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chapter five

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

The economic development element provides a set of goals, policies, and actions that are geared towards promoting sustainable, fair, and equitable economic growth in the City of Indio, diversifying the local economy, and improving overall quality of life. The economic strategies are intended to increase prosperity for Indio's residents and businesses and stimulate economic investment in the community. Indio's economic success depends on offering a variety of employment opportunities, maintaining and attracting high-quality residential projects and businesses, increasing tourism activity, promoting Indio's image as a safe and desirable place. This Element includes goals and policies that support a dynamic economic foundation for Indio that is capable of adapting to the ever-changing needs of the modern economy and conditions in the Coachella Valley.



INDIO CHAMBER OF COMMERCE
HISTORIC MURAL PROJECT-NO.1
HIGHWAY 99
TRAVELING THROUGH 3 COUNTRIES,
THIS HIGHWAY EXTENDED FROM THE
CANADIAN BORDER TO THE BORDER
OF MEXICO. ON ITS WAY SOUTH IT
PASSED THROUGH WASHINGTON, OREGON AND
CALIFORNIA. IT QUICKLY BECAME THE BUSIEST TRUCK
ROUTE IN THE NATION AND WAS REFERRED TO AS THE
MAIN STREET OF CALIFORNIA. ITS TOTAL LENGTH WAS
1754 MILES. HIGHWAY 99 FLOURISHED FROM 1925-1965
WHEN IT WAS DEALT A DEATH BLOW BY THE ESTABLISH-
MENT OF THE FREEWAY SYSTEMS FIRST INTRODUCED IN
THE 1940'S. TODAY ONLY 3 SMALL PORTIONS OF HISTORIC
HIGHWAY 99 STILL REMAIN. ESTABLISHED IN 1925.
DESIGN-DUANE FLATMO+PAINT-DUANE FLATMO+JEFF JORDAN

INDIO CHAMBER OF COMMERCE
HISTORIC MURAL PROJECT-NO.1

Key Considerations and Strategies

Indio has prepared an Economic Development Action Plan, which identifies strategies to strengthen and build upon the City's key assets and opportunities for economic growth. The Action Plan contains the following community goals:

1. Bolster Indio's tourism and hospitality sector
2. Strengthen Indio's existing retail base and recruit new retail development
3. Create livable communities and facilitate neighborhood revitalization
4. Promote Indio's image, identity, and opportunities
5. Be development ready
6. Seek alternative sources of sustainable revenue
7. Create new job opportunities

The Economic Development Element of the General Plan builds upon this foundation, taking steps to foster continued economic growth and prosperity. This Economic Development Element will provide policies that support the community goals and vision that is stated by the General Plan as a whole. The Element is closely tied to several other elements that are associated with the physical development of Indio. It is correlated to the Land Use and Community Design Element in that the development pattern, mix of land uses, and aesthetic improvements are important components of a balanced and healthy economy. It is associated with the Housing Element, which addresses the provision of housing for all income groups to support a diverse population and labor force. It is related to the Mobility Element, which addresses the variety of transportation options available to access job centers, shopping areas, schools, and public facilities. It is also associated with the Conservation Element, which establishes a framework for the responsible and efficient use of resources. Additionally, the Economic Development Element is related to the Parks and Recreation Element insofar as parks, recreational facilities, and community gardens attract users and visitors and offer opportunities to host special events or support other economic development activities.

Figure 5-1: Economic Development and Planning



Festival City

As the “City of Festivals,” Indio is recognized as a premier location for arts and entertainment, education, commerce, history, and culture. The City annually hosts a variety of world-renowned cultural festivals and events, such as the Coachella Valley Music and Arts Festival and the Stagecoach Country Music Festival, that attract nearly 1.4 million visitors. Increasing the ability of the City to capture a higher proportion of these taxable expenditures is an important opportunity. To approach this opportunity, the City can focus on expanding the development of tourism-related uses, specifically in Midtown, the Fantasy Springs Leisure and Hospitality District, Empire Polo Club Resort and Entertainment District, and Polo Square Lifestyle Zone. The addition of lodging, dining, and hospitality businesses will encourage visitors to stay in Indio, which will create economic benefits for the entire community.

