar studies for other development areas.	Dec. 2017	CEO's office/CED	
		2.3: Continue collaborative efforts and leadership to create a sustainable solution for the Salton Sea that fosters economic development and protects the health and environment of the region.	2.3.1: Develop consensus among state, federal, regional and binational stakeholders to mitigate impact of the shrinking Salton Sea.	Continuous through 2020	CEO's Office	
		2.4: Continue and expand efforts to develop adequate housing for all segments of the community.	2.4.1 Explore use of Enhanced Infrastructure Financing Districts (EFID).	June 2016	CEO's office/CED	Workshop for Board of Supervisors
			2.4.2 Review to ensure County General Plan Housing Element has appropriate tools to encourage housing development for all income levels. Consider amendments if necessary.	June 2018	CEO, Planning & CED	

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Customer Service & Efficiency	Create a culture of customer service excellence among all county departments and constituent agencies.	3.1: Use technology to enhance customer access to information and service from Imperial County.	3.1.1: Implement online access to assessed property value and assessment appeal information.	Continuous through 2020	County Assessor	
			3.1.2 Add additional online services such as business tax filing and access to property building records.	June 2016	County Assessor	
			3.1.3: Improve county telephone processes (i.e. on-hold music).	March 2016	CEO's office, IT	
			3.1.4 Continue outreach program to educate residents about property assessments.	Continuous	County Appraiser, PIO	
			3.1.5 Provide Public Access to Wi-Fi in all county facilities.	Dec. 2016	IT	
			3.1.6 Provide internet access to outlying areas.	June 2019	IT	
			3.1.7 Integrate access to county information via Social Media Program.	Dec. 2016	CEO's Office - Public Information Officer	
			3.1.8 Encourage all departments to make online services available to the public whenever possible.	June 2017	CEO's Office	
			3.1.9 Develop cash control and other policies to implement a pilot online payment options for county services starting with the Public Health Department.	Sept. 2016	CEO's Office, Public Health Lead, Auditor's	
		3.2: Enhance county services, and access to county services to remote, rural communities.	3.2.1 Provide part-time county services to outlying areas.	Jan 2017	CEO's Office	
			3.2.2: Design and install county digital information kiosks starting in county offices and then adding them in outlying communities.	Dec. 2016	CEO's Office	
		3.3: Develop training to enhance customer service in all county departments.	3.3.1: Work with appropriate providers to hold a customer service academy for county employees.	Dec. 2016	CEO's Office	
		3.4: Develop incentives to honor excellence in employee customer service.	3.4.1 Expand Employee Recognition Program to include Recognition for Excellence in Customer Service.	Jan. 2017	CEO's Office	
		3.5: Coordinate efforts to combine all county departments into one Operation Center Campus Plan.	3.5.1: Develop a County Operations Campus Center Plan including implementation and financing strategy.	June 2017	CEO's Office	
			3.5.2: Develop a "One Stop Permit Center" at County Operation Campus Center.	June 2017	CEO's Office	

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Infrastructure & Sustainability	Foster efficient utilization of all resources in Imperial County: human, natural and environmental.	4.1: Examine Imperial County's infrastructure needs through 2020 and develop plan to address identified needs.	4.1.1: Create working group to examine and identify operational and infrastructure needs.	Dec. 2016	IC/ICTC/ CalTrans/LAFCO	Working group to start meeting in June 2016.
		4.2: Enhance communication and cooperation with local, state and federal agencies to address mutual concerns and critical issues throughout Imperial County.	4.2.1: Create BOS ad hoc group to regularly meet with local, state and federal agencies to address mutual concerns and critical issues in the region.	Dec. 2016	CEO's Office	
		4.3: Preserve and enhance existing agricultural land and open space.	4.3.1: Review to ensure County General Plan Conservation and Open Space Element has appropriate tools to encourage preservation of agricultural land and open space. Consider amendments if necessary.	April 2016	CEO's Office/Planning	
		4.4: Continue maintaining and repairing the county's 2,600 miles of roads through the judicious use of Measure D funds and other funding opportunities.	4.4.1: Develop a Public Works Rapid Response Team Pilot Project to handle immediate road issues such as potholes.	Dec. 2016	CEO's Office/Public Works	
			4.4.2: Analyze alternate funding for ongoing road improvements, such as a 1/2 cent sales tax in consultation with ICTC.	Dec. 2016	Public Works	
		4.5: Implement countywide measures to make maximum use of alternative energy resources.	4.5.1: Evaluate consultant's findings and determine energy conservation measures to be implemented in all county facilities. Evaluate the use of savings to further conservation efforts.	Jun-17	CEO's Office	
			4.5.2: Develop plan to increase use of electric/alternative fuel vehicles in county fleet.	Continuous thru 2020	CEO's Office	

