

High Desert Report

An economic overview of the Mojave River Valley region
affiliated with The Bradco Companies, a full service, commercial real estate company



Welcome to the 60th Edition of The Bradco High Desert Report, which was originally published in May of 1993. We have reached another milestone with this great publication!

I think we can all agree that 2022 was somewhat of a challenging year, not only with our national elections but, more importantly, the economy, the continued increase by the Feds to increase interest rates, etc. While 2022 was a rather challenging year, it was actually a great year for the Bradco Companies, (the longest-standing full-service commercial, industrial, and land brokerage company servicing the entire High Des-

ert/Mojave River Valley region. We are blessed with many great transactions, many centered on the industrial market (please see comments below).

Many of you who have received this newsletter in the past or are ongoing online subscribers understand the importance of my relationship with Dr. Alfred Gobar, the renowned national economist based in Brea, California, whose family were long-time residents of Lucerne Valley, CA, and who is by far our most major contributing editor and person to ever have an impact on this publication. I keep in contact with Dr. Gobar through his daughter Wendy, and we saw him in the last year. He continues to battle cancer, and I don't think I have ever seen anyone battle as hard as he has or has had the strength he has to battle this nasty disease. Please pray for him and the entire Gobar family.

It was sad to see him at last year's Christmas celebration. While I believe he knew that Debbie and I were there, you could tell that his memory is nothing like it was. I don't think I have ever met anyone as witty as Dr. Gobar or who could entertain a group for an hour talking about local economics, as he could.

The year 2022 was also a very challenging year for many of us who lost friends, relatives, etc. With COVID-19 my brothers, Mark, Doug, John, and Todd, (with their lovely wives and our sisters-in-law) were able to bring closure to our mother Mary R. Brady's passing and a Celebration of Life on March 21, 2022 (exactly two years to the day of her passing).

We have also lost some great friends and people throughout our region whom I would like to mention.

- ❖ Sandra, sister to Mr. Roberto & Silvia Torrez
- ❖ Mrs. Pearl Ludwig (spouse of Glen

Ludwig, Ludwig Engineering)

- ❖ Mr. Don Little (Partner, Brentwood Mortgage)
- ❖ Mr. Virgil Lewis Jr. (Currier, Daily Press)
- ❖ Mr. Jim Johannes (Golden State Flooring/Hesperia)
- ❖ Mr. Peter Roberts (Roberts Hotel Group)
- ❖ The Honorable Judge Erick Nakata (Superior Court Judge)
- ❖ Mr. Nikolas Matich (Son of Mr. & Mrs. John Matich)
- ❖ Mr. Arthur N. Rupe (Chairman, Arthur Rupe Foundation, Santa Barbara)
- ❖ Mr. Dale Colle (Marriott Vacation Club Executive)
- ❖ Mr. Greg Coon (former retired High Desert Fireman)
- ❖ Mr. Hugh Tobiason Ebmeyer (Father of Bruce Ebmeyer)
- ❖ Mr. Reed Kiplinger (well-known retired Doctor)
- ❖ Mr. Jerry Lewis (former Congressman/Chairman Appropriations Committee)
- ❖ Mr. Bob Dutton (former Council Member/Assemblyman/State Senator/San Bernardino County Assessor)
- ❖ Mr. Duane Thompson (High Desert Real Estate Agent)
- ❖ Ryker, Grandson of Mr. & Mrs. Dave McGiffin
- ❖ Mr. Charlie Johnson (Pinon Hills, Phelan, CSD Elected Official)
- ❖ Mr. Dale Killion (Dennis & Marites Killion's Father/Father-in-law)
- ❖ Mrs. "Winnie" Parker (Mary R. Brady (deceased) close friends with

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Publishers Message

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Mrs. Jean Johnson)

- ❖ Dr. Ted Baca (Barstow Community College Trustee, Barstow Community Leader)
- ❖ Mrs. Lisa Verhagen (Spring Valley Lake Resident and Community Leader)
- ❖ Mrs. Elian Bourque (High Desert Real Estate Associate)
- ❖ Mr. Duane Moyers (Founder of Arizona Pipeline)
- ❖ Mr. Ray Echols (High Desert Resident/Insurance Executive)

The Bradco High Desert Report is not intended to be a newsletter or summary of obituaries, but in my thirty-four and a half years in the region, I have met some incredible people who have not only touched my life, but I believe have touched the lives of the readers of The Bradco High Desert Report or are influenced by some of the things that they have done.

I am also proud to announce that I was re-elected for my fourth term at Victor Valley Community College District, where I now serve as vice president. I will be president of the Board of Trustees in December of 2023, and serve with four incredible trustees, including our current president, Mr. Dennis Henderson; our clerk, Ms. Sharron Pinkerton;

former president Mr. Brandon Wood; and former president Ms. Jennifer Tarpley.

I would also be remiss if I did not recognize the great job that Dr. Daniel Walden has done since he took over for Dr. Roger Wagner.

Dr. Roger Wagner was hired by Victor Valley Community College Board of Trustees on July 1, 2014. The college was having many challenges, including a four-million-dollar structural deficit, and they were on the verge of losing their accreditation. Dr. Wagner was able to re-position Victor Valley Community College District until he retired on December 31, 2018.

Dr. Daniel Walden, a former educational executive with the Los Angeles Community College District, was hired by unanimous vote on January 1, 2019, and since then has built an excellent team of educational leaders, probably one of the best-staffed community colleges in the entire country.

With Dr. Daniel Walden's leadership, the Victor Valley Community College Board of Trustees and his senior staff are working towards competing for the Aspen award, given every two years to one community college out of nearly 920 in the United States.

Dr. Walden, thanks for the leadership

you have brought our educational institution, which has a \$600-million economic impact per year to the High Desert region in the nearly 2,000 square miles that it covers, the 13,000 students we educate, and the 1,100 employees we have on our 262-acre campus.

As I look at the work that has been done by Mrs. Pamela Schemers, Administrative Associate with our firm, I wish to thank her personally for helping put together this publication. This is not an easy publication to work on. Especially during this last year, when we have had some rather turbulent times. But we have also had some great times as well. Before I discuss some of the great articles, let me make a couple of observations.

- ❖ The industrial market has not only heated up within our area, but it is almost impossible to find a 20 to 40 to 80-to-120-acre industrial site, zoned with utilities, in today's market.
- ❖ According to CoStar, our region has nearly 27-million square feet of space. In the last year we have seen, and the Amazon distribution center completed (they will not move in for another year), Modway (Hesperia), Iron Mountain (SCLA), Mars (pet food division, SCLA), to name a few.

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THE BRADCO HIGH DESERT REPORT

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❁ As I look at the very large aerial in our conference room, I can tell you that I can see nearly 30- million additional square feet of space, starting through the Entitlement stage within the five incorporated cities that I believe will be developed over the next five to seven years. Rather exciting.

❁ Additionally, during this last year, Mr. Ken Sheer and his partner, Mr. Mark Milakovich, of Covington Capital (I always need to mention our friend Mr. Brandon Gallup, who we work with regularly), have taken a very large financial commitment towards our region in their purchase of nearly 3,400,000 square feet of quality LEED-certified industrial space at Southern California Logistics Airport, and their purchase of property from Mr. Dougall Agan, his partner, Mr. Chris Downey, and their staff at Stirling Investments. This \$270-million cash transaction took place in November of 2021. Congratulations, Ken, Mark, Brandon, the entire staff, and your equity partners at Covington Capital. With that occurring, Ms. Kim Schneider, a very well know industrial executive within the industrial industry (president of the Western Division of Prologis, the global leader in logistics real estate and the largest owner of industrial property throughout the world). As of September 30, 2022, they owned or had investments in, on a wholly owned basis or through co-investment ventures, properties and development projects expected to total ±1.0 billion square feet (97 million square meters) in 19 countries lease modern logistics facilities to a diverse base of ±5,800 customers, are now in control of Southern California Logistics Airport, and are working very well with the City of Victorville and the Airport Authority. I see great things happening now that Prologis is officially involved.

❁ Burlington Northern Santa Fe

(BNSF), a Berkshire Hathaway Company, finally announced, after the last seven years of us monitoring their land acquisitions, that they are moving forward with an “Integrated Gateway” in Barstow, California, that will be 4,500± acres, will create nearly 20,000 direct and indirect jobs, and will have a financial impact of nearly \$1.5 billion invested in the project. Congratulations to the City Council and the staff in the City of Barstow.

❁ We are waiting for a very important announcement to be made by Brightline, the proposed Speed Train from Las Vegas to Rancho Cucamonga. While it was originally envisioned to go from Las Vegas (where they have already purchased 110± acres for ±\$140 million cash) to their original destination, Apple Valley (the southeast corner of Dale Evans Parkway and I-15) that they purchased for \$10 million cash (that has now been resold to one of their entities for over \$27 million cash), added an additional option with a stop in Hesperia (where I-15 South and 395 South come together in the “V”) and an ultimate destination at the Metro Link Station in Rancho Cucamonga at Millikan Avenue.

I don't think this is a “pipedream” anymore. We are hoping we will hear they have their funding by sometime in mid-2023. I want to thank Mr. Ben Porritt, Sr. Vice President of Affairs, for the updated information he gives us, as well as Mrs. Greta Seideman, whom we talk with on a regular basis.

❁ Lastly, and probably one of the most important developments that has occurred this last year, was the groundbreaking, on February 23rd, by Mr. John Ohanian and his partners with DMB Development, equity raised by Mr. Ray Werta, (formerly the chairman of CBRE, former president with

the Irvine Company) on their 9,633± acre project, fully entitled and approved for 15,663± homes in Hesperia.

Right before I wrote this article, I had lunch with Mr. Ohanian, and they are moving forward with their continued interviews of some nationally known homebuilders and the preparation of nearly 2,000 lots to be graded and partially improved for production that will start within the next year. They have moved over ten million cubic yards of dirt and are starting on a bridge within the next two months that is estimated to cost somewhere between \$4.4M and \$5M. Silverwood Parkway will be extended nearly two miles south of Rancho and I Avenue to the model complex, which they are now re-estimating will be open by May 2024.

With this project, Brightline is hopefully moving forward and the proposed industrial development we see it is, I truly can say, without any reasonable doubt, that the High Desert/Mojave River Valley region will double in the next 25 years. I will be 91 years old at the time, I still plan on having something to say about issues I believe to be paramount to the region.

We wish all our current readers, and future readers, the very best in 2023 and encourage you to reach out if you ever have a question or an opinion about something you think is important within our region. As president of The Bradco Companies, I am proud to give back nearly 20 percent of my time on issues I think are important within our region. While making money is important to cover your overhead, etc., I also believe it is important to make a difference where you live, work, and play.

Happy 2023!



The Bradco High Desert Report

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Brighter Days for Travel: Brightline West Continues Progressing on High-Speed Rail System

By: Ben Porritt, Senior Vice President of Brightline

The future looks bright for the High Desert and Inland Empire as Brightline West continues advancing key milestones in developing its high-speed rail system between Los Angeles and Las Vegas. Brightline West will connect the two iconic destinations through multiple intercity projects, including the High Desert, in what will be an economic engine for the region. Stations at the south end of Las Vegas Boulevard, I-15 and Dale Evans Parkway in Apple Val-



ley, and in the Rancho Cucamonga Hart District (situated adjacent to the Metrolink platform) will anchor the line and provide easy, quick access, parking, and premium amenities that have become synonymous with the Brightline experience. An additional commuter station in Hesperia was also added, which could reduce traffic on the Cajon Pass for travelers heading to and from Los Angeles and Rancho Cucamonga.

About Brightline West

The concept of connecting city pairs that are too short to fly but too long to drive is one Brightline is familiar with; as the only privately owned passenger rail business in the U.S., it operates a passenger rail system in South Florida which currently operates from Miami to West Palm Beach. Its service will extend into Orlando, with construction to

be completed in 2023. In its first year, Brightline's Florida system carried more than one million passengers for a unique, hospitality-driven approach to transportation. The system also spurred transit-oriented development around its stations as part of a real estate vision to reenergize neighborhoods by connecting multi-modal transportation systems, office, retail, commercial, and residential spaces.

Brightline West's system will connect Las Vegas and Los Angeles in about three hours, operating in a dedicated and protected corridor primarily in the I-15 right-of-way. In doing so, it eliminates at-grade crossings and minimizes its impact on the surrounding environment. The system will

be true European high-speed rail, operating at up to 180 miles per hour through all-electric, zero-emission trains that will reduce vehicle miles traveled by 935 million annually, removing three million cars from the highway and 400,000 tons of CO₂ emissions every year. It could reduce traffic on I-15 at the state line by about 15 percent each year. Onboard amenities include premium food and beverages, free WiFi, spacious seating options, and the ability to check your luggage straight through to your Las Vegas resort.

Milestones and Momentum

Brightline West has made significant progress on the system in the last year. In fall 2022, the City of Rancho Cucamonga and the San Bernardino County Transportation Authority approved several agreements that represent a key

next step in development and station plans in Rancho Cucamonga, enabling connectivity to downtown Los Angeles via Metrolink. The latest renderings of the Rancho Cucamonga station were released concurrently with these agreements and are available in this publication.

