Stanislaus Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy 2025-2030

County of Stanislaus, Cities of Ceres, Hughson, Modesto, Newman, Oakdale, Patterson, Riverbank, Turlock & Waterford

Stanislaus County / www.stancounty.com

1010 10th Street / Modesto, CA 95354

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PREFACE

The Economic Development Administration (EDA)

The US Department of Commerce, Economic Development Administration (EDA) mission is to support the creation of economic development programs creating/retaining full-time permanent jobs and income for unemployed and underemployed in areas of economic distress. EDA supports regions and communities to implement programs and projects through Comprehensive Economic Development Strategies (CEDS). EDA also supports investment (grants) in priority areas to assist positive impact on sustainable regional economic growth and diversification. Funding awards are based on competitive application processes.

The Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS)

The CEDS is both a document and a process. It is a process of establishing and maintaining a robust economic development system by helping to build regional capacity and programs that contribute to individual, business, and community success. Acceptance of this document by EDA allows the region and its communities to qualify for funding from various EDA grant programs. Funding may be sought from EDA for the projects and priority programs identified in this document.

The CEDS Process

The CEDS process begins with selection of a *CEDS Committee* responsible for convening the planning process and overseeing plan implementation. The committee must represent the region's economic development community, including business, industry, government, service and nonprofit organizations, minority populations, and training and educational institutions.

The CEDS Document

The Stanislaus County CEDS should be considered a living document. Written as a five-year plan, annual reports will be submitted to EDA during the interim years. These reports will employ the evaluation framework to record and update progress toward meeting the region's economic development goals, completing the priority projects in the CEDS, and adding any new challenges, opportunities, or priority projects.

This CEDS includes a comprehensive summary of the economy, including identification of regional strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. A comprehensive action plan, founded on a vision and set of goals, and a framework for evaluating progress on implementation is also part of the five-year CEDS. The action plan consists of strategies and tasks intended to address the most critical needs and have the greatest potential to improve the region's economy over the next five years.

This CEDS has been prepared in accordance with US Economic Development Administration (EDA) guidelines.

CEDS Alignment

The Stanislaus County CEDS aligns with and incorporates the activities, goals, and strategies of local jurisdictions, regional stakeholders, the 2030 Stanislaus Investment Blueprint and the Northern San Joaquin Valley's region's California Jobs First Regional Investment Initiative.

Public Participation

Public engagement was integral to the development of the Stanislaus County Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS). Input was gathered from a wide range of stakeholders, including city and county staff, community-based organizations, education and workforce leaders, business and industry representatives, and local and regional partners (see EDAC, Key Community Stakeholders, Key Organizational Stakeholders).

The Economic Development Advisory Committee (EDAC), serving as the CEDS Committee, held open and publicly noticed meetings to review and guide the strategy's development. Drafts of the strategy were made available for review and public comment, ensuring transparency and the opportunity for broad-based input.

A 30-day public review period was held July-August 2025 for community input to final document.

All documents are available on the county website https://www.stancounty.com/ceo/econ-dev/edac.shtm.

Stanislaus Economic Development Advisory Committee (EDAC) Sitting as the CEDS Committee (as of June 2025)

Jurisdiction	Last Name	First Name	Member / Alternate	Position
Board of Supervisors (D4)	Grewal	Mani	Member	
City of Ceres	Otero	Cerina	Member	Councilmember
	Aguirre	*Julian*	*Alternate*	*Economic Development*
City of Hughson	Crooker	Randy	Member	Councilmember
	Strain	*Julie*	*Alternate*	*Councilmember*
City of Modesto	Zwahlen	Susan	Member	Mayor
	Wright	*David*	*Alternate*	*Councilmember*
City of Newman	Pimentel	Gisel	Member	*Councilmember*
	Ball	*Scott*	*Alternate*	*Councilmember*
City of Riverbank	Joshua	Mann	Member	*Community Development Director*
	Holdaway	*Melissa*	*Alternate*	*Adm Asst.*
City of Turlock	Sims	Anthony	Member	Economic Development
	Philips	*Erika*	*Alternate*	*Councilmember*

Jurisdiction	Last Name	First Name	Member / Alternate	Position
City of Waterford	Talbott	Elizabeth	Member	Councilmember
	Gutierrez	*Guadalupe*	*Alternate*	*Councilmember*
City of Oakdale	Gilbert	Kayleigh	Member	Councilmember
	Smith	*Frederick*	*Alternate*	*former council*
City of Patterson	Roque	Carlos	Member	Mayor Pro-Tem
	Romero	*Jessica*	*Alternate*	*Councilmember*
District 1	Ismail	John	Member	
District 2	Foster	Doris	Member	
District 3	Schweininger	Christine	Member	
District 4	Russell	Cecil	Member	
Community	Singh	Harpreet	Member	
Community	Vierra	Rosalinda	Member	
Community	Ibarra	Jose	Member	
Community	Olvera	Dillon	Member	
Community	Arshad	Ali	Member	
Community	White	David	Member	Opportunity Stanislaus
All members were contacted for interviews. Interviews were held with designated city representative vs. alternate. All community representatives received interview forms which some emailed responses as well as attended an interview.				

Key County-City Stakeholders

Jurisdiction	Position	Representative
County	Assistant Executive Officer	Tina Rocha
	Deputy Executive Officer	Erica Inacio
	Public Works Director	David Leamon
	Planning Director	Angela Freitas
City of Modesto	Community Development Director	Jessica Hill
	Economic Development Manager	Trevin Barber
	Public Works Director	Bill Sandhu
	Director of Engineering Services	Toby Wells
	Planning Manager	Tristan Osborn
City of Turlock	Economic Development Manager	Anthony Sims
	Public Works Director	Chris Fisher
	Planning Director	Adrienne Werner
City of Ceres	Community Development Director	Lea Simvoulakis
	Economic Development Manager	Julian Aguirre
	Public Works Director	Samir Royal
City of Riverbank	Community Development Director	Joshua Mann
	Public Works Director	Codey Bridgewater

Jurisdiction	Position	Representative
City of Oakdale	Public Services Director	Jeff Gravel
City of Patterson	Community Development Director	Bryan Stice
	Public Works Director	Mike Willett
City of Newman	Community Development Director	Michael Holland
	Public Works Director	Thomas Spankowski
City of Waterford	Public Works Director	Lonnie Statzer
	Planning Director	Mark Niskanen, JB Anderson Planning
City of Hughson	Community Development Director	Carla Jauregui
Feb-April each jurisdiction was sent a profile to be completed during an interview. Interviews were held with each jurisdiction (multiple individuals within a city) to gather details for the profiles and SWOT.		

Key Organizational Stakeholders

Entity	Position	Representative
Board of Education	Superintendent	Scott Kuykendall
University	President	Britt Rios-Ellis
Community College	President	Brian Sanders, Ed.D.
Workforce Investment Board	Director	Doris Foster
Modesto Irrigation District (MID)	Asst General Manager - Electrical Resources	Martin Caballero
Turlock Irrigation District (TID)	Assistant General Mgr Power Supply	Timothy J. Payne, PE
Opportunity Stanislaus	Chief Executive Offier	David White
Stanislaus 2030	Executive Director	Amanda Hughes
VOLT	Executive Director	Eric Neuenfeldt
Housing	Director of Planning & Community Development	Angela Freitas
	Manager IV, Planning & Community Development	Kristin Doud
	Deputy Executive Officer	Erica Inacio
First Five	Executive Director	Shameram Karim
Emergency Response	Director of OES	Erik Klevmyr
Feb-April recent reports such as Stanislaus 2030 and North San Joaquin Valley THRIVE (California Jobs First Reports) and others were reviewed. Following the gathering and review of reports organizational leaders and key stakeholder were interviewed for further information, context and actions being taken. The Superintendent and Presidents of the University and Community College were unable to be personally interviewed.		

Purpose

The Stanislaus County CEDS builds on the foundation laid by the Stanislaus 2030 Investment Blueprint and other regional initiatives to prioritize strategic investments in infrastructure, industry diversification, workforce development, and small business growth. It is focused on the economic vitality of the county and cities within the county. It is designed to align with federal Economic Development Administration (EDA) priorities and with regional partnerships for the California First Jobs Program, also known as North San Joaquin Valley THRIVE.

Guiding Principles

These guiding principles reflect Stanislaus County's commitment to inclusive values and actions that deliver results. They serve as a compass for how economic development is pursued—through collaboration, respect, and shared responsibility—and are reinforced in Goal 5 as part of ensuring implementation lifts all communities and supports long-term, countywide economic impact.

Stanislaus Economic Development Strategy CEDS – Guiding Principles
1. **Shared Economic Growth** Advance economic opportunity for all residents by removing barriers to quality jobs, supporting underserved communities, and ensuring access to career pathways and entrepreneurship.
2. **Collaboration and Alignment** Foster regional cooperation across jurisdictions, sectors, and institutions—align with Stanislaus 2030, California Jobs First, and megaregional initiatives to amplify impact and leverage shared assets.
3. **Readiness and Responsiveness** Invest in shovel-ready sites, infrastructure, and workforce systems that anticipate business needs and position the region for competitive growth and rapid project deployment.
4. **Innovation and Economic Diversification** Promote innovation, entrepreneurship, and sector diversification to build resilience, attract emerging industries, and expand the County's high-value economic base.
5. **Results-Driven Accountability** Measure success through tangible outcomes—increased job creation, gross regional product, and private investment—while continually improving strategies to deliver lasting economic impact.
6. **Community-Centered Development** Strengthen the connection between people and place by supporting vibrant small cities, livable communities, and infrastructure that enhances the overall quality of life.

Organization of the CEDS Document

The Stanislaus County CEDS outlines economic challenges, identifies opportunities, and sets forth goals, objectives, and actions to support a resilient local economy with expanded commerce and employment opportunities. Organization of the CEDS document follows the U.S. Economic Development Administration's guidelines.

Section I. Economic Overview & Strategic Framework is a data analysis and discussion of the economic, physical and social environments of the region, county, and communities.

Section II. S.W.O.T. provides an analysis of the internal and external factors that affect the region's economic development, competitiveness, and potential.

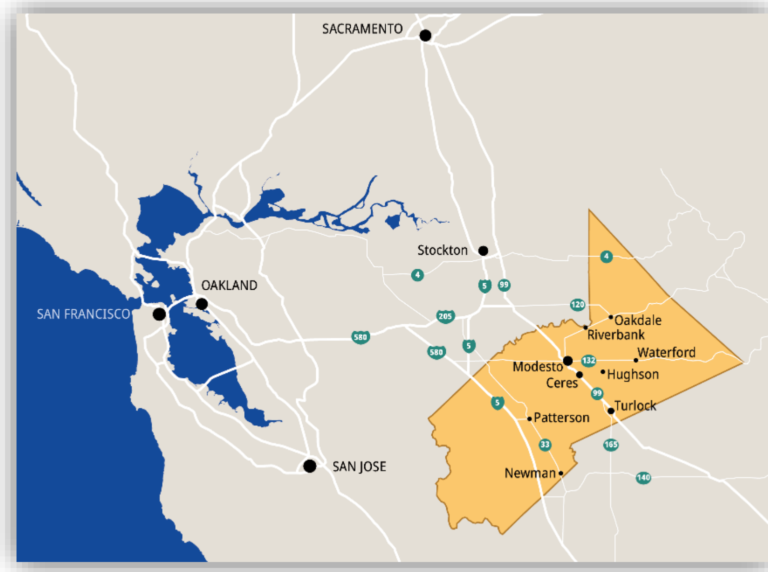
Section III. Strategic Direction is built on data analysis, findings from the SWOT, and public engagement. Strategic objectives focus on leveraging assets and opportunities, meeting challenges, mitigating threats, and stimulating economic growth and stability.

Section IV. Action Plan and implementation of the strategies is accomplished through the coordinated efforts of local government, workforce and education partners, community organizations, and other stakeholders.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Strategic Location in California's Central Valley

Stanislaus County lies at the geographic and economic crossroads of California's Central Valley.