Economic Diversity

Indio is the original City of the Coachella Valley and for most of its history the community has served as an important center for regional commercial activity. With over 2,000 businesses ranging in size from small businesses to large-scale commercial enterprises, Indio is continually in the process of reinventing and growing as a vibrant community with a strong and diverse commercial base.

Downtown and Midtown

The revitalization of Downtown has been a priority for many years. While the recent development of the College of the Desert’s Indio Campus, Loma Linda University Children’s Health Indio, Coachella Valley Arts Center, Coachella Valley History Museum, and Indio Performing Arts Center has brought new life to Downtown, the necessary catalytic projects to modernize Downtown have not yet materialized. To address these concerns, the City has prepared a Downtown Specific Plan that seeks to transform the area into a vibrant, mixed-use destination. California Desert Trial Academy College of Law, as of 2018 the only law school in Riverside County, recently opened and the new John J. Benoit Detention Center is currently under construction, reinforcing Indio’s role as the second county seat. To expand economic growth, the City is working with the Coachella Valley Economic Partnership, East Valley Coalition, and Greater Coachella Valley Chamber of Commerce to provide business assistance services for existing and new businesses. Such assistance may include low-cost office space and business support resources. Collectively, these projects could bring additional year-round activity to Downtown.

Similar to Downtown, the Midtown / Indio Fashion Mall District is in need of redevelopment. Located at the crossroads of Highway 111 and Monroe Street, this district has the potential to become a prime retail and entertainment destination. However, the abundance of vacant retail space and vacant and underutilized lots has hindered the revitalization of this area. The City of Indio has been working with property owners to revamp the area and attract regional visitors. Further retail and residential mixed-use development opportunities may emerge along Highway 111 as the Midtown area comes to evolve.

Land Uses

As Indio continues to grow and attract new businesses, developers have seen the City’s full, long-range potential as a commercial location. In recent years, major retail development has emerged along I-10 and Highway 111, with the development of power centers, an auto mall, and small-scale retailers. These new businesses have not only increased retail and taxable sales opportunities but have also provided Indio with a variety of employment opportunities.

To expand economic growth, Indio has designed the Land Use and Community Design and Transportation Elements to accommodate compact, mixed-use environments that are linked together by an attractive network of pedestrian and bicycle friendly streetscapes. Providing such uses promotes economic growth by supporting local businesses, creating employment opportunities, and giving developers an incentive to invest in the City. Through this Economic Development Element, Indio continues to implement actions that reinforce the City’s reputation as the place for opportunity and growth.

Workforce Development

To maintain a highly educated and skilled workforce, Indio is partnering with local school districts and appropriate agencies to provide job training programs that can prepare the local workforce for occupations in new and emerging industries. This increases the economic competitiveness of the local labor force, which fulfills Indio’s economic development objective to become a key employment center for the Coachella Valley.



College of the Desert near Downtown Indio

Goals and Policies

A strong, diversified economy and tax base increases prosperity for both residents and businesses. With an increasingly educated and skilled workforce, it ensures that Indio secures its role as an employment center for the Coachella Valley with quality jobs and housing and is viewed as a desirable place to work, shop, and live. It also serves to retain existing and attract new businesses as well as promote long-term economic vitality. It further seeks to facilitate economic growth in both new, emerging areas of Indio and older areas in need of revitalization.

This section provides goals and policies that enhance the economic well-being of Indio. This Economic Development Element provides policies and goals on a city-wide basis with more focused recommendations integrated into the Land Use and Community Design Element by subarea within Indio. These policies are designed to facilitate business retention and expansion, job growth, an educated and skilled workforce, and an economically-viable community that supports a high-quality of life.