The company has agreements in place for all land required to operate the train, including 110 acres on the south end of the iconic Las Vegas Strip for its Las Vegas terminus. Brightline is also working with the Federal Railroad Administration on its primary permitting document for the Apple Valley – Rancho Cucamonga segment and completed its public comment period in November 2022.

An Economic Engine

As an economic game-changer for the region, Brightline will be adding about 40,000 construction jobs and 1,000 permanent jobs as it continues along its path to provide a faster, greener, and more enjoyable way to travel between Southern California and Las Vegas. Along with nearly a billion dollars in estimated tax revenue, the project will create about \$10 billion in economic impact, driving economic activity through region.

Development continues with this exciting project in terms of permitting, planning, and partnerships that will enable Brightline West to break ground and create a better way to travel between Southern California and Las Vegas. For more information and to stay updated on the project, visit: GoBrightline.com or follow Brightline West on social media at [@BrightlineWest](https://twitter.com/BrightlineWest). For questions and additional information, email: outreach@brightlinewest.com.



High Desert Report

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Victor Valley Transit Authority: Service, Ingenuity, and Innovation

By VVTA Marketing Manager/Public Relations/PIO

Victor Valley Transit Authority (VVTA) has always endeavored to bring more service, ingenuity, and innovation to the High Desert. After the California Air Resources Board (CARB) enacted its proposed Innovative Clean Transit (ICT) in 2018, the VVTA Board of Directors affirmed “its commitment to operate a 100% all electric and hydrogen fuel cell fleet and establish a goal to meet this objective by 2035.”

In response to the CARB’s ICT, in 2019 VVTA got out in front of the regulation and purchased its first seven Battery Electric Buses (BEBs) to operate throughout the Victor Valley. VVTA was the first agency in SB County to place BEBs into service. After the initial BEB purchase, the agency took advantage of available incentives early. For instance, VVTA was able to take advantage of the VW Mitigation incentive for purchasing Zero-Emission buses. The Volkswagen (VW) Environmental Mitigation Trust provided about \$423 million for California to mitigate the excess nitrogen oxide emissions caused by VW’s use of illegal emissions testing defeat devices in certain VW diesel vehicles. VVTA applied for these funds to support the purchase of five additional Battery Electric Buses. In total, the agency was awarded \$900,000 from the trust.



In 2022, as California was still in the grip of the COVID pandemic, Victor Valley Transit Authority delivered five Battery Electric Buses to their state-of-the-art facility in Barstow. This was the first time passengers in the city of Barstow and neighboring communities were able to ride the New Flyer Xcelsior XE Battery Electric buses. These BEBs were another step towards VVTA’s commitment to operating an all zero-emission fleet by 2035.

Providing students with access to free public transportation has always been a top priority within Victor Valley Transit’s mission. The program, provides free rides to students on VVTA buses began with Victor Valley College. In recent years, Cal State University San Bernardino was added to the program. Options for Youth Charter School was the latest school to offer free rides for all their students. The program, which began February 1, 2022, allows all students currently enrolled in any of their five locations in the Victor Valley to board any fixed or county bus fare-free by simply presenting the bus operator with their current student ID.

While many district area schools have school bus service in place, many charter schools do not, and if they do, parents are funding transportation programs costing upwards of \$40 a month. VVTA’s Consolidated Transportation Services Agency (CTSA) Division looks to work with

schools that don’t have student transportation services, such as Options for Youth. The relationship between Victor Valley Transit and Options for Youth began with VVTA’s Fare Media Program, which provided the school with a limited number of free passes each semester. However, the school’s needs turned out to be much greater than the program could serve. Subsequently, VVTA presented Options for Youth with a program offering free rides for all currently enrolled students. This program comes at a lower cost to the school’s transportation budget while providing free fares



to all students.

Recognition was another highlight for VVTA this year. Victor Valley Transit’s Executive Director, Kevin Kane, was honored at CALACT’s Spring Conference Awards Luncheon in Newport Beach, CA, where he received their annual “Wall of Excellence” Award. Each year the award is given to individuals who have a long and distinguished career in public transportation and have made outstanding contributions to the transportation industry.

When COVID hit and other transit agencies could not obtain PPE equipment, Mr. Kane stepped up to assist CALACT with financing the bulk order purchase of safety equipment. The order amount was over \$100,000, and CALACT did

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each Tuesday at their Hesperia location. Assisted by the County of San Bernardino Workforce Development Department, in October, Victor Valley Transit returned to full service, ahead of other agencies across the country.

This brought pre-COVID service times and much relief to commuters who rely on Victor Valley Transit for

their daily commute. This included returning the 30-minute weekday service to affected routes, with all other routes returning to hourly service. Additionally, regular service returned to Wrightwood and Pinon Hills. Victor Valley Transit's full-service return also brought back the Express Route, providing direct service between the Victor Valley Transportation Center and Victor Valley College, Monday through Thursday. The agency's most popular line, Route 15, added two trips on Sunday and now operates seven days a week. Route 15 services passengers to Barstow, Victorville, and San Bernadino.

The High Desert is largely a suburban / rural area. A challenge facing some potential riders is getting to a bus stop, as they may live miles away from the nearest stop. Victor Valley Transit answered this challenge by rounding off the year by introducing a new micro-transit pilot program! The new Micro-Link service serves North Victorville, South Victorville, and Hesperia zone areas, Monday through Friday, from 6:00 am to 8:00 pm, with on-demand transportation services. Priced at just \$4.00 per ride,

Micro-Link provides convenient and flexible scheduling that answers many transportation needs. Riders can download the Micro-Link app, choose their pick-up and drop-off locations within a zone area, reserve a ride, and connect within their neighborhood and beyond. Passengers can schedule a ride from five days to on-demand availability via the Micro-Link app or by phone by calling 760-244-4000. Riders can pay in advance via the app or with cash on board each van at the time of pickup. If they need to travel outside the specific zoned area, Micro-Link will take them to the nearest bus stop so they can continue their journey successfully! For those who choose to travel outside a zone area, each booked trip includes a free fixed route Day Pass.

The public had a lot to deal with throughout the COVID pandemic, and those who choose or rely on Victor Valley Transit for their travel needs were no exception. For this reason, VVTA gave back, offering all transit services free of charge for the month of October. As the world looks ahead to a possible post-COVID world in 2023 and beyond, Victor Valley Transit will also continue to look into the future with expansion, service improvements, and hydrogen fuel cell technology to make public transportation sustainable for future generations.



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High Desert Report

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Take notice. Career pathways in our region are delivering excellence.

By Matt Wells, Director, Mountain Desert Career Pathways



Did you know:

1. 20-30% of high school students in our region are earning college credits while in high school.
2. There are over 13,000 students in our high schools enrolled in and doing technical deep dives through Career Technical Education (CTE) pathways specific to nearly every industry sector.
3. Our students are competing and winning at a national level.



This region's districts are invested in fostering incredibly strong Career Technical Education (CTE) programs that prepare students for regionally significant career opportunities. It is critical that pathways are connected to and aligned with local industry needs as well as the postsecondary programs where students can continue their technical skill. We're working on changing culture, and **here's our reality:**

Industry partners share their struggle to acquire and retain the skilled talent necessary to sustain business, much less capitalize on opportunities to grow. Too often, talent is relocated here from other communities. That talent, while

valuable, doesn't have local roots, often leaving within 3-5 years.

Conversely, we have 13,000 students passionate about their industry-focused studies on everything from aviation to automotive, medical to manufacturing, programming to building trades. However, too many of them are unaware of top-notch businesses in their community that need employees with their talents, suffering from a false misconception that they need to leave to be successful. I grew up here. This mindset still exists.

Also, we have many families and sub-communities struggling economically.

In short, we have great jobs that too often go unfulfilled by local talent, trained local talent that is unaware of local businesses that need them, and economically struggling families.

If we can strongly connect postsecondary institutions and local businesses with our K-12 career development programs, businesses are more likely to secure the talent they need, residents secure meaningful careers they can be proud of, and their families will be more financially secure. The 5-year forecast demand shows over 33,000 well-paying occupations expected over the next five years. We seek to prepare our students to excel at those jobs.



In short, Our students win. Our businesses win. Our community wins.



A significant body of work is pushing towards this outcome. MDCP districts just wrapped up over a dozen meetings between over a hundred high school CTE teachers and their community college colleagues to foster alignment between high school and college. This is a continuation of annual work inspiring incredible results. For the 2021-22 school year, 3,886 college grades were awarded to high school students through articulation agreements (3,319 through Victor Valley College; 567 through Barstow Community College). This equates to roughly 24% of CTE students or 13% of the general high school population. **This is 10 times the rate of some neighboring regions!** Another 10% of students earned college credits through Dual Enrollment in both CTE and core classes such as English, Math, and Science. This means that approximately 20-30% of high school students in our region are earning college credits. **That is an incredible result to celebrate!**

But why celebrate? Let me share four reasons:

1. These results mean that many students are accelerating their path towards certificate or degree completion. For example, an automotive student may complete one or two

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courses of a six-course certificate while in high school, reducing the amount of time needed after high school to complete that program before entering the workforce.

2. The conversations, collaboration, and competitions that happen as a result of K-12 teachers and college faculty interaction results in building relationships for adults and for students. As students build their personal networks that include college and industry professionals, they improve their career trajectories.
3. The college credits earned while in high school promote a college-going culture (whether 2-year, 4-year, or beyond). This builds student and family confidence in the ability to attend and successfully complete college. Also, it promotes the idea that the High Desert is primed for college success. If we want to expand 4-year degree access here, this reputation is key!
4. These results bring a spotlight to great results happening in our region, causing people to inquire about the great work they're hearing about here. That will bring opportunities to our students, our schools, our busi-



ness partners, and our economy.

Let's talk about competitions. We have multiple, locally grown regional events, often in partnership with Victor Valley College or Barstow Community Col-

lege, where students from CTE programs across the valley test their mettle, forge relationships with college faculty and industry partners, and connect with a community of learners passionate about that industry sector. These competitions include culinary, baking, automotive, welding, digital design, entrepreneurship, videography, and a hackathon. More are anticipated this year.

While these are local trials of industry-focused talent, we also have hundreds of students competing in larger regional, state, and national competitions. In fact, last year, we had three schools with teams that placed second nationally through SkillsUSA! These were:

- a. Serrano High School students placed 2nd in 3D Visualization and Animation
- b. An Apple Valley High School student placed 2nd in CNC Turning Specialist
- c. Lakeview middle school students placed 2nd in Mobile Robotics Technology

Too, students have been positively impacted through guest speakers, industry tours, and roadshows with partners like Mitsubishi Cement, General Atomics, the Silverwood Project/DMB, Exquadrum, ComAv, GE Aviation, Victorville Motors, Providence St. Mary Medical



Center, and more. Students have been supported financially through \$75,000 in CTE-focused scholarships the past two years through a partnership with the Oro Grande Foundation. Dozens of industry partners have volunteered their time on advisory committees or contribute to a Mountain Desert Economic Partnership (MDEP) team. Multiple companies have hosted educators on summer externships.

The scope of this work is large. Big outcomes require big goals and time to accomplish them. To that end, we need more help. We need more people and businesses engaged. Here are some ways to do so:

- Serve on an industry-specific advisory committee
- Support training, entrepreneurship, talent, and essential-skill development through MDEP
- Endorse our Essential Skills document (<https://mdcareerpathways.com/essential-skills>)
- Support CTE students through scholarships
- Connect with students through guest speaking, site tours, etc.

At the end of the day, we want to elevate our community to new levels of success. We want to be known as a place where talent pipelines are strong and economic opportunity thrives, where residents can learn, work, stay, and play, where the cultural norm is business and education working hand in hand. So, connect with us. Let's change our world.

<https://mdcareerpathways.com/getinvolved>



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It's an honor to serve you in Congress

By Congressman Jay Obernolte (R-Hesperia)

It is an extraordinary honor to serve California's High Desert, Inland Empire, and Eastern Sierra in Congress, and I am looking forward to continuing to fight on behalf of our rural district. Our community and our country need commonsense policies that will help our economy grow, create new jobs, and keep our neighborhoods safe.

We need more affordable prices at the grocery store and reliable power in our homes. We need to lower crime and keep drugs off our streets and away from our children.

Over the past two years, I have sponsored and cosponsored numerous bills to support these goals. I introduced my Balanced Budget Constitutional Amendment and my Finding Federal Savings Committee Resolution as my first bills in Congress to tame federal spending, put the federal budget on a sustainable path, and lower the threat of continued rising inflation.

I coauthored major bipartisan legislation known as the Resilient Federal Forests Act to mitigate catastrophic wildfires and improve forest health by using state-of-the-art science to triage the top 10 percent of high-risk fireheds and simplify bureaucratic red tape.