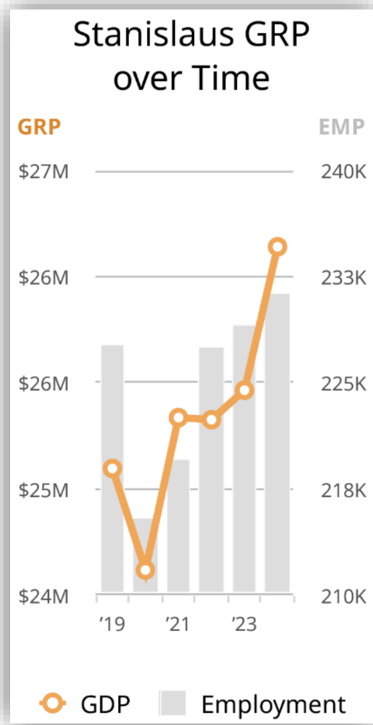
Located in the northern section of the San Joaquin Valley, it is approximately 90 miles east of San Francisco and 60 miles south of Sacramento. The county is bordered by San Joaquin County to the north, Merced County to the south, Tuolumne and Calaveras Counties to the east, and Santa Clara County to the west.

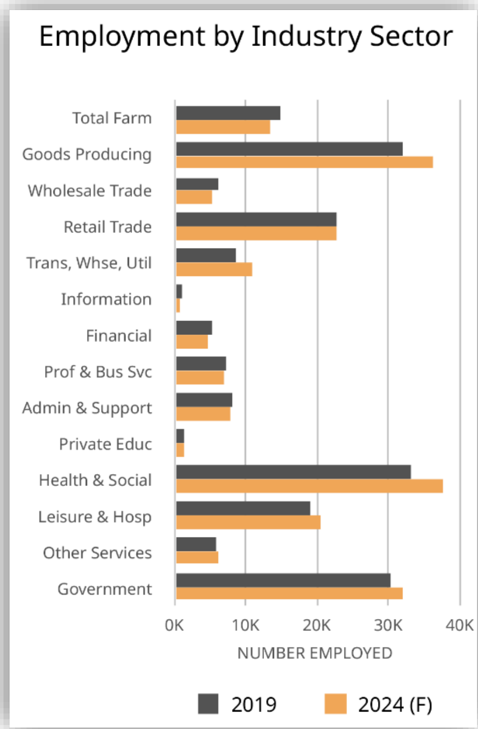
This prime location offers direct access to key urban and economic centers in the East Bay, Bay Area, and Silicon Valley—creating strategic connections for logistics, workforce, and innovation. With growing partnerships involving leading institutions in the Bay Area and beyond, Stanislaus is increasingly recognized as a vital hub for emerging sectors like the bioeconomy and circular economy, strengthening its role in the region's future-facing industries.

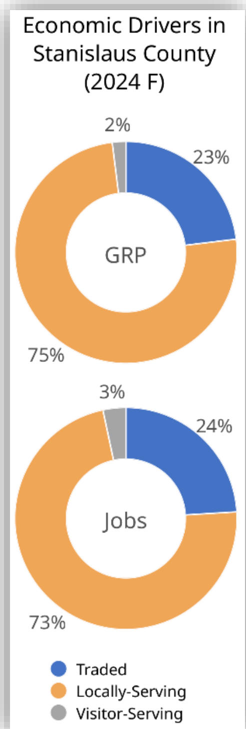
Economic Conditions

With strong momentum from community-led planning efforts like the Stanislaus 2030 Investment Blueprint, this CEDS charts a five-year path to foster inclusive growth, expand quality job opportunities, and strengthen regional competitiveness.

The region has demonstrated resilience in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. Since 2019, Stanislaus County has added over 3,000 jobs, led by gains in agriculture, manufacturing, logistics, and health care. Gross Regional Product (GRP) has rebounded, median incomes have increased, and job levels now exceed pre-pandemic benchmarks. ***However,*** wage disparities persist, particularly for entry-level and low-income workers, and not all communities have shared equally in recovery and growth.







Strategic Framework

The CEDS builds on the strengths and challenges identified through existing foundational and guiding reports which included extensive stakeholder engagement—*the Stanislaus 2030 Investment Blueprint, North San Joaquin Valley THRIVE Strategy, and the People's Plan for Economic Justice*. In addition to a review of over 30 reports and plans, interviews with city leaders, county agencies, and community organizations grounded the strategy of experience and local aspirations (see Stakeholder Charts, Preface, pg 2-4). With the guidance of the EDAC, a comprehensive SWOT analysis was conducted which led to focused goals that build upon and complement ongoing work efforts and plans.

Strategic Direction

The vision guiding the CEDS is action oriented—*Position Stanislaus County as a competitive, high-performing, and inclusive economy that attracts private investment, expands access to quality jobs, and creates lasting pathways to prosperity*. Five interrelated goals were developed to advance this vision. These goals are supported by clear objectives, actions, and performance metrics.

- **Goal 1: Expand Investment-Ready Sites and Infrastructure**
  Prioritizes shovel-ready land, utility investment, and cross-jurisdictional coordination to meet growing business demand.

- **Goal 2: Strengthen and Diversify the Economic Base**
  Focuses on retaining key industries like agriculture and manufacturing while supporting emerging sectors such as bioeconomy and renewable energy.
- **Goal 3: Advance Workforce Participation and Career Pathways**
  Seeks to better align workforce efforts with industry needs, expand training access, and remove barriers to employment like childcare and transportation.
- **Goal 4: Elevate Small Business and Entrepreneurial Ecosystems**
  Enhances capital tools, technical support, and outreach to underserved small businesses and entrepreneurs, especially in rural and small cities.
- **Goal 5: Catalyze Equitable Growth Through Local and Regional Collaboration**
  Embeds shared capacity and regional cooperation across all goals, with a focus on lifting historically underserved communities.

Implementation & Metrics

Each goal is accompanied by a recommended implementation plan that outlines proposed actions, stakeholders, timelines, and measurable outcomes which may be further reviewed and modified as to specific actions by working groups. Progress tracking is recommended across multiple indicators, including GRP growth, sector-specific job creation, business formation, and workforce participation.

Collaborative structures—such as working groups and partners in economic and workforce development with the capacity to lead specific goals and actions—would complement the EDAC by helping guide implementation and ensuring that local voices continue to shape priorities.

Stanislaus County's economic future depends on its ability to work together across communities, sectors, and systems. This CEDS is not a standalone document—it is a complement to the ongoing work of dozens of local partners. It reinforces a shared commitment to inclusive prosperity and practical solutions that deliver long-term economic impact.

SECTION I. ECONOMIC OVERVIEW & STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

Section I. Economic Overview and Strategic Framework provides an overview of Stanislaus County's economic conditions, which are further described in Appendix B, *Economic Conditions*. It summarizes key economic trends since 2019, including job growth, income shifts, sector performance, and regional challenges. This section also overviews research, public engagement plans, and work efforts already in place that are shaping the strategic direction to align, complement, leverage and build on efforts already underway.

Summary Background

1. Stanislaus County, a Key Central Valley Location

Stanislaus County is in the heart of California's Central Valley—one of the most productive agricultural regions in the world. Its central position offers strategic access to major population centers, transportation networks, and emerging innovation corridors that shape the region's future economy:

- **Central Location**: Approximately 90 miles east of San Francisco and 60 miles south of Sacramento, the county offers proximity to major markets while maintaining a strong agricultural and community-based identity.
- **Population:** Home to more than 552,000 residents, the county includes a blend of urban centers, corridor cities, and small rural communities.
- **Cities and Communities***:* The county includes nine incorporated cities—including the urban core of Modesto; corridor cities like Turlock, Ceres, and Patterson; and smaller communities such as Hughson, Oakdale, Riverbank, Waterford, and Newman. It also encompasses nine unincorporated communities such as Salida, Keyes, Denair, and Crows Landing.
- **Transportation Corridors:** The county is served by two major north-south transportation routes—Interstate 5 and State Route 99—as well as key east-west connectors like State Routes 132 and 120, supporting regional freight, commuting, and logistics.
- **Education and Health Infrastructure:** California State University, Stanislaus in Turlock and Modesto Junior College contribute to regional talent and research capacity. The county also serves as a healthcare hub for the surrounding area, with a growing concentration of medical facilities and services.
- **Economic Role:** Stanislaus County anchors a major segment of the North San Joaquin Valley economy, with leading industries in agriculture, food processing, logistics, and advanced manufacturing. It is also emerging as a center of innovation in the bioeconomy, driven by partnerships through initiatives like BEAM and investments in circular economy technologies.

2. Stanislaus Economic Trends Show Resilience

Stanislaus County has shown strong economic recovery and sector growth since the pandemic; clear signs of resilience and opportunity—though structural challenges remain. See Appendix B *Economic Conditions* for a detailed report.

Key Economic Trends (2019–2024)

- **Real Gross Regional Product (GRP):**
  ↑ +2.2% after inflation (2019–2022) – now above pre-pandemic levels.
- **Employment Recovery:**
  Jobs lost during the pandemic were fully recovered by 2022, with continued growth to 2024 in key sectors:
  - **Food Manufacturing:**
    +3,100 jobs—this has been the strongest area of growth, contributing significantly to the region's traded economy and strengthening economic resilience.
  - **Healthcare:**
    Substantial job gains (nearly 4,000) as demand for health services increased both during and after the pandemic, particularly in elder care and support services.
  - **Warehousing & Logistics:**
    Strong post-pandemic growth, +2,000 jobs due to e-commerce and distribution expansion. This includes long-haul and last-mile delivery roles.
  - **Hospitality (hotels & restaurants):**
    Recovery from pandemic lows brought job increases, +1,500, as travel and local dining resumed.

  Sectors with job losses include:
  - **Professional Services:**
    Declines noted, likely reflecting remote work trends and slower recovery in office-based employment typical in suburban and rural California areas.
  - **Wholesale Trade:**
    Also saw some declines, mirroring statewide patterns related to supply chain adjustments and consolidation.
- **Labor Force Participation:**
  Increasing steadily since 2021, an indication of the return of previously discouraged workers.
- **Unemployment:**
  Fell from pandemic highs (double digits) to ~7.3% (2023)—still above state and national averages but trending down.
- **Median Household Income:**
  Increased by nearly 10% since 2019—but disparities persist across geographic areas.
- **Wage & Equity Gaps:**
  Despite income gains, disparities remain in wages, job access, and educational attainment.

Structural Conditions and Barriers:

- **Shovel-Ready Sites:** Shortage of infrastructure-ready industrial and commercial sites is a barrier to business expansion and attraction.
- **Housing Affordability:** Home prices have risen faster than incomes; rent burden remains high for low-income households.
- **Broadband & Transportation Access:** Connectivity and mobility constraints in smaller cities limit access to jobs and services.
- **Sector Dependence**: Agriculture remains a major economic engine, but is highly exposed risks from drought, climate variability, and market volatility.

3. Regional Plans Highlight Forward-Thinking, Action Oriented

This strategy builds upon over 30 local, regional, and state-level plans reviewed throughout the CEDS development process. Two strategic efforts—the Stanislaus 2030 Investment Blueprint and the North Valley THRIVE Plan—have progressed to implementation providing a foundation for guiding direction:

1. *Stanislaus 2030 Investment Blueprint*—A countywide, community-engaged initiative that defines broader strategies for equitable growth and addresses challenges and disparities.
2. *North Valley THRIVE (North San Joaquin Valley Jobs First Plan)*—A multi-county framework of strategies, coordination, and development in Merced, Stanislaus, and San Joaquin counties.

The People's Plan for Economic Justice offers valuable public input and priorities from historically underserved communities and is referenced as a key source of community voice as a community-led report. Other key documents that informed the CEDS include local general plans, regional infrastructure assessments, transportation studies, and workforce development plans.

4. Engaging Stakeholder and Public Input

Stakeholder input was a critical component of the planning process. Outreach included:

- Structured interviews and calls with city staff, county departments, utility providers, workforce and economic development leaders, and regional organizations.
- One-on-one interviews with members of the Economic Development Advisory Committee (EDAC), a countywide committee representing all nine cities, County and key organizations.
- The EDAC provided guidance during the preparation of the plan at public meetings, and it is posted for public access and comment to ensure it reflects regional needs and values.