IMPERIAL COUNTY IN 2015

To provide context for this plan, it is important to take into consideration current population trends and other demographics.

Population

The State Department of Finance released its annual population report on May 1, 2015, that shows Imperial County is numbered among the fastest growing counties in the California. While San Joaquin County -- with an annual growth of 1.5 percent -- was the fastest growing county in the state, it was closely followed by Imperial and three San Francisco Bay area counties (San Francisco, Alameda and Contra Costa), each with a 1.3 percent growth rate. (Source: Department of Finance population report news release May 1, 2015).

The state report also listed the City of Imperial as being the 4th fastest growing city in California, based upon percent change from 2014.

The following table provides an annual comparison of population and growth between January 1, 2014 and January 1, 2015. Some of the numbers included with the city of Calipatria as well as the unincorporated area may include inmates in the Calipatria and Centinela State Prisons.

Imperial County Population			
CITIES	January 1, 2014	January 1, 2015	Percent Growth 2014 TO 2015
Brawley	25,967	26,273	1.2%
Calexico	40,653	41,033	.09%
Calipatria	7,533	7,466	-0.9%
El Centro	44,366	44,847	1.1%
Holtville	6,178	6,246	1.1%
Imperial	16,762	17,446	4.1%
Westmorland	2,311	2,333	1.0%
Unincorporated	37,228	37,785	1.5%
Total	180,998	183,429	1.3%

Source: California Department of Finance May 1, 2015

As can be seen by the table, about 21 percent of the population of Imperial County is located in unincorporated areas, which include 10 small communities and a number of colonias.

The population growth over the past 12 months has continued a years-long trend that has resulted in major changes in the retail sector of Imperial County as well as expansion of housing development, many of which ceased during the recession, but are now starting to pick up again.

Retail expansion has been most evident in development of the Imperial Valley Mall in El Centro and the Gran Plaza Outlets in Calexico. There are additional new major retail outlets currently under construction on Highway 86 between El Centro and Imperial as well as at Brawley’s southern city limits.

According to the State Department of Finance projections, Imperial County will experience a growth of about 25 percent over the next decade and by 2020 will top 200,000 in population.

	Imperial County	
	Total	Annual Average % Change
2000	143,151	1.65
2001	144,726	1.10
2002	147,185	1.70
2003	150,909	2.53
2004	153,937	2.01
2005	157,657	2.42
2006	162,532	3.09
2007	166,894	2.68
2008	170,104	1.92
2009	173,241	1.84
2010	174,528	1.16
2011	175,712	0.68
2012	179,138	1.95
2013	180,061	0.52
2014	180,672	0.33
2015	187,689	3.89
2020	211,973	12.944
2025	233,610	10.21

Location

Imperial County is home to approximately 180,000 residents which live and work within its seven primary cities (Brawley, Calexico, Calipatria, El Centro, Holtville, Imperial, and Westmorland) and eight unincorporated communities (Bombay Beach, Heber, Niland, Ocotillo, Palo Verde, Seeley, Winterhaven and Salton City). The county was established in 1907 and it is the last county to be established in California. The landmass forms the southeast corner of California as it is situated adjacent to San Diego County to the west, Mexico to the south and Arizona to the east. The landscape is comprised of approximately 4,597 square miles of pristine desert, mild mountain ranges, the Salton Sea and productive

year-round farmland in the Imperial Valley made possible by the abundance of water from the Colorado River via the All American Canal. Its location near major metropolitan areas of San Diego, Los Angeles, Phoenix and Mexicali-Mexico has allowed Imperial Valley to be one of the world's leading producers and exporters of agriculture and renewable energy. In addition, its rich natural beauty attracts Hollywood's film industry as many recent films use the valley as their backdrop. Also, its abundant resources draws tourists and recreational enthusiast to enjoy many activities such as hunting, off-road racing, camping, boating and rare bird watching especially around Salton Sea where a variety of rare migratory birds feed and breed before their long journey to and from home.