I've also cosponsored a package of six

bills to unleash America's domestic energy potential, restart onshore and offshore lease sales, and require the timely issuance of permits to drill. I am also supporting and promoting numerous bills to help our local law enforcement, secure the border, and stop the flow of deadly fentanyl into our community.

In my second term as your representative in Congress, I look forward to continuing to work alongside my colleagues in Congress to make our community a better place to live.

I will continue to fight to lower the cost of energy you pay at home and at the pump, while also lowering global emissions. I will continue to support our local veterans and fight to ensure better access to critical care, both through the VA and at our local hospitals and rural health care clinics.

Furthermore, I will continue to fight for responsible governance in Washington and decreased federal spending to help put our economy back on the right track and lower the rampant inflation facing you, your family, and your businesses.

If I can be of assistance to you, please contact my office any time at (760) 247-1815.

It is an honor to serve you.

What Do Fed Rate Hikes Mean

By Mike Thomas, Area Manager,
PRMG

To help fight inflation, the Federal Reserve has hiked its benchmark Fed Funds Rate seven times During 2022, including their most recent hike of 0.5%, taking the Fed Funds Rate from 0.25% to now 4.5%. Remember, the Fed Funds Rate is the overnight borrowing rate for banks, and does not directly affect mortgage rates.

So, what do Fed rate hikes mean for mortgage rates?

Raising the cost of borrowing on certain items slows the economy down and incentivizes savings rates, driving down demand and thus curbing inflation. If the Fed is successful in cooling inflation, mortgage rates should decline. History proves this during rate hike cycles for the past 50 years.

But if the market doesn't believe the Fed can get inflation under control, we could see more volatility in mortgage rates. If you're looking to purchase a home or refinance a mortgage, reach out to me today. I can help you find the best opportunities in these uncertain times.



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Real Estate Owners Need to Know These Facts About ESG Reporting

By Marika Erdely, MBA, LEED AP +C, Certified Energy Auditor, Fitwel Ambassador



1. What is ESG and how will it affect commercial real estate?

2. How will the Inflation Reduction Act benefit my real estate

portfolio?

The latest trend in sustainable commercial real estate is “Environmental, Social and Governance,” also known as ESG. Lately, ESG has received attention from regulators and investors, and, according to a recent report from Deloitte, “sustainability has become a strategic imperative across industries.” Real estate professionals need to begin focusing on how ESG can impact portfolios and policy.

Here is a simple table identifying many of the current ESG definitions:

 E nvironmental	 S ocial	 G overnance
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Benchmarking - Energy Efficiency - GHG Reduction - Electrification - On-Site Renewables - Building Resilience - Offsets - Water Management - Waste Management - Emergency Preparedness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Health & Safety - Employee Satisfaction - Employee Benefits - Diversity & Inclusion - Human Rights - Community Engagement - Impact on Local Communities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ethical Standards - Board Diversity & Governance - Stakeholder Engagement - Shareholder Rights - Recognition Programs

Soon, public companies will need to report on the three ESG categories, also known as an ESG Strategy, to their investors. The SEC’s proposed Rule on Climate Disclosure gives companies a roadmap for ESG reporting and requires disclosures related to climate-related risks that could have an impact on their

businesses, whether it’s their day-to-day operations or a financial impact on their real estate assets.

The SEC reporting will be part of public companies’ quarterly and annual disclosures and will detail the company’s carbon footprint and include reporting on greenhouse gas emissions from real estate and the climate-related risks to those assets. At NAREIT’s ESG conference I recently attended, several panelists also suggested that insurance companies and banking institutions will be considering climate disclosures in their financial metrics. Additionally, it was mentioned that investors from the European Union would also be looking at ESG disclosures when considering investments in the U.S.

Most public companies have been focusing on their ESG strategies, and the process of gathering data for this year’s

ESG disclosures is already under way.

But what about private companies and the private commercial real estate owners that lease space to public companies? Private owners should also focus on having an energy-efficient property and should not ignore the trend toward ESG.

The “E” in the ESG framework stands for “environmental,” which refers to real estate and the efficiency of buildings. All buildings emit emissions, and these emissions (in the forms of kWh and therms) can be broken down into three kinds: Scopes 1, 2, and 3.

- **Scope 1:** Direct emissions that stem from sources that are owned or controlled by the organization (Such as company vehicles and the fuel they burn, process emissions from industrial activities, leaks from refrigeration)
- **Scope 2:** Indirect emissions that arise from the generation of purchased electricity, heating, cooling, and steam (Any utility bill creates emissions such as electricity or gas used by the building)
- **Scope 3:** Other indirect emissions that are directly from the supply chain of goods and services that the public company purchases. (This is the largest scope and most complicated coming from the organization’s operations, purchasing and selling goods, such as leased assets, business travel, employee commuting)

Initially, Scope 1 and 2 emissions will be required to be disclosed by the SEC. However, public companies will soon be mandated to report Scope 3 emissions as well.

Mandated reporting means that if you have a tenant in one of your buildings that is providing products to a public company, the tenant will soon have to be reporting on their building’s emissions and activities. There will then be an effort to reduce those emissions, even if your building is not operated by a public company.

How do you measure your property’s emissions?

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An economic overview of the Mojave River Valley

Real Estate Owners Need to Know These Facts About ESG Reporting

Continued

It comes down to a service called Energy Star Benchmarking, which gives owners data about their property that can be used to calculate the property's total emissions.

As an expert in reducing commercial property emissions, I have anticipated a big push to move real estate into the world of ESG reporting, which goes a long way toward environmental sustainability. Once the SEC finalizes their ruling on ESG reporting, all public companies will be required to focus on the "E" on their buildings like never before. Additionally, I believe that when companies also consider the "S" for Social and "G" for Governance, they will ultimately be better stewards of the planet.

How are building owners expected to make their buildings energy efficient in anticipation of their tenants' emissions reporting requirements?

There's good news! There are many financial benefits from the new Inflation Reduction Act of 2022 (IRA) to commercial property owners and developers.

Personally, I like the investment tax credit (ITC) known as the federal solar tax credit and the fact that it is now back up from 26% to 30% of the total project cost through 2033. Currently, our solar pv projects are benefiting from 58% of the project cost being covered by this

tax credit and federal and state depreciation deductions.

Section 179 (a tax deduction) of the IRA provides owners with a dollar amount per square foot if the commercial or residential building meets a certain efficiency standard. Owners can earn \$5 per sq. ft. for new construction or retrofitting a building, depending on its resulting energy efficiency. It is a ladder benefit ranging from \$2.50 per sq. ft. for a 25% reduction in energy usage up to a maximum of \$5.00 per sq. ft. for 50% or more.

For multifamily landlords, Section 45L (a tax credit) allows up to \$5,000 per unit (single-family or apartment) if the building meets certain energy efficiency criteria.

So, what does this mean for building owners? And, what about AB 802?

Energy-efficient buildings will be worth more and will be more attractive for public companies concerned about emissions. Not only will public companies care, but those that supply goods and services to these companies will also monitor ESG strategy. Soon, everyone is going to be thinking about Energy Star Benchmarking—a viable tool to produce data for reporting on your building's emissions.

Energy Star Benchmarking is also used

to report for AB 802, California's energy disclosure law requiring all buildings over 50,000 sq. ft. to report their energy usage on an annual basis since 2018. (Reports are due in June!)

The California Energy Commission (CEC), the governmental entity that mandates AB 802, will soon be notifying building owners of this law and will be rolling out new software to do so. Ignoring the mandated reporting could result in fines ranging from \$500 to \$2,000 per day per meter once the CEC decides to enforce the law.

If you need an expert to understand your building's energy or water efficiency and its emissions, feel free to reach out to me at Marika@greeneconome.com. At GreenEconoMe, a team of professionals is ready to help you meet your ESG requirements, save money operating your property, and increase the value of your property.

Marika Erdely, MBA, LEED AP +C, Certified Energy Auditor, Fitwel Ambassador

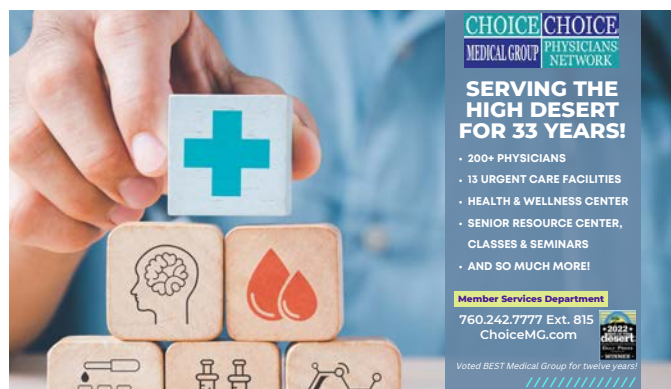
Marika is an expert in energy and water efficiency and is Founder and CEO of GreenEconoMe, an energy consulting and construction company located in Santa Monica, CA. Marika has over 30 years of professional financial experience and approaches sustainability through an economic lens.



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2021-2022 Updates – Housing Authority of the County of San Bernardino

By Nicole Beydler

The Housing Authority of the County of San Bernardino (HACSB) is the largest provider of affordable housing in San Bernardino County, serving more than 10,000 families through federally funded rental -assistance programs. Administering these programs is the core purpose of housing authorities. The primary program we administer is the Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) program, formerly known as “Section 8.” The HCV program is the nation’s largest homelessness-prevention program, helping to make rent affordable for very low- and extremely low-income individuals and families residing in privately owned rental units.

HACSB is one of about 2% of housing authorities nationally to be designated as a Moving to Work (MTW) agency. The MTW designation provides the opportunity to design and test locally designed housing initiatives that target at least one of the three MTW Statutory Objectives: save taxpayer dollars through efficient work; help the families we serve achieve economic independence; and ensure a family’s freedom of housing choice. The MTW designation does not include additional funding to achieve these objectives, but it does allow us more flexibility than traditional non-MTW housing authorities to adapt to changing market conditions and housing challenges.

Over the past year, rental-housing prices in San Bernardino County continued to soar, with some media outlets pointing to renters leaving higher-cost Los Angeles County and Orange County and seeking the relatively lower-cost housing available in San Bernardino County. With vacancy rates falling to 1% in some areas of the county, families participating in HACSB rental-assistance programs had difficulty finding and renting units, just like other families. Everyone faced extreme competition for the few available units. Despite the increased need for housing assistance throughout the pandemic, our programs did not increase in size to meet that need. By contrast, the number of families we

were able to assist decreased over the duration of the pandemic because the cost of assistance rose substantially but program funding did not.

In 2021 and 2022, HACSB leveraged our MTW designation to adopt policy changes designed to help eligible families successfully lease with HCV assistance. We launched our Landlord Signing Bonus Program, which offers a \$1,000 signing bonus to landlords who rent to a tenant participating in a HACSB rental-assistance program. To combat the stereotype that HCV customers damage their rental units, we also developed and launched a local Damage Mitigation Program. This program reimburses landlords for tenant-caused damage beyond normal wear and tear, unpaid rent, and related court costs, up to \$2,500. Our team is working now to launch housing navigation services to help customers locate available housing and to help sustain and cultivate our relationship with landlord partners across the county.

The fight against homelessness is a top priority nationally and in San Bernardino County, and HACSB has a fundamental role in this fight. The HCV program is our largest and most powerful tool, helping to protect more than 9,000 San Bernardino County households from falling into homelessness. In 2021, a new federally funded program was created to serve homeless and at-risk families. HACSB launched the new national Emergency

Housing Voucher (EHV) program in San Bernardino County. This program is funded under the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) and serves low-income individuals and families who are homeless, at-risk of homelessness, fleeing or attempting to flee domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, stalking, or human trafficking, or were recently homeless or have a high risk of housing instability. The program includes 70,000 new vouchers nationwide; HACSB received 455 EHV program vouchers to serve San Bernardino County. While these programs serve a very small number of San Bernardino County families, the impact to the customers they serve is life changing. HACSB is also working with our third-party research partner, Loma Linda University, to evaluate the impacts of these programs so the lessons learned locally can be used to improve affordable-housing services nationwide.

Moving into 2023, HACSB anticipates receiving 99 new vouchers under the HCV program. This is the first expansion of the HCV program in more than twenty years. This new allocation will allow HACSB to serve families from our current HCV waiting list. Additionally, the new national Stability Voucher Program is expected to launch in 2023. This new program is very similar to the EHV program, serving a similar population. HACSB anticipates receiving less than 30 Stability Vouchers.



HACSB Customers Served in the High Desert

City	Families Served	Individuals Served	San Bernardino County Population Census 2021	Percent of Population
Adelanto	203	738	38,118	1.9%
Apple Valley	248	808	76,224	1.1%
Barstow	446	1,642	25,442	6.5%
Hesperia	203	672	100,971	0.7%
Victorville	738	2,392	135,950	1.8%
Grand Total	1,838	6,252	376,705	1.7%

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How a HOA Saved a Community

By Larry Taylor, President & CEO, Steele Canyon Golf Club Corp.

