

City of Atwater



Vision

A vibrant and progressive community that provides economic opportunity and prosperity for all residents, while maintaining its "small town" friendliness, livability and safety

"Positioning for Prosperity"

An Economic Development Strategic Plan
for the City of Atwater

Date: April 1, 2003

Preface – Prioritizing Goals

The City of Atwater participated in a countywide strategic planning process with the Merced County Economic Development Corporation (MCEDCO), the County of Merced and the cities of Livingston, Los Banos and Merced. The five-year plan is being underwritten by a state grant from the Department of Housing and Community Development Job/Housing Balance Improvement Program. The project involves specific assessments and analysis to assist each community and the county with strategic planning to position the county and communities to successfully:

- attract and retain diversified businesses
- develop an education system that provides youth with the hard and soft skills needed to enter the workforce
- develop a skilled labor force required by technology and knowledge-based companies
- develop a strong collaborative of business service providers

To prepare the City of Atwater’s economic development strategic plan a Task Force was created:

- Kory Billings, Silveria Petroleum
- Ken Devoe, Jack In The Box
- Bill Effinfer, Small Planet Foods
- Joan Faul, Atwater City Council
- Don Gormly, Anberry Rehabilitation Hospital
- Skip Hinman, Coldwell Banker Gonella Realty
- Sandee Lenker, Atwater Elementary School District
- Jim Reese, NCI Building Systems
- Rudy Trevino, Mayor
- Mike Zdanowski
- Gary J. Frago, Atwater City Council

- Dorothy Bizzini, Atwater Redevelopment Advisory Committee
- Joe Keller, Atwater Chiropractic
- Lesa Rasmussen, Chair, Atwater Planning Commission
- Linda Morris, County Bank
- Scott McBride, City of Atwater

The Task Force met in two visioning sessions to identify strengths, weaknesses, needs and issues for the City of Atwater.

On December 17, 2002 a third visioning session was held to review and finalize the recommended goals and strategic actions. At this session, the Task Force recommended that the Atwater City Council adopt this plan and begin implementation of the priority strategies. These strategies and suggested start dates are outlined below.

Priority	Goal	Start Date
1	Goal 1: Atwater will create a strong leadership and collaborative network that is engaged and committed to attaining the City’s vision for economic prosperity.	February 2003 (Council adopts) March 2003 (appoint Coalition)
2	Goal 2: The City will foster the development of appropriate sites, buildings and business parks to attract new and expanding businesses to Atwater.	Identify sites: April 2003
3	Goal 8: The City will collaborate with property and business owners, residents, and community and business groups to create and sustain a vibrant downtown.	September 2003
4	Goal 3: Promote local and regional telecommunications capabilities to deliver affordable, high-speed Internet access to every home, business, and school in Atwater.	April 2003
5	Goal 5: Deliver excellent marketing and technical assistance services to existing and new businesses to retain, expand and attract capital investment and jobs.	May 2003

Priority	Goal	Start Date
6	Goal 4: The City and collaborative partners will provide a wide array of business outreach, innovation and competitiveness support services and resources to new and expanding businesses to stimulate job and investment growth.	May 2003

The time and involvement of the Atwater Task Force is greatly appreciated by the City, the consultants, and the Strategic Planning Steering Committee.

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Executive Summary

Over the past six months, the City of Atwater participated in a countywide Economic Development Strategic Planning Process. Through a series of facilitated task force meetings, and an independent analysis of the Atwater business climate, the strengths and weaknesses of the community were identified. The task force also identified community values and principles that help define the community. Using this information, the task force created this strategic action plan, titled *Positioning for Prosperity*, which includes:

- Assessment of Community Strengths and Weaknesses
- Community Vision, Values, and Goals
- Strategic Actions

Positioning for Prosperity is an action plan. The Task Force identified six distinct areas that require the commitment of leadership and resources to achieve the community's vision for economic prosperity. The six areas and supporting goals include:

I. Vision & Strategic Planning

Goal 1: Atwater will create a strong leadership and collaborative network that is engaged and committed to attaining the City's vision for economic prosperity.

II. Real Estate, Utilities, Transportation and Telecommunications

- Goal 2: The City will foster the development of appropriate sites, buildings and business parks to attract new and expanding businesses to Atwater.
- Goal 3: Promote local and regional telecommunications capabilities to deliver affordable, high-speed Internet access to every home, business, and school in Atwater.

III. Business Environment

Goal 4: The City and collaborative partners will provide a wide array of business outreach, innovation and competitiveness support services and resources to new and expanding businesses to stimulate job and investment growth.

Goal 5: Deliver excellent marketing and technical assistance services to existing and new businesses to retain, expand and attract capital investment and jobs.

IV. Workforce

Goal 6: To attract and support globally competitive companies, Atwater will expand employer access to local workforce development resources that develop workers with necessary technical and job-ready skills.

V. Education

Goal 7: Establish a Business Education Initiative that brings business, government, and education together to form partnerships to ensure future prosperity for students and young people by creating a full range of unique, results-oriented programs to address the needs of business and students.

VI. Quality of Place

- Goal 8: The City will collaborate with property and business owners, residents, and community and business groups to create and sustain a vibrant downtown.
- Goal 9: The City will collaborate with community residents, businesses, youth, and neighborhood and faith-based organizations to develop a quality of place strategy.

Introduction

Through a collaborative effort of the County of Merced, Cities of Atwater, Livingston, Los Banos, Merced and the Merced County Economic Development Corporation (MCEDCO) an Economic Development Strategic Planning process has been underway since July 2002. Each City formed an Economic Development Strategic Planning Task Force to work with consultants to plan and prepare an Economic Development Strategic Plan for their City. The individual Task Forces met in two visioning sessions to identify needs and issues and a third visioning session to finalize strategic actions. In conjunction with the local visioning sessions the consultants conducted a Business Climate Assessment to identify business development opportunities and constraints.

This Strategic Plan embraces the findings and preferences of the Atwater Task Force on vision, values, goals and strategic actions to continuously build a healthy economy for

Atwater, its residents and businesses. The supporting documents, Atwater Business Climate Assessment and seven assessment reports on Merced County including: Workforce, Education and Training, High Tech Potential, Technology Infrastructure, Organizational Assessment, Customer, Competition and Positioning Assessments, will be available on the Atwater (www.ci.atwater.ca.us) and MCEDCO (www.mercedcountyledc.com) websites along with the countywide economic development strategy, titled *Merced County, People, Place, Prosperity — Positioning for Global Competitiveness*.

Atwater’s Vision

A vibrant and progressive community that provides economic opportunity and prosperity for all residents, while maintaining its “small town” friendliness, livability and safety

Atwater’s Values

- We are dedicated to planning our future from a comprehensive perspective...integrating land use planning with planning for other community needs (transportation, housing, economic development, environmental quality, etc.) that creates enduring value, beauty, and livability, and protects the natural environment.
- Our decisions will be influenced by our regard for the rural character of the community and our desire to maintain a clear edge between the town and agricultural lands.
- We understand that some local decisions and choices have regional impacts (transportation, air quality, water quality, etc.), and we will collaborate with regional partners to address these issues.
- We will enhance the beauty, value and connectedness of the community through investment in the downtown core, which defines our community.

Atwater’s Visioning Sessions

The Atwater Task Force’s assessment of community strengths and weaknesses was very similar to the consultant’s assessment of the City’s strengths and weaknesses (as reported in the Atwater Business Climate Assessment). This similarity of findings shows that the community leaders that participated in the visioning and economic development strategic planning process have a good understanding of the City’s current capacity for economic growth, and the factors that constraint it from reaching its potential. This is important, because before change can occur there must be an acknowledgement that change is needed, and a commitment to be a part of change.

It is the Task Force’s assessment of the community’s current status and their vision for its economic potential that inspired the strategic actions.

The Task Force’s assessment of community strengths and weaknesses follows:

Strengths and Weaknesses

I. Vision and Strategic Planning

- Strength:** The City has dedicated economic development staff that work with a coordinated network of economic development agencies to attract, retain, and grow new business.
- Weakness:** The City doesn’t have an adopted economic development vision and strategy.
- Weakness:** The City and the county do not enjoy a good working relationship that would allow them to work together to resolve challenges and capitalize on opportunities.
- Weakness:** There isn’t strong community leadership (via businesses, chambers of commerce, community-based groups) in economic and community development.
- Weakness:** There isn’t consensus on growth in the City. There is a need to define the differences between economic and population growth.

II. Real Estate, Utilities and Transportation

- Strength:** The City’s infrastructure can support additional business development.
- Strength:** The City has sufficient industrial land planned for industrial development for the next five years.
- Weakness:** The lack of an airport with scheduled passenger and cargo service to major destinations is a constraint.
- Weakness:** The City has a very limited inventory of available land and buildings for sale or for lease. Properties that are available are not maintained in a database (ideally searchable on the Internet). Most of the available industrial property lacks essential public services (sewer, water, roads, etc).
- Weakness:** The City does not have a Business/Technology park.