5. Process has Informed the Strategic Direction

The insights from data analysis, regional plans, and community input directly shaped the strategy's vision, guiding principles, and five overarching goals. These focus on expanding investment-ready sites, growing sectors and businesses, aligning talent with industry, supporting entrepreneurship, and ensuring equitable, collaborative development.

SECTION II. SWOT

The **Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT)** section reviews factors shaping Stanislaus County's economic future. It draws from data (Economic & Physical Conditions Reports[1]) as well as local insights to identify the most relevant economic constraints and areas of potential. These key factors help shape the goals and objectives that follow, serving as a guide for where action is most needed to strengthen competitiveness, increase access to opportunity, and drive long-term economic vitality.

Background Review & Engagement

The SWOT included a review of over 30 reports and plans (last five years)—including Stanislaus 2030, The People's Plan for Economic Justice, and the regional North San Joaquin Valley Jobs First THRIVE Strategy—along with current data trends on post-pandemic recovery, wage disparities, and industry shifts.

It is informed by direct engagement with local stakeholders, including one-on-one interviews with EDAC members, discussions with city representatives to inform the City/County Economic Profiles and identify Opportunity Sites, and outreach to key partner organizations. Additional research was conducted into capital improvement needs and innovative programs already addressing Stanislaus 2030 priorities, helping to identify both on-the-ground strengths and ongoing challenges shaping economic development in Stanislaus County.

SWOT

The SWOT charts on the following pages reveal several key themes shaping the region's economic trajectory.

- ***Strengths*** include a diversified ag-based economy, growing momentum in the bioeconomy sector, a culture of regional collaboration, and active institutional partnerships.
- ***Weaknesses*** such as a lack of shovel-ready land, gaps in skilled labor, low educational attainment, and uneven access to broadband and infrastructure, particularly in smaller and underserved communities—pose significant barriers to growth.
- ***Opportunities*** lie in expanding emerging industries, unlocking federal and state funding (if available), strengthening talent pipelines, and revitalizing vacant buildings and infill areas.
- ***Threats*** such as climate impacts, increasing housing costs, and differences in economic opportunity across communities highlight the importance of strategies that are responsive to local conditions and assets.

These realities affirm the CEDS' commitment to broad-based economic growth, strong regional partnerships, and expanding opportunity for all residents and neighborhoods across Stanislaus County.

[1] Economic & Physical Conditions, see Appendix B & C.

Strengths

1. Diverse Economic Base

- Strong performance reported in manufacturing, healthcare, and logistics, with manufacturing contributing significantly to GRP.
- Resilient economic growth, Gross Regional Product (GRP) increasing by 2.2% 2019 to 2023, despite ongoing inflationary pressures.

2. Industry Diversity

- **Key traded sectors** include agribusiness, food processing, advanced agriculture technology, manufacturing, logistics, and renewable energy contributing to economic stability and growth:
  - **Agribusiness and Food Processing:** Fertile land and water resources Stanislaus County leads agricultural innovation, driving export revenues and food security.
  - **Manufacturing:** Advanced technologies and skilled workforce, adds value to raw material production, diverse job opportunities.
  - **Logistics:** Hub for supply chain management and distribution with major transportation corridors, rail systems, and ports.
  - **Renewable Energy:** Investments in solar, bioenergy, and other renewable projects enhance leadership in sustainable energy production and innovation.

  These traded sector industries are growing and stable due to strong demand for agricultural products, ongoing innovation in manufacturing processes, increasing need for efficient logistics solutions, and California's push toward renewable energy initiatives.
- **Emerging Traded Sector continuing to position County as leader:**

  Circular Bioeconomy: Stanislaus County has strong potential to lead in the Circular Bioeconomy which offers a promising path forward—renewable energy (biofuels), transformation of raw and agricultural byproducts into high-value materials, sustainable products, and advanced manufacturing opportunities.

  Through BEAM Circular the county secured national funding to advance circular economy solutions. Key partnerships with CSU Stanislaus, UC Merced, UC Davis, UC ANR, and Lawrence Livermore Lab support cutting-edge research and commercialization, while collaborations with ag and tech sectors will transform waste into value-added products and position the region for long-term economic growth.

3. Educational Assets

- Access to higher education through institutions like Modesto Junior College, CSU Stanislaus, UC Merced, University of the Pacific, CSU Fresno fosters workforce development and innovation.
- VOLT Institute, a trade school specializing in industrial maintenance, mechatronics, and advanced manufacturing, provides hands-on technical training to meet industry demands.
- Stanislaus County Office of Education (SCOE), vocational and private schools support education and training.
- Several teaching hospitals Doctors Medical Center of Modesto, Memorial Medical Center (Sutter Health), Stanislaus Surgical Hospital and related medical education partners Valley Consortium for Medical Education (residency), CSU Stanislaus School of Nursing, and Modesto Junior College with Allied Health Programs support the healthcare sector.

4. **Logistical Advantages**

- Proximity to major transportation routes (Interstate 5, Hwy 99, Hwy 132, Hwy 580) and access to ports and rail systems.
- Planned Altamont Corridor Express (ACE) rail expansion to enhance connectivity.

5. **Affordability**

- Lower cost of living and housing compared to California averages, attracts residents and businesses seeking more affordable alternatives.

6. **Community Resources and Initiatives**

- Cities within Stanislaus County have historically supported business-friendly policies, initiating permit streamlining and fostering economic growth.
- Effective programs and initiatives offer targeted and critical resources:
  - **Stanislaus 2030 Initiative**: Comprehensive plan includes goals for regional economic diversification, workforce readiness, and development of high-growth sectors. Its importance lies in creating a resilient economy by addressing current and future market trends.
  - **Small Business Development Center (SBDC)**: SBDC serves entrepreneurs and small businesses offering professional consulting, training, and access to financial resources. Targets early-stage companies, minority-owned businesses, and those seeking expansion.
  - **Opportunity Stanislaus**: Organization supports cities and county through business attraction, retention, workforce training, and economic analysis assistance. Role in creating public/private partnerships is pivotal for growth.
  - **Stanislaus Equity Partners (STEP)**: STEP focuses on community development, providing financing and technical assistance to small businesses, especially in underserved areas. It enhances economic development by fostering innovation and enabling access to capital.
  - **BEAM Circular,** introduced in the 2030 Plan and funded by Stanislaus County and other partners to grow the region's bio industrial economy. Focus is on advancing innovation, workforce development, and sustainable industry positioning as a hub for clean manufacturing and ag-tech opportunities**.**

Weaknesses

1. Limited Shovel-ready Land and Buildings

- Few fully infrastructure-ready sites are available for immediate business expansion or relocation.
- Many industrial and commercial parcels lack basic utilities (water, sewer, broadband, etc.), delaying project timelines.
- Smaller cities face capacity constraints in preparing and marketing sites, limiting their competitiveness.
- Missed opportunities for investment as companies seek ready-to-go locations with short turnaround timelines.
- California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) hinders projects due to increased costs and timelines.

2. Labor Force Challenges

- Slow growth in the younger workforce (<40 years), limiting economic expansion and innovation.
- Skills gaps in high-demand sectors such as healthcare, logistics, advanced manufacturing, and bioeconomy.
- Declining enrollment in Career Technical Education (CTE) programs impacts workforce readiness.
- Limited access to childcare facilities inhibits workforce participation, particularly among working parents.
- Commuting trends show an increasing number of residents working outside the county, reducing the retention of the local workforce.
- Employers are struggling to attract and retain skilled talent due to competitive job markets in neighboring regions.
- Impacted healthcare training programs and costs of training.

3. Housing Supply and Affordability

- Housing development is not keeping pace with demand, leading to rising costs and potential displacement, particularly for low- and middle-income families.
- The Regional Housing Needs Allocation (RHNA) Plan shows over 34,000 new housing units are needed by 2031 to meet projected growth.
- Rising rental costs disproportionately impact renters; average rents are increasing by up to 6% annually requiring renters to earn significantly above the state minimum wage to afford housing.
- A high percentage of renters (44.6%) are spending more than 35% of their income on housing, further highlighting affordability challenges.
- Supply constraints are exacerbated by limited new housing construction, leading to competitive markets and potential displacement of vulnerable populations.

- Limited funding for smaller cities to do projects is available.

4. Economic Disparities

- Poverty remains a persistent issue, particularly among renters who bear a higher burden of housing costs.
- Low-income residents experience limited economic mobility due to rising housing costs and limited job access.
- Services for an aging population are limited.

5. Environmental Risks

- The region faces high vulnerability to drought, heatwaves, and other climate-related threats, as identified in the Multi-Jurisdictional Hazard Mitigation Plan.
- Water resource challenges are impacting agriculture and long-term sustainability.

6. Healthcare Accessibility

- Stanislaus County is designated as a Health Professional Shortage Area (HPSA), indicating a shortage of healthcare professionals relative to the population's needs.
- While 93.9% of the population is covered by private or public health insurance, the uninsured rate has been gradually increasing since 2020.
- The county has fewer primary care providers per capita than state and national averages, exacerbating healthcare access issues.
- Dental shortages also exist; Stanislaus County has significantly fewer dentists per capita than the California state average.
- Key healthcare providers in the county include Memorial Medical Center, Doctors Medical Center of Modesto, Emanuel Medical Center in Turlock, and Kaiser Medical Center, but emergency and specialty healthcare services remain stretched.
- Public healthcare services such as the Stanislaus County Health Services Agency (HSA) and Behavioral Health and Recovery Services (BHRS) provide essential community health programs, but funding and service capacity remain challenges.
- The county ranks high in coronary heart disease deaths, rising rates of syphilis, and opioid prescription rates are nearly double the California average.

7. Childcare Shortages

- A critical barrier to employment is the significant shortage of childcare services in Stanislaus County. As of April 2024, there are five children for every licensed childcare space, equating to an estimated need of approximately 36,000 additional childcare slots to meet workforce demands.
- Childcare costs range from $9,800 to nearly $15,000 per year per child, creating financial barriers for working families.
- A study conducted by UC Berkeley found that approximately 50 census tracts in the North San Joaquin Valley lack access to licensed childcare resources, with the greatest gaps near urban centers.
- Childcare facilities have limited flexibility on hours and locations.

Opportunities

1. **Industry Expansion**
    - Targeted growth in critical sectors such as logistics, advanced manufacturing, bioeconomy, and renewable energy.
    - Renewable energy initiatives like Project Nexus and the Proxima Solar Project.
    - Strategic alignment with the 2030 Investment Blueprint for small business and industrial growth.
    - Expansion of small business support services.
    - Technology integration in agriculture such as precision farming and automation can help modernize the industry and increase competitiveness.
    - Ability to utilize the existing agricultural raw materials for creating value-add products, and products for other cultures, thereby increasing exports.

2. **Workforce Development**
    - Expanding Career Technical Education (CTE) programs and attracting new and emerging workforce candidates to address skills gaps.
    - Leveraging partnerships with local colleges and trade schools like VOLT Institute to align curricula with industry needs, including bioeconomy-specific training.

3. **Circular Bioeconomy**
    - Advancing the Bioeconomy and technologies to create sustainable products and reduce environmental impacts, enhancing the region's economic and ecological resilience.
    - Partnering with green technology firms to establish Stanislaus County as a hub for sustainability innovations.

4. **Opportunity Sites and Developments**[2]
    - Crows Landing Industrial Business Park: A major economic development project repurposing the former Crows Landing Air Facility into an industrial hub, poised to generate thousands of jobs in logistics, manufacturing, and aviation-related industries.
    - Beard Industrial Park: Located east of the Modesto Airport with over 2,000 acres and 300 acres available for development.
    - Patterson and Westside Development: Expansion of industrial and warehouse space along the I-5 corridor, attracting logistics and e-commerce investments.
    - Modesto and Turlock Commercial Growth: Increasing development in retail, healthcare, and business services supporting population and economic expansion.
    - United Soccer League (USL) Stadium: Support the Modesto-USL stadium initiative, a 5,000+ seat stadium with an integrated sports and entertainment district.
    - Reuse Development Project: Continuing advancing redevelopment plan for Modesto Municipal Golf Course, 54 acres to mixed-use or expanded recreational development.
    - Renewable Energy Zones: Identified areas for wind, solar, and bioenergy projects that contribute to sustainability goals while driving economic investment.