The Spring Valley Lake Homeowners Association, which is comprised of 3800+ homes in Victorville, was facing an extremely difficult dilemma. Club Corp, the owners of the Spring Valley Lake Country Club and over 300 clubs nationwide, put the property up for sale in 2021. The club, which was in the center of the community, had suffered from decades of deferred maintenance. This created a downward spiral in the ability to provide an acceptable experience to its membership. By 2021, the club's roster had fallen to under 400 memberships, down from a high of over 800 in 2010. The maintenance crew, normally 18 in number, was now only 5, making it impossible to maintain the golf course. In the minds of many members, Club Corp had given up on Spring Valley Lake and the High Desert, leaving its residents in the lurch.

When the HOA learned about the sale, the Board of Directors immediately became concerned about the future of the club. There were numerous case studies close in proximity to Spring Valley Lake that proved when golf courses were sold to developers, home values were decimated. Facing a very scary reality, the Spring Valley Lake Association Board of Directors sprang into action. The Board, comprised of Brian Bickhart, Brian Hurst, Cheri Boyd, JoAnne Romero, Lewis Ponce, Bill Scott, and Brad Letner, convinced Club Corp to sell the club to them at a price of \$2,000,000, pending residential approval. For a HOA board to purchase the club is extremely unusual. The HOA By-Laws stated that the residents would have to approve the purchase with 67% approval—a very daunting, if not impossible task. Regardless of the odds, the board had to try.

As the ballots were turned in, it became increasingly apparent in December 2021 that the threshold was not going to be

reached by the expiration of the purchase agreement. In a fortuitous chain of events, Joseph W. Brady, a longtime member and community leader, happened to be playing golf at Bermuda Dunes Country Club before Christmas and loved what he saw. He asked his playing partner, a member of the club, about membership. The member explained that the club had been on the verge of bankruptcy two years prior and was acquired by a company operating as Pacific Golf Management. In that short time, Bermuda Dunes had become a thriving club, growing from 450 memberships to close to 700, with more joining each day. The owner had invested substantial dollars in both the clubhouse and the course. The company also owned four other prominent country clubs in Southern California: Steele Canyon, Bear Creek, Dove Canyon, and Pauma Valley.

Mr. Brady immediately contacted the CEO of the company, Larry Taylor, and opened discussions on the feasibility of Pacific Golf acquiring the purchase rights of the HOA. Mr. Taylor met with the board and initiated due diligence. In an amazing 45 days, Pacific Golf agreed to purchase the course. On March 15, 2022, the ownership of the club was transferred to Pacific Golf Management. One of the most important components of the sale was that the club would have

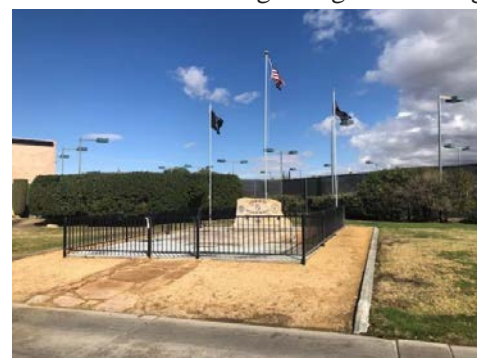
to stay as a private club in perpetuity and could not be developed without the HOA's approval. The HOA included in the agreement that the club would allow a Veterans Memorial Garden to remain in perpetuity as well, something very important to the community.

Besides its potential, a major reason for Pacific Golf to purchase the club was the impressive pedigree of both the clubhouse and golf course. The clubhouse is a rambling 40,000-square-foot ranch-style building that was designed by Clifford May, a famous architect known as the father of California Ranch Style buildings. May designed over 1,000 homes in California, and the Spring Valley Clubhouse was one of his best designs. The other pedigree factor was the golf course was designed by Robert Trent Jones, arguably the most famous architect at that time. Jones and his son, Robert Trent Jones, Jr., have designed over 500 golf courses worldwide. Their designs are featured sites of the most prestigious golf tournaments, including the U.S Open and PGA Championships. Larry Taylor commented that, "This was like buying both a Renoir and Monet painting that had been smudged and ignored."

Immediately, the new company started upgrading the facility, and re-named the club Bear Valley Country Club to underscore its new beginning. The chang-



Bear Valley Country Club Entrance



Veteran's Memorial

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How a HOA Saved a Community

Continued



Cliff May



Robert Trent Jones Junior and Senior

es included a new parking lot, renovated aquatic and fitness areas, interior and exterior painting, new furniture, and multiple other upgrades. The renovations made an immediate and amazing impact on the membership and the residents. In a short two months, the club grew to over 800 memberships, comprised of over 2,000 members, making the club the new center of the community. Brian Hurst, a local real estate agent and extremely committed board member, commented, “The new ownership has made a huge difference in our community. Not only have our home values been saved, but they have also increased significantly. If the club had been sold to a developer, the uncertainty and potential negative development would have had a catastrophic impact on our home values.”

Fast forward to today, the club contin-

ues to grow as word gets out by excited members. The pro-active intervention of the HOA and its board of directors changed the club’s direction from a sinking one to one where the future has no limits. “Not only am I extremely thankful that Larry and his team saved our community from a very dire situation... the country club is the best I have ever seen in my 30 years,” stated long-time member David Greiner.

Spring Valley Lake HOA and Bear Valley Country Club have become true partners in ensuring the stability of the community. In summary, the experiences at Spring Valley Lake prove that residents can make a difference in the quality of their lives—something that both Robert Trent Jones and Cliff May would be very proud of.



Aquatic Center



Renovated Golf Course

continued on page 15

Ontario International Airport

By Atif Elkadi

CEO, Ontario International Airport

Six years after the return of Ontario International Airport (ONT) to local authority, we proudly own one of the aviation industry’s most impressive success stories.

In 2022, a projected 5.8 million passengers will fly into or out of ONT – nearly 200,000 above the last pre-pandemic year of 2019 and 33% more than when the airport was re-acquired in 2016. Those kinds of numbers, along with the flights and destinations our airline partners have added, have earned us recognition from *Global Traveler* magazine as the fastest-growing airport in the United States for each of the past four years.

All of this has occurred despite the global disruption in air travel resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic. In fact, since those early days, weeks and months, ONT has been one of the fastest-recovering airports in the nation and will be one of a select few that exceeds pre-pandemic levels once 2022 comes to a close.

In the meantime, ONT has strengthened its role as a logistics supply chain hub. Today, we rank among the Top 10 cargo airports in North America, processing nearly 900,000 tons of goods each year. Amazon, UPS, and Federal Express all maintain sizable operations at Ontario International – FedEx Express having opened a \$290 million expanded operations center in 2020 and UPS opening in the Western Regional Air Hub to process more than 400,000 packages daily.

So many factors play into our success – the leadership and vision of our Ontario International Airport Authority Board of Commissioners, our extraordinary team of airport professionals, our supportive business and airline partners, and this

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An economic overview of the Mojave River Valley

Ontario International Airport

Continued

community and region we serve.

The Inland Empire is one of the fastest-growing population and economic centers in the country. More broadly, 10 million Southern Californians live or work closer to ONT than any other airport.

In addition, ONT is the hub of a global logistics network that's among the most important anywhere. According to a new report by Oxford Economics, logistics activity in the eight zip codes surrounding ONT generate \$17.8 billion in economic impact.

Ontario International's operations alone produce \$3.8 billion in economic impact, supporting 27,800 jobs across the region and generating \$571 million in local, state, and federal taxes.

The future looks even better. According to the Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG), ONT is one of the few airports in California with the capacity for significant growth – as many as 30 million passengers per year, long-term.

For our airline partners, our fast-growing region provides a strong customer base, and the steps we've taken to enhance the customer experience since the return to local ownership have made us an even more attractive gateway.

Over the past six years, ONT has added China Airlines, Frontier Airlines, Jet-Blue, Hawaiian Airlines, Avianca and Volaris, and now connects to more than two dozen direct destinations in the United States, Latin America, and Asia.

We have added exciting amenities such as new restaurants and stores, high-end passenger lounges, and services such as our new ONT+, which allows the non-traveling public to secure an online pass to greet families and friends at the gate

– or spend more time with them as they prepare to depart.

With all of this, our Board of Commissioners and our airport staff are committed to growing the right way. This includes working with community partners to ensure state-of-the-art transit access into and out of the airport. Recently, the San Bernardino County Transportation Authority and Omnitrans launched a new service, ONT Connect, a direct shuttle between the Rancho Cucamonga Metrolink station and ONT. This is a precursor to an anticipated tunnel project between the station and the airport, using autonomous passenger vehicles. This service will provide a direct transit connection to the airport not only from Metrolink but from the Brightline West rail system that will include a stop in the High Desert/Mohave River Valley at Apple Valley.

In addition, the West Valley connector, a zero-emission bus rapid transit system under development, will connect to ONT.

We're excited about what is happening at ONT, and what's to come, and look forward to serving this great region of ours even better for generations to come.

Publisher's Note:

Airports, such as Ontario International Airport, make a huge economic impact, to not only the Ontario area, but to the entire Inland Empire region.

I started my career in Santa Barbara, California and during my second year of my career, 1980, remember flying from Santa Barbara to Ontario to look at some properties that the Real Estate firm I worked for owned. It was a very small airport at that time. It is a huge asset to the entire Inland Empire and I congratulate the City of Ontario, its leaders, the County of San Bernardino, its Supervisors and all those people that played an intercal role in making this a first class facility.



Inland Economic and Growth Opportunity (IEGO)

*By Jackie Melendez,
Executive Director*

Investing in the Future of the Inland Empire

Inland Empire Community Foundation (IECF) has invested in the High Desert region of San Bernardino County for many years—in its educational and social service sector and, in particular, the nonprofit sector.

From 2019-2022, IECF provided 614 grants totaling \$5.5M to nonprofits serving the High Desert. Communities from Victorville to Adelanto have benefited from these grants.

Recent research sheds new light on the economic and educational challenges faced by the Inland Empire, including communities of the High Desert. To address these challenges, and with equity and collaboration being cornerstones of its framework, IECF took a lead in sponsoring Inland Economic Growth & Opportunity (IEGO) in 2019.

IEGO is a regional, cross-sector, bi-county collaborative. This network of over 70 community-based organizations, businesses, institutions, and stakeholders is committed to growing middle-class jobs and pursuing inclusive economic development to improve the quality of life for all Riverside and San Bernardino County residents. IEGO's work focuses on building industry clusters in sustainable logistics, cybersecurity, advanced manufacturing, and green technology.

The collaborative endeavor seeks to lift thousands out of poverty and broaden local access to opportunity by investing in better pathways to good jobs with higher wages. Long-term results will include improving educational outcomes, reducing poverty, inspiring the region's

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Inland Economic and Growth Opportunity (IEGO)

Continued

brightest young people to stay local after graduation, and strengthening the civic infrastructure necessary to address emerging opportunities.

IEGO believes access to opportunity is essential, but not sufficient, to close the persistent racial, gender, and economic equity gaps that exist in the Inland Empire. Wealth building, housing and food security, and other place-based conditions present recurring barriers that must be addressed to close those gaps.

To promote economic justice, IEGO has invested its efforts with businesses, leaders, and institutions that embody and value diversity, equity, inclusion, and anti-racism.

The success of IEGO to date has been its reliance on a spirit of collaboration and the shared values of equity, innovation, and sustainability. Members of IEGO include Cal State San Bernardino, University of California, Riverside, and local organizations such as the Mountain Desert Career Pathways, based in the High Desert.

IEGO supports a “cluster based” approach to advance inclusive economic development to the region. This approach seeks to create a geographic concentration of related companies and other organizations in a field and is distinct from sector development, which targets the growth of just one existing industry. This approach generates greater productivity and innovation, higher wages, and more entrepreneurial activity than developing a single industry sector. Think film production in Hollywood, wine in Napa Valley, and technology in Silicon Valley.

Cluster strategies allow communities and regions to build hubs of existing sectors or work to build new, promising industry sectors based on the inno-

vation, skill, and human capital already developed. A cluster of industries then becomes central to economic growth. When education classes, certifications, and degrees are aligned in these industries, local students are able to remain in their communities to work, invest, and give back, and businesses are able to thrive on the synergy created within the cluster.

In January 2022, IEGO retained its first Executive Director, Jackie Melendez. Melendez says, “When we talk about an inclusive economy, we are talking about economic development from the ground up—focusing on communities that have been left out of the conversation when it comes to what our economy should look like.”



“We know that the IE doesn’t get its fair share of private or public funding,” continues Melendez, “so having an organization like IEGO that’s at the center, that can advocate for the entire region, is critical. One of our goals is to help bring different parts of the region together to collectively be one ‘empire.’ Success as a region is all about collaboration.”

IEGO seeks to ensure that all innovation and economic growth is sustainable and tied to benefits for workers and residents

of the region, including the High Desert.

IEGO welcomes community-based organizations, investors, and businesses in the High Desert to join us as we work collectively to build a resilient, nimble, and inclusive economy. Melendez says, “We invite partners to join us who are interested in solving problems and doing business differently—because we need new tools and new partnerships to meet the challenges of the future.”