III. Business Environment

- Strength:** Businesses in the City have access to the County’s Office of Business Economic Opportunities, Action Business Center (ABC) that provides a wide array of services (financing, incentives, special zones, counseling, etc.) to existing businesses and entrepreneurs.
- Strength:** The City has a streamlined regulatory process.
- Weakness:** The City does not operate a business retention and expansion program.
- Weakness:** The City could more effectively promote the technical and financial incentives and programs available to Atwater businesses and entrepreneurs.

IV. Workforce

- Strength and Weakness:** There is a large pool of available workers, but if these potential workers do not possess the skills required by industry, then the county has a large pool of unemployed people that lack skills necessary to participate in the labor force.
- Weakness:** The County does not possess a large labor pool of workers skilled in technology and knowledge-based applications.
- Weakness:** The City does not have a diversified employer and job base.
- Weakness:** The City does not have a business (economic development)-workforce-education collaborative that meets the needs of employers for skilled workers.

V. Education

- Strength:** Merced College offers applied technology programs for youth and adults.
- Strength:** Increasing use of technology in schools.
- Strength:** Schoolteachers and administrators are experienced and qualified.
- Weakness:** K-12 students do not score well on standardized tests, and high school graduation rates are generally below the state average.
- Weakness:** Youth are not learning the skills needed to get and keep a good job (soft and hard skills).
- Weakness:** There isn’t a strong collaboration between employers and schools and colleges to provide opportunities for technical training and skill building of youth and adults.
- Weakness:** The college and university systems are not well connected with the business community.

VI. Quality of Place

- Strength:** Cost of housing
- Strength:** Low crime rate
- Weakness:** The community is not clean and attractive – doesn’t present well.
- Weakness:** The downtown does not do a good job in defining the community...little “sense of place.”
- Weakness:** Availability of housing
- Weakness:** Not enough parks, paths, open space, and sports areas.
- Weakness:** Availability of emergency healthcare.
- Weakness:** Not enough arts, cultural and entertainment events.

Atwater Economic Development Goals and Strategies

I. Vision and Strategic Planning

Goal 1:

Atwater will create a strong leadership and collaborative network that is engaged and committed to attaining the City's vision for economic prosperity.

Why is it important?

Change is inevitable. What is not certain is how Atwater will guide and manage change. Currently there isn't a shared vision of Atwater's future. Citizens agree that Atwater needs to grow its base of jobs and investment in order to secure a prosperous future for its residents and businesses, but don't know how to push this idea forward, or who should take the lead.

This economic development strategic plan provides guidelines for improving the economic and community vitality for residents and businesses. However, without visionary, visible and vocal leadership to guide the strategies for community improvement, the plan will likely sit on the shelf. It is critical that all leaders in Atwater fully understand the issues and their long-term consequences as they relate to the community's future. Atwater's leaders from the City council, schools, industrial and commercial businesses, agricultural producers and processors, faith-based organizations and community and neighborhood groups, should agree on the goals and strategies and commit to taking action. Without leaders committed to the goals and the process, failure is guaranteed.

Just as important as leadership are collaborative partners committed to improving the community's economic prosperity. No matter the size of the community, county, region

or state, economic development strategies cannot be implemented effectively and efficiently without broad based cooperation and partnerships. Organizations involved in economic development each have unique strengths and resources. It is critical that these organizations act as a team by implementing strategies based on their strengths, while simultaneously recognizing and supporting other organizations' strengths. As the community and the region grow, boundaries and areas of responsibility and impact around issues such as land use development, housing, air quality and transportation become blurred. It is important to understand the synergies between these issues and to avoid "turf battles" and duplicative efforts that only serve to erode an already limited base of resources and do nothing to facilitate the achievement of mutual goals.

How are we doing?

The City formed a public/private strategic planning task force that met over the past several months to develop this economic development strategic plan. The commitment by these individuals is commendable, and this group should serve as the foundation for a formalized economic development leadership alliance in Atwater. This is especially important and timely since the Task Force members cited the lack of strong community leadership and involvement in economic and community development, lack of consensus on economic growth, lack of a coordinated network of economic development agencies to attract, retain, and grow new business, and the City-County relations as community weaknesses. (Note: Task Force members stated that the relationship between the City and the County was improving).

What do we need to do?

Following are the recommended strategic actions to achieve the Leadership and Collaboration Goal 1. A synopsis of the operational schedule — who should take the lead, who are the essential partners, and when the action should be started is provided in the table, with operational details provided in Appendix A.

I. VISION AND STRATEGIC PLANNING — STRATEGIC ACTIONS	LEADERSHIP	PARTNERS	START DATE														
Goal 1: Atwater will create a strong leadership and collaborative network that is engaged and committed to attaining the City’s vision for economic prosperity.																	
Action 1: The Atwater City Council adopts the Atwater <i>Positioning for Prosperity</i>, economic development strategic plan. <input type="checkbox"/> The Atwater Strategic Planning Task Force, along with members of the Strategic Planning Steering Committee, should hold a work session with the City Council to present the Atwater Positioning for Prosperity plan, how it relates to the countywide strategic plan, recommended priority actions and request that the Council formally adopt the plan. <input type="checkbox"/> Agendize for public hearing and input, City Council adopts the plan.	Atwater City Council	Task Force & Strategic Plan Steering Committee	February 2003 (Council adopts)														
Action 2: Atwater will form an economic development leadership committee that will take responsibility for implementing the economic prosperity strategies. (Consider calling this group the “Atwater Prosperity Coalition.”) <input type="checkbox"/> Create a new leadership group (Atwater Prosperity Coalition) that includes a greater number and broader diversity of members that represent major constituents and interests in the community. <input type="checkbox"/> Representation should include the major ethnic groups (Hispanic, Indian and Caucasians); youth, business, education, workforce, local government, downtown, arts and culture (possibly someone from the Court Theatre planning group), real estate (including housing), and the farming and agricultural production industry. All of these interests represent the critical collaborative partners needed to implement the strategies for prosperity.	Atwater City Council	Prosperity Coalition and City staff , Chamber of Commerce, education, youth, workforce, business	March 2003 (appoint Coalition)														
Action 3: Atwater will develop and/or strengthen collaborative partnerships with other public and private sector entities (Merced County, education, MCAg, other cities, etc.) to proactively address regional issues. <input type="checkbox"/> Through appointments to the Prosperity Coalition, develop strong collaborative partnerships that support the City’s vision and economic development strategies. This economic development strategic plan includes specific actions that need the support and commitment of various “outside” organizations and agencies. The City Council should consider these key collaborative partners when making appointments to the Prosperity Coalition to build the leadership framework needed to implement the strategic plan. <input type="checkbox"/> Members of the Prosperity Coalition should join the boards, working committees and task forces of key collaborative partners to gain insight and to provide support for addressing regional issues that are (or will be) impacting Atwater. Regional issues and potential collaborative partners include: <table border="0" data-bbox="236 1154 1857 1414"> <tr> <td>Business Retention and Expansion</td> <td>MCEDCO, Merced County Department of Business Economic Opportunities, Action Business Center</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Education</td> <td>School Districts, Merced College and UC Merced, MCOE, CSU Stanislaus</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Workforce Development and Skill Building</td> <td>Workforce Investment (formally known as the Private Industry Training Department), WorkNet, Merced College</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Business Innovation Support Services</td> <td>Merced County Department of Business Economic Opportunities, Action Business Center</td> </tr> <tr> <td>City-County Relationship</td> <td>Merced County Board of Supervisors and County Departments</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Housing and Transportation (including air & high speed rail)</td> <td>Merced County Association of Governments (MCAg), Merced County</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Air Quality</td> <td>San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District (APCD), MCAg</td> </tr> </table>	Business Retention and Expansion	MCEDCO, Merced County Department of Business Economic Opportunities, Action Business Center	Education	School Districts, Merced College and UC Merced, MCOE, CSU Stanislaus	Workforce Development and Skill Building	Workforce Investment (formally known as the Private Industry Training Department), WorkNet, Merced College	Business Innovation Support Services	Merced County Department of Business Economic Opportunities, Action Business Center	City-County Relationship	Merced County Board of Supervisors and County Departments	Housing and Transportation (including air & high speed rail)	Merced County Association of Governments (MCAg), Merced County	Air Quality	San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District (APCD), MCAg	Atwater City Council	City staff MCEDCO and other regional agencies	
Business Retention and Expansion	MCEDCO, Merced County Department of Business Economic Opportunities, Action Business Center																
Education	School Districts, Merced College and UC Merced, MCOE, CSU Stanislaus																
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Business Innovation Support Services	Merced County Department of Business Economic Opportunities, Action Business Center																
City-County Relationship	Merced County Board of Supervisors and County Departments																
Housing and Transportation (including air & high speed rail)	Merced County Association of Governments (MCAg), Merced County																
Air Quality	San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District (APCD), MCAg																

I. VISION AND STRATEGIC PLANNING — STRATEGIC ACTIONS	LEADERSHIP	PARTNERS	START DATE
<p>Action 4: The Atwater Prosperity Coalition will actively communicate the economic development vision and strategy as a way to garner consensus and support for implementation of the economic prosperity strategies.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Develop a “communications plan” that includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ public service announcements (PSA), ▪ postings on the City’s and the chamber’s website, ▪ press releases in the local newspaper, and ▪ presentations at local service clubs and community events. <input type="checkbox"/> This communications plan should begin with the adoption of the strategic plan (Positioning for Prosperity) by the City Council, and the appointment of members to the Prosperity Coalition. <input type="checkbox"/> Each success should be actively communicated to the community using the various media described above. This is extremely important to generate more interest and support (from the community and from collaborative partners) for achievement of the vision and strategies, and ultimately to develop community consensus on economic vitality initiatives and actions. 	<p>Prosperity Coalition</p>	<p>City Staff</p>	