The eastern border of Imperial County is marked by the Colorado River. Imperial County is the ninth largest county in California. The City of Calipatria, located in the northern portion of the Imperial Valley, has an elevation of 180 feet below sea level, the lowest of any city in the Western Hemisphere. (Source 2014-15 CEDS Report)

While agriculture has remained Imperial County's primary industry, both its geological and desert location has made it a primary center of renewable energy resources.

As the 2014-15 CEDS report noted, "The County of Imperial of the 21st Century strives to be the nation's leader in renewable energy projects. Touting 42,000 megawatts of renewable energy resource potential, Imperial Valley has become a "hot-bed" for renewable energy projects employing current solar, geothermal, wind and biofuels technology. The pursuit of renewable energy is driven by California's mandate established in 2002 under Senate Bill 1078 to generate 33 percent of its electricity from renewable sources by 2020. The Valley's highly sought-after resources, available workforce, proximity to large population centers and large tracts of available land have attracted mega-investments for renewable energy development. With 2,000 MW of untapped geothermal resources, Imperial County is still the second largest geothermal energy-producing county in the nation, generating over 500 megawatts. The Imperial Valley encompasses nearly 500,000 acres of some of the world's most productive farmland and possesses the largest single water right on the Colorado River." (Source: 2014-15 CEDS report)

Agriculture

While there was a decrease in output in 2014, agriculture is still critical to the economy of the Valley.

According to the 2014 Imperial County Agricultural Crop and Livestock Report, gross production was valued at \$1.85 billion, which reflected a decrease of about 14 percent compared to 2013. The main reasons for this decrease included a reduction in livestock production and market prices; fewer and smaller replacement cattle; and warm winter weather that affected the winter vegetable harvest with an earlier product at lower market prices.

Cattle, which ranked for years as the county's No. 1 commodity, maintained that position in 2014 even with a decrease of 37 percent primarily due to the closure of the Brawley Beef plant and the ripple effect that had through cattle feeding operations.

Work is currently underway to reopen the plant but probably on a lesser scale than the previous operation. However, that would be a needed boost to the local cattle industry.

The crop report also reflected that the only category to show an increase in gross value in 2014 was Field Crops. Higher yields, higher market prices, and new high value commodities added to the "Misc. Field

Crops” category all contributed to the increase. This was despite a decrease of about 4 percent in harvested acres of Field Crops and Seed crop categories, according to the report. Bermuda grass seed showed the largest decline in harvested acres, decreasing by 11,726 acres (a decrease of 38%).

The agriculture report also reflected that 17,180 Federal Export Certificates were issued in the county to 91 countries. Mexico and Japan made up for 76 percent of the certificates. The Republic of Korea had 8 percent and China, 4 percent.

Export of Hay accounted for 46 percent of the commodities exported, followed by vegetables at 38 percent and seeds, 16 percent.

The following table is a listing of the top 10 commodities from the 2014 Agriculture Report:

Rank 2014	Commodity	Gross Value 2014	Rank 2013
1	Cattle	\$347,009,000	1
2	Alfalfa	\$219,766,000	2
3	Onions	\$129,026,000	8
4	Head Lettuce	\$91,336,000	3
5	Broccoli	\$89,719,000	4
6	Bermuda grass Hay	\$77,448,000	6
7	Sudan grass Hay	\$65,245,000	10
8	Spinach	\$57,010,000	19
9	Carrots	\$52,559,000	7
10	Wheat	\$47,750,000	12

Educational Attainment

While percentages have been going up, educational attainment in Imperial County, as measured by the percent of residents who have received a bachelor's degree or higher, remains an issue.

According to the US Department of Agriculture's Economic Research Service, 13.3 percent of Imperial County residents had completed at least a bachelors' degree in 2013—the most recent year found. Imperial County's percentage equals Tulare County. Only Lassen, Kings and Merced counties had lower educational attainment rates.