For more information on IEGO, please reach out to Jackie Melendez at jackie@iegocollab.com or visit IEGOCOLLAB.COM.

About IECF: Founded in 1941, the Inland Empire Community Foundation is the oldest and largest community foundation serving the Inland region and is nationally accredited. We have deep roots here and are committed to working with all who care passionately about improving our community. We come to the table with an in-depth understanding of the IE and our nonprofit sector, and extensive experience with our donors that can make a meaningful difference—now and in the future. Learn more at iegives.org.



High Desert Report

An economic overview of the Mojave River Valley

WVRA Awarded \$4 Million Grant

By David Wyliel, Safety/Communications Officer



Funding will expand agency's ability to treat food waste and produce RNG



CalRecycle has awarded VVWRA a nearly \$4 million grant for a new co-digestion and renewable natural gas project. The project will increase the amount of food waste treated at VVWRA while also increasing the amount of renewable natural gas (RNG) produced. The VVWRA project will include the installation of food waste receiving infrastructure, liquid slurry feedstock storage tanks, and an organics polishing system to expand VVWRA's co-digestion of food waste. The organics polishing system will help get rid of inorganic material like glass and plastic in the food waste. The feedstock will be delivered via tanker trucks as a pre-processed food waste slurry, polished to remove contaminants, and then co-digested with wastewater sludge. The project will convert the biogas or methane to RNG and inject it into a Southwest Gas pipeline that runs through VVWRA

property. Bio-solids will be dewatered and dried, then transported off-site for land application. The grant funds will be used to help fund engineering and construction, community outreach and education, grant administration, and the purchase of a new organics polishing system, receiving station infrastructure,

and feedstock storage tanks. The new equipment will complement the existing infrastructure that went online in January. The RNG project at VVWRA is part of the effort to meet the requirements of SB 1383, which requires the diversion of 75% of organic waste from landfills by 2025.



How Public Works Infrastructure Projects Come to Life



The San Bernardino County Public Works Department is responsible for planning, designing, constructing, operating, and maintaining the county's infrastructure. Infrastructure refers to county roads, special districts, solid waste systems, flood control, water conservation facilities, and more.

Public Works performs projects and scheduled maintenance, looking into the future to project needs based on growth, and partnering with other agencies for continued success.

Have you ever wondered how a public works project comes to life?

The Department of Public Works first chooses a project that meets the county's identified needs. These needs include safety, maintenance, improvement of operations, and long-range planning. It's crucial that every new project directly benefits our residents!

Next, a detailed study occurs, where en-

vironmental impacts are researched and funding is secured. Public projects can be very expensive, and funding usually involves a combination of federal, state, and local funds.

With the scope of work understood, the project enters the preliminary engineering phase, where early plans are designed and prepared. Environmental Clearance also begins here, which assesses the impact of the planned project on the environment and people. This process can be lengthy, especially when complicated environmental mitigation is needed.

All throughout the project, extensive efforts are made to minimize any impact to adjacent properties, but right-of-way acquisition is sometimes unavoidable. Right of way refers to being granted authorization to use another's property for a specific purpose, such as building a road across private property to connect two public roads. These impacts are

unique to each project, so the amount of land that may be required varies, and the acquisition process can take months or years.

All the pieces are now in place for the project to move into the final design phase. Here, the final plans, specifications, estimates, and any additional, necessary permitting are completed and packaged for review by the Board of Supervisors.

After board approval, the project is clear to be advertised for bidding, and when it has been awarded to a contractor, construction is ready to commence! Construction timelines may be dependent on the project's size, region, season, and funding deadlines, but the work never stops until the project is completed!

To learn more about our County Projects or the Department of Public Works, please visit www.dpw.sbcounty.org.



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HR Perspective – COVID and the Workplace

By Lynn Hounsley, President/CEO, Integrity HR, Inc.

The COVID-19 pandemic has forced businesses to rapidly adapt, which included months, now years of adjustments to work roles, schedules, routines, and priorities, has prompted employers and employees to reconsider many default assumptions about what they do, along with how and why they do it.

The changes will vary by field and employer, but flexibility and safety will be top priorities that could bring, for instance, a rethinking of the five-day work week, the way employees earn and spend vacation time, and the modification of benefits offered.

Also, the power dynamics between employers and employees has shifted as each considers the other's roles in light of what they learned during the pandemic. Organizations will likely give more attention to employees' mental health care, getting a closer look at the daily personal pressures their staffs face. Employers have had time to reassess which jobs and employees are truly essential to the success of their businesses, while workers have been able to reconsider the daily demands their jobs place on their lives, such as travel, commuting, or following rigid workday schedules, and whether they're still willing to tolerate them. That's led to once less-common trends like workplace flexibility, "work from anywhere," and virtual meetings becoming a standard. We are already seeing more and more companies moving to a four-day work week, cutting back significantly on travel for internal activities like training and sales meetings.

It has also disrupted the balance of power at work. Where employers used to set the terms of employment—where, when, and how the work gets done—the question of "who decides" is now much more up for grabs.

There is also an observation of employees displaying high levels of burnout and stress, even among workers who

still appear to be high functioning.

With the current economic recession, employees are "disincentivized to speak openly and honestly about their stress and frustration" out of fear, or they cope by minimizing its effect with comparisons with others who seem to be worse off.

Remote Work and the Rise of Hybrid Work

The pandemic has jolted the foundation of a workplace model that had been relatively unchanged since the late 1920s: employees traveling from home to a workplace five days a week between 9 a.m. and 5 p.m. to complete their obligations. Although some employers have seen resistance from remote workers not wanting to return to the office, this is the reason employers are moving to a hybrid remote arrangement.

As we have seen employers adapting with the remote working model, these shifting practices are continuing to evolve as businesses return to a "new normal" of hybrid work arrangements, according to the Society for Human Resource Management's (SHRM's) 2022 Employee Benefits Survey.

According to the survey conducted in January and February of 2022, 63 percent of employers said they offer most of their workers the opportunity for hybrid work, which involves a combination of working remotely and in person. During the pandemic, employers and employees learned that "Remote work works," said Daniel Stunes, senior researcher at SHRM, and "Today, more people want the flexibility to work remotely at least part of the time or when they need to do so. Businesses have discovered that they may need to consider offering hybrid work opportunities to attract job applicants and keep employees."

Across all organizations, 62 percent said they offer employees a subsidy or reimbursement for at-home office or work

equipment. Among those organizations:

- Employers, on average, provided about \$891 to employees to cover costs related to working from home.
- Most employers (95 percent) cover costs related to work technology, such as computer monitors, keyboards, or headsets.
- Over two-thirds (68 percent) cover costs related to general office supplies such as pens or notepads.
- 24 percent said they cover the cost of chairs for employees working from home

So as employers prepare to reopen, they would be wise to maintain and emphasize work flexibility and safety regulations and gradually bring staff back to the workplace. "Organizations need to clearly communicate with employees their expectations for employee engagement, how often they assume that employees need to come in, and if there are any changes to office policies, like lunches or common spaces not being available, they should clearly communicate this as a safety precaution. Too often, firms "under-communicate" out of fear of how messages will be received, when research shows that conveying as much information as possible, being almost "overly transparent," helps businesses win trust.

Wage & Hour Issues with Hybrid Work

Employers need to be reminded that with a hybrid remote-working situation, hourly nonexempt employees are to be paid for the hours they work, be paid for any overtime hours worked, take the legally required rest and meal break and be reimbursed for any personal expenses such as cell phone, computer, internet, etc.

A clear written remote-work policy is recommended, along with a remote-work agreement to outline details such as work schedule, work standards and performance, safety, provided company

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HR Perspective – COVID and the Workplace

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equipment, confidentiality, and electronic security.

How is remote work changing the work environment?

Remote work isn't a new concept by any means. Approximately 7% of employees worked completely remotely prior to COVID-19.

The remote-work shift that happened in the wake of COVID-19 took place on a scale and at a pace rarely seen in the workforce. Now, the mindset about remote work has shifted, too. Remote work is no longer just for the Millennial nomad looking to freelance. Remote working, full-time, lifelong positions are here to stay because:

- **Employees want to choose.** Many employees had never worked remotely before COVID-19, but now that they have, they don't want to give it up. As more workers express a desire to continue remote-working arrangements, workplaces have had to increase flexibility to match those demands. In fact, it's been estimated that 70% of the entire workforce will be working remotely 5+ days each month by 2025.
- **People are migrating from cities to rural communities.** According to a CBRE report, 2020 saw a significant increase in emigration from dense, high-cost urban metros to more rural communities.
- Between supply chain disruptions, rising rents, and inflation, the overall cost of living has gone up since the beginning of the pandemic. Remote work allows employees to save money, which can help offset rising costs in other areas. By spending less on gas, food, coffee, and professional attire, for example, individuals can use those resources to invest or enjoy personal hobbies. This not only reduces financial stress but also improves mood and productivity.

The Impact of Remote Work on

the Workforce

The shift to remote work has affected the workforce in a variety of ways. While most changes are positive, there are some hurdles to overcome. Here's a rundown of some of the major impacts.

- **Increased productivity and engagement.** One of the major benefits of remote work is that it boosts productivity and engagement. In fact, studies have found that 81% of hybrid employees report being highly engaged, followed by 78% of fully remote employees, and only 72% of on-site employees. However, this increase in productivity and engagement relies on technological preparedness. When remote employees have the materials, equipment, and digital tools necessary to effectively work remotely, they are two times more likely to be engaged.
- **Access to a diversified talent pool.** Remote work means the potential talent pool for organizations is no longer limited by geography. It's now possible to recruit employees from around the globe without having to pay for relocation expenses, enabling a greater amount of diversity when it comes to ideas, age, race, and abilities.
- **Higher employee retention.** Beyond the advantage of attracting new talent, offering a strong remote-work policy can also help incentivize your current employees to stay with your company. Results presented in a Gallup study suggest that 54% of employees would leave their current employer for one who offers more flexibility. Giving employees ranges in terms of work location and hours is a relatively low-cost benefit and employee retention strategy to leverage.
- **Reduced overhead costs.** Organizations save a large amount of money on real estate expenses when they need less office space due to remote and hybrid employees. They can also save on office supplies, utilities, and more.

- **Increased importance on cybersecurity and technology.** When working remotely, employees, devices, and their data now reside outside the walls of an organization's physical environment. This increases vulnerabilities and, in turn, the risk of cyberattacks. To adjust, businesses must prioritize cybersecurity and ensure they are using technology safely and effectively.

COVID-19 and Mental Health

One effect of the pandemic that will continue is employees' mental health. The virus' physical, social, and economic impacts have not been felt equally, which has led to "significant" mental health issues, including increased anxiety and depression, for people at every level within organizations. Even those who did not become sick or laid off report worries about their own health and that of loved ones, the possibility of losing income, or just the constant uncertainty over when, or if, their lives will return to normal.

Employers will need to provide more support to employees than ever before, either in the form of temporary relief, job sharing, or other incentives in order to help them deal with the increased stress they've been experiencing.

It is important for companies to not overlook employees' health and safety concerns, because burnt-out employees are going to be less productive and more likely to quit.

Employers are looking to their current medical plan options whether to add some type of additional mental health option.

Minimum Wage and COVID Paid Sick Leave

As you may know, effective January 1, 2023, Governor Newsome updated minimum wage for all to \$15.50 per hour. This also effects the minimum sal-

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ary for exempt employees to \$64,480.

While this is great news for minimum wage earners, this leaves small businesses unsure of possible long-term effects and greater implications. There is an ongoing debate about the impact of raising minimum wage on small businesses. Even with countless laws passed and economic studies conducted, there continues to be no consensus on the effects of raising minimum wage for small businesses. Some studies find little to no effect of raising minimum wage on small businesses, while others see a significant effect.

Small businesses need to review their current infrastructure and finances to come up with creative solutions. Just as we have seen the costs of goods rise, all businesses are following suit. This is a very sensitive issue, and every business has to look at their overall business strategy and obtain advice and counsel from their business and financial consultants for opportunities and strategies.

COVID-19 Supplemental Paid Sick Leave. The current iteration of the SPSL requirement was set to expire on Sept. 30. This was passed by the governor on September 30th. Remember, this is for employers with 26+ employees. However, a last-minute proposal (AB 152) would extend that requirement until the end of this year. Importantly, that legislation will not entitle employees to a new bank of SPSL. Rather, it will merely extend the existing entitlement until the end of the year.

AB 152 makes a few small changes to the SPSL law and establishes a new program for small businesses to provide up to \$50,000 in grants to cover some of the costs of SPSL provided in 2022. Because the SPSL expires at the end of September, this bill is a "budget trailer" bill, making it effective as soon as signed by the governor.

New Ownership Takes the Wheel at SCLC

By Kim Snyder, President, West Region, Prologis

Tyson Chave, SVP, Investment Officer, Prologis

San Francisco-based logistics company Prologis now owns the keys to the logistics park called Southern California Logistics Center (SCLC). With prime location and adjacency to Southern California Logistics Airport, company leaders say they will bring many positive changes to the park.