Vision & Strategic Planning Reference Information& Models:

- **Strategic Localism & Civic Entrepreneurship** by Jeffery Roy http://www.smartcommunities.org/research_reports_roy.htm
- **North Carolina Citizens for Business and Industry (NCCBI)** www.nccbi.org/ Realizing that the days of continuing to do business the same old way are over, Davidson County officials have decided to do something about it. Davidson Vision, an aggressive business recruitment organization, was created to attract high-tech industry to a county in need of diversification. The group hopes to raise \$2.2 million, and county commissioners have agreed to provide \$400,000 over the next four years. Lexington, Thomasville and Denton have been asked to contribute to the campaign as well. Davidson Vision was started by Davidson Progress, a private, non-profit group of business and community leaders. For the past two years, volunteers from the county and consultants put together a plan that included higher-paying jobs, improved education and training, and a better quality of life.
- **Greater Louisville Inc.** <http://www.greaterlouisville.com/>. During the last quarter of 1997, The Louisville Area Chamber of Commerce and the Greater Louisville Economic Development Partnership were merged, creating Greater Louisville Inc. Greater Louisville has assumed responsibility for the business attraction mission of the former Partnership and the membership services and public affairs missions of the Chamber, as well as responsibility for the Vision. Efforts are now underway to integrate several other priorities under the Greater Louisville Inc. umbrella, including workforce development, business retention, and entrepreneurial economic development. The result of these efforts is, for the first time, a unified economic development agency with responsibility for most of the community’s economic development priorities and the capability to execute that responsibility.
- **Great Valley Center**
 - ▲ **Leadership Institute** <http://66.42.64.231:8080/gvli/index.aspx> Leaders in the Central Valley are currently making public policy decisions that will shape outcomes for decades. In the fastest growing region in California, the responsibility for these elected leaders is increasing. The Great Valley Leadership Institute provides support for local elected officials to enable them to better address issues of leadership and to provide participants with a frame of reference and tools to deal with complex and broad issues.
 - ▲ **Catapult Program:** <http://66.42.64.231:8080/catapult/index.aspx> To show young people how they can be forces for change and support the development of strong communities, the Great Valley Center and its partner [The California Center for Civic Participation and Youth Development](#), are offering CATAPULT, a program designed to support and encourage Central Valley youth as future leaders.
 - ▲ **Institute for the Development of Emerging Area Leaders:** <http://66.42.64.231:8080/ideal/index.aspx>The mission of the Institute for the Development of Emerging Area Leaders (IDEAL) is to strengthen local capacity for effective public policy decision-making impacting the economic, social and environmental future of California’s Central Valley.
 - ▲ **LEGACI Grants:** <http://66.42.64.231:8080/legaci/index.aspx> Each year, the Center awards well over one-half million dollars in monetary grants to non-profit groups, community organizations, and local governments that are working to improve the well being of the Great Central Valley through initiatives in the areas of Land Use, Economic development, Growth, Agriculture, and Community Investment, (LEGACI).

Vision & Strategic Planning Support Documents:

- Atwater Business Climate Assessment, November 2002

II. Real Estate, Utilities, Transportation and Telecommunications

Goal 2:

The City will foster the development of appropriate sites, buildings, business parks, and support infrastructure to attract new and expanding businesses to Atwater.

Why is it important?

To fulfill the community's vision for economic prosperity, the City must plan and set aside land to site new and expanding businesses. This is especially important if the City is committed to reducing the current jobs-housing imbalance. The City of Atwater is well positioned for business growth in terms of its geographic location (in the path of business growth from the north), and its location along Highway 99. The City's public infrastructure (sewer and water) also has adequate capacity to support additional business growth.

The type of industrial land (parcel size, infrastructure, location, amenities, etc.) must "fit" with the needs of the business that the City wants to attract or retain. Different businesses require different sites and buildings. For example, a high technology business seeks flexible building space in a business park environment with state-of-the-art telecommunications capability, and access to a highly skilled workforce. Conversely, a distribution company seeks a larger site with outdoor storage and parking areas preferably within an enterprise zone, good transportation access, and a trainable workforce force with a good work ethic.

In addition, it is very important that available and planned sites for business development are listed on the City's web site. Most companies and corporate site location consultants conduct their preliminary site and building searches using the Internet.

How are we doing?

The City does not have an adequate inventory of ready-to-go sites and buildings for immediate use. The Atwater Business Park has only two available parcels and the other industrial parcels in the City are unimproved. The City has identified industrial growth expansion areas in its General Plan.

The City's web site does not currently contain information (including pictures and maps) of available business/industrial sites and buildings, which places the City at a distinct market disadvantage.

What do we need to do?

Following are the recommended strategic actions to achieve the Sites, Buildings and Infrastructure Goal 2. A synopsis of the operational schedule — who should take the lead, who are the essential partners, and when the action should be started is provided in the table, with operational details provided in Appendix A.

Goal 3:

Promote local and regional telecommunications capabilities to deliver affordable, high-speed Internet access to every home, business, and school in Atwater.

Why is it important?

Atwater's competitive position and future economic prosperity in the New Economy will depend on universal access to an affordable, high-speed digital broadband network that is available to every person and business in the region. As technological advances are made in computer processing power and business applications, the means by which data is transmitted must also keep pace. The ability to offer a full range of broadband services through one line (virtual line in wireless cases) is quickly becoming the standard that telecommunication companies are striving for. This increasing convergence—the migration of voice and video traffic onto the Internet is a trend that is increasing as we deploy more and more "broadband" networks that can carry voice, data, and video over the same wires and using the same electronics. Today, communities that do not have broadband access to the Internet face the same barriers to

economic prosperity that communities, mostly rural, faced in previous generations when the railroads, highways, and airports bypassed them.

Local government is a key player in the telecommunications infrastructure. As large users, local government decisions including, vendor selection, and negotiating strategies can have significant effects on the local telecommunications market. Local government decisions can entrench the status quo, drive vendors out of the local market, and induce carriers to offer new services, and/or attract new vendors into the local market. And local government has an interest in (and in some cases ownership of) rights-of-way and antenna sites, and other properties critical to providing telecommunications services. Local government also has a variety of regulatory responsibilities regarding zoning and building codes, and cable franchising.

How are we doing?

Currently, dial-up services are available throughout Merced County, wherever a telephone line is connected. In Atwater, the demand for broadband is not great. SBC Pacific Bell (DSL), Merced Net (terrestrial wireless), and DirecTV (satellite) provide broadband services. There is no cable broadband service available through AT&T, the local cable company.

Technology is not the problem. Broadband access technologies are available to deliver the necessary bandwidth to serve Atwater residents and businesses. The problem is that telecommunications companies are unable or unwilling to build the necessary network infrastructure to serve the community and the region. This reluctance is due to several factors including: the expense and risk of capital investment is far too great to serve areas with real or perceived moderate or low consumer demand; the risk associated with building a network is complicated by widely varying local government regulations and management practices of public right of ways; and federal regulations that hinder universal access by requiring that incumbent providers share their network infrastructure with competitive telecommunications providers.

What do we need to do?

Following are the recommended strategic actions to achieve the High Speed Internet Access Goal 3. A synopsis of the operational schedule — who should take the lead, who are the essential partners, and when the action should be started is provided in the table, with operational details provided in Appendix A.

II. REAL ESTATE, UTILITIES, TRANSPORTATION & TELECOMMUNICATIONS — STRATEGIC ACTIONS	LEADERSHIP	PARTNERS	START DATE
Goal 2: The City will foster the development of appropriate sites, buildings and business parks to attract new and expanding businesses to Atwater.			
Action 1: Identify and prepare appropriate sites for business development. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> The City’s General Plan includes over 300 acres of Business Park and Urban Reserve Business Park designations within the City’s Sphere of Influence. This acreage should be researched to determine its suitability for business and industrial growth. This research should include the interest of the property owners and infrastructure expansion requirements and estimated costs. Parcels appropriate for business development (including individual sites and sites appropriate for a business park) should be identified. <input type="checkbox"/> Identify and inventory industrially zoned land that is currently under-developed for its redevelopment potential (infill). This research should include the possibility of land assembly (several contiguous under-developed parcels). <input type="checkbox"/> Identify and inventory the constraints (sewer, water, access, etc.) to the development (or redevelopment of under-developed parcels) of existing industrially zoned property and develop a plan and timetable to mitigate the constraints. <input type="checkbox"/> Research the feasibility (market demand) for a business technology park. 	City ED staff & Prosperity Coalition	City Council, property owners, developers, utility providers	April 2003 (Identify sites)
Action 2: Expand and maintain the City’s website to include specific and detailed information, maps and pictures of the available and planned industrial parcels, buildings, business parks, and supporting data. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> City economic development, redevelopment, and IT staff, working with the Prosperity Coalition should complete the business/industrial inventory and work with MCEDCO to develop a standardized format and an interactive GIS web based platform that can be used by all of the cities, the county, and by MCEDCO. It makes sense for this information to be consistent throughout the county. Not only will it be easier for MCEDCO to effectively market these properties, potential businesses and corporate site selection consultants will appreciate the consistent format, setting Merced County sites apart from competitors. <input type="checkbox"/> A protocol for quarterly updating the information should be established. <input type="checkbox"/> Supporting information should be standardized (MCEDCO website and the cities) to include short descriptions and web links to resource agencies, including: ABC, PITD, WIB, CITD and any other sources of financial and/or technical assistance available to assist with new business development or expansions. 	City ED & IT staff	MCEDCO	
Action 3: Continue to invest in public infrastructure that supports economic growth. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> The City should continue to seek funding to extend public infrastructure to serve business/industrial sites. 	City ED and Planning staff	City Council, Prosperity Coalition	