The 13 percent rate for Imperial County residents with bachelor's degrees is an increase of 3 percent from the rate listed in an economic development strategic plan developed in for Imperial County in 2006. The 2006 plan listed the county bachelor's degree rate at 10.34 percent.

Recent U.S. Census data also reflects that 32 percent of Imperial County's population age 25 and older has neither a high school or college degree while 22 percent have a high school diploma. <http://censusreporter.org/profiles/05000US06025-imperial-county-ca/>

Unfortunately, this attainment rate has been noticed nationally which compounds the county's image issues. In 2014, Yahoo rated the City of El Centro (which is the Metropolitan Statistical Area measured for the county) among America's least educated cities.

Imperial County Poverty Rate

While poverty is a serious issue in Imperial County, statistically it is helped by the county's low cost of living and social safety net programs such as CalFresh, CalWorks and other low income tax programs.

The California Poverty Measure was developed by the PPIC and the Stanford Center on Poverty and Inequality in 2012. It takes the official measure from the census Bureau (household income of \$24,000 per year for a family of four) and adjusts it for local cost of living and safety nets.

While using standard criteria, according to the PPIC, Imperial County's official poverty measure is 19.2 percent of the population. But when it applies cost of living and the effect of social safety net programs the rate for Imperial County drops to 13.4 percent. http://www.ppic.org/main/publication_show.asp?i=261

By comparison, San Diego County, which has an official rate of 14.5 percent, has an adjusted rate of 21.7 percent when cost of living and social safety nets are factored in. <http://www.ppic.org/main/mapdetail.asp?i=1396>

This table shows how Imperial County compared with the rest of the state using the 2012 California Poverty Measure. http://www.ppic.org/main/publication_show.asp?i=261

County	Poverty	County	Poverty	County	Poverty
Alameda	19.1%	Madera	22.6%	San Luis Obispo	16.5%
Alpine, Amador, Calaveras, Inyo, Mariposa, Mono, Tuolumne	15.0	Marin	16.0	San Mateo	18.0
Butte	21.3	Merced	19.0	Santa Barbara	23.8
Colusa, Glenn, Tehama, Trinity	17.6	Monterey, San Benito	24.5	Santa Clara	18.3
Contra Costa	17.1	Napa	16.0	Santa Cruz	20.6
Del Norte, Lassen, Modoc, Plumas	19.6	Nevada, Sierra	10.9	Shasta	14.8
El Dorado	13.3	Orange	22.5	Solano	18.1
Fresno	21.0	Placer	13.2	Sonoma	18.7
Humboldt	20.7	Riverside	21.2	Stanislaus	23.5
Imperial	13.4	Sacramento	19.5	Sutter, Yuba	19.6
Kern	18.7	San Bernardino	20.6	Tulare	25.2
Kings	17.0	San Diego	21.7	Ventura	19.1
Lake, Mendocino	24.4	San Francisco	24.4	Yolo	22.5
Los Angeles	26.1	San Joaquin	19.0		

Attachment #1

Examples of possible Imperial County Vision statements

To be a diverse community working collaboratively to attract industry, create jobs and opportunity

To create economic opportunity through collaboration

Opportunity ... community ... economic growth

A safe, vibrant and diverse community feeding and energizing California

A region that works and speaks with one voice to build the economy and create jobs

A community honoring its pioneering heritage by working together to build opportunities of the future

To become an example of how California's diverse desert communities can lead the nation in border cooperation as well as sustainable energy and agriculture production

To create educational opportunity and a thriving economy while remaining true to our small town values

To lead California's alternative energy future while remaining true to our agricultural heritage

To build quality of life through education and job creation

To be a model of how a region can rebuild itself

Attachment #2
Supervisors' Committee on Strategic Plan
CUSTOMER SERVICE Focus
May 21, 2015 Meeting Notes

Supervisor Mike Kelley, Ralph Cordova, Bill Gay and Sue Giller participated

Discussion/ideas:

- Move all permitting services to one location to make it easier for developers to get what they need.
- Could 1-stop permitting be provided a virtual service rather than a bricks and mortar place?
- Beef up the permitting/ planning departments to have one person doing one job to speed up the process, so a developer does not have to wait.
- Strengthen processes using technology to make permitting systems more efficient.
- Instill a customer-service mentality throughout the county.
- Have a human being answer the telephones rather than an automated system.
- How efficient does the county want to become? Is there a point when customer service and efficiency conflict?
- Develop a county customer service policy.
- Review and improve the new county phone system to make it easier for customers to reach a person and to get rid of current music. Maybe include historic or informative information about the county instead.
- See if some county services could be provided on line so customers would not need to talk to someone.
- Could some department requests for information or documents be provided online?
- Have the county install a kiosk or interactive screen in all county buildings to act as a guide for customers and to answer questions.

**Supervisors' Committee on Strategic Plan
IDENTITY/IMAGE Focus
May 21, 2015 Meeting Notes**

John Renison, Ray Castillo, Ralph Cordova, Bill Gay and Sue Giller participated

Goal 1: *Develop mechanisms to enhance the appearance of Imperial County through beautification projects, elimination of blight and graffiti.*

Discussion/ideas

- Concern about trash piling up in neighborhoods, particularly near entrances of some cities, which hurts neighborhood property values and damages region's image.
- Issues may include cost of dumping or inconvenience of getting to landfills
- County/cities could hold cleanup days and provide transfer stations, partner with New Creations, other organizations to provide labor for events
- Sometimes it's challenging to get cities and the county to collaborate on issues such as these.
- Concern was expressed about the need to do something about trash collecting along freeways/state highways
- Do seniors need any special assistance beyond what the county is already doing?
- The messages and music of the new county phone system are raising concerns and need to be tweaked

Goal 2: *Communications. Develop a comprehensive, region-wide public relations plan for Imperial County including local, regional and national traditional media as well as electronic media such as website, Facebook, e-journals and twitter.*

**Supervisors' Committee on Strategic Plan ECONOMIC
DEVELOPMENT/JOB CREATION Focus
May 21, 2015 Meeting Notes**

Jack Terrazas, Ralph Cordova, Bill Gay and Sue Giller participated

Goal 1: Collaborate with existing economic development organizations and agencies to update and implement strategies to stimulate development of renewable energy, call centers (outsourcing) and other job creating industrial clusters such as value-added agriculture.

Discussion/ideas:

- Ralph, just back from the ICSC RECon development conference in Las Vegas talked about the thousands of developers there that have very specific detailed information about the communities and what they want.
- The good news was there were more developers at the conference because the economy is improving.
- The bad news is that many of the developers won't consider a community such as I.C.
- The challenge is how to find the developers interested in building in a community with the location and demographics of Imperial County among the thousands out there that demand a specific set of criteria that we do not meet.
- Maybe I.C. needs to create its own market and sell that rather than spend time hunting around the thousands of developers at a trade show.
- Could I.C., for instance, market to supply change industries for biotech firms rather than to R&D firms themselves?
- Are there things the county could do to help local property owners build or attract development?
- Maybe the county needs to have its own booth at trade shows like RECon.
- A lot more research is needed.
- I.C. can take steps to become more business-friendly here offering wireless access in its buildings.
- I.C. should start talking/planning regionally with the cities and other agencies and that should be done prior to attending trade shows.

Goal 2: Cultivate proactive industrial development mechanisms to enhance new drivers for industrial development (i.e. Holtville Airstrip, Keystone Planning area, known geothermal resource areas, Mesquite Regional Landfill and others.)

**Supervisors Committee on Strategic Plan
INFRASTRUCTURE/SUSTAINABILITY Focus
May 22, 2015 Meeting Notes**

Ryan Kelley, Ray Castillo, Ralph Cordova, Bill Gay and Sue Giller participated

Discussion/ideas:

- **Hold an employee appreciation event and barbeque as an annual event at a large venue such as the fairgrounds or IVC.**

Goal 1: Develop a plan to meet Imperial County's infrastructure needs through 2020 by determining what currently exists and how it can best be utilized and enhanced in light of anticipated development and demographic changes.

Discussion/ideas:

- The county needs to have fiber optic capacity at its facilities in West Shores and Palo Verde
- Perhaps county could work with ICOE to use its cable.