Prologis recently purchased Stirling Development's interest in SCLC and now controls 1,100 acres, totaling approximately 50 million square feet, *See map on page 22.*

"As the new owner, Prologis plans to leverage its nearly 40 years of logistics experience with a high level of engagement with the surrounding Mojave River Valley," said Kim Snyder, president of the U.S. West Region at Prologis.

What Prologis Brings to the Table

"We have deep global experience building high-quality, environmentally friendly facilities across California and around the world," Snyder said. "California is home for us, and we understand the community's culture and needs. We'll seek city and community input and redevelop the former George Air Force Base land with a focus on job creation, sustainability, and operating efficiency, benefitting both businesses and residents."

Prologis owns approximately one billion square feet of logistics real estate in 19 countries, enabling 2.5 percent of the world's GDP. The company has been part of the Southern California community—its biggest market—for over 30 years. It owns and manages more than 500 warehouses and properties across California, providing hundreds of local customers with facilities and services crucial to maintaining a highly efficient supply chain.

As the logistics leader in sustainability, Prologis has committed to achieving net zero emissions across its value chain by 2040. The U.S. Green Building Council (USGBC) honored Prologis this year with its Leadership Award for the company's exemplary commitment to green buildings.

Prologis also uses its scale to help its customers drive sustainable operations by developing solutions that lower energy costs and ensure access to clean, renewable energy sources. Its Essentials Platform offers key energy solutions, including smart lighting, smart metering, and energy storage. Further, Prologis has the most prolific rooftop solar construction efforts in the industry and works directly with customers in solar-capable markets to size its systems based on estimated energy consumption.

Why Victorville

As the Inland Empire West and East have become increasingly expensive in both rent and land prices, SCLC and the surrounding Mojave River Valley have emerged as a more affordable operating alternative and can accommodate large and specialized requirements that are difficult to deliver in the L.A. Basin. The SCLC has supported logistics and distribution operations for major brands, including Keurig Dr Pepper, Newell Brands, Iron Mountain, and Mars.

"Victorville is located in one of the most dynamic industrial real estate markets in the country. It's pro-business mindset and access to a strong workforce has helped set the city up to continue to experience strong growth in institutional-quality logistics assets," said Tyson Chave, SVP and investment officer for Prologis. "E-commerce will continue to grow to match consumer expectation for fast delivery. We're excited about this development and what it offers our customers—an advantageous and cost-effective location to grow their business."

Prologis has already developed built-to-suit facilities at SCLC for several companies, including Amazon and Iron Mountain, a global data and records management company. Looking ahead, the Prologis team projects that it will develop 500,000 square feet annually, helping to create jobs for the community while attracting some of its global customers to Victorville.

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The Bradco High Desert Report

High Desert Report

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Property Values Within the Mojave River Valley Region Thrive Despite COVID-19 Pandemic

By Chris Wilhite, San Bernardino County Assessor-Recorder-County Clerk

It is important to note that county assessors do not forecast property values. County assessors determine the value of property as of January 1st to be placed on the annual roll, as mandated by the state constitution. I wanted to highlight this because there are unknown long-term impacts of rising interest rates and inflation on our economy and housing markets.

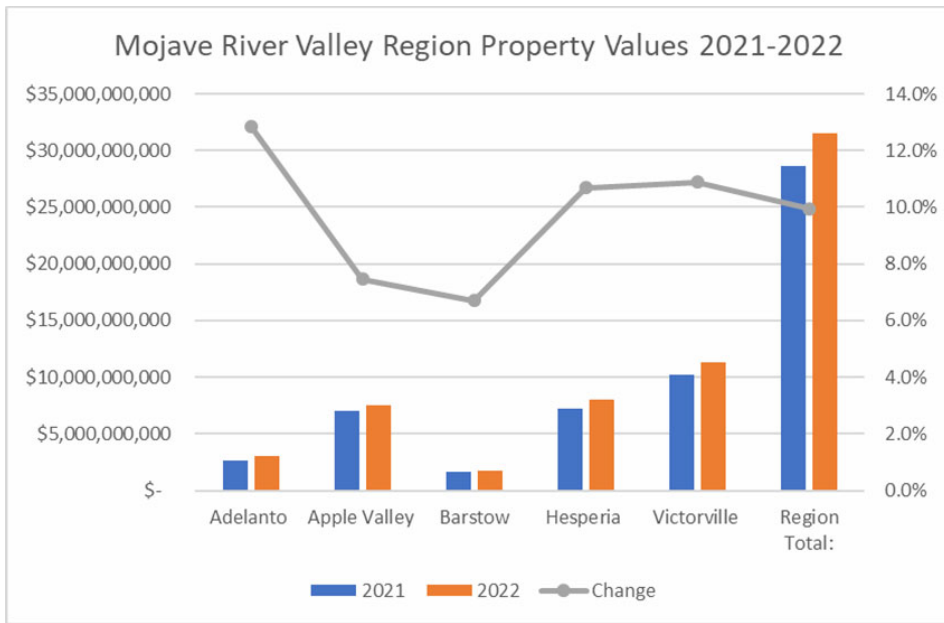
With this in mind, the 2022 annual roll showcased the continuation of steady assessed property valuation growth seen continuously since 2010.

we saw an overall increase in property values across the board, most property owners will not see an equal value increase on their property for taxation purposes. This is due to Proposition 13, which was adopted in 1978. Prop 13 requires county assessors to only reappraise a property to determine the fair market value for assessment purposes, also known as the “Base Year Value,” at the time of change of ownership, for new construction, or when a property’s current market value is below its Base Year Value. Proposition 13 limits the

led to a total of \$21.6 million savings for San Bernardino County property owners. I encourage property owners to visit our website at arc.sbcounty.gov/tax-savings, to learn more about tax saving opportunities such as Homeowners’ exemptions and service-related 100% disabled veteran’s exemptions.

Assessed valuations should not be used as forecasts or be deemed as predictions of future property valuations. Annual assessment rolls are snapshots in time as of the previous lien date of January 1. Individuals wishing to see their assessed value may visit ARC’s website: arc.sbcounty.gov. For other inquiries, please contact our Assessor’s toll-free number at 1-877-885-7654.

Don’t forget about our local High Desert office for Recorder and County Clerk services where local residents can record documents, obtain birth, death, and marriage certificates for events in San Bernardino County, and many other services. Couples can even get a marriage license and be married on site. For Recorder-County Clerk inquiries, please contact our office at (909) 387-8306.



The 2022 San Bernardino County Assessment Roll contained a value of \$288,579,483,759, which is a 9.3% net increase as compared to the 2021 Assessment Roll, with continued residential and industrial construction adding to the increase. Looking closely at the Mojave River Valley Region, which includes the cities of Adelanto, Apple Valley, Barstow, Hesperia, and Victorville, we saw an overall 10% net increase.

Highlighting the unincorporated area of Spring Valley Lake, assessed property values grew from \$1.27 billion to \$1.34 billion or approximately 5.5%.

It is important to note that although

growth of a property’s annual Base Year Value adjustment to no more than CCPI or 2%, whichever is lower.

In 2022, our office helped over 330,000+ San Bernardino County property owners save on their property taxes through our Tax Savings Opportunities programs. These tax savings programs

I want to dedicate this article to a long-time friend, a person whom I called my step-brother (I always called his father Ted Dutton my step-dad), who passed away suddenly this past year. Bob Dutton is our former Assessor, former Council Member for the City of Rancho Cucamonga, former State Assemblyman and a former State Senator. Bob, we miss you dearly. We will see you again someday.

Joseph W. Brady.

	2021	2022	Change
Adelanto	\$ 2,651,711,526	\$ 2,992,485,301	12.9%
Apple Valley	\$ 6,971,588,538	\$ 7,491,954,752	7.5%
Barstow	\$ 1,601,817,259	\$ 1,709,049,637	6.7%
Hesperia	\$ 7,233,521,171	\$ 8,007,064,299	10.7%
Victorville	\$ 10,209,662,438	\$ 11,320,625,156	10.9%
Region Total:	\$ 28,668,300,932	\$ 31,521,179,145	10.0%

The Bradco High Desert Report

Victor Valley Community College Enrollment Rebounds After Pandemic and College Adds Exciting New Programs, Services and Opportunities for its Students.

By VVC Public Information Officer Robert A. Sewell

Victor Valley College (VVC), in partnership with the community, is dedicated to providing opportunities for student learning through academic advancement, workforce development, and personal growth.

ABOUT THE COLLEGE

Victor Valley College (VVC), now in its 61st year, serves an area encompassing roughly 2,200 square miles and is located on a 253-acre campus at the center of the three major communities of the Victor Valley (Apple Valley, Hesperia and Victorville). VVC serves the cities and communities of the High Desert: Adelanto, Apple Valley, Helendale, Hesperia, Lucerne Valley, Oak Hills, Oro Grande, Phelan, Piñon Hills, Silver Lakes, Spring Valley Lake, Victorville, and Wrightwood.

VVC also features a 9.83-acre Regional Public Safety Training Center (RPSTC) in Apple Valley and an aviation program at Southern California Logistics Airport (SCLA) in Victorville. In total, a population base of approximately 430,000 people with over 30 feeder high schools and diploma-granting institutions rely on VVC for their educational needs and opportunities.

VVC celebrated the 10th anniversary of the Regional Public Safety Training Center which opened in 2012. Since opening in 2012, over 19,670 students have been served by our public safety programs (Emergency Medical Services, Fire Technology and Criminal Justice)

What's happened in the last 25 years is an increase in how much community colleges are involved in job training and economic development. "VVC is the place to be" when industry identifies a skill gap. The relationship between industry and the college continues to

strengthen as we work together as a catalyst to develop career partnerships that provide workers with the skills the economy needs most.

VVC is the primary source of workforce training in the Victor Valley. Our career technical programs teach fundamental skills that employers in almost every corner of the region need and offer more than 100 certification programs to ensure our graduates are marketable employees. VVC also offers customized training to help companies train up their employees in specialized skills they need in order to be more profitable.

STUDENT ENROLLMENT

Through extensive outreach efforts and enhancements to programs and services, student enrollment at VVC is up over 20% from a year ago.

High school students were invited to several VVC Discover Industrial Technology and Discover Public Safety events this past year. This fall, Construction had their highest enrollment in 10 years, Welding doubled enrollment, Intro Automotive courses increased by fifty percent and all Emergency Medical Service classes were full.

VVC added 10 more on-site part-time counselors to assist with recruitment and matriculation at 10 of our largest high schools: Adelanto, Apple Valley, Excelsior Charter, Granite Hills, Hesperia, Oak Hills, Serrano, Silverado, Sultana and Victor Valley, and through this effort saw the largest number of high school seniors enroll at VVC in the Fall 22 semester.

In May 2022, the college established the first VVC Rams Center at Silverado High School to al-

low high school students direct access to VVC resources and enrollment. Additional sites will be created in fall 2022 at other high schools as space becomes available

VVC rolled out One & Done Events this summer to provide one day assistance in getting students fully enrolled for the fall semester.

This coming year, 2023, the college is anticipating the first cohort of Early College Academy (ECA) students to enter VVC with 30 units they earned in the program while attending high school. Nearly 650, 10th – 12th grade students are currently taking part in ECA.

Connect2Success (C2S) is in full operation this year. This very specialized and highly trained call center was created on the idea of one call, one email. You get to talk to someone, and you get a response. This resource has an immediate connection to the success of our students. Over 26,000 phone calls and emails to info@vvc.edu have been answered through the C2S, with a first call resolution over 90%.

NEW PROGRAMS AND OPPORTUNITIES

Through our Justice-Involved Education (JIE) program, VVC is now offering Correspondence Associate Degrees in Sociology and Business, increased our Juvenile Justice enrollment, received approval for 7 non-credit workforce development courses, with certificates of

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achievement, and will soon be offering development courses for faculty and staff to teach/support justice-involved students.

VVC is now offering certificates in Entrepreneurship and will shortly open an Entrepreneurship and Innovation Center. Victor Valley College's faculty and staff will utilize the center to develop students' entrepreneurial growth mindsets under effectual reasoning and experiential learning. Faculty and staff will promote entrepreneurial and innovation knowledge development, providing students and community learners with entrepreneurial ecosystem connections.

VVC's Commercial Driver License (CDL) program launched on September 26th with 24 students enrolled, and hundreds more expressed interest. The program intends to run CDL training programs twice in the fall and spring and once in the winter and summer (6 times a year). Courses are currently being written for ELDT Hazardous Materials and Owner-Operated Entrepreneurship.

VVC's Cosmetology Program anticipates launching in fall 2023, classrooms are under construction, and lab equipment has been purchased.

Curriculum has been approved for a Mobile Notary program with plans to offer this program in spring 2023.

Emergency Telecommunications (911 Operators) program has curriculum approved and is working with industry partners to finalize program specifics. The launch date for this program is yet to be established, but it is on the near horizon.

Work is currently taking place on expanding EMS and Auto noncredit training.