Goal ED-1: Vibrant Economy. A vibrant economy that maintains existing businesses and attracts new development.

ED-1 Policies

- ED-1.1 Regional and local partnerships.** Engage in public-private partnerships with local and regional organizations, such as the Coachella Valley Association of Governments (CVAG), the Greater Coachella Valley Chamber of Commerce (GCVCC) La Quinta, Palm Desert, and Coachella Valley Hispanic Chambers of Commerce, the Coachella Valley Economic Partnership (CVEP), and the East Valley Coalition (EVC).
- ED-1.2 East Valley Coalition (EVC).** Support the EVC partnership between the cities of La Quinta and Coachella and Riverside County to jointly market and promote economic development in the Eastern Coachella Valley.
- ED-1.3 Permitting process.** Improve the permitting process where businesses can identify their economic development requirements early and work with a dedicated staff member who will guide them along the way in order to ensure that development is realized in a timely manner.
- ED-1.4 Project review.** Provide a timely and thorough review of proposed economic development projects.
- ED-1.5 Financing priorities.** Set public infrastructure financing priorities by key economic focus areas as identified in the City's Economic Development Action Plan as they are updated and revised over the life of the General Plan
- ED-1.6 Business outreach.** Expand the City of Indio's economic development role to include a regular outreach effort to better understand and respond to the ongoing economic needs of existing and new businesses in Indio.

ED-1.7 Branding program. Maintain a unique brand comprised of visual themes and taglines that distinguish Indio from other jurisdictions in the Coachella Valley and accentuate its opportunities and attractions.

ED-1.8 Marketing program. Support marketing programs that emphasize Indio’s unique economic opportunities including, cultural, arts, and environmental advantages and attributes.

ED-1.9 Placemaking. Support a variety of revitalization and improvement programs focused on placemaking and beautification, such as facade improvements, small plazas, public art, and community events.

ED-1.10 Flexible spaces. Promote flexible work spaces that can be shared among commercial and/or educational tenants to support entrepreneurship, affordability, sharing of resources and appeal to start-ups and/or spin-offs from regional institutions of higher learning and the modern workforce.

Goal ED-2: Employment Base. A growing employment base with a diversity of job opportunities for current and future residents.

ED-2 Policies

ED-2.1 Business development opportunities. Identify business development opportunities that will increase the number of professional and technical jobs as well as increase skill and wage levels. Emphasis should be placed on development opportunities that diversify the local economy.

ED-2.2 Incubators. Encourage development of incubator facilities in Indio through the provision of low cost space and business resources that support the startup and expansion of firms with creative new ideas and products; work cooperatively with the California and Coachella Valley Innovation Hub (iHub) Programs.

ED-2.3 Infrastructure improvements. Identify public services and public infrastructure improvements necessary to expand existing and encourage new industrial development. Conduct regular business surveys, business outreach forums, and public-private partnerships with the GCVCC and the EVC to identify those improvements.

ED-2.4 Industrial growth. Support the retention and growth of the industrial and manufacturing sector and actively attract new industrial businesses.

ED-2.5 Job fairs. Work with the GCVCC, CVEP, and EVC to host an annual local job fair to facilitate the awareness of employment opportunities for both the local labor force and local businesses.

ED-2.6 Attract livable wages. Continue to pursue and attract companies and industries who offer livable wages and medical benefits for employees in Indio.

Goal ED-3: Workforce Development. A City with a highly-educated, skilled, and adaptable workforce that is growing.

ED-3 Policies

- ED-3.1 Economic development and labor pool alignment.** Align economic development efforts with the labor pool to increase the number of jobs filled by Indio residents.
- ED-3.2 Training.** Collaborate with the College of the Desert and other appropriate entities to identify and strengthen educational and training courses in new and emerging technologies that are compatible with the City's economic development policies and increase the economic competitiveness of the local labor force.
- ED-3.3 Trades.** Attract trade colleges and training programs that can prepare the local workforce for occupations in new and emerging industries.
- ED-3.4 Schools.** Collaborate with the local K-12 school districts to provide students in their STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) plus the arts and humanities courses (STREAM) with summer and part-time internship opportunities with local businesses and government agencies.
- ED-3.5 Internet access.** Support the availability of community-wide WI-FI and high-speed internet connectivity for both businesses and households.