Goal #2: Develop ways to enhance cooperation with CalTrans, BLM, cities and other agencies regarding critical issues and concerns throughout Imperial County.

Discussion/ideas

- CalTrans is often difficult to work with and get answers from, i.e. Chick Road.
- Issues of blight and debris along the freeway fencing affect the region's image negatively.
- Would CalTrans be willing to privatize its fencing or change the current situations in El Centro, Imperial?
- A better approach might be work on improving the relationship with the agencies instead of hitting the structural issues directly.

Goal #3: Preserve and enhance existing agricultural land and green space.

Discussion/ideas:

- The Board's support of agriculture will be updated and solidified when it acts on the renewable energy overlay zone.

Goal #4: Continue maintaining and repairing the county's 2,600 miles of roads through the judicious use of Measure D funds and other funding opportunities. And, develop a plan to reduce the county's commitment to maintain so many miles of roads by eliminating those with minimum usage.

Discussion/ideas:

- Perhaps the road issue of greatest concern is how to provide staff or other mechanisms so Public Works dispatch a rapid response to immediate needs without sacrificing ongoing maintenance and scheduled projects.

Goal # 5 Develop a plan to reduce the county's energy use through 2020.

Discussion/ideas:

- A consultant has approached the county repeatedly to talk about doing a study to determine ways its facilities can save energy. The consultant works for a financing group that would guarantee the cost savings if projects were built. It might be good to revisit the options available.
- The county could develop a policy to buy electric or more energy efficient vehicles even if they cost more.
- Perhaps APCD has funds available to offset the higher cost the county would have to pay for electric/energy efficient vehicles.
- The county could also become a leader in conserving another resource – water by setting aside money to zeroscape additional county buildings.
- By taking these steps, the county can become a community leader and inspire cities and others to conserve energy and water.
- What about installing timers and/or motion sensors on the lighting in all county buildings to save electricity.
- By requiring employees to turn off their computers at the end of the day the county can save energy and money.
- Many of these changes could be done right now.
- Could the county retrofit its facilities to be LEED certified?
- County could install EV charging station in county parking lots for county vehicles.
- It could install EV charging stations in parking spaces close to buildings to encourage employees to drive their own electric vehicles to work.
- What about charging \$1 to park under county solar shaded parking spaces and put money into fund for employees?

**Supervisors' Committee on Strategic Plan
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT/JOB CREATION Focus
May 26, 2015 Meeting Continuation Notes**

Next Steps:

- Collaborate with cities, chambers and county to develop a coordinated, regional development attraction focus for the ICSC Sept. 16-18 Western Division Conference in San Diego, by:
 - Develop a regional inventory of property available for development
 - Taking the issue to CCMA
 - Getting the Chambers of Commerce (Joint Chambers) together to talk about how to get the information
 - Collaborate with cities, county and SCAG to come up with the economic and demographic projection data
- Follow up with Michael Bracken
- Decide if there needs to be a new study to determine the industry clusters I.C. is most likely to attract

Discussion/Ideas

Goal 1: Collaborate with existing economic development organizations and agencies to update and implement strategies to stimulate development of renewable energy, call centers (outsourcing) and other job creating industrial clusters such as value-added agriculture.

- Maybe a new study is needed to identify those industry clusters most likely to be attracted to I.C. based on economics, location and demographics.
- It is really important to know what a developer/investor needs. El Centro connected with the man who developed the mall because he had a successful mall in Texas and wanted to build near the border. Sometimes other businesses will follow on the heels of a large developer that has already determined the area is good for building.
- I.C. needs an inventory list of available properties.
- Landowners and developers should be at industry attraction conferences with the county.
- The CEDS report has good data, but information taken to ICSC conferences needs to be targeted to what developers want.
- San Bernardino County, Riverside County and some of their cities presented a united front at the RECon conference that was very effective.
- I.C. needs to make its approach regional by including the cities.
- It is more difficult to attract development now because of the loss of RDA.
- What about bringing together a "Red Response Team" of local community leaders to help with regional industry attraction, like the Join Strike Fighter committee.
- It would be good to meet with the chambers and to take the issue to the CCMA to get ideas.
- Michael Bracken offered to talk about what's available and what he could offer.
- The county needs to have hard data, including growth projections, to show potential investors and developers.