Other noncredit programs in development are as follows: Phlebotomy, Low Voltage Installation Technician, Cours-

es for Older Adults and Makerspace support for Entrepreneurship and Innovation Center.

COMMITMENT TO STUDENT VOICE

This summer 2022, the college surveyed students past and present who were either enrolled at VVC or applied to VVC since spring 2020. The purpose of the survey was to gain a better perspective regarding students' enrollment decisions: their intent to attend college, reasons affecting their decision, and support VVC could provide to help them attend.

Student Housing -

As VVC looks forward to a Higher Education Student Housing Grant and to make sound student housing decisions, a 2022 Student Demand Survey was sent to students enrolled for the Fall 2022 semester. In less than three weeks VVC students responded in great numbers with 2,012 individual surveys received. The results are being compiled to determine the level of student demand to live in a proposed on-campus housing project, to learn the floor plan(s) most desired by students and in turn to understand at what rent level students felt would be fair for the chosen floor plan.

Student Scholarships – The Victor Valley College Foundation awarded 320 scholarships worth over \$257,300 during the 2022-2023 VVC Foundation Scholarship Drive. The scholarship drive for the 2023-2024 academic year opens in January 2023 and closes in

March 2023. Visit vvcfoundation.com for information on how you can apply.

Child Development Center - As of July 1 2022, VVC's Child Development Center has been approved by the California Department of Education and Social Services to increase the serving capacity of children from 32 preschool aged to 148 children ages 18 months- 5 years old. This expansion will prioritize VVC's student parents' children to be placed in a High-Quality Title V program. The Child Development Lab has been recognized as one of the two Early Childhood Education Programs in the



ASB is representative of the study body's voice in a fashion they feel will enhance the "caring" student experience found at Victor Valley College.

High Desert by San Bernardino County as a 5-star-rated program.

Additionally, the Child Development Lab will expand opportunities for Student Workers/FWS positions, Student Teacher Internship placements, Develop a Teacher Workforce Pipeline, Clinical Pediatric service hours, Student Mentorship Practicum and Student/Community Volunteer hours.

In the near future, the Child Development Center will provide an on-site Student Parent Resource Center that aligns with some of Associated Student Body's (ASB) visions to ensure that student parents have FREE access to parent-

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ing skill training workshops, a lending library on Child Development books, family-related community events, Best Practices for young children and health related screening tools.

Student ASB Clubs - 16 student clubs have returned to increase student engagement this fall to include: Adventure's Fantasy, Archery, Base 11 (STEM), Black Student Union, Campus Crusade, CNSA, Child Development, Gamer's Guild, Gender & Sexuality Alliance, Model United Nations, Music, Off Broadway, Pre-Health Scholars, Rams Real Estate, Ready Rams, and Respiratory Therapy. Soon Geography and Phi Theta Kappa will be chartered.

Rebranding VVC - During fall 2022, VVC has begun the process of rebranding the college with the support of Elder Tree, a marketing/advertising agency based out of Norwalk. In an effort to capture and assess qualitative feedback regarding the college's reputation and visibility in the greater community, Elder Tree will be conducting a series of focus groups with Victor Valley College's various stakeholders. These focus groups will engage members of VVC faculty, staff, and student population, and the surrounding community.

VVC CAMPUS EXPANSION

This year will continue to be busier than usual at VVC, expanding the campus, adding 12 new classrooms, upgrading our food court and Rams Café, switching out drinking fountains with filtered hydration stations, and creating an E-Sports competition room.

Groundbreaking for the **VVC Educational Event Center and Multi-Purpose Stadium** was held on August 9, 2022. It is anticipated to be completed by spring 2024, just in time for the Rams football team to open their season. The

estimate cost for the project is about \$47 million.

The **Educational Event Center** will be built overlooking the stadium field and will be used to host various events and meetings, not just for the benefit of VVC staff and students, but also for the High Desert community. The plans show that three adjacent conference rooms can be combined for round table banquet events with a seating capacity over 600. The 20,000 sq. ft. conference center will also feature a new board room for trustee meetings, a kitchen and concession area, two sets of bathrooms, a ticket center, lobby, and multiple storage areas.

The stadium will replace the existing track on VVC's lower campus and will feature a new synthetic track and field, a re-crowned football field, and bleacher seating for 4,094 (2,558 home and 1,536 visitor). Modern stadium lighting and an advanced sound system will also be installed, as well as new parking stalls.

The **VVC Multi-Cultural Center (MCC)** is anticipated to open this fall, bringing awareness and support for students whether historically underserved, racially/ethnically/socially minoritized, marginalized, undocumented, or first generation in college through its rich array of programs and services.

VVC Engagement Centers will be created and serve as the "Second Stop" for students. Each school—Business, Law and Academic Resources (BLAR); Humanities, Arts and Sciences (HAAS); Public Safety and Industrial Technology (PSIT); and Sci-

ence, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM)—will have a designated engagement center where students will have the opportunity to connect with counselors, peer mentors, and Guided Pathways faculty facilitators. The centers' location in the Advanced Technology Center plays an important role in connecting with students who have completed the onboarding process in the One Stop Center and creates the opportunity to connect students directly to Tutoring and Academic Support services.



The goal of the engagement centers is to increase retention by creating meaningful connections with students and introducing them to the resources needed to be successful students right from the start. Students will have the opportunity to attend workshops, connect with instructional and counseling faculty, and build a sense of belonging at VVC.

ACCREDITATION

On September 27, 2022, Victor Valley College received an approval letter from the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges (ACCJC) for Substantive Change to offer Correspondence Education that will support the Justice Involved Education (JIE) program.

In the academic year 2022-23, Victor Valley College is writing its Institution-

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al Self-Evaluation Report (ISER) due to ACCJC on August 1, 2023. During the writing process, Victor Valley College will evaluate its practices and outcomes against accreditation standards to ensure our programs, services, and allocating resources support student learning and achievement.

In spring of 2024 the college will have selected members of the peer review team visit to our campus to validate and verify ongoing alignment with the Commission's standards. The peer team will document its findings and any recommendations and/or commendations in a formal Peer Review Team Report at the close of the visit.

A BRIGHT FUTURE

"The future is bright for VVC, for our students and for the communities we serve. As our partnerships with the community grow and the campus expands its programs, services and facilities to meet the needs of the High Desert, we continue to recognize our responsibility to our students goes beyond the classroom. VVC strives to provide a 5-star experience for each and every student as we prepare them for the future ahead!"

~ Dr. Walden, Superintendent/President of Victor Valley College

As Publisher, I am also very proud to have been appointed to Victor Valley Community College's Board of Trustees on February 1, 2011. I ran for my first election in November of 2012 and have been re-elected in 2012, 2016, 2018 and now on November 8, 2022. I believe that Victor Valley Community College District is one of the most important assets in the entire region. If we have an educated workforce, we attract more companies, if we attract more companies we raise the "bar", and everybody's living standards throughout the entire Mojave River Valley region. I wish to thank everyone who has supported my campaign for four (4) elections, and helped me raise \$23,000.00.

Thank you, Joseph W. Brady

Hilltop House in Apple Valley

Taylor, founder of Apple Valley Legacy Museum at the Bob Hope Cottage #153 at the Historic Apple Valley Inn

Anyone who has driven through Apple Valley on State Highway 18 has probably glanced up to look at the once majestic Hilltop House perched on top of the rocks above Rancherias Road. In fact, it is visible from miles away in any direction, as was the plan when Apple Valley developer Newton Bass hired architect Francisco Artigas to design the structure at the top of what was then known as Miners Hill or Pioneer Hill as a place to showcase a 360-degree view of the desert and mountains.

Despite often being referred to as "The Bass House," and sitting above a street now known as Bass Hill Rd., Bass never lived there. Rather he used it as a sort of penthouse lodging for important guests to the Apple Valley Inn right below, and with the help of some 86-proof Apple Valley whiskey, to convince prospective property owners to sign on the dotted line for a future in "The Golden Land of Apple Valley." In addition, the house was often the site of business meetings, weddings, holiday parties, and movie shoots.

Since Bass's death in 1983, the property has changed hands several times. Past owners had big ideas for refurbishing the property into a home, a restaurant, or even a religious retreat, but they all faced roadblocks: water service, electrical connections, the sole access road, as well as requirements of the Fire Department and Building and Development. After some futile attempts to renovate the property, including one owner who painted the building bright red, it fell into disrepair, attracting vandals, the homeless, and teenage partygoers. Several fires later, what was left of the walls were bright with graffiti, and the once sparkling pool which flowed both inside and out made for a perfect skateboard park.

In 2013 a group of ambitious, caring, and history-loving citizens decided to do something about it. Calling themselves the Apple Valley Legacy Trail group, their goal was to Reclaim, Repurpose, and Revitalize the trail to Apple Valley's historic landmark. Their more specifically stated mission was: To create and preserve a Legacy Trail to the historic Apple Valley landmark known as the Hilltop House, providing far-reaching educational, civic, economic, and environmental benefits for the community.

In order to ensure community buy-in, the group involved the school district, local business leaders, the High Desert Community Foundation, and other non-profit groups. They had a presence at the San Bernardino County Fair, Apple Valley's 25th anniversary celebration, and chamber luncheons, presenting a formal slideshow on April 11, 2013. They held fundraisers, applied for grants, developed professional architectural designs, and met with the then-current property owners. One requirement for an MDAQMD or NPS (National Park Service) grant is to have a "defined trailhead," which at the time didn't exist.

The Apple Valley Legacy Museum project opened at the Bob Hope Cottage #153 of the Apple Valley Inn as a sister project to the AVLT, and the two non-profits worked together to reenact the famous Historic Apple Valley Inn steak fry in August of 2015. Announcements were made, and community interest grew. The following year at the 2016 steak fry, it was announced that the Town of Apple Valley had closed escrow on the purchase of the "hilltop triangle" property. The trailhead issue again surfaced, interfering with future grants. It was necessary to have a welcoming or visitor center for the trail.

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Hill Top House in Apple Valley

Continued

Due to the topography and no vehicle access to the top of the hill, the trailhead building would have to be at the bottom of the hill at the base of the trail. Park property and Apple Valley Inn property were both considered. The discussions continue.

In an Apple Valley Town flyer entitled "Apple Valley Past Meets the Future," the history, present, and future of the Hilltop House are outlined. History: Built in the 1950s by architect Francisco Artigas, offering panoramic views of the desert landscape. Destroyed by a 1967 fire, rebuilt in 1968, and a second fire in 2009.

Present: The Town purchased the property in 2016 with the assistance of a NPS grant and transferred the property to the Apple Valley Parks System in 2017. In 2022 the decision was made to demolish the structure and rebuild it as a look-out point for the hiking trail, incorporating the look of the original silhouette of the structure.

Future: The site will open to the public as a new Town amenity in the Apple Valley Parks System.

At the Apple Valley Legacy Museum, the volunteers continue to share the Hilltop House's history, as well as its future plans. In anticipation of the upcoming demolition, the AVLM, with assistance of the Mohave Historical Society and the Inn office staff, hosted a "Good-bye Hilltop House" event Sat. June 25. The porch of the museum was filled with Hilltop House displays, including a diorama, photos, news articles, scrapbooks, and future architectural plans. After a slide presentation, initially developed in 2014 by the AVLT committee, and a brief intermission to grab some refreshments, purchase a souvenir, pick up a raffle ticket, or visit the museum, it was SHOWTIME.

"Saturday Night Bath in Apple Valley," a 1965 spoof filmed completely at the Apple Valley Inn, the Hilltop House, Deadman's Point western town, and a few other local spots, was a big hit. The audience included one of the "stars," who as a fourth grader at Mariana elementary school and was in the class chosen to act in the school scenes. He pointed himself out as "the kid in the plaid shirt." Fortunately, in the film, the big-time Las Vegas gambler and his men are not able to outsmart the small-town residents of Apple Valley to turn their town into a "neon oasis" as was envisioned.

The ridiculousness of the film is a perfect fit for a "Something Weird Video" production, involving a lost bullfighter, a town council who make their decisions using an Ouiji board, Hotel Room 8 1/2, which is actually the Hilltop mansion, and a bathtub perched on (where else?) the side of the Hilltop Hill as the dollar bills wash down the drain. Newton Bass, of course, has ulterior motives for this crazy John Myhers film, as the words "Apple Valley" are heard or seen over 100 times!

If you would like to see the Hilltop House in all of its former glory, with its indoor/outdoor pool, its unusual architecture built into the rocks, its majestic bed from *Gone with the Wind*, its magnificent outdoor staircase with a wrap-around walkway, and its unbelievable 1965 views of the valley below, they are all memorialized in this film.

Yes, memories of the Hilltop House will live on in the minds and hearts of long-time residents. Newcomers can drop by the Apple Valley Legacy Museum, Bob Hope Cottage #153 at the Apple Valley Inn, situated right below the Hilltop House, to learn more about its history.