[2] A full listing of Opportunity Sites are included at the end of the SWOT Analysis, Appendix C and City/County Profiles.

5. **Infrastructure and Transportation Improvements**
   - Altamont Corridor Express (ACE) Rail Expansion: Increasing connectivity between Stanislaus County and the Bay Area supports workforce mobility.
   - Highway 99 and I-5 Upgrades: Enhancing transportation infrastructure to improve freight movement and reduce congestion.
   - EV and green transportation infrastructure: With California's push for electrification, investing in EV infrastructure could attract new industries and improve regional transportation.
   - Broadband Expansion: Increasing internet access in rural and underserved areas supports economic development and education.
   - Enhanced Infrastructure Financing District Partnership (EFID): A proposed City of Modesto–County EIFD as a catalyst for economic redevelopment projects is advancing. A 5,125-acre district (18% of city land) which includes $2.2 billion in assessed value targeting incorporated areas with regional impact and County pockets prioritized for annexation.

6. **Housing Initiatives**
   - Policy incentives to promote affordable housing development and streamline approval processes.
   - Public-private partnerships to accelerate housing construction and address shortages.
   - The Stanislaus 2030 initiative includes a focus on housing as part of economic resiliency, ensuring alignment of housing policies with workforce needs and existing actions can be part of public-private partnerships:
   - The Stanislaus County Down Payment Assistance Program (DPAP) helps first-time homebuyers access homeownership, while cities like Modesto and Turlock are adding affordable units through projects like Tower Park Village and Avena Bella. Nonprofits and partners are also pursuing funding to expand housing affordability.

7. **Healthcare Expansion and Access Improvements**
   - Investments in healthcare infrastructure to expand primary and specialized care services.
   - Potential for new healthcare training programs to address workforce shortages in nursing, mental health, and elder care.
   - Development of Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs) to improve healthcare access in underserved areas.

8. **Childcare Expansion Initiatives**
   - Stanislaus 2030 Child Care Expansion Project: Creating thousands of new licensed childcare spaces to support working families.
   - Workforce-Integrated Childcare Programs: New employer-based childcare solutions aimed at increasing workforce participation.
   - The Children's Crisis Center of Stanislaus County offers 24-hour emergency childcare services for families in crisis.
   - The Stanislaus STARS program[3] is a quality improvement initiative focused on enhancing early care and education programs.

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[3] http://www.STANCOE.Org/CFS/QRIS-CSPP

Threats

1. **State and National Economic Conditions**
   - Fluctuations in the national economy, inflation, and federal interest rate policies may impact local business investment and consumer spending.
   - Higher interest rates could slow down home sales, business expansions, and infrastructure financing, leading to potential economic stagnation.
   - Economic slowdowns at the state and national levels could reduce funding for essential programs, including housing, transportation, and healthcare initiatives in Stanislaus County.
2. **Changes in Administration and Policy Shifts**
   - Shifts in federal and state administrations may result in regulatory changes affecting industries such as agriculture, logistics, and manufacturing.
   - Potential reductions in federal and state funding for workforce development, infrastructure, and social programs could strain county resources.
   - Evolving trade policies may impact exports from the region, particularly in the agriculture and manufacturing sectors.
3. **Economic Vulnerabilities**
   - Potential tariffs are unknown, but businesses have globalized supply chains. Could impact inventory delivery and further inflationary pricing pressures.
   - Agriculture sector dependence susceptible to climate impacts and market volatility.
   - Rising costs of living could drive residents and businesses to relocate.
   - Workforce shortages in key industries, exacerbated by talent outmigration.
   - Rising unemployment rate and stagnant labor force participation in some demographics.
4. **Environmental and Climate Challenges**
   - Increasing frequency of extreme weather events impacting agriculture and housing.
   - Water resource limitations may threaten long-term sustainability of traded sectors.
5. **Housing Crisis**
   - Escalating housing costs outpacing income growth, eroding affordability advantages.
   - Continued housing mandates from the state.
   - Delays in addressing housing supply gaps could exacerbate socioeconomic divides.
6. **Healthcare System Strain**
   - Growing demand for services from an aging population without a corresponding increase in healthcare capacity.
7. **Infrastructure and Resource Constraints**
   - Potential delays in planned infrastructure projects due to funding or logistical barriers.
   - Ongoing energy and water resource management challenges.
8. **Competition for Investment**
   - Neighboring counties and regions are competing for the same industries, investments, and talent pool.

Economic Opportunity Sites

During the research and preparation of the CEDS (February to May), individual meetings were held with each city and the county to review and prepare individual **City/County Economic Profiles** that identify priority opportunity sites within the jurisdiction, infrastructure needs, capital improvement projects, and economic development initiatives. These profiles provide critical ground-level context to ensure the CEDS aligns with real-time local priorities and opportunities.

Economic Opportunity Sites (Sites) were identified by each City and the County and are included in the SWOT Section of the CEDS as locations with the potential to support job creation, private investment, and long-term economic growth. Each jurisdiction selected its Sites based on a combination of factors, including:

- Alignment with local and regional planning priorities
- Current level of development readiness (e.g., zoning, entitlements, and infrastructure)
- Suitability for new or infill development, revitalization, or site enhancement

These areas reflect a mix of industrial, commercial, retail, and visitor-serving opportunities, and were prioritized based on their potential to contribute meaningfully to economic resilience and place-based prosperity.

It is important to note that these Sites and areas represent a selected set of priority sites. Cities and the County may have additional locations with economic potential that were not included in this initial round of review.

City/County Economic Profiles

Each individual **Economic Profile** is included in the Appendix C *Physical, Conditions,* City/County Economic Profiles for reference.

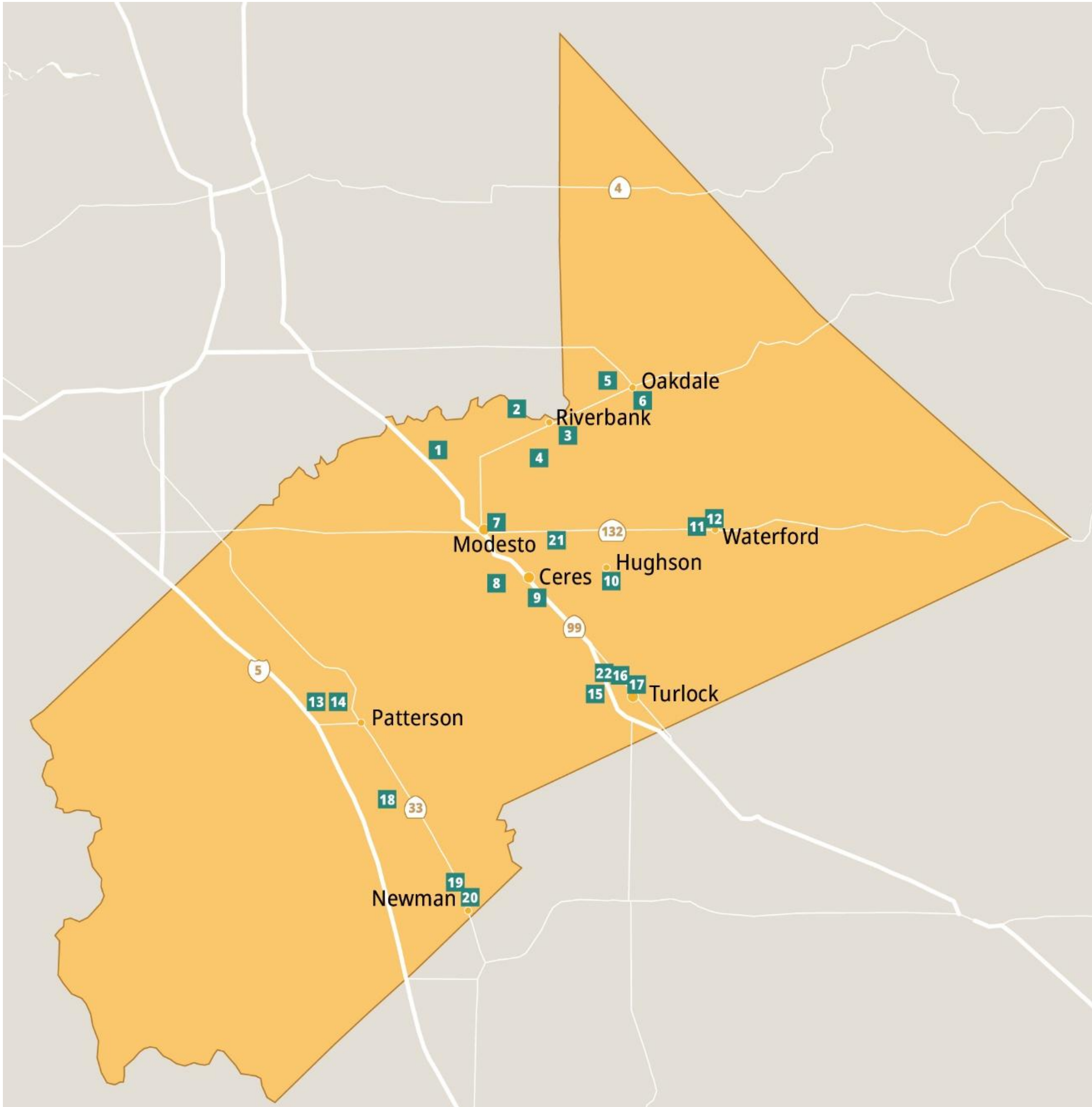
Economic Opportunity Sites

The limited availability of shovel-ready industrial and commercial land is a well-documented barrier to economic growth in Stanislaus County. By highlighting these Economic Opportunity Areas (Sites), cities and the County have a shared foundation to begin convening around action strategies for planning, infrastructure investment, and site development.

The Stanislaus County Opportunity Sites Map identifies the location of 20 potential economic opportunity areas throughout the County followed by a brief description of each site. These are further documented in the Appendix C *Physical Conditions*, Economic Opportunity Sites.

There are also other city and county-led redevelopment and reuse projects identified in the City/County Economic Profiles that are being advanced such as the United Soccer League (USL) Stadium in Modesto, reuse of municipal golf course, and partnerships in infrastructure financing for preparing properties for development.

Stanislaus County Opportunity Sites Map



STANISLAUS COUNTY OPPORTUNITY SITES

1. Kiernan Business Park, Modesto
2. River Walk Specific Plan, Riverbank
3. Riverbank Industrial Area, Riverbank
4. Tivoli Modesto, Modesto
5. Crane Crossing Specific Plan, Oakdale
6. South Oakdale Industrial Specific Plan, Oakdale
7. Old County Courthouse Redevelopment, Modesto
8. West Landing Specific Plan, Ceres
9. Copper Trails Specific Plan, Ceres
10. Tully Road Industrial Subdivision, Hughson
11. Vacant Commercial Properties & Former Burger King, Waterford
12. Vacant Commercial Properties North Side, Waterford
13. Arambel Business Park, Patterson
14. Baldwin Ranch Master Planning Area, Patterson
15. West Side Industrial Specific Plan, Turlock
16. ACE Ceres-Merced Extension Project, Stanislaus County
17. Turlock Town Center, Turlock
18. Crows Landing Industrial Park, Stanislaus County
19. NW Newman Master Plan Area, Newman
20. Hwy 33 Specific Plan, Newman
21. Beard Industrial Park, Modesto
22. Turlock Market Place, Turlock