II. REAL ESTATE, UTILITIES & TRANSPORTATION — STRATEGIC ACTIONS	LEADERSHIP	PARTNER	START DATE
<p>Goal 3: Promote local and regional telecommunications capabilities to deliver affordable, high speed Internet access to every home, business, and school in Atwater.</p>			
<p>Action 1: Create a regional collaborative network.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> The way to stay out of the telecommunications backwater is through aggregation--turning small users into large users. Small users, and ideally all users in a community, must band together to deal with carriers as a group and local government is best positioned to take the lead. To accelerate this process local governments should band together. Through regional collaboration to aggregate demand, real improvements are possible. The City of Atwater needs to make telecommunications (high speed Internet) a community infrastructure priority by actively participating with the proposed countywide telecommunications initiative to facilitate the use of high-speed Internet to all areas of the county. This regional initiative recommends that MCAG take the lead for forming a collaborative team of City and county representatives to make high-speed Internet affordable and ubiquitous in the county.</p>	<p>City Engineering staff & Prosperity Coalition</p>	<p>MCAG, MCEDCO, cities & county staff</p>	<p>April 2003</p>
<p>Action 2: Develop and maintain a telecommunications infrastructure database that uses a standardized GIS format.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> The City, working with the other cities, county, and MCAG should agree upon a standardized data collection methodology (GIS based data collection standards) to ensure consistency and the ability to regionally aggregate data. A GIS map and inventory of telecommunications infrastructure was developed for the City for this project; however, some infrastructure sites were not identified because information was proprietary, or not recorded by the City or the telecommunications company. Each City and the County need to complete the telecommunications inventory per the standards and keep it maintained. The adoption of standards will allow the City to independently collect telecommunication data to maintain the City inventory while ensuring the data gathered is compatible and can be aggregated for use with the regional inventory. The types of broadband to be in the database includes: DSL, Hybrid-Fiber (Coax) Cable, Wireless, Satellite, T-carrier, Frame Delay, ISDN.</p> <p>Support for the development and adoption of regional GIS standards include the California GIS Council and California Spatial Library. Both use the federal geographic data committee (FGDC) methodology. The FGDC is in the final stage of outlining standards for data collection, accuracy, necessary attributes and metadata. In brief, the framework consists of a procedure to ensure that when various individual entities collect data, that it will all be compatible and useful, today and in the future.</p>	<p>City of Atwater MCAG MCEDCO, Prosperity Coalition, County & surrounding cities</p>	<p>City of Atwater & MCAG staff</p>	

II. REAL ESTATE, UTILITIES & TRANSPORTATION — STRATEGIC ACTIONS	LEADERSHIP	PARTNER	START DATE
<p>Action 3: Establish and maintain clear telecommunications policies and practices that incorporate the best available telecommunication technology.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Standardize permitting for telecommunications, and particularly right-of-way (ROW) practices to remove inconsistencies and barriers to local and regional deployment of broadband. Assign a City staff person to participate with regional forums (proposed to be hosted by MCAG) to discuss permitting and ROW policies and practices regarding taxes, application fees, tower siting, zoning, building and construction codes, building access, franchise agreements, etc. <input type="checkbox"/> Work to develop regional “standardized” policies and practices that are consistent with each of the cities and the county. <input type="checkbox"/> The City should decide on the services and network design it wants for the entire community...treat this as a master planning exercise just like planning a water or sewer system, and carry the master plan forward into the City’s codes and permitting procedures. Continuously inventory and review ordinances and standards to ensure they keep up with technology and advances in the field. Design for the long term – and build to the highest common denominator. <input type="checkbox"/> Consider requiring that developers place telecommunications conduit in ROW’s. When a college campus or office park upgrades its telecommunications networks, they install gigabit Ethernet to every building, and at least fast Ethernet (100bps) to each office or dorm room. By contrast, telephone companies are deploying old style analog telephones, and cable companies are deploying HFC networks that deliver one-tenth the performance. The City should work with builders, developers and telecommunications companies to ensure that new development and significant redevelopment projects receive the same level of telecommunications infrastructure as a typical college campus or large corporate office. <input type="checkbox"/> For new developments, consider requiring that developers install and/or fund high-speed Internet telecommunications facilities in the same way that they provide streets and waterworks and convey these facilities to the City’s utility department. The City may not want to get into the telephone, cable, and Internet business, but should own the underlying facilities that carry these content services. 	<p>City Engineering & Planning Dept MCAG Prosperity Coalition & telecom companies</p>	<p>City staff and resources</p>	
<p>Action 4: Develop a relationship with local telecommunications companies that include noticing of public improvement construction projects for co-location of telecommunications equipment to reduce their costs to extend services.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Hold work session meetings with the telecommunications providers to review the inventory and discuss issues and needs, such as, permitting, market demand research and ROW construction projects. <input type="checkbox"/> Establish a communications system to notify telecommunication companies of utility construction projects in ROWs. Encourage telecommunications providers to install telecommunication infrastructure during these construction projects. This could lower costs to the telecommunication provider and lessen road construction inconveniences. <input type="checkbox"/> Work with telecommunication service providers to ensure that local schools have broadband access as part of strategic franchise or ROW negotiations. 	<p>City Engineering, Planning & Economic Development staff Telecom providers</p>		
<p>Action 5: Initiate and implement a comprehensive investigation of high-speed Internet demand in the community and across the region down to the business location level using GIS. Aggregate the demand and use as leverage with telecommunications companies to justify expansion of high-speed Internet services.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Participate with MCAG and MCEDCO to develop a communications campaign to reach out to residents and businesses about the importance and capabilities of broadband technology and its relationship to global competitiveness, and to help expand the demand for broadband. <input type="checkbox"/> Participate in a regional survey and host on City website an on-line survey of business and residential access high speed Internet needs. 	<p>MCAG MCEDCO</p>	<p>MCAG staff & resources</p>	

Real Estate, Utilities & Transportation Reference Information & Models

- **Hacienda Business Park.** A 20 year retrospective <http://www.hacienda.org/>
- **City of Modesto Business Park Development Plan** http://www.ci.modesto.ca.us/cdd/Bus_Development_Division/bizparkdev.htm
- **The City of Rancho Cucamonga Redevelopment Agency** has an award winning site selection tool that displays maps, photographs, aerials and details on available sites. Users of the site can click on the “site finder” to perform custom queries and calculate site-specific demographics to refine their search. www.insiderancho.org
- **The City of Pleasanton** also has a Web-based searchable database. <http://pleasanton.Cityapplications.com/economic/edcindex.jsp>
- **West Central I-80 Development (Iowa).** Fourteen communities within two rural counties have collaborated on one website to showcase industrial sites, buildings, and key socio-economic information. They even have an agricultural business park. <http://www.iowadevelopment.com/>
- **GIS Planning.** The originator of web geographic information system (GIS) applications for government, business and community organizations that foster enhanced economic development, e-commerce and web services. GIS Planning combines state-of-the-art technical expertise with a background in urban planning practice to create user-friendly ArcIMS GIS applications on the World Wide Web. The company has pioneered the field of Internet GIS for economic development from the creation of the world's first web-based economic development GIS program to our newest generation of modern applications. Our programs are real-world, field-proven, leading-edge technology. www.GISplanning.com

Telecommunications

- **GIS Standards Website**
 - ▲ <http://www.fgdc.gov/framework/frameworkintroguide/>
 - ▲ <http://www.fgdc.gov/standards/status/swgstat.html>
 - ▲ <http://www.fgdc.gov/metadata/production/prentatt.html>
 - ▲ <http://www.sjvgis.org/default.asp>
- **Applied Rural Telecommunications: An Economic Development Resource Center.** AeRIe provides rural communities the tools they need to apply telecommunications to meet their community and economic development needs. <http://bcn.boulder.co.us/aerie/>
- **League of Cities Model Telecommunications Policy** http://www.ci.san-carlos.ca.us/is/display/0,1124,deptid-3_isid-106,00.html
- **Southern California Association of Governments. Telecommunications Deployment Strategy 1996** <http://www.globaltelematics.com/tds-execsum.pdf>
- **Infrastructure—How to Connect People and Business. Presentation** by Miles Fidelman, The Center for Civic Networking to the Jacksonville, FL government Technology Summit. November 1, 2001.