- Have the county develop its own intermodal facility to attract development. It could be built on the UPRR north of I-8 or off Ogilby Road near the old Tumco Mine. Such a project could be financed with revenue bonds.

Goal 3: Continue collaborative efforts and leadership to create a sustainable solution for the Salton Sea that fosters economic development and protects the health and environment for the region.

- What about the Salton Sea?
- Why not develop something like Coachella's Stage Coach to attract tourism to the Salton Sea.
- Maybe there needs to be a broader strategic workshop for the board, county and others to talk more broadly about development ideas.
- Is it possible to pre-zone the Salton Sea to make it easier for renewable energy developers to site there? That is what the new energy overlay zone will do.

**Infrastructure/Sustainability Meeting
June 29, 1015**

Jeff Lamoure, Susan Moler, Armando Villa, Andy Horne, Ralph Cordova, Robin Hodgkins, Jim Minnick

Bill Gay, Sue Giller facilitated

Specific Projects:

- Develop the concept of pilot projects to build community in rural town sites that focus on clean up/build infrastructure
- Internet services for outlying communities
- Better coordination with agencies on roads, planning and growth issues

Discussion/ideas/issues:

- Need to define what infrastructure means
- The consensus of the group was county infrastructure includes:
 - Education
 - Transportation (including roads and bridges, rail, airport, transit)
 - Fiber optics
 - Utilities including water, sewer, power, natural gas.
 - Trash/landfills
- There is a lack of coordination between permitting agencies on infrastructure that is causing problems and will limit growth. For instance:
 - Issues with Brewer Road bridge in Imperial
 - County plan calls for widening Dogwood Road to 160 feet, but IID has build power lines and canals within that right of way
- Better coordination is needed, build relationships with other agencies
- Is an MOU needed with all the all the development, permitting and planning agencies –county, cities, IID?
- The inherent differences between the cities and the county contribute to the issues. Cities focus on micro economies while the county focuses on macro economies of the whole region.
- Right now the county isn't investing in the town sites, but is being pressured to
- County needs to balance the macro and the micro
- In areas where the county has done work to clean up the trash in a run down area, how do you keep the area from reverting to trashy?
- Trash service isn't available in many rural areas
- Why do people dump illegally?
- They are lazy, it's a habit, no trash service
- Could transfer stations be installed? Not without their own set of issues
- Use a carrot and stick approach. Like the tobacco tax, which is a really big stick that pays for advertising and services to prevent smoking. It works

- Maybe the county could develop a pilot project in a specific area to clean up a community and invest in community center or other infrastructure to strengthen the sense of neighborhood. If the pilot worked, the concept could be expanded
- Make sure the county strategic plan is written as a guiding document that supports the county's efforts to get grant funding
- Infrastructure is also internet
- Right now don't have sufficient infrastructure for County Center #4
- Libraries are becoming like internet coffee houses
- Maybe IVTA and chambers could be internet hubs outlying communities
- All county buildings should have Wi-Fi, but the county needs more band width
- If county wasn't in IVTA, would that free up enough money to invest in a dark fiber system?
- The county could do a pilot project in Seeley to use the Seeley Fire Station as the hub of a community Wi-Fi network.
- There is Wi-Fi at Sunbeam Lake that could be extended to Seeley
- The pilot project could be used in one community or a selected few in the county to test a concept before expanding to other communities
- A pilot project could be done in Heber with the community center now under construction
- Maybe the county could partner with the schools to extend the internet to more rural communities
- The county could use some of its Solar Community Public Benefits money to invest in internet infrastructure for rural areas

**Reclaiming Blighted Communities Meeting
June 29, 1015**

Esparanza Colio Warren, Bill Gay, Sue Giller

Specific Projects:

- Develop the concept of pilot projects to build community in rural town sites that focus on clean up/build infrastructure

Discussion/ideas/issues:

- CDGB projects might be a way of financing “pilot” projects to clean up and build the neighborhood culture to maintain the progress
- CDGB is a competitive grant process
- Used CDGB funds to hold community cleanups in Bombay Beach and Niland