1. **Kiernan Business Park** (Modesto) an attractive opportunity site due to its 614 acres of planned high-quality business and industrial space. Located adjacent to Modesto and close to Highway 99, it offers excellent accessibility. The development includes a mix of business park, offices, regional commercial, medical campus, mixed-use, and residential areas, making it a versatile and strategic location for investment.
2. **River Walk Specific Plan** (Riverbank) a mixed-use development project encompassing almost 1,000 acres in the northwest corner of the City. The land uses proposes a variety of housing densities, mixed-use, parks and recreation, including all infrastructure and utilities necessary to service the development. The RWSP estimates between 2,432 to 2,682 residential units, and 375,000 to 875,000 square feet of mixed-use for commercial, office, service, or retail use, as well as some transitional care facilities. A large portion of the RWSP is intended to be an age-restricted active adult community, while a portion will not be age restricted. It is currently under review and pending entitlements.
3. **Riverbank Industrial Area** (Riverbank) is a former Army Ammunition Plant located in southeast Riverbank, east of Claus Road, north of Claribel Road and is the location of Aemetis carbon sequestration and bio jet fuel facility. The area is served by BNSF rail spur. Being touted as a “green” industrial park, but the U.S. Army still has possession and contamination cleanup is required before it can be turned over to the City. Warehouses are being used, with leases coordinated by City (City is receiving those funds).
4. **Tivoli Specific Plan** (Modesto) is considered an Opportunity Site because it offers a unique chance for development and investment in a growing area. The Tivoli Specific Plan (TSP) aims to foster attractive and distinctive development, ensuring public facilities and services are adequately provided. It includes a mix of residential, commercial, and recreational spaces, promoting a vibrant community.
5. **Crane Crossing Specific Plan** (Oakdale) is located across two separate areas on the western edge of town, the Crane Crossing Specific Plan outlines low-, medium- and high-density residential uses with some supporting general commercial uses along Highway 108/West F Street. There are 168 acres targeted for residential and 64 acres allotted for general commercial and flex uses. The plan was adopted in March 2014.
6. **South Oakdale Industrial Specific Plan** (Oakdale) was adopted in May 2006. Located at the south end of town in an area within city limits and primarily undeveloped, the plan includes 383 acres of industrial, 68 acres of office and 56 acres of general commercial uses.
7. **Courthouse Redevelopment** (Modesto and Stanislaus County) The redevelopment of the Downtown Courthouse block and its alignment to the current Downtown Master Plan. The current Courthouse site in downtown Modesto is central to the City's downtown. Initiatives are aimed at enhancing green spaces along I Street and infrastructure plans to retain the current building's historical elements along with new mixed-use developments. A thorough evaluation of the space will guide its potential redevelopment and alignment of the Downtown Master Plan, while improvements aim to foster a vibrant and welcoming downtown area for residents and visitors. The County currently is part owner of the building.
8. **West Landing Specific Plan** (Ceres) approved in 2011 but still undeveloped, the West Landing Specific Plan area encompasses 906-acres of developed, underdeveloped and agricultural land that is now part of the western city limits. The plan includes a mix of residential, totaling approximately 420-acres, 85 acres of retail, 85 acres of office and 130 acres of industrial uses. The industrial area is primarily built out, with opportunities for business parks and varying densities of residential.
9. **Copper Trails Specific Plan** (Ceres) 535 acres of unincorporated land within the southeast area, adjacent to the Ceres city limits. Future development could result in up to 2,392 dwelling units and 1.1 million square feet of regional commercial development just west of SR 99 and north of Gondring Road.
10. **Tully Road Industrial Subdivision** (Hughson) a subdivision application to divide 46.44 acres into thirty-four industrial lots. Project is located at the south end of the City, just south of the existing California Trus facility.
11. **Vacant Commercial Properties and a former Burger King on Yosemite Boulevard** (Waterford), two vacant parcels (APN 080-045-027 and 080-045-051) totaling 4.19 acres with frontage improvements. Two parcels to the west at 11900 Yosemite Blvd is a vacant Burger King drive-thru. Zoning is Commercial Highway.

12. **Vacant Commercial Properties on the north side of Yosemite Boulevard** (Waterford) APN 080-065-022 and 080-047-003 are each just over one-half acre with frontage along Yosemite Blvd. Zoning is Commercial Highway.
13. **Arambel Business Park** (Patterson) represents the expansion of the existing West Patterson Business Park (WPBP) to include parcels located north and west of the WPBP. There is a Restoration Hardware fulfillment center located at Arambel, with opportunity sites located west and north of the fulfillment center. Adopted in 2012, Arambel has 652 acres of light industrial area, 87 acres as a business park, and 35 acres general commercial.
14. **Baldwin Ranch Master Planning Area** (Patterson) adopted in 2022, the master plan proposes almost 1,300 acres be developed with a range of housing densities, a mixed-use town center, a commercial center and 317 acres of light industrial uses along the western edge, fronting the east side of Rogers Road. The plan area is located on the north end of town, adjacent to the existing edge of development within the city.
15. **Turlock Regional Industrial Park & West Side Industrial Specific Plan** (Turlock) includes more than 1,700 acres of industrially zoned parcels with the balance of acreage divided between Business Park and Commercial zoned parcels. The City has invested more than $14 million in water and sewer infrastructure to make large areas of the park “shovel ready.” The plan was adopted in 2006.
16. **ACE Ceres-Merced Extension Project** (Stanislaus County) extension would include track upgrades, new track, new bridges & a second mainline track along 34 miles of the UPRR Fresno Subdivision between Ceres and Merced. New Turlock, Livingston and Merced Stations along the extension alignment. New layover and maintenance facility in Merced.
17. **Turlock Town Center** (Turlock) is a 8.37-acre fully-leased neighborhood shopping center that anchored by a grocery and drug store and contains 29 retail suites and five retail pads. Currently listed for sale at $48.8 million.
18. **Crows Landing Industrial Business Park & Airfield** (Stanislaus County) a former air facility property, this 1,528-acre business park is envisioned as a vibrant, regional employment center. General land uses include 350 acres for light industrial/manufacturing, 349 for logistics/distribution, 78 acres as a business park, and 370 acres for airports uses (runways, taxiways, hangars). The project includes a 20–30-year phasing plan.
19. **Northwest Newman Master Plan Area** (Newman) consists of a mix of residential, business park, community commercial, office, parks and school uses within a 362-acre area north and west of town. The area is adjacent to existing manufacturers including DIGZ Prefab & Modular Homes and Westside Landscape & Concrete. The area is partially outside city limits, but within its sphere of influence.
20. **Highway 33 Specific Plan** (Newman) was updated in January 2022 to provide direction for parcels along the Highway 33 corridor, primarily comprised of commercial, office and business park uses. The corridor runs north south and passes through the central downtown area.
21. **Beard Industrial Park** is a prime opportunity site thanks to its strategic location near major transportation routes and efficient rail services. The park offers over 9 million square feet of industrial space across more than 2,000 acres, making it ideal for businesses needing large facilities. Established infrastructure and a community of globally recognized companies create a supportive business environment. The availability of large parcels of land and ongoing development efforts further enhance its growth potential.
22. **Turlock Market Place** is a 30-acre greenfield site located just south of the existing Monte vista Crossing commercials center, one of the highest trafficked retail destinations in the county. Great exposure and visibility to Highway.

Federally Designated Opportunity Zones

Stanislaus County has **16 federally designated Opportunity Zones**. These zones were created under the 2017 Tax Cuts and Jobs Act to spur long-term private investment in low-income and economically distressed communities by offering tax incentives to investors. Opportunity Zones are set to sunset on December 31, 2026.

SECTION III. STRATEGIC DIRECTION

Stanislaus County has demonstrated remarkable economic resilience—recovering quickly from the COVID-19 pandemic. Driven by a strong foundation in agriculture, logistics, and rising household incomes, this recovery reflects both the region's adaptability and community strength.

Stanislaus County also stands out for its proactive, collaborative economic ecosystem—one shaped by the development of the *Stanislaus 2030 Investment Blueprint* plan brought together hundreds of stakeholders and residents in 2022 to tackle deep-rooted disparities focused on expanding access to quality, good-paying jobs and addressing long-term challenges that affect disparity.

This Economic Development Strategy is intended to support and build upon the momentum already started. It reinforces and aligns with ongoing efforts focused on actions that create competitive location, community investment and economic impact.

Vision Statement

Stanislaus County Economic Development Strategy

A competitive, high-performing, and inclusive economy that drives private investment, expands quality job opportunities, and strengthens career pathways—positioning Stanislaus County as a destination for business growth, innovation, and economic mobility.

Stanislaus 2030: The Strategic Foundation for CEDS Goals

The *Stanislaus 2030 Investment Blueprint* laid the groundwork for inclusive and forward-thinking economic development in the region. Shaped by broad stakeholder engagement and deep community input, it identified core priorities—such as industry diversification, workforce mobility, small business support, and equity—it is a guiding document for the county.

The CEDS goals directly build on this foundation—targeted, actionable strategies that support site readiness, workforce pathways, small business growth, and regional collaboration priorities identified by the CEDS Committee and stakeholders.

Goals

OVERARCHING GOAL

Position Stanislaus County as a competitive, inclusive, and resilient economy—driving private investment, expanding quality jobs, and fostering opportunity for all Stanislaus residents.

Five goals represent a framework for advancing economic development in Stanislaus County. These reflect current economic conditions, ongoing initiatives, and priorities raised during the CEDS stakeholder engagement and SWOT analysis.

1. **Expand Investment-Ready Sites and Infrastructure**
2. **Strengthen and Diversify the Economic Base**
3. **Advance Workforce Participation and Career Pathways**
4. **Elevate Small Business and Entrepreneurial Ecosystems**
5. **Catalyze Equitable Growth through Local and Regional Collaboration**

These goals are intended to guide the implementation of the County's economic development strategy in alignment with Stanislaus 2030 and other collaborative efforts with the purpose of supporting private investment, expanding access to quality jobs, and strengthening regional partnerships while remaining flexible enough to incorporate additional input and evolve with changing needs.

The following Goal Matrix provides an overview summary of the five strategy goals noting:

1) Strategic goal – *what is to be accomplished*
2) Rationale for the goal inclusion – *why it is needed*
3) Factors – *critical elements to reach success*
4) Metrics – *measuring progress*

STANISLAUS ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT GOAL MATRIX

Goal 1. Expand Investment-Ready Sites and Infrastructure

Ensure Stanislaus is ready for business growth with shovel-ready land, modern infrastructure, and project-ready systems.

Rationale	Factors	Metrics
Companies in advanced manufacturing, ag-tech, and the bioeconomy cannot expand or locate in Stanislaus if industrial sites remain with limited infrastructure or not "shovel-ready." Ensuring a robust portfolio of market-ready suitable sites directly supports job growth and higher wages.	▪ Industrial site readiness ▪ Broadband ▪ Utilities ▪ Transportation corridors ▪ Development processes	▪ Site planning ▪ Site investment activity ▪ Infrastructure dollars ▪ Permits issued

Goal 2. Strengthen and Diversify the Economic Base

Support traded sector growth—including ag-based industries, advanced manufacturing, logistics, and renewable energy—while nurturing emerging industries like the bioeconomy.

Rationale	Factors	Metrics
The historically strong farm and food-processing core remains critical with potential for expansion in product diversification as does a strong construction sector with good paying jobs and continued growth. These sectors complement the emerging industries (advanced manufacturing, renewable energy, bioeconomy), generate higher-wage jobs and sustainability during industry or economic downturns.	▪ Retention/expansion ▪ New industry growth ▪ Innovation partnerships	▪ Job growth ▪ Gross Regional Product (GRP) in key sectors ▪ New firm formation ▪ Expansion and retention projects ▪ Wage growth

Goal 3. Advance Workforce Participation and Career Pathways

Connect residents to quality jobs through coordinated sector strategies, career navigation, and targeted workforce solutions.

Rationale	Factors	Metrics
Employers and national studies cite skill shortages in areas like industrial maintenance, advanced manufacturing, health care, and technology. Younger workers leaving, lacking, or having no interest in post-secondary credentials pose a constraint on industry and economic growth.	▪ Sector convenings (e.g., health, ag, logistics) ▪ Work-based learning ▪ Childcare access ▪ Entry-to-career ladders	▪ Enrollment in sector pathways ▪ Job placement ▪ Wage growth ▪ Employer participation ▪ Childcare availability

Goal 4. Elevate Small Business and Entrepreneurial Ecosystems

Grow inclusive economic opportunities by expanding support for small businesses, startups, and underserved entrepreneurs.