Goal ED-4: Fiscal Sustainability. A fiscally-sustainable community with opportunities to maximize public revenue.

ED-4 Policies

- ED-4.1 Economic development performance monitoring.** Apply accepted fiscal analysis methods and establish a system of fiscal performance measures to evaluate the ongoing revenue and cost performance of economic development in Indio; regularly monitor measures such as sales tax, property tax, and other major revenue sources in order to track fiscal trends.

Goal ED-5: Infrastructure Financing. A City that uses creative and innovative infrastructure financing options to meet the needs of current and future residents and employees.

ED-5 Policies

- ED-5.1 Implement economic vision.** Expand the role of the Citizens Finance Advisory Commission to include assisting with the implementation of the City's economic vision, monitoring progress, and recommending effective revisions to ongoing programs and actions.
- ED-5.2 Infrastructure financing districts.** Explore the feasibility of establishing one or more targeted infrastructure financing districts in Indio to facilitate public capital improvements. This would entail evaluating existing options, such as the newly adopted legislation for an enhanced Infrastructure Financing District, or other options that may become available.
- ED-5.3 Infrastructure capital needs linking.** Coordinate the public infrastructure capital needs with Indio's annual Capital Improvement Program (CIP) to create effective linkages between the

General Plan’s economic development objectives and the timely provision of new or refurbished public infrastructure.

- ED-5.4 Grant funding.** Partner with local and regional agencies and organizations, such as CVAG, CVEP and EVC, to identify and obtain federal, State, and regional grants for public infrastructure that reinforce the General Plan goals for economic development, jobs-housing balance, improved accessibility, and community sustainability.
- ED-5.5 Infrastructure financing sources.** Continue to identify, update, and apply traditional financing techniques, such as outside grants and loans, development impact fees, special assessments, and special taxes to maximize Indio’s access to infrastructure financing sources.
- ED-5.6 New financing techniques.** Continue to evaluate and implement emerging financing techniques as they become available.
- ED-5.7 Public-private broadband partnership.** Actively seek a public-private partnership to provide ultra, high-speed fiber optic communications to businesses in Indio. When feasible and applicable, new construction shall install future cables to support citywide broadband internet accessibility.

Goal ED-6: Tax Base Diversification. A City with a diversified tax base that allows it to flourish during different market cycles.

ED-6 Policies

- ED-6.1 New retailers.** Where appropriate, support the entry of new retail uses into the City, including uses that will attract spending from visitors and residents of neighboring communities in the Coachella valley
- ED-6.2 Retail development.** Support retail development that meets the community needs of Indio’s residents in appropriate locations in order to prevent the leakage of local expenditures to neighboring communities.
- ED-6.3 Transient Occupancy Taxes (TOT).** Encourage the development of uses that generate transient occupancy taxes. Require operators of short term accommodations to comply with regulations that generate transient occupancy taxes.
- ED-6.4 Non-retail taxes.** When possible, identify and attract industrial and warehousing/distribution businesses that have substantial business-to-business or other non-retail taxable sales potential.

Goal ED-7: Retail and Services. A City with the destination hospitality, retail, and entertainment opportunities to meet the needs of visitors and residents.

ED-7 Policies

- ED-7.1 Hospitality inventory.** To assess hospitality needs, prepare a current hospitality facility inventory that includes the types of hotels/motels, number of rooms, price structure, location, amenities and other associated resort-style facilities.
- ED-7.2 Hospitality opportunities.** Continue to work closely with the Greater Palm Springs Visitors and Convention Bureau to identify both hospitality businesses and locational opportunities for the Eastern Coachella Valley.
- ED-7.3 Music events.** Continue to support local music festival event promoters and work to extend opportunities to increase development opportunities that would complement the festivals.
- ED-7.4 Cultural and art events.** Continue to publicize cultural and arts events and attractions in Indio to residents, potential visitors and business prospects.
- ED-7.5 Cultural tourism.** Recognize the value of music, dance, theater and visual arts to Indio's quality of life and economy, supporting cultural tourism as part of an economic development strategy for the City.