Real Estate, Utilities & Transportation Support Documents

- Business Climate Assessment
- Technology Infrastructure Assessment
- Web pages from: GIS Planning, City of Pleasanton, Inside Rancho

III. Business Environment

Goal 4:

The City and collaborative partners will provide a wide array of business outreach, innovation and competitiveness support services and resources to new and expanding businesses to stimulate job and investment growth.

Why is it important?

Job creation and economic investment are key components of a viable community and important aspects of a community's strategic plan. Incorporating a structured business retention and expansion (BRE) program into a community's overall economic development strategy is a proven technique that stimulates the creation of jobs and investment. A BRE program based on helping local businesses compete globally can produce immediate results of benefit to local businesses and provide valuable input in the development of a results oriented long-term economic development strategy. The challenge faced by many communities, particularly rural communities, is the lack of staff, resources and tools to help implement a BRE program. This is particularly true in California, where for the past several years the State has experienced shrinking revenues, and subsequently has cut financial and technical assistance programs that once supported local economic development efforts.

Keeping track of how local businesses are doing, what resources they need to be competitive in the marketplace, and their investment in innovation, is critical to the City's ability to successfully retain and expand its business base. Without a strong local business base, that is globally competitive, the City will not be able to successfully retain or support business and job growth.

Opportunities for new innovative business growth will require access to financial and intellectual capital through linkages with venture capitalists and angel investors and the formation of special interest networks focused on emerging technology advancements. Some of these resources will emerge with the growth of research and intellectual synergies related to the new UC campus; many more will require proactive initiatives

and collaborations between the community, local businesses and entrepreneurs, and university leaders

How are we doing?

The City participates in the bi-annual survey of businesses conducted by MCEDCO and the Action Business Center (ABC). This survey is very comprehensive and elicits information on many factors to doing business in each of the cities and the county. This is an excellent way to get a "snapshot" of business satisfaction. However, this is not an on-going industry outreach/technical competitiveness program, and doesn't allow for the development of a relationship between the City and the business community.

ABC is an excellent resource to entrepreneurs and existing businesses looking for technical assistance and financing for start-up and expansion. However, ABC does not have a strong presence outside of Atwater.. Also, the types of available services and resources may not meet the needs of existing industry clusters or innovative-knowledge based companies seeking a competitive edge in the global market.

What do we need to do?

Following are the recommended strategic actions to achieve the Business Outreach & Innovation Goal 4. A synopsis of the operational schedule — who should take the lead, who are the essential partners, and when the action should be started is provided in the table, with operational details provided in Appendix A.

Goal 5:

Deliver excellent marketing and technical assistance services to existing and new businesses to retain, expand and attract capital investment and jobs.

Why is it important?

No community stands still, economically it either moves forward or backwards. The community's economic vitality is dependent on the prosperity of local businesses — businesses that contribute to the City's revenue base through business to business sales, business to consumer sales, taxes, payroll and by providing employment for local residents. Communities compete with regions, states and even countries for not only

new business locations but also by keeping their local businesses from being recruited away by these same competitors.

To maintain and expand the existing business base each City and the county must **cooperatively** market the unique attributes and value-added customer services to brand Merced County as **the** place to do business.

How are we doing?

During the strategic planning process, professional site selection consultants, real estate brokers, existing employers and businesses not located in Merced County were interviewed to determine their perceptions of Merced County as a place to do business. The detailed responses are contained in the Customer Assessment Report, but, generally, Merced County is known as one of the areas in the Central Valley – no real distinction and no understanding of each of the cities. Many of those interviewed were not even aware of the new UC Merced campus. Local marketing efforts have been in

place for quite some time, all at different levels based on funding and staffing. A focused, countywide business recruitment marketing effort has not been in place for several years. In addition, critical decision-making data for businesses has not been updated or marketed on a regular basis.

What do we need to do?

Following are the recommended strategic actions to achieve the Marketing and Technical Assistance Goal 5. A synopsis of the operational schedule — who should take the lead, who are the essential partners, and when the action should be started is provided in the table, with operational details provided in Appendix A

III. BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT — STRATEGIC ACTIONS	LEADERSHIP	PARTNERS	START DATE
<p>Goal 4: The City will coordinate with collaborative partners to provide a wide array of business outreach and innovation support services and resources to new and expanding businesses to stimulate job and investment growth.</p>			
<p>Action 1: The City will collaborate with MCEDCO to design and implement a business competitiveness program.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ The City, working with the Prosperity Coalition should partner with MCEDCO, WIB, ABC, and the other cities to develop a countywide business retention and expansion program. A countywide BRE program provides many benefits including the sharing of resources and costs, and specific City information can be aggregated to identify regional issues and trends. This information can then be shared with business resource agencies, such as ABC to seek needed resources and services. ❑ The best models for business outreach and competitiveness are segmented by industry groups. Not all industry groups in the county are represented in Atwater, however they are important assets in the region, and may be potential growth industries in the future. Proposed industry segments are identified below. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Agricultural Production Network - including Organics (growers) 2. Agribusiness Network (processing) 3. Arts and Cultural Attractions Network 4. Manufacturing Network - (including Wood Products, Fabricated Metal Products, Transportation Equipment, Warehousing & Distribution) 5. Technology Network (innovative, emerging industries) 6. Health Network <p>New ways to communicate and collaborate with these business sectors should be investigated and employed whenever possible. Techniques such as the use of facilitated work sessions to identify industry issues, on-line surveys, information dissemination, etc., should be used whenever appropriate and feasible.</p>	<p>Prosperity Coalition</p>	<p>Prosperity Coalition, City staff, MCEDCO, ABC, WIB, WI, Chamber of Commerce</p>	<p>May 2003</p>
<p>Action 2 The City will work with regional partners to provide the resources, services and networks needed to transition to a knowledge economy. A complete description of knowledge economy indicators is provided in Appendix B.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ The City will collaborate with MCEDCO and ABC to begin using the knowledge (New Economy) indicators to benchmark progress towards the initiation, expansion and attraction of knowledge-based businesses. ❑ The City will collaborate with ABC and MCEDCO to review and update technical and funding assistance programs to incorporate the needs of knowledge-based businesses. The existing array of programs may be sufficient to support the needs of traditional industries, but inadequate to support the growth and development of knowledge-based businesses. The specific deficiencies will be illuminated with the development of the knowledge-based benchmarking system and could include the need to establish: (venture capital networks, angel investors, industry working groups [manufacturing, software, information technology, health care], electronic commerce techniques, and entrepreneurial advisory groups.) 	<p>ABC</p>	<p>MCEDCO, ABC, City staff, Prosperity Coalition</p>	

III. BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT — STRATEGIC ACTIONS	LEADERSHIP	PARTNER	START DATE
<p>Goal 5: To deliver excellent marketing and technical assistance services to existing and new businesses to retain, expand and attract capital investment and jobs.</p>			
<p>Action 1: Develop and implement a regional branding strategy.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Establish a unique identity (brand) to position Merced County & cities in the minds of business as a distinct location in the Central Valley. To establish a brand it must be used consistently by all marketing entities, i.e., county, cities, and organizations marketing to businesses. The brand design would be an <i>umbrella</i> theme. Each City would still have their own identity but coordinate marketing collateral to promote the brand and collaboration of unique services, programs and attributes. <input type="checkbox"/> The Strategic Plan Steering Committee and City representatives should become the Brand Management Committee working with MCEDCO. <input type="checkbox"/> Create a brand guide for all marketing entities. <input type="checkbox"/> To support the brand, a Communications Plan will be provided with the countywide strategy that outlines methods to send consistent and frequent messages to existing and new business, the City would participate by suggesting and submitting messages and/or stories for businesses. 	<p>ED Staff MCEDCO</p> <p>MCEDCO Supported by: Strategic Plan Steering Committee and cities</p>	<p>Resource agencies and cities.</p>	<p>May 2003</p>
<p>Action 2: Develop and distribute marketing collateral.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> The City should partner with MCEDCO in updating and/or creating the following marketing collateral which should be used by the Brand Management Committee. Collateral material should be technology-driven whenever possible to maintain consistency of materials and provide the most efficient system to all users. Brand Templates: Logos, Paper, Folders <input type="checkbox"/> Website: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ MCEDCO website should be updated to have interactive databases containing the county and cities real estate and socio-economic data (based on site selection standards) which would allow the cities to update their data through password security. <i>Note:</i> Site Selection data software has been provided through this project. ▪ Ensure links are constructed so data only has to be updated once but would appear to be on each City website as well as housed on MCEDCO. ▪ Create a secure website to transmit proposals to prospects. ▪ Populate website with specific target industry information. <input type="checkbox"/> Resource Guide: MCEDCO with support from Brand Management Committee should develop a Resource Guide that provides information on services, technical assistance programs, incentives (economic development and work force development) on the web in a format for easy continual updating. At the local level, it can be downloaded and printed for business presentations (for business retention and attraction).. 	<p>MCEDCO Supported by: Brand Management Committee & Prosperity Coalitions</p>	<p>Resource agencies and cities.</p>	

III. BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT — STRATEGIC ACTIONS	LEADERSHIP	PARTNER	START DATE
<p>Action 3: Develop and implement a targeted marketing campaign.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> The City should actively participate with MCEDCO in planning and implementing a targeting campaign. <input type="checkbox"/> Industry Targets: Focus new business marketing on specific target businesses that match the local product – real estate and work force. The identified short-term target sectors are: Ag & Ag-related Products, Machinery & Machinery Suppliers; Transportation Equipment; Rubber & Plastic Products; Data Processing & Information Retrieval Services. Long-term targets: Electronics & Engineering Related; Environmental Sciences. <input type="checkbox"/> Industry Profiles: prepare industry profiles for the industries being targeted – why Merced County and its environs are the best location for this industry. Use for direct mail marketing <input type="checkbox"/> Create an initial database of 25-30 target businesses, replenish monthly with 20-25 new business names, and remove names after screening and business are identified as not a viable prospect. <input type="checkbox"/> Implement a direct mail campaign to targets. 	<p>MCEDCO Steering Committee</p>	<p>Cities, county, business and property owners.</p>	
<p>Action 4: Develop and implement a prospecting strategy. Cost comparison software, MetroComp, has been provided through this project. This information can be used for proposals and presentations, showing the City/county’s advantages over competitive areas.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Upgrade site maps currently used in proposals to match site selection consultant standards. <input type="checkbox"/> Create a competitive proposal package. <input type="checkbox"/> In and Outbound Visitation Schedule: Conduct personal calls on target businesses, real estate brokers and site selection consultants 	<p>MCEDCO Steering Committee</p>	<p>Property owners and cities</p>	

Business Environment Reference Information & Models

Business Outreach

- **Greater Louisville, Business Networks Program:** Retains and grows companies through results-oriented group facilitation of businesses with common interests. Together, networks accomplish what businesses cannot do alone. <http://www.greaterlouisville.com/businet/>
- **Business Retention and Expansion International (BREI)** http://www.brei.org/articles/article_page.htm. This site provides information on Best Practices for BRE programs. Additional information including; training materials and sample surveys are available at this site.
- **Washington Development Network** http://www.wdnonline.org/why_washington/busRetExpan.htm. WDN works with the State of Washington Office of Technology and Economic Development to provide and market state and local resources to existing and expanding businesses.
- **Jefferson Parish, Louisiana, Business Retention and Expansion Program** On line business survey at: www.jedco.org/Default.asp?PAGE_ID=4
- **Jefferson Parish, Louisiana, Tech survey:** www.jedco.org/Default.asp?PAGE_ID=28
- **State of Texas, JobsBrain the BR&E advisor:** <http://unix.utb.edu/~msoren/>

Knowledge Economy

- “New Economy Index,” Progressive Policy Institute, www.neweconomyindex.org
- Office of Technology Policy, U.S. Department of Technology, “The Dynamics of Technology-based Economic Development,” October 2001.
- Joseph Cortright and Heike Mayer, “High Tech Specialization: A Comparison of High Technology Centers,” Center on Urban and Metropolitan Policy, January 2001.
- Office of Technology Policy, U.S. Department of Commerce, “Understanding Broadband Demand: A Review of Critical Issues,” September 2002.
- Joel Kotkin, “The Rural Great Plains in the Digital Age,” 2002
- Andrew Haeg, “Farm Towns Look for Ways to Survive”, Minnesota Public Radio, July 10, 2001
- “Information Technology Strategic Plan: Southwest Reap Zone”, CEO Praxis, 2002
- Mark Drabenstott and Katherine Sheaff, “The Main Street Economist: Re-exploring Policy Options for a New Rural America”, Center for the Study of Rural America, Federal Reserve Bank of Kansas City, June 2001
- Karl Stauber, “Why Invest in Rural America--and How? A Critical Public Policy Question for the 21st Century”, Federal Reserve Bank of Kansas City, Second Quarter, 2001

- The Ford Foundation, “**Win-Win: Innovative Business Strategies**,” 2002
- **Community Development Venture Capital Coalition**: has more than 80 members including 40 community development venture capital funds which provide equity capital finance to small business in order to create good jobs, wealth and entrepreneurial capacity that benefit low-income people in inner-City and rural communities throughout the U.S. and the world. Contact information: Kerwin Tesdell, www.cdvca.org, (212) 594.6747
- **Center for Community Capitalism** in the Kenan Institute of Private Enterprise, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill: provides research and analysis to firms on business opportunities in untapped markets and impact of electronic commerce on low-income neighborhoods. Contact: Michael Stegman, www.kenaninstitute.unc.edu, (919) 962-8839

Business Environment Support Documents:

- Organizational Assessment
- Customer Assessment
- Positioning Assessment

IV. Workforce

Goal 6:

To attract and support globally competitive companies, Atwater will expand employer access to local workforce development resources that develop workers with necessary technical and job-ready skills.

Why is it important?

To be competitive in today's marketplace, companies require workers who not only have basic skills, but also a higher level of knowledge in math, science, and information technology. In addition, knowledge companies demand top talent with creativity, innovation, entrepreneurship, good judgment, and teamwork and decision-making skills. Local companies that are globally competitive will prosper and expand employment opportunities that will require additional skilled workers. Meanwhile, attracting companies to establish new operations in Atwater will require the community to address the most important site selection factors today, which are the availability, productivity, and cost of labor.

How are we doing?

The Atwater region faces significant challenges in terms of accomplishing this goal which include:

- Merced County has one of the highest unemployment rates in the Central Valley, which is often twice the state unemployment rate.
- The WI (formally known as PITD) applicant pool is composed disproportionately of young, at-risk populations who face serious barriers (basic math and reading skills and job readiness) to employment.
- Employers are concerned about the skills of the workforce, but they have even more reservations about the skills (or lack thereof) of the unemployed population and welfare recipients.
- Employers recruit for higher-level technical and management positions outside the region.
- Most Atwater employers have no awareness of the workforce development services.
- The City does not have a business, economic development, workforce, and education collaborative to address employers' needs for skilled workers.

What do we need to do?

Following are the recommended strategic actions to achieve the Workforce Goal 6. A synopsis of the operational schedule — who should take the lead, who are the essential partners, and when the action should be started is provided in the table, with operational details provided in Appendix A.

IV. WORKFORCE — STRATEGIC ACTIONS	LEADERSHIP	PARTNERS	START DATE
<p>Goal 6: To attract and support globally competitive companies, Atwater will expand employer access to local workforce development resources that develop workers with necessary technical and job-ready skills.</p>			
<p>Action 1: The City should collaborate and take a leadership role with regional partners to design and implement a new system for delivering workforce development services to Atwater employers.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ Workforce development services are a regional issue. Workforce Investment of Merced County (WI) and the WorkNet One Stop partners, MCEDCO and the Action Business Center (ABC) should partner in implementing specific strategies and recommendations in the countywide strategy for implementation. ❑ The City of Atwater should be an active partner to ensure workforce resources are available to Atwater employers through a local delivery system that is coordinated with the regional workforce program. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Participate in continuous cross training among economic development, workforce development, education and human services agencies to familiarize outreach staff with each organization’s business services. 2. Partner to bring customer service training for all staff involved in the delivery of workforce development services. 3. In collaboration with regional partners, establish a communications and appropriate customer response system to share information about new job leads, jobs that need advanced training, and other business retention/expansion issues 4. Hold monthly meetings for all Atwater business services team members to monitor success and ensure continuous improvement. ❑ Provide regular progress reports to the City’s Prosperity Coalition the WIB, the MCEDCO Board, City council and other stakeholders. The monitoring reports should include: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Number of businesses contacted and assisted 2. Number of jobs identified and filled 3. Wages of jobs filled (many of these are federally mandated performance measures for the workforce development program) 4. Customer service satisfaction surveys of job seekers and employers should be completed after services are provided. 	<p>The City of Atwater’s office of economic development should initiate the partnership with WI, WorkNet, MCEDCO and the ABC.</p>	<p>PITD’s WorkNet, MCEDCO and the ABC. Additional partners include Merced College’s Workplace Learning Resource Center, reps from UC Merced, the County Office of Education, the County’s Human Services Agency, MCEDCO, and the City’s Prosperity Coalition</p>	
<p>Action 2: The City should collaborate with regional partners to develop and implement a regional marketing plan, which is coordinated with other regional business outreach efforts, to increase employer awareness and use of workforce development resources.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ Identify local employers’ preferences for marketing venues and materials. ❑ In collaboration with regional partners, develop a regional marketing plan which may include: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. An inventory of current marketing activities, which have been successful and should be retained. 2. New marketing approaches, such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▲ Website ▲ Links between relative websites ▲ Direct mail ▲ Brochures for face-to-face meetings with employers ▲ Promoting business services and resources as an incentive for existing or new businesses. 3. Lead organizations charged with implementation. 4. Resources needed to implement marketing plan. 	<p>Atwater’s local team organized to implement the model in Action #1 will represent Atwater at the regional level.</p>	<p>Key regional partners include WI, WorkNet, MCEDCO and the Action Business Center (ABC).</p>	

IV. WORKFORCE — STRATEGIC ACTIONS	LEADERSHIP	PARTNERS	START DATE
5. Implementation timeline and calendar of activities/promotions. 6. Performance monitoring steps. 7. Evaluation of success. <input type="checkbox"/> Participate in implementation of the marketing plan, as determined in the plan.			