Rationale	Factors	Metrics
Small business and entrepreneurship play a pivotal role in Stanislaus County's smaller cities and underserved communities, both as essential job creators and as catalysts for long-term, intergenerational prosperity. Elevating small businesses—particularly among underserved groups—directly tackles key challenges faced by small cities in Stanislaus: limited job opportunities, out-migration of talent, and stagnation of local economies.	▪ Capital access ▪ Business hubs ▪ One-stop navigation ▪ Ecosystem support for rural and equity-priority areas	▪ Business starts ▪ Loans and grants awarded ▪ Program participation

Goal 5: Catalyze Equitable Growth Through Local and Regional Collaboration

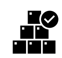
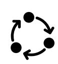
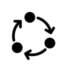
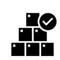
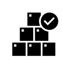
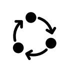
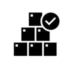
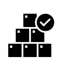
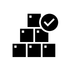
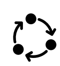
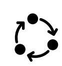
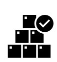
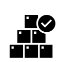
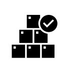
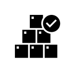
Strengthen economic resilience by coordinating across the County's cities to address shared challenges, unlock growth in underserved areas, and lead broader regional cooperation through *North San Joaquin Valley* partnerships.

Rationale	Factors	Metrics
Collective action is needed to overcome limited city-level resources, harness cross-jurisdiction assets, leverage limited resources, coordinate regional capital improvements, and speak with a unified voice for state/federal funding. Alliances with North San Joaquin Valley for megaregional cooperation and California Jobs First. Align with existing Stanislaus 2030.	▪ Joint projects with smaller cities ▪ Resource pooling ▪ Engagement with California Jobs First, THRIVE ▪ Alignment with Stanislaus 2030 priorities	▪ Number of shared infrastructure and funding efforts ▪ Regional MOUs and participation in megaregion planning ▪ Joint city–county initiatives launched

Strategic Lenses for Implementation

Economic development in Stanislaus County is not happening in isolation. Public agencies, nonprofits, industry, education, community organizations, and grassroots initiatives are working toward a more vibrant and inclusive future. These strategic lenses represent the principles important to these agencies and represent **operational values** for implementation reflected in Goal 5.

STRATEGIC LENSES FOR IMPLEMENTATION			
Equity & Inclusion	**Community-Centered Engagement**	**Sustainability & Resilience**	**Regional Collaboration**
Ensure growth reaches all communities—especially rural, low-income, and historically underserved populations.	Incorporate local voices and lived experience in planning, delivery, and evaluation to ensure better outcomes and community ownership.	Promote economic, environmental, and climate resilience through infrastructure, industry diversity, and readiness planning.	Align efforts across cities, the county, and regional partners (e.g., Stanislaus 2030, Jobs First/THRIVE) to maximize impact and efficiency.

GOAL ALIGNMENT TO STRATEGIC LENSES FOR IMPLEMENTATION				
Five Strategy Goals	**Equity & Inclusion**	**Community Engagement**	**Sustainability & Resilience**	**Regional Collaboration**
1. Expand Investment-Ready Sites and Infrastructure				
2. Strengthen and Diversify the Economic Base				
3. Advance Workforce Participation and Career Pathways				
4. Elevate Small Business and Entrepreneurial Ecosystems				
5. Catalyze Equitable Growth Through Local and Regional Action				

 = Direct CEDS Response  = Indirect or supporting role

SECTION IV. ACTION PLAN

The Stanislaus County CEDS Action Plan builds on the forward-looking, community engage foundational strategies established in the *Stanislaus 2030 Investment Blueprint*. The CEDS complements this work by focusing specifically on economic development strategies and actions that can help communities attract investment, grow quality jobs, and expand opportunity—especially in historically underserved areas.

A key focus area of the 2030 Blueprint was the **bioeconomy**, which has already led to significant investment in the region through **BEAM Circular**, an initiative recognized at both the county and regional multi-county level as a priority in the **North San Joaquin Valley "Jobs First" Strategy**. The CEDS supports this emerging sector while identifying other traded industry opportunities, infrastructure needs, and place-based growth strategies.

The five goals, associated objectives, and action steps outlined in this plan were shaped by local data, SWOT analysis, stakeholder input, and alignment with existing initiatives. Together, they offer a practical roadmap for implementation, enabling Stanislaus County and its partners to work together in advancing economic growth that is inclusive, resilient, and future-ready.

SUMMARY GOALS & OBJECTIVES	
Goals	**Objectives**
1. Expand Investment-Ready Sites and Infrastructure	1.1 Evaluate and Prioritize Opportunity Sites 1.2 Advance Site Readiness 1.3 Align with Target Industries
2. Strengthen and Diversify the Economic Base	2.1 Support Agriculture and Food Systems 2.2 Advance Bioeconomy and Emerging Industries 2.3 Strengthen Advanced Manufacturing 2.4 Continue Business Support
3. Advance Workforce Participation and Career Pathways	3.1 Advance Industry-Led Sector Strategies 3.2 Expand Access to Career Pathways 3.3 Expand Childcare Infrastructure
4. Elevate Small Business and Entrepreneurial Ecosystems	4.1 Spark Entrepreneurial Interest 4.2 Strengthen Capital Tools and Support
5. Catalyze Equitable Growth Through Local and Regional Collaboration	5.1 Embed Collaboration and Shared Capacity

Goal 1: Expand Investment-Ready Sites and Infrastructure

Objective 1.1: Evaluate and Prioritize Opportunity Sites for Economic Impact

☑ *Purpose: Ensure opportunity sites move forward while supporting city-specific priorities as well as identifying near-ready sites to prepare shovel-ready for new market opportunities to meet shifting demands and emerging industries.*

Key Actions:

1. Convene a Countywide Working Group (use Economic Opportunities Sites (EOS) identified in CEDS as starting place)
   - Include all cities, especially small jurisdictions
   - Meet quarterly or biannually, beginning in Year 1, Q2
   - Serve as a shared forum to identify common barriers, learn from peer cities, and align efforts on funding and readiness

2. Review Sites Using a Market Readiness Tool
   - Evaluate EOS and other possibly underutilized buildings for reuse or expansion opportunities
   - Categorize sites by type:
     - Traded sector/industrial sites (e.g., Crows Landing, South Modesto Industrial)
     - Local commercial/mixed-use sites (e.g., Waterford corridor, Hughson infill)

Track	Purpose	Typical Examples
Track A: Traded Sector Sites	High-impact, regionally significant sites for job-creating industries	Crows Landing, Riverbank Industrial Complex, South Modesto Industrial
Track B: Local Commercial Sites	Smaller-scale commercial or mixed-use sites important to city vitality	Waterford infill, Hughson corridor, downtown Ceres

   - Categorize sites into short-, mid-, and long-term potential
   - Align sites with target industries (e.g., logistics, ag-tech, advanced manufacturing) or local commercial needs

3. Review Needs for Space Beyond Shovel-Ready Land
   - Identify underutilized buildings or commercial corridors with potential for reuse, especially in small or rural cities
   - Share best practices for adaptive reuse, brownfield redevelopment, or pre-permitting efforts
   - Discuss needs for smaller-footprint, flexible industrial or tech spaces, including incubator or innovation facilities

4. Invite Private Sector Experts
   - Hold information sessions with industrial and commercial brokers, site selectors, developers
   - Assess:
     - Gaps in product (e.g., size/type of industrial buildings)
     - Market factors (e.g., how tariffs, reshoring, or logistics shifts affect site demand)
     - How Stanislaus County can position itself competitively for new investment

5. Use Collaboration to Identify Shared Priorities
   - Identify one or two cross-jurisdictional investment opportunities that cities can pursue jointly
   - Explore opportunities for regional infrastructure coordination
   - Build a shared pipeline of shovel-ready and high-potential sites, including commercial and infill reuse projects
   - Identify one or two smaller projects, maybe commercial, that are important to smaller cities and would make impact

Objective 1.2: Advance Site Readiness Through Partnerships and Funding Strategies

☑ ***Purpose:*** *Define and initiate the steps needed to bring prioritized sites closer to market readiness.*

Key Actions:

1. Develop tailored Site Action Plans for sites that identifies (1) planning gaps (CEQA, entitlements) and (2) infrastructure needs (roads, utilities, water, drainage)
2. Identify potential funding sources (EDA, CA I-Bank, USDA, etc.)
3. Convene property owners and cities to align development goals
4. Engage technical assistance providers or planning consultants if needed

Objective 1.3: Align Priority Sites with Target Industry Needs and Market Demand

☑ ***Purpose:*** *Ensure that top Economic Opportunity Sites (Economic Opportunity Sites) support the growth of key traded sectors and match the needs of expanding or relocating employers.*

Key Actions:

1. Cross-reference Economic Opportunity Sites with Stanislaus County's target industries, including:
   - Advanced Manufacturing & Green Tech
   - Ag-Tech & Bioeconomy
   - Logistics & E-commerce
   - Medical Devices & Life Sciences

- Tourism & Commercial Revitalization
- Other emerging industries and tech sectors

2. Explore opportunities for small-scale sites or shared facilities aligned with emerging bioeconomy firms, R&D operations, or pilot production needs
3. Get input from professionals in those fields as to fit and demand for reuse and smaller spaces, e.g., industrial and commercial real estate brokers, site selectors, developers and logistics professionals
4. Use internal and external stakeholders (such as Opportunity Stanislaus, BEAM) to inform outreach, value propositions, and user alignment

Potential Implementation Timeline & Partner Engagement
Goal 1 Investment-Ready Sites Strategy

Timeline	Milestone / Activity	Stakeholders
Year 1 Q1–Q2	Finalize Economic Opportunity Sites list and apply Readiness Tool	Cities, County, Opportunity Stanislaus
Year 1 Q3–Q4	Prioritize top sites and develop Site Action Plans	County staff, public works, economic development planners
Year 2 Q1–Q2	Identify funding opportunities and convene owners, cities, and technical partners	County, cities, infrastructure consultants
Year 2 Q3–Q4	Host broker/developer roundtables; align sites with industry/user targets	Opportunity Stanislaus, industry experts, regional partners

Case Study: Crows Landing
From Airfield to Economic Engine

Background: Crows Landing, a former Naval airfield in southwest Stanislaus County, is being repositioned as one of the region's most strategic economic opportunity sites. With over 1,500 acres of development potential, it is among the few sites in California with scale, infrastructure access, and community support.

What They're Doing: The County is advancing planning, infrastructure, and reuse studies to unlock Crows Landing's potential as a hub for logistics, advanced manufacturing, and emerging industries. Its location—proximate to I-5 and near major ag and distribution corridors—makes it especially valuable for traded-sector investment.

Why It Matters: Crows Landing could serve as a catalytic site for job creation and long-term revenue growth, while also absorbing industrial demand in a region where shovel-ready land is scarce. It is a flagship example of how large, public-owned properties can be leveraged for equitable growth.

Goal 2: Strengthen and Diversify the Economic Base

Objective 2.1: Convene and Support Key Sector Collaboration in Agriculture and Food Systems

Purpose: Build a deeper understanding of challenges and opportunities in the County's largest economic sector and facilitate innovation through regional partnerships.

Key Actions:

1. Launch an **agriculture-focused industry roundtable** to assess:
   - Shifting land use, reliable water access, and trade policy
   - Opportunities for value-added processing, ag-tech adoption, and market diversification
   - Emerging needs and solutions related to new technologies, export growth, and changing consumer preferences (e.g., health, sustainability, traceability)

2. Partner with **CSU Stanislaus and Modesto Junior College** to:
   - Support agri-food research, workforce pipelines, and entrepreneurship
   - Link students and startups to innovation in food systems and packaging

3. Use Economic Opportunity Sites and reuse sites to explore:
   - Facilities for food production, cold storage, co-packing, and shared processing
   - Opportunities to expand local-to-global market access for agricultural producers
     Leverages: Food & Ag strategies from Stanislaus 2030, CSU ag-tech initiatives, and SBDC export resources

Objective 2.2: Advance the Bioeconomy and Other Emerging Industries

Purpose: Leverage the region's ag-tech, clean tech, and manufacturing strengths to support early-stage industries that can scale locally. This objective supports and should integrate with the 2030 and North San Joaquin Valley Circular Bioeconomy Activation Plan, January 31, 2025.