Grants have been used in Winterhaven and Palo Verde

**Customer Service Meeting
Monday, June 15, 2015**

Imperial County Department heads, frontline staff, Ralph Cordova, Bill Gay

Discussion/ideas/issues

- A lot of people do not like the new automated phone system. There needs to be a way people can reach a real person easily
- Not all County campuses are on an automated phone system
- There needs to be consistency throughout county on customer service policies but the differing nature of each department's customer service needs also must be recognized.
- There should be consistent phone answering scripting
- There is a need for customer service training throughout the county. Should "shoppers" be considered? There needs to be specific training on how to handle tough constituents. Training is also needed on how to deal with people who are frustrated with the telephone system. There is a need to educate the public on how to use the system.
- There needs to be standardized procedures in dealing with abusive or hostile callers.
- Social Services has a procedure where one person is designated to deal with clients who are being difficult
- Surveying customers was also discussed to provide quantitative feedback on perceptions
- Music on hold was discussed in detail. Consistency is needed. Discussion centered around replacing music on hold with local or NPR radio station live broadcasts (in Spanish and English) Ideas also were put forward to develop county updates.
- Issues regarding Spanish Language callers were discussed. Even though they are asked whether they wish to speak English or Spanish (press 1 or 2), there is no way attendants know on the receiving end what language the caller has chosen. Can different ringtones be used?
- There needs to be a culture change regarding customer service: employees need to be held accountable.

Attachment #3

Imperial County Strategic Planning Workshop Brainstorming Group Prioritization (X=Number of Votes)

- **XXXXXXXXXX** Image of county
- Safe Community
- **X** Our strengths are governance/employees/people
- **XXX** Lowest per capita income in state - vision is to improve
- **XXX** Create a literate environment
- Need reasons for more people to come to IC
- Make it a more beautiful place
- **XXX** Higher ed full/ partner with SDSU, Cal Poly or other to have a full 4-year university here with an emphasis on ag/ energy
- Verge of energy producing cluster
- **X** Financial advantage
- **XXXXXXXXXX** Customer service
- **X** Senior friendly service
- **XXXX** Align resources
- Want others to view us as “big boy” – move to adult center
- **XX** Infrastructure
- Energy production
- Keystone planning area
- Salton Sea
- **XX** Affordable housing
- **XX** Create attractions for people to come to
- **X** Sunbeam Lake need more facilities to attract Snowbirds
- **XXX** Promote tourism
- **XX** Work with private sector to expand tourism/recreation
- **XX** Make it easier for business to move here
- Subtract blight
- Landscaping
- **XX** Create business friendly environment
- **X** Attract/invite investment
- **XX** Beautify entrances and downtowns
- **XXXX** Subtract blight
- Partner with local chambers of commerce
- **XX** Localize government services in outlying areas/create government portals
- **XXXX** Find common ground with other agencies – eliminate silos
- Revitalize communities – have them take ownership
- **XXXXXX** Develop e-commerce for county services in outlying areas
- County take lead – others will follow
- Eliminate “ivory tower” – have county services on wheels

- **XXX** Recognize what services county provides
- Customer service – better access on phone – eliminate delays
- **XX** Help desk
- Benefits of county
- Lack of large population
- Ability to go anywhere quickly
- No traffic
- Promote local events
- **XXXXX** Safe community
- **XX** More things to do
- Finding balance
- **XXXXX** Sense of community
- Friendly, caring community
- No conference facilities
- Perception can't easily get here
- **XX** Open fields – take advantage of ag tourism
- Location, location, location
- **XXX** Efficient
- **X** Energy friendly for seniors
- Powering up Southern California
- **XXX** Environmentally healthy
- Sustainable agriculture
- **XXX** Sustainability
- Greener
- **X** Prosperity
- Wider scope of public transportation
- Public bus capacity
- **X** Establish good working relationship with BLM
- **X** Veterans clinic in remote areas
- **XX** County road improvements – communicate processes
- **XXXX** Leverage our current assets
- One word
- **XXX** Promotion of region
- **X** Eliminate parochialism
- **X** Jobs – geothermal
- Destination
- Positive