Workforce Reference Information & Models

- "Joint Venture Silicon Valley, 2002 Workforce Study: Connecting Today's Youth with Tomorrow's Technology Careers" <http://www.jointventure.org>.
- L.A. Worksource (Workforce Development Program), <http://www.worksourcecalifornia.com/>
- Idaho Works! (Workforce Development Program) <http://www.idahoworks.org/>
- Greater Louisville Works! (Workforce Development Program), <http://www.greaterlouisvilleworks.com/>
- Jobs for the Future (JFF): provides businesses with human resource solutions in the form of effective models and strategies that employers can implement to build a highly skilled workforce. Contact: Jerry Rubin, <http://www.jff.org> (617) 728-4446
- National Association of Manufacturers/Center for Workforce Success: offers educational information, industry data and resources for developing innovative workforce solutions for manufacturers seeking a skilled labor pool. Contact: Phyllis Eisen, <http://www.nam.org>, (202) 637-3000
- Literacy Tool Kit: Developed by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce. Case studies, Power Point presentation, fact sheets and other promotional tools for improving basic skills competencies. Designed for employers and employment and training providers. <http://www.uschamber.com/CWP/Projects/Workforce+Literacy/default.htm>
- U.S. Chamber of Commerce/Center for Workforce Preparation: the largest business federation in the world, the U.S. Chamber provides educational information and local community-based resources to businesses of all sizes and industries seeking solutions to worker shortages and training challenges. Contact: Beth Buehlmann, www.uschamber.com, (202) 463-5525

Workforce Reference Support Documents

- Strategies to address workforce skills gaps and providing career ladders are presented in the Education section of this report and, on a broader basis, in the Merced County Regional Strategies Report

V. Education

Goal 7:

Establish a Business Education Initiative that brings business, government, and education together to form partnerships to ensure future prosperity for students and young people by creating a full range of unique, results-oriented programs to address the needs of business and students.

Why it's important:

Fifteen years ago in the United States, a high school diploma was sufficient to ensure young adults a middle class lifestyle, but this is no longer true. The skills required to compete for a job in the knowledge economy have changed radically but the skills learned in most public schools have not kept pace with requirements of the job market. To be competitive, U.S. companies are shifting more value-added manufacturing and support jobs overseas to areas that offer lower labor costs and a labor force that is better educated, more motivated and has stronger technical skills. The better-paying jobs that remain in the U.S. require a higher degree of technical training, math and science skills and the ability to think creatively and work in teams. Weak academic achievement limits students' opportunities for a higher education and/or a vocational or technical career.

An educational system that does not produce graduates with a strong academic background and job-readiness skills is considered by most businesses to have a locational disadvantage for two reasons. First, the level of academic achievement is an indicator of the quality of the local labor pool (existing and future). Secondly, the employer's ability to attract and retain management and other top talent will be difficult. Managers and professionals value a quality public education system for their families and for their own continuing education.

How are we doing?

Academically, Atwater high schools lag the state average in SAT-9 reading and math scores by approximately 17percent and 19percent respectively. In math, Atwater elementary students lag the state average by 5 percent. Reading scores for elementary students are 11percent less than the state average. Consequently, many students do not have the basic reading and math skills required for employment and specifically for jobs that use technology. Local employers and educators concur that the local workforce lacks basic skills, the ability to apply skills to the job, and "soft" or job-readiness skills. As a result, employers must recruit from outside the region to fill job openings.

Some of Merced County's 20 school districts are hiring an out-of-state consultant to advise them on steps to improve student performance in their schools, including some of the districts serving Atwater.

What do we need to do?

Following are the recommended strategic actions to achieve the Education Goal 7. A synopsis of the operational schedule — who should take the lead, who are the essential partners, and when the action should be started is provided in the table, with operational details provided in Appendix A.

V. EDUCATION — STRATEGIC ACTIONS	LEADERSHIP	PARTNERS	START DATE
<p>Goal 7: Establish a Business Education Initiative that brings business, government, and education together to form partnerships to ensure future prosperity for students and young people by creating a full range of unique, results-oriented programs to address the needs of business and students.</p>			
<p>Action 1: Business, Education and Government should have similar goals for improving the K-12 education outcomes in the City and County, i.e.,</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Increase academic performance <input type="checkbox"/> Improve test scores <input type="checkbox"/> Increase high school graduation rates <input type="checkbox"/> Increase the number of students going on to colleges and universities <input type="checkbox"/> Prepare students for the job market <input type="checkbox"/> Prepare students for higher education <p>The City and Prosperity Coalition (or participate at the regional level) should invite 3-4 key business, education and government leaders to participate in creating a Education Collaborative whose mission will be to ignite an educational renaissance – a commitment by all participants to build an educational system that enables all students to be successful, productive citizens. The steps that need to be taken by the City and the Prosperity Coalition:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Identify Committed Leaders Educators, Superintendent, Principals, UC Merced, Community College publicly committed to the goals; businesses publicly committed to the goals; person responsible for shepherding the process. 2. Define Approach to Investing in Education Review models presented in the Education & Training Report that could be supported and implemented; maximize the use of resources and minimize overlap when reviewing models. Select one or two models to initiate change, such as, Children’s Readiness for Kindergarten or a Technology Career Role Model program. 3. Determine realistic and measurable student performance goals The Initiative should be centered on helping students achieve learning goals. 	<p>The Prosperity Coalition (or City Council) should take the initial lead by establishing the Education Initiative. Leadership would then transition to the Collaborative.</p>	<p>Key business leaders</p>	
<p>Action 2: The Education Collaborative should take the Initiative to businesses and other partners committed to the goals and mission of the Initiative:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Articulate the ways that business, agencies and non-profits can help to implement unique, results-oriented programs. 2. Begin discussions with the school districts and educators to review “change models” that have affectively addressed similar issues faced in Merced County. 3. Build new partnerships to implement and maintain programs that will address the specific needs. 4. Communicate what is happening to people within and beyond the Collaborative 		<p>Businesses, schools & government</p>	

V. EDUCATION — STRATEGIC ACTIONS	LEADERSHIP	PARTNERS	START DATE
<p>Action 3: The Education Collaborative should also participate in the Education and Training Regional Strategy which includes, at a regional level, a similar strategy but also includes:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Identifying the obstacles and constraints faced by educators in achieving the priority goals. 2. Determining skill sets needed by local employers. 3. Reviewing current educational programs and services that have been successful and should be retained. 4. Identifying tools and resources required to implement programs (funding, facilities, staffing, materials, etc.) 5. Preparing implementation timeline. 6. Developing performance monitoring steps 7. Creating methods to evaluate success 			

Education Reference Information & Models

- UC Merced School-Centered Programs. www.ucmerced.edu/professional_dev/programs.asp.
- National PTA. www.pta.org/parentinvolvement/spanish/index.asp The National PTA provides a collection of resources in Spanish to promote parental involvement in a variety of areas such as **100 Ways for Parents to be Involved in Their Children’s Education, National Standards in Spanish, Building a Healthy Child, Successful Students**, and others.
- Sallie Mae Fund Grants. <http://www.salliemaefund.org/helping/> The Sallie Mae Fund awarded a \$50,000 grant to the National Council of La Raza for its Parents as Partners in Education initiative. The initiative works to build community and school links, strengthen the quality of education for Hispanic students, and more effectively involve Hispanic families in the K-12 education of their children.
- Joint Venture Silicon Valley. “**2002 Workforce Study: Connecting Today’s Youth with Tomorrow’s Technology Careers**” A.T. Kearny, 2002. <http://www.jointventure.org>.
- National Center for Education Statistics “**Issue Brief: Vocational Education Offerings in Rural High Schools**” U.S. Department of Education, Office of Educational Research and Improvement, July 2002
- The Business Education Council www.becon.org Maximizing the efficient use of resources and minimizing overlap.

Education Reference Support Documents

- Education Assessment

VI. Quality of Place

Goal 8:

The City will collaborate with property and business owners, residents, and community and business groups to create and sustain a vibrant downtown.

Why it's important:

California communities face a new century of immense competitive pressure. The downtown is the City's calling card to the world. How the downtown is perceived sets an image that people across continents can grasp and recognize – it's the City's product brand.

How are we doing?

Atwater's downtown, even though clean and well maintained is struggling economically, and does not provide the types of amenities, services and "quality of place" needed to create and sustain vibrancy.

What do we need to do?

Following are the recommended strategic actions to achieve the Vibrant Downtown Goal 8. A synopsis of the operational schedule — who should take the lead, who are the essential partners, and when the action should be started is provided in the table, with operational details provided in Appendix A.

Goal 9:

The City will collaborate with community residents, businesses, youth, neighborhoods and faith-based organizations to develop a quality of place strategy.

Why is it important?

Cultural amenities, crime, green spaces and congestion are a few of the factors determining quality of place. It is widely recognized that quality of place is directly related to quality of life, an asset highly sought after. Quality of place describes the positive personal experiences available in a specific location; including family and social relationships, environmental qualities, career and job opportunities, entertainment venues, cultural and historical heritage, and recreational opportunities. Most would agree that municipal officials influence some quality of place factors. Yet officials receive very little help from the community when considering how planning and policy decisions affect quality of place, and therefore the quality of life. These officials, and economic and community development planners must embrace the idea of quality of place, particularly as the new economy demands greater attention to these assets.