Key Actions:

1. **BEAM Circular** leads the objective, collaborating with resource assistance as available to:
   - Support startups and scale-ups in renewable bioproducts, pilot projects, and supply chain innovation
   - Develop shared infrastructure models (e.g., testing facilities, flex space)
   - Map and market reuse or greenfield sites suitable for bio-industrial, renewable, or low-carbon production
   - Integrate all actions with the THRIVE Circular Bioeconomy Activation Plan, California Jobs First, January 31, 2025.

Case Study: BEAM Circular

Building a Bio industrial Future in Stanislaus County

Background: BEAM Circular is an emerging anchor in Stanislaus County's efforts to build a resilient and future-focused economy. Backed by millions in County investment and aligned with the Stanislaus 2030 plan, BEAM is advancing the region's vision to become a national leader in the bioeconomy—where agriculture, innovation, and sustainability converge.

What They're Doing: BEAM is building out a regional ecosystem for bio industrial manufacturing, focused on transforming agricultural byproducts and organic materials into high-value, circular products. This includes supporting infrastructure for pilot projects, shared facilities for startups, and strategic partnerships with universities, public agencies, and investors.

Why It Matters: With deep roots in agriculture and food production, Stanislaus County has a competitive advantage in renewable feedstocks and industrial know-how. BEAM unlocks this potential, fostering high-wage, clean-tech jobs while attracting public and private capital to the region. BEAM's work also aligns with California's broader climate and innovation priorities, making it a model for regional transformation.

Objective 2.3: Strengthen Advanced Manufacturing Through Talent Readiness and Addressing Needs

☑ *Purpose: Retain and grow high-wage, export-focused manufacturing jobs by aligning sites, skills, and employer engagement. This objective supports and should integrate the Advanced Manufacturing Sector Activation Plan, North San Joaquin Valley THRIVE, June 2025.*

Key Actions:

1. Through meetings and roundtables with the industry sectors continue to identify skills and training needed to create a "skill-ready" pipeline of workers. This work should be done in conjunction with the Advanced Manufacturing Sector Activation Plan, THRIVE, June 2025.
2. Continue communication with industry to address other barriers or challenges that impede production and growth.
3. Continue to support and expand **VOLT Institute** to ensure job-ready training for:
   - Industrial maintenance
   - Mechatronics, automation, and clean manufacturing
   - Other skills needed by advanced manufacturing
4. Identify Economic Opportunity Sites and buildings that match the facility needs of manufacturers expanding or modernizing, or space to help grow emerging advanced manufacturing.

Objective 2.4: Continue Business Support Through Partner-Led Programs

Purpose: Maintain ongoing access to business assistance and technical resources through established regional and state partners.

Key Actions:

1. Continue to promote **partner resources** such as:
   - SBDC, CMTC, USDA, GO-Biz, Opportunity Stanislaus, VOLT, BEAM, Workforce, financing and research sources
2. Continue to connect businesses and identify new resources and opportunities for businesses such as:
   - Export assistance
   - Innovation grants
   - Operational support for resilience and competitiveness
3. Continue to research industry trends to identify red flags that disrupt these businesses, track intel as part of retention/expansion declines and growth in any sector category

Potential Implementation Timeline & Partner Engagement Goal 2 Strengthen & Diversify Economic Base		
Timeframe	**Milestone / Activity**	**Stakeholders**
Year 1 Q2–Q3	Ag and advanced manufacturing sector roundtables	THRIVE, Mfg Council of the Central Valley, County, Opportunity Stanislaus, CSU, MJC, industry leaders
Year 1 Q4	Support to BEAM for emerging sector startups and reuse sites	BEAM, County, Cities, CSU, Mfg Council of the Central Valley, Developers
Year 2 Q1–Q2	VOLT-aligned facility support, employer outreach, engagement with smaller communities to attract trainees	Opportunity Stanislaus, VOLT, Mfg Council of the Central Valley, Manufacturers
Year 2 Q2–Q4	Expand awareness of partner-led business support resources	Mfg Council of the Central Valley, County, SBDC, CMTC, Chambers, Others

Goal 3: Advance Workforce Participation and Career Pathways

The Stanislaus 2030 Blueprint has provided a strategy foundation for moving more residents into promising jobs and career pathways. Many of those strategies are being activated by various organizations.

The CEDS strategy role should be to keep abreast of the advancement, assist in addressing gaps or challenges in activation and identify tactical actions that support and reinforce the 2030 goals thereby ensuring collaboration for robust industry input on talent needs and addressing systemic barriers such as awareness, transportation, and childcare. Through alignment these actions will result in a more competitive, inclusive workforce aligned with the region's economic future.

Objective 3.1: Advance Industry-Led Sector Strategies to Build Competitive Talent

Purpose: Deepen public-private collaboration to identify critical skill gaps—across all occupations and education levels—and ensure training systems are responsive to real-time employer needs. Stanislaus has excellent programs that drive credibility in this area.

Key Actions:

1. Support using sector strategy model to engage employers in actively participating in outcomes. *Model*: Convene employers by industry (e.g., health care, hospitality, professional office, etc.), Identify skills needed by occupation (from production to front office), Align training content and credentialing with what companies require
2. Encourage employers and business associations to host or co-lead roundtables, sharing hiring barriers, skill requirements, and retention challenges
3. Use findings to inform resource investments (e.g., grants, curricula, support services)
4. Create a feedback loop to employers

Case Study: VOLT Institute — A Fast Track to Skilled Careers

Background: VOLT Institute, operated by Opportunity Stanislaus, is an industrial training center helping fill critical skills gaps across the region's manufacturing sector.

What They're Doing: VOLT delivers hands-on training in industrial maintenance, mechatronics, and automation, equipping workers with skills needed for high-wage/demand careers. Works directly with employers to adapt curriculum and connect graduates to jobs.

Why It Matters: Prepares work-ready candidates for key industry sector and supports the retention and growth of local industry. Its model is scalable and designed to evolve alongside changing technologies.

Objective 3.2: Expand Access to Career Pathways by Addressing Barriers

Purpose: Address persistent challenges of awareness, trust, and complexity that keep potential students and jobseekers from entering existing training programs even when they are free.

Key Actions:

1. Consider a Career Pathways awareness campaign jointly supported by all—education, training and workforce development (united effort)
   - Modeled as a public service initiative (e.g., Ad Council style) to drive awareness of all that is available (no wrong door – all lead to careers), emphasizing real career success stories, pathways, training, support and ultimately a career.
2. Continue to track the collaborative and assist where needed to advance the hub-and-spoke transportation model supported by Stanislaus 2030). Bring resources or engagement as needed by transportation agencies.
3. Consider small, short career entry programs such as:
   - Fast-track “try-a-trade” sessions
   - On-ramp bootcamps
   - Sector-specific “taster” courses for hesitant jobseekers

Objective 3.3: Expand Childcare as Workforce Infrastructure and Business Opportunity

*Purpose: Support economic mobility by investing in childcare as both a **critical workforce enabler** and a **microenterprise path** for residents and those in underserved communities.*

Key Actions:

1. Reinforce and elevate the **Home Child Care Expansion Initiative** (First 5, Nurture, Stanislaus 2030) where possible, such as collaborating on outreach in rural and underserved areas or recognizing in-home providers as essential small businesses contributing to economic resilience in promotions
2. Identify opportunities to **bundle wraparound support** for new childcare entrepreneurs:
   - Coaching, licensing guidance, mentor networks
   - Micro-grants or bridge funding for start-up costs
3. Align employer/employee needs to identify childcare deserts near employment centers or job hubs

Potential Implementation Timeline & Partner Engagement Goal 3: Advance Workforce Participation & Career Pathways		
Timeframe	**Milestone / Activity**	**Stakeholders / Leads**
Year 1 Q3–Q4	Formalize sector convening structure by industry (e.g., health, advanced manufacturing)	SCWD (lead), Opportunity Stanislaus, industry reps, education partners
Year 1, Q4	Initiate "Career Awareness" campaign design and partner messaging alignment	SCWD, MJC, K-12, CSU, workforce and CBOs
Year 2, Q1	Launch coordinated outreach campaign and track awareness and traffic to program sites	Campaign partners, County Communications, Stanislaus Alliance
Year 2 Q1–Q2	Conduct employer-led sector roundtables on skill needs and hiring barriers	SCWD, business associations, chambers
Year 2, Q2	Aggregate feedback to inform curriculum, micro-credentialing, and fast-track options	SCWD, training providers, VOLT, MJC, BEAM (as relevant to Goal 1/2 tie-ins)
Year 2 Q3–Q4	Support First 5's rural outreach and identify gaps for wraparound childcare services	First 5 Stanislaus (lead), Nurture, County ED, cities
Year 3, Q1	Launch or promote pilots for "try-a-trade" or bootcamp career entry models	SCWD, nonprofit training providers, CBO partners
Ongoing (Year 1–3)	Track hub-and-spoke transportation planning progress; elevate partner needs where relevant	StanCOG, County departments, ED leaders, cities, employers
Annually	Measure and review goal-aligned metrics (job placements, sector participation, childcare slots added)	All strategic partners reporting to SCWD and ED implementation team

Case Study: Growing Childcare as Economic Infrastructure

Background: Childcare is both a workforce necessity and an entrepreneurial opportunity. In Stanislaus County, gaps in accessing childcare services were identified as major barriers to labor force participation, especially for women and low-income families.

What They're Doing: With leadership from **First 5 Stanislaus** and local workforce agencies, the County is supporting in-home childcare entrepreneurs, exploring wraparound business services, and launching efforts to expand capacity—especially in underserved areas.

Why It Matters: Access to affordable, quality childcare increases economic participation while also seeding new small businesses. Investing in childcare helps families, supports employers, and strengthens local economies from the ground up.

Goal 4: Elevate Small Business and Entrepreneurial Ecosystems

Stanislaus County's small and microbusinesses, especially in smaller cities and rural areas—are vital to local jobs, services, and economic resilience. The Stanislaus 2030 Small Business Strategy lays the foundation for broader system improvements. The CEDS supports this strategy by reinforcing outreach, growing entry-point resources, and helping grow funding, technical support, and identify place-based models that have could be instituted to help entrepreneurs thrive.

Objective 4.1: Spark Entrepreneurial Interest Through Entry-Point Opportunities

☑ *Purpose: Support early exposure to entrepreneurship in underserved communities—among both adults and youth—by encouraging local partners to host short, engaging activities that build confidence, foster creativity, and connect residents to available small business resources.*

Key Actions:

1. Partner with local governments, service clubs, and school programs to host short events that introduce entrepreneurship and business basics
2. Promote sponsorship of entrepreneurial youth events such as *Lemonade Day* (lemonadeday.org), a national youth entrepreneurship program that empowers children to start a one-day business
3. Explore piloting a *Teen Maker Market* or youth business fair model where high school students can showcase and sell handmade products, art, or food

> **Model: Youth (Children or Teen) Business Fair (Acton Academy, national model https://www.childrensbusinessfair.org/)**
>
> - One-day youth entrepreneurship events for kids and teens
> - Each student gets a table and 2 hours to sell
> - Includes application, mini pitch, and debrief for learning

4. Create or support introductory business bootcamps or "try-it" workshops—2 or 3 session mini courses hosted in libraries, schools, or chambers that give first-time entrepreneurs a low-barrier opportunity to explore their business ideas

Objective 4.2: Help Bolster Key Small Business Resources and Local Capital Tools

☑ *Purpose: Strengthen existing programs that support business stability and growth, especially for microbusinesses and historically excluded groups. This objective supports and should integrate with Stanislaus 2030 Small Business Strategies already in the implementation stage.*

Key Actions:

1. Collaborate on advancing Stanislaus 2030 Small Business Strategies – Streamlined Permitting, One-Stop Shop, Supplier Readiness, Access to Capital & Community Development Financial Institutions (CDFIs).
2. Support the expansion and creation of revolving loan funds and microgrant programs, especially for businesses in small cities
3. Consider, if not already in place, *Business Coaches on the Go*—meeting businesses where they operate to help with finance, marketing, hiring, compliance, and digital tools
4. Consider creating a program that matches small operators with more established business owners interested in expanding (e.g., a successful small business owner wants second location but doesn't have the capacity to operate (potential co-ownership, ***micro franchise model***), particularly in food, retail, or service sectors