Goal ED-8: Jobs-Housing Balance. A City that grows with a balance of jobs and housing to meet the needs of current and future residents.

ED-8 Policies

- ED-8.1 Transportation connectivity.** Coordinate transportation investments to create better connectivity between residences and job locations.
- ED-8.2 Employment infill.** Allow employment generating land uses at infill sites and in development locations
- ED-8.3 Missing-middle housing.** Encourage the growth of diverse housing types including missing-middle housing opportunities in Indio.

Implementation Actions

The table below identifies programs, policy updates, planning efforts, coordination efforts, and other actions that will help implement the General Plan’s land use and urban design vision and policies. Programs are consistent with this chapter’s goals and policies.

Table 5-1: Economic Development Programs

	DESCRIPTION	PRIORITY	TIME FRAME	RESPONSIBILITY
1	<p>Update economic development planning. Continue to update and implement an economic development strategy. The strategy should be based on analysis, community and stakeholder engagement, General Plan goals and policies, and City Council priorities. In addition to the vision, goals, objectives, and actions generated during preparation of the strategy, it should actively seek to achieve the goals of the General Plan, and it may provide or address the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A business visitation program • A communications strategy to market Indio to existing businesses, residents, and potential new business • Specific business types to target for business attraction efforts • An incentives policy • Measurable objectives for local economic development efforts and for collaboration with regional economic development partners • Economic development performance benchmarks and targets • A mechanism to measure performance and adjust programs where needed to improve performance. 	High	Ongoing	Economic Development, community partners
2	<p>Establish and implement an annual business visitation program. Focus on attracting and recruiting new investment in key sectors with a focus on hospitality and retail.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participate in investment events such as ICSC conferences • Commission a hospitality market study and identify sites for future investment • Maintain and update inventory of sites for commercial development 	High	Ongoing	Economic Development, community partners
3	<p>Establish, update, and publish an inventory of sites and facilities. Continue to make inventory of available spaces for economic development and new</p>	High	Ongoing	Economic Development,

	<p>investments available. Keep information up to date and available on line.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide information of commercial development sites by type of land use • Provide information on large-scale residential developments 			community partners
4	<p>Downtown Indio Specific Plan. Market the Downtown Specific Plan to developers and businesses generally conducive to a pedestrian-oriented Downtown area, such as a mix of local and regional-serving retail, local serving office uses, arts and cultural facilities, and cafes / restaurants.</p>	High	Ongoing	Economic Development, Planning
5	<p>Midtown district. Market the Midtown District to developers and businesses to revitalize the area around the Indio Grand Marketplace.</p>	High	Short	Economic Development, Planning
6	<p>Streamline development permitting process. Work to find efficacies and make development permitting as simple and as transparent as possible.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Move elements of permitting process on line where possible • Integrate the permitting and planning with GIS capabilities to aid in program development • Work to reduce multiple visits per applicant 	Medium	Ongoing	Planning
7	<p>Marketing and placemaking programs. Develop marketing and beautification strategies to raise awareness of areas targeted for revitalization.</p>	High	Short	Economic Development, Planning
8	<p>Workforce training inventory. Conduct an inventory of workforce training needs of businesses in Indio and coordinate with regional partners and other educational institutions to identify or create suitable training programs and help coordinate training resources in the County.</p>	High	Short	Economic Development
9	<p>Public-private partnerships. Support the use of public-private partnerships to foster job growth and vocational training, including partnerships used or planned by major public entities in Indio.</p>	Medium	Ongoing	Economic Development