How are we doing?

Members of the economic development strategic planning task force cited many of the quality of place factors such as, offering of arts, entertainment and cultural events, diversity of shopping, diversity of housing, health care services, and a vibrant and active downtown as weaknesses in the community. The areas of greatest concern expressed by the Task Force were; the way the community looks, and particularly the shuttered and dilapidated Air Force base housing, and the "perception" of a high crime rate.

What do we need to do?

Following are the recommended strategic actions to achieve the Quality of Place Strategy Goal 9. A synopsis of the operational schedule — who should take the lead, who are the essential partners, and when the action should be started is provided in the table, with operational details provided in Appendix A.

VI. QUALITY OF PLACE — STRATEGIC ACTIONS	LEADERSHIP	PARTNERS	START DATE
Goal 8: The City will collaborate with property and business owners, residents, and community and business groups to create and sustain a vibrant downtown.			
<p>Action 1: Create and implement a downtown revitalization plan that enhances the beauty, value and “quality of place” through investment in the downtown core.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Involve local businesses, residents and organizations (Task Force) in developing a downtown revitalization plan that addresses the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Regulations that are streamlined and support residential growth. ▪ Discrete boundaries--it must be clear where downtown begins and where it ends. ▪ Develop good circulation and directional signs to downtown. For example, there are no directional signs to downtown Atwater after exiting Highway 99. ▪ The downtown’s physical infrastructure needs to support accessibility and be in good shape. The City must act as the “property manager,” making repairs and beautifying the common areas in order to maintain downtown’s investment value. ▪ Identify and pursue new and improved local and regional amenities (i.e. revitalization of the Court Theatre). ▪ New investment and development must promote a safe, clean and inviting environment. ▪ Reuse of old and unique buildings must be a priority. ▪ Clearly identify and enhance public spaces (parks, buildings, pedestrian corridors) ▪ Consider adding murals as a way to identify the community and provide a venue for public art ▪ Implementation Plan <input type="checkbox"/> Task Force should prioritize actions, determine resources & schedule, introduction to community (buy-in), secure council adoption and implement. 	City Council, Atwater Prosperity Coalition	City Council (financing), Property & Business Owners, Chamber of Commerce, community residents and community groups.	September 2003
<p>Action 2: Create a unique tourist attraction in the downtown area.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> The City of Atwater should leverage its proximity to Yosemite (generator of visitors) by creating a unique tourist attraction in the downtown area incorporating the history of Castle Air Force Base and promoting the Castle Air Museum. Many people know where Atwater is because they pass through on the way to Yosemite, and some are familiar with Castle – but there is not enough draw to make them stop. Numerous towns are not only revitalizing their downtown but developing themes to encourage and support more visitors to stop, visit, shop and stay. Developing a tourist attraction in a community is an art. Development must tell a story, not just display artifacts; it must be a draw to be successful. The Atwater Prosperity Coalition should invite Roger Brooks, Destination Development, to do a community workshop on the development of themes and military museums – generate ideas and enthusiasm for developing a visitor attraction theme. <input type="checkbox"/> If the workshop has generated interest and enthusiasm to work on a revitalization theme, the Coalition should work with the City to apply for CDBG grant funds for the development of a Tourism Development Plan which would identify the theme and provide step-by-step instructions on what to do, how to do it, budgets, organizations and marketing. 			

VI. QUALITY OF PLACE — STRATEGIC ACTIONS	LEADERSHIP	RESOURCES	TIMELINE & MONITORING
Goal 9: The City will collaborate with community residents, businesses, youth, and neighborhood and faith-based organizations to develop a quality of place strategy.			
<p>Action 1: Develop a “Quality of Place” strategy.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ Schedule and hold a series of facilitated town hall meetings to discuss Atwater’s quality of place characteristics, with the goal of determining what features are the most important, and to gather ideas from the community about how to bring these amenities into the community. (This action is interrelated with creating a vibrant downtown because how people feel and define the community is often determined by how they feel about the downtown). ❑ Specifically, the community should discuss and rank the importance of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Structural amenities (stores, professional services, restaurants, theatres, community centers, and recreational facilities). ▪ Natural amenities (parks, open space, trees, gardens, trails, clean air and water) ▪ Stress reducer amenities (supportive social and family networks, sense of community, clean and safe, lack of congestion, job diversity, quality schools and health care, growing economy) <p>The meetings should conclude with a commitment from participants to join an Atwater Prosperity Coalition “Quality of Place” task force to develop specific strategies for bringing these amenities into the community.</p>	<p>City Council, Atwater Prosperity Coalition.</p>	<p>Property & Business Owners, community residents and community groups.</p>	

Quality of Place Reference Information & Models

Downtown Revitalization

- **Sacramento:** The City’s R Street Corridor specific plan provides for 3,000 new housing units along a light rail line. Over 1,000 housing units are in the process of being built in downtown and midtown Sacramento. Many of these projects feature ground floor retail. http://www.lgc.org/freepub/land_use/cv_liv_places_news/cvnews.html
- **Lindsay:** The City of Lindsay is actively pursuing infill, partnering with the Local Government Commission, the San Joaquin Valley APCD, California Center for Land Recycling and the Great Valley Center. The most ambitious project is the Sweet Briar project which site spans two City blocks on Sweet Briar Street, located on an abandoned rail right-of-way. For some time the City has envisioned mixed-use development for the area that reflects the themes of a European market place. They have imagined housing, a paseo, and an open-air “Mercado” market where farmers and merchants could sell their goods. To help move their vision to reality, a site plan and financial feasibility analysis for the project was completed in 1999. To date, the City has dedicated over \$1.7 million in federal funds to the project and \$500,000 in CDBG funds for on-site infrastructure improvements. http://www.lgc.org/freepub/land_use/cv_liv_places_news/cvnews.html
- **Dinuba:** The City developed a Downtown Entertainment Feasibility Study focusing its entertainment energy in one area of the downtown. The City renovated a closed-down bowling alley. New parking was also added. It is soliciting proposals for a four-screen movie theater next to the bowling center. Smart growth is also a central component to Dinuba’s revitalization. The City passed a Downtown Residential Overlay ordinance and is in the process of seismically upgrading historic downtown buildings to allow housing above ground-floor businesses. The City has also implemented traffic calming and installed sidewalk furniture on its downtown streets. http://www.lgc.org/freepub/land_use/cv_liv_places_news/cvnews.html
- **Innovative housing ordinance in Kirkland, Washington.** Allows cottages and smaller homes in traditional subdivisions. <http://www.ci.kirkland.wa.us/depart/planning/pdfs/innovativehousingflyer.pdf>
- Roger Brooks, Destination Development, rbrooks@destinationdevelopment.com, www.destinationdevelopment.com; 360-754-7920
- Merced Sun Star, Castle Air Museum deserves to be saved, Friday, December 6, 2002.

Quality of Place Strategy

- **Quality of Place in Rural Minnesota,** Northwest Minnesota foundation, Prepared by Nathan R. Dorr, February, 2002 http://www.nmfoundation.org/QoofP_full1.pdf
- **The Citizens Handbook, A Guide to Building Community in Vancouver,** Charles Dobson / Vancouver Citizens Committee The Citizens Handbook is meant to encourage the emergence of more active citizens - people motivated by an interest in public issues, and a desire to make a difference beyond their own private lives. Active citizens are a great untapped resource, and citizenship is a quality to be nurtured. When people decide they are going to be part of the solution, local problems start getting solved. When they actually begin to work with other individuals, schools, associations, businesses, and government service providers, there is no limit to what they can accomplish. <http://www.vcn.bc.ca/citizens-handbook/Welcome.html>
- **Inter-American Development Bank.** A creative community is a community with a vision of the future that involves the use of information and communication technologies in new and innovative ways to empower its citizens, institutions that include local government, private sector and academic sector and regions as a whole. As such, the community makes their own decision to create a better health care delivery, better education and training and new business opportunities. Communities around the world are responding to the needs of their citizens by discovering new ways of using information and communication technologies for economic, social and cultural development. Communities and countries that take advantage of these new technologies will create jobs and economic growth as well as improve the overall quality of life within their communities. <http://www.iadb.org/ict4dev/comuni.htm>

- **Local Government Commission, Principles for Sustainable Growth:** www.lgc.org/economic/index.html Communities that are lovable have strong, vibrant economies that encourage local enterprise, serve the needs of residents and promote stable employment. Lovable communities also make sure that their economic development helps to increase social equity and that it nurtures the natural environment.

Quality of Place Support Documents

- Downtown Development Key Trends & Practices by Kent Robertson, PhD.
- Living it Up Downtown, A Reprint from Tierra Grande, the Real Estate Journal
- Ten Steps to a Living Downtown, Jennifer Moulton, FAIA
- Downtown Revitalization in Urban Neighborhoods and Small Cities, Barbara Wells, Northeast Midwest Institute <http://www.nemw.org/DowntownRevital.pdf>
- Web pages: City of Lindsay