Potential Funding Sources for Capitalizing or Recapitalizing Loan Funds and Resource Assistance

Funding Source	Eligible Uses	Notes
EDA Economic Adjustment Assistance	Capitalizing RLFs or micro-loan funds under CEDS framework	Leverage CEDS-aligned goals; fund planning and implementation
USDA Rural Microentrepreneur Assistance Program (RMAP)	Microloans and technical assistance for rural entrepreneurs	Nonprofits or economic development organizations apply; ≤$50K loans
Community Development Block Grant (CDBG)—Economic Development or Microenterprise	Training, startup assistance, and working capital for low/mod-income microbusinesses	Cities or counties apply; fit for underserved communities
State Small Business Credit Initiative (SSBCI 2.0)—California IBank, CalOSBA	Loan capital and loan guarantee programs (some flexibility to fund "innovation-type"pilots)	Potentially partner with CDFIs or apply through existing channels
SBA PRIME (Program for investment in micro-entrepreneurs)	Training and technical assistance for disadvantaged micro-entrepreneurs	Nonprofits eligible; grants often focused on underserved groups
AmeriCorps VISTA or Economic Mobility Corps	Support boots-on-the-ground technical assistance for small business outreach and mentoring	Places volunteers to help implement or scale pilot programs

Potential Implementation Timeline & Partner Engagement Goal 4: Elevate Small Business & Entrepreneurial Ecosystems		
Timeframe	**Milestone / Activity**	**Stakeholders / Leads**
Year 1	Collaborate with Stanislaus 2030 on implementing the Small Business Strategies.	Stanislaus 2030, County and partners already involved in initiative.
Year 2 Q1–Q2	Convene partners to review actions and explore how CEDS efforts can align with the *Stanislaus 2030 Small Business Strategy*	SCWD (Lead), SBDC, Equity Partners, Opportunity Stanislaus, Cities
Year 2 Q2–Q3	Identify interest and capacity to support short-form entrepreneurship events (e.g., Lemonade Day, teen fairs)	Local chambers, schools, libraries, youth orgs, city partners
Year 2 Q3–Q4	Assess current small business finance tools and explore opportunities to expand or launch RLFs/microgrants	Cities, County, SBDC, regional funders, equity organizations
Year 3	Consider piloting “Business Coaches on the Go” model where feasible; explore partner roles and resource needs	SCWD, SBDC, local business networks
Year 3	Explore the feasibility of peer-based models (e.g., co-ownership, micro-franchise) through partner discussion	SCWD, SBDC, chambers, local entrepreneurs, Opportunity Stanislaus
Year 3 (Optional)	If capacity and interest align, consider scaling successful activities and track impact in small cities	Local economic dev staff, SCWD, implementation committee

Case Study: Micro-Franchise Models Empowering Small Business Growth

Background: ***Micro-franchising*** offers a simplified business model designed for aspiring entrepreneurs who lack access to capital, experience, or formal business training. Popularized in emerging markets, this approach is gaining attention in communities looking to support small-scale business growth in low-income areas.

What They’re Doing (Model): Programs such as *CleanSlate in Chicago* and *The Street Vendor Project* in New York provide ready-made business models (e.g., neighborhood cleaning, food vending) along with branding, training, and operational support. Participants pay little to no startup cost and access ongoing mentorship and back-office help—much like a traditional franchise, but scaled for micro-enterprise. The model can be public or matched with existing businesses to expand their footprint.

Why It Matters: This approach reduces the risk and complexity of starting a business from scratch, while still building ownership, income, and community stability. It's particularly relevant in areas with many solo entrepreneurs and in cities like those in Stanislaus County, where 68% of businesses have fewer than 9 employees.

Goal 5: Catalyze Equitable Growth Through Local and Regional Collaboration

Goal 5 serves as a cross-cutting strategy that supports the implementation of all other CEDS goals. This goal emphasizes the importance of how economic development is approached—through collaboration, inclusion, and shared capacity to access funding, deliver solutions, and ensure all communities can participate in and benefit from regional progress.

Grounded in the *Stanislaus 2030 Investment Blueprint* and aligned with the *People's Plan for Economic Justice*, this goal promotes intentional coordination to help lift all cities—especially smaller and historically underserved communities.

Objective 5.1: Embed Collaboration, Equity, and Shared Capacity in the Way Regional Economic Development Is Carried Out

☑ *Purpose: Ensure that local and regional partners work together in ways that advance inclusion and strengthen under-resourced communities making economic development investment more impactful—particularly through shared solutions that address capacity gaps and unlock funding for smaller jurisdictions.*

Key Actions:

1. Establish an informal cross-sector Working Group (complementary to the formal Economic Development Advisory Committee (EDAC) to support CEDS implementation. This group can help prioritize Opportunity Sites, identify entry-points into workforce pathways, advocate for solutions to local barriers, and assist smaller communities in moving forward one or more strategic projects. It provides a structure for balancing urban and rural needs while creating space for shared support.
2. Promote shared funding strategies and joint applications for regional or state and federal grants—especially for infrastructure, planning, and workforce mobility projects that benefit smaller communities or require multijurisdictional support. Consider cost-sharing models or technical assistance pooling (e.g., shared grant writers, consultants, outreach teams).
3. Use the Working Group as a sounding board to align cross-jurisdictional economic development priorities, such as infrastructure, opportunity site readiness, and equitable access to employment hubs and services. Promote early alignment to increase competitiveness and reduce duplication.
4. Draw on the *People's Plan for Economic Justice* as a reference for identifying local equity priorities and ensuring project impacts reach historically underserved communities. Encourage equity-centered metrics and community-informed approaches as a standard for implementation.

Potential Implementation Timeline & Partner Engagement Goal 5 Catalyze Equitable Growth through Local & Regional Collaboration		
Timeframe	**Milestone / Activity**	**Stakeholders / Leads**
Year 1 Q1–Q2	Introduce and frame Goal 5 with the Economic Development Advisory Committee (EDAC); propose formation of Working Group	County, EDAC, SCWD, Opportunity Stanislaus, interested city partners
Year 1 Q2–Q3	Convene initial Working Group participants; discuss regional collaboration needs and initial shared priorities	Working Group (informal), cities, CBOs, economic development staff
Year 1 Q4	Identify and support at least one shared application, planning initiative, or smaller city project with regional significance	County, cities, partner technical advisors
Year 2	Align group activities with specific CEDS goals (e.g., opportunity sites, workforce access); test cost-sharing or shared staffing models	County, cities, SCWD, Opportunity Stanislaus
Year 2–3	Integrate equity-focused practices and shared metrics into regional funding efforts or implementation pilots	Working Group, People's Plan advocates, EDAC, partner agencies

Economic Development Ecosystem

Stanislaus County's economic development ecosystem is broad, collaborative, and community-driven—reflecting years of intentional alignment. The combined expertise, resources, and partnerships form the foundation for implementation.

Stanislaus County Economic Development Ecosystem	
Local Governments (Cities & County)	
Stanislaus County	City of Ceres
▪ Board of Supervisors	City of Hughson
▪ Chief Executive Office	City of Modesto
▪ Planning	City of Newman
▪ Public Works	City of Patterson
▪ Workforce Development	City of Oakdale
	City of Riverbank
	City of Turlock
	City of Waterford
Regional Economic Development & Business Organizations	
Stanislaus 2030 – Countywide Blueprint, implementing specific initiatives	
Opportunity Stanislaus (countywide economic development lead)	
Stanislaus Community Foundation (fiscal sponsor and backbone support for Stanislaus 2030)	
Stanislaus Latino Chamber	
Valley Sierra Small Business Development Center (SBDC)	
Stanislaus Equity Partners	
Stanislaus Business Alliance (historical reference)	
BEAM Circular (bioeconomy workforce and business development)	
Cooperative Extension	
Education & Training Institutions	
California State University, Stanislaus	Modesto Junior College (MJC)
UC Merced (regional collaboration)	Stanislaus County Office of Education (SCOE)
UC Berkeley	Stanislaus Partners in Education
Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory (LBNL)	VOLT Institute (advanced manufacturing training)
UC Agriculture and National Resource (Davis)	Building and Construction Trades Council
University of the Pacific	Technical Schools / High School CTE Programs
Community-Based Organizations (CBOs) & Nonprofits	
Center for Human Services	Golden Valley Health Centers
Stanislaus Boys and Girls Club	Central Valley Opportunity Center (CVOC) (farmworker job training)
First 5 Stanislaus (childcare)	
South Modesto Businesses United	North Valley Labor Federation (workforce support)
Utilities, Planning & Development	
Turlock Irrigation District (TID)	Water Districts
Modesto Irrigation District (MID)	Building and Construction Trades Council
PG&E	Stanislaus Regional Transit Authority (StaRT)
Regional & State Collaboratives	
California Jobs First (formerly CERF), North San Joaquin Valley Partnership–THRIVE	
Fuse Corps (fellows supporting capacity in economic development and workforce)	
Brookings Institution (advisor on strategy and metrics)	
Jobs for the Future (talent development advisor)	

Implementation & Execution

Recognizing the number of organizations already advancing economic development initiatives across Stanislaus County—and the limited capacity and resources of agencies and staff—implementation of the CEDS will rely on leveraging existing efforts and coordinating action through focused collaboration.

Working Groups

To support integrating these goals, objectives and actions into existing structures, it is recommended the County and its partners organize **cross-sector working groups** aligned with each goal area (if these are not already in place by existing organizations such as Stanislaus 2030), there should not be silos. Use existing working groups to collaborate work efforts and establish new working groups where there is a void.

These working groups—composed of city representatives, county agencies, workforce, education, business development organizations, and community partners—could collaborate to further refine responsibilities, timelines, and available resources with the purpose of confirming priority actions, identify potential lead entities, and evaluate capacity for execution.

Each working group could assess:

- What is feasible within current staffing and budget limits,
- New funding, technical assistance, or coordination needed
- Feasible timelines
- Identify leads and support teams
- Tracking performance metrics

Through collaborative execution implementation can be staged over the five-year CEDS timeframe, aligning efforts with existing plans and investment opportunities.

Performance Metrics & Review Timeline

Tracking key performance indicators (KPIs) helps assess whether the CEDS strategy is delivering on its goals—supporting quality job growth, advancing inclusive economic opportunity, and improving regional competitiveness.

The Performance Metric Matrix below is a guide and should be reviewed by the Working Groups to confirm timelines for execution and metric measurement.

Performance measures should be included in the ***CEDS Annual Report*** to EDAC, Board of Supervisors, public and sent to EDA to show progress as well as update any data, modifications to projects or goals and add new opportunity sites and/or projects.

Stanislaus Annual Performance Metric Matrix						
Category / Goal Area	**Performance Metric**	**Yr 1**	**Yr 2**	**Yr 3**	**Yr 4**	**Yr 5**
Overall Economic Indicators	Gross Regional Product (GRP) growth					
	Annual change in agriculture production value					
	Total employment by sector					
	Countywide unemployment rate					
	Unemployment insurance claims (monthly average)					
	Average wage (overall and by key sectors)					
	New business starts / licenses					
Goal 1: Investment-Ready Sites	Number of sites with completed readiness assessments					
	Sites progressing through zoning/infrastructure/predevelopment steps					
	External or shared funding secured for site planning or development					
Goal 2: Industry Sector Growth	Job growth in targeted sectors (e.g., ag, bio, mfg, logistics, energy)					
	Sector convenings or roundtables held					
	New market/export initiatives launched					
Goal 3: Workforce & Access	Participation in sector-based workforce programs					
	New pathways or pilot initiatives (childcare, transportation, wraparound services)					
Goal 4: Small Business Ecosystem	Microbusinesses supported in underserved areas					
	New or expanded RLF, grant, or micro-franchise programs					
	Youth entrepreneurship events or pilot maker markets held					
Goal 5: Collaboration & Equity	Small cities participating in collaborative or cross-jurisdictional projects					
	Shared technical assistance, planning, or funding proposals developed					

APPENDIX

A. Glossary of Terms
B. Economic Conditions
C. Physical Conditions
D. Economic Profile
E. Reference Documents & Resources