And in the future, residents and visitors should be able to look up and see the sun set behind the soon-to-be-built Hilltop look-out platform at the top of the refurbished Hilltop trail. Thanks to all who have supported this effort. It's been a long time coming!

Article compliments of Marcy Taylor, founder of Apple Valley Legacy Museum at the Bob Hope Cottage #153 at the Historic Apple Valley Inn, and the Victor Valley Legacy Museum, Old Town Victorville on Seventh and A in the Santa Fe Trading Co. complex. I am the current president of the Mohave Historical Society and vice-chair of the Apple Valley Historic Advisory Committee, in addition to membership in and past board member of both the Friends of the Apple Valley Library, and Victor Valley Branch 1082 of the NAACP. I can be reached at (760) 985-1918 or mltaylor@gmx.com.



High Desert Report

An economic overview of the Mojave River Valley

Business Liabilities You've Never Thought Of: Ground Squirrels

Annie Raish, CWCP, High Desert Wildlife Control LLC

Ground squirrels have become a fixture throughout the Mojave River Valley and beyond. Native to the coastal and valley areas of Northern California, the California ground squirrel (*Otospermophilus beecheyi*) has become a severe problem in our region due to its ability to adapt to new environments.

We receive more calls about ground squirrel infestations than all other species combined. Our desert climate is favorable to them. California ground squirrels are not native to the Mojave Desert Region, are highly invasive, and cause severe problems for homeowners, ranchers, crops, and commercial and industrial properties. They also cause serious harm to native species of animals and plants due to their aggressive nature. California ground squirrels are classified by the California Department of Food and Agriculture as a serious pest species, causing millions of dollars of damage annually. They'll even chew through concrete.

They are carriers of fleas and ticks that can cause misery for pets, livestock, and humans. In addition to fleas and ticks, ground squirrel burrows may harbor Assassin Bugs, called Conenose Bugs or Kissing Bugs. This insect can cause an anaphylactic reaction in sensitive individuals (including the author of this article.)

The species of fleas carried by ground squirrels are the same that are responsible for the spread of bubonic plague. A quick search on Google will return many articles of squirrels found infested with bubonic plague-positive fleas, requiring the closing of areas to protect public health while areas are treated. Fortunately, this is uncommon, but the possibility is always there throughout our region and the desert southwest.

There is no place where people exist that ground squirrels haven't found a way to survive, prosper, and spread. California ground squirrels can live on just about anything, including grass, tree bark, leaves, landscaping plants, and carrion.

Due to their aggressive nature, they readily attack and kill many species of our native wildlife. Addressing ground squirrel issues during their normal biological activity periods is imperative if control is to be gained.

Any "hilly" area is revered, as they love sloped areas to dig into. Unfortunately, they can move *a lot* of soil, and there's no such thing as a completed burrow. They're constantly "cleaning house," enlarging their underground homes and removing soil.

As the colony grows, related adult females may dig their own entrances into the burrow system, creating their own nesting, food cache, and latrine areas. When the area can no longer support the growing population, younger animals spread to new properties, and the damage continues.

Squirrels leave a path of ruined vegetation, destroyed irrigation systems, and chewed vehicle wiring. Their propensity for digging into and moving massive amounts of soil destabilizes building foundations, hillsides, retaining walls, and levees, resulting in severe erosion and sometimes collapse.

The presence of and types of damage caused by ground squirrels can be a liability in the business world. People can become seriously injured when falling into a ground squirrel burrow or over the large mounds of soil they excavate. A destabilized foundation can require structural engineering and expensive repairs to conform to California's strict building standards. Destroyed landscaping can be costly to replace.

Trash receptacles, including dumpsters that are permitted to overflow and/or don't close securely, landscape vegetation, pet food left outdoors, bird feeders, etc. are all a colony of squirrels requires. Residential properties and retail centers are both ground squirrel colony magnets.

Failure to act proactively to control ground squirrel infestations outdoors

in retail centers has resulted in numerous calls for service from local grocery stores and other businesses where ground squirrels have entered through open doors. Once inside, squirrels will find someplace quiet to nest.

They help themselves to produce grains, bakery items, pet foods, and more. They quickly learn to change their behavior to times when businesses aren't busy or resort to night-time foraging activity. All disease vectors and vermin constitute a human health hazard, and the Department of Health can order a business to close until the offending squirrel(s) are removed. Removal from large buildings with endless hiding places can be a time-consuming and expensive process.

For example, businesses such as golf courses and amusement parks are perfect places for ground squirrels to dig in and make themselves at home. The girdling damage to trees, including trunks, branches, and root systems kills trees. The destruction of turf and topsoil in the creation of burrow entrances, and mounds of soil that people can fall into or trip over, are all risks that aren't worth taking.

Once present, ground squirrels become a maintenance issue. Regular (monthly) inspections of all properties, whether a single-family residence, an apartment complex, or a busy shopping center, can help in significantly reducing damage, and, therefore, liability. The longer an infestation is permitted to continue, the greater the damage and the higher cost to gain control.

A proactive policy addressing ground squirrel issues when they are first encountered is imperative. The risk and liability of potential injury claims alone are worth ensuring that areas in which the general public shop and recreate are maintained and free of such risks. Proactively addressing issues on properties, regardless of the type, is the smartest way to protect your investment.



High Desert Report

An economic overview of the Mojave River Valley

Business Liabilities You've Never Thought Of Part 2: Snakes in the Workplace

By Annie Raish, CWCP, High Desert Wildlife Control LLC

Living and working in our desert region, there are some liabilities that business owners might not consider. One of those liabilities is snakebite.

Our local High Desert region is home to 4 species of rattlesnakes, and numerous species of nonvenomous snakes. The Northern Mohave rattlesnake (often referred to as the "Mojave Green"), the Sidewinder, the Southern Pacific rattlesnake, and the Speckled rattlesnake all call the Mojave River Valley home. All of these species are dangerous, and bites are always a medical emergency. Down in the Inland Empire, Western Diamondback, Red Diamond, and Southern Pacific rattlesnakes are the most commonly found species.

Snakes of all species are a crucial part of a healthy desert ecosystem. Some eat insects, others eat lizards, and many eat mice, rats, squirrels, and even rabbits.

Snakes do us a tremendous service in helping to keep rodent populations under control, and in doing so, help to prevent the spread of numerous diseases carried by rodents. Some of those diseases, such as Hantavirus, Plague, Tularemia, Salmonella, Lyme disease, and others can make people very sick.

Snakes found in the workplace can also be a serious liability issue. Allowing employees to approach, handle, or remove snakes can have dire consequences, not only because venomous snakebites can be life-threatening, but also, because of liabilities including worker's compensation claims. While bites from nonvenomous species aren't life-threatening, bites can become infected.

In our region, a venomous snakebite requires a patient to be sent by air ambulance to Loma Linda University Medical Center, where physicians spe-

cializing in envenomation are trained and equipped to care for those who are bitten.

Snakebite treatment is prohibitive in cost, and quickly spiral into hundreds of thousands of dollars. Effective treatment includes multiple vials of anti-venin, at a cost of at least \$6,000.00 per vial, and often more. Admittance to ICU is often necessary. Supportive care, extensive lab work, and nursing care quickly add up.

With tremendous advances in snakebite treatment, the incidence of fatalities due to snakebite has dramatically decreased over the past few decades. However, an average of 5 people per year still die from complications caused by snakebite in the United States annually. Despite treatment, some people suffer from disfigurement or disability due to the damage caused by envenomation.

While employees may claim to have experience handling snakes, allowing this practice while in the workplace is never worth the risk. Many local businesses have taken proactive measures to prevent snakebite injuries. Employers have instituted zero-tolerance policies which strictly forbid employees to approach or handle snakes of any species at any time, not only due to the risk of a bite but also because of the risk of species misidentification and the associated liabilities involved.

Only trained, certified professionals using proper safety equipment, handling techniques, and skilled in secure containment should be permitted to remove snakes from retail, commercial or industrial properties. We also recommend that homeowners don't take matters into their own hands. People are struck by snakes while trying to move

them or kill them. A dead rattlesnake is as dangerous as one that is alive.

While there is a cost for skilled snake removal services, removing the potential for a severe employee liability issue is certainly worth that cost, and removal for businesses where snakes are commonly located is inexpensive when considering the cost of a single hospital bill, an increase in worker's compensation premiums, or a potential lawsuit.

Many employers take advantage of an annual Worker Environmental Awareness Training session (WEAT) which offers employees the training they need regarding best practices and procedures while working in rattlesnake country.

Using professional services for humane, skilled snake removal, as well as educating employees about safety is always an intelligent choice.



High Desert Report

An economic overview of the Mojave River Valley

Adelanto City Update High Performer in the High Desert

By Mayor Gabriel Reyes



The City of Adelanto has seen tremendous growth over the last four years, fueled by a business-friendly government, strong developer success,

ongoing community engagement, and lots of available land. I want to take this opportunity to reflect on some of the more notable achievements.

To start, the city was able to bring fiscal responsibility to our city. For the first time since 2010, city staff and council balanced the annual budget. Much credit for this achievement goes to the finance department and to the cannabis audit and compliance team.

Second, the city has embraced the renewable energy space, installing solar at our wastewater and water facilities, the sheriff station, public works locations, city hall, the senior center, the stadium, and other locations. These improvements were made at no cost to our taxpayers and will save the city more than \$15 million in utility expenses over the next 20 years. In the same vein, AES Solar broke ground on a large solar field that will provide power to Amazon distribution facilities. We are proud to play a role in reducing emissions for generations to come.

Additionally, I'm happy to announce that we have permitted over 750 homes that are either in development or completed. In the last two years alone, we have had the highest annual increase in building permits issued compared to all other cities in the High Desert. It is my goal as mayor to be able to build another 5,000 homes over the next four to six years. The intentionality behind this number is to increase our population by approximately 17,000 residents and position the

city to pass the 50,000-resident marker, hence getting qualified as an urban city. Such an achievement would significantly increase attraction opportunities and open direct access to funding from state and federal sources.

As it relates to the main artery through our city, in 2019 we discovered an ordinance from 1985 that blocked development on Hwy 395, given the then-planned additional Hwy 220 around the city, which never came to fruition. The city worked tirelessly to submit the required documentation to Caltrans, and we expect multiple new signalized intersections that will result in commercial and retail to be developed throughout the city, but most importantly, in North Adelanto.

Lastly, the Lewis Group broke ground at the corner of Mojave and Hwy 395, named Adelanto Towne Centre. The project includes sit-down restaurants, a gas station, convenience stores, a car wash, and other retail for our city. We hope they will be able to attract a great gym as well.

In closing, I want to extend my gratitude to The Bradco Companies for highlighting Adelanto's success and tremendous potential. We are committed to being a great neighbor and look forward to the year ahead.



Town of Apple Valley Update

By Orlando Acevedo, Economic Development Director, Town of Apple Valley



Town of Apple Valley

Apple Valley continues to build one of the most desirable communities in Southern California.

This year Apple Valley was voted "Best Place to Live" for the 10th straight year by readers of The Daily Press Best of the Desert Awards. We call it a decade of excellence.

Earlier this year the Town approved an industrial zoning overlay on 978-acres of regional commercial area along Interstate 15 to allow for fulfillment and distribution centers near Stoddard Wells Road; this action is already generating significant development interest in this area and will attract more investment partners to the table to offset infrastructure extension costs. The Town is processing an unprecedented demand for industrial space, and we want to be responsive to the growing demand.

Brightline West Train, expected to be operational in late 2027, will add more than 10,000 construction jobs and 500 permanent jobs once the high speed train, train station, and maintenance facility are operational. Similar to their South Florida rail stations, the Brightline West station in north Apple Valley is expected to attract transit-oriented commercial and residential development in the surrounding area. All told, the project will create more than 1,200 housing units and will inject \$2.13 billion into California's economy, including \$275 million in federal, state, and local tax revenue.

We continue to fine tune our Housing Element, General Plan, Development Code, our processes and service to be more development friendly. We've created a full Economic and Community Development Department, comprised of all the entitling divisions including Plan-

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An economic overview of the Mojave River Valley

Town of Apple Valley Update

Continued

ning, Building and Safety, Engineering, and Economic Development, to keep improving our entitlement process and enhance our customer service to ensure we are helping homeowners, businesses, builders and developers bring jobs and investment into our community. The Town also recently hired two new assistant planners to backfill vacancies and retirements and meet the need of our development and real estate partners.

This year alone, our Building and Safety Department processed over 4,900 permit applications and issued 2,016 permits and completed 1,094 plan reviews, coupled with 585 new business licenses and 2,325 renewed business licenses this year. During the past year, nearly 45,000 sq. ft. of medical office space has been constructed near Providence St. Mary Medical Center. The Town issued 108 new home construction permits this past fiscal year, compared to 115 last fiscal year.

In October, the Town Council approved

the Village Specific Plan in partnership with the Village Property and Business Improvement District (PBID) to implement the shared vision of a vibrant downtown that serves as a destination for shopping, dining, and entertainment and balances the needs of residents, workers, business owners, and visitors alike.

The Town has funded more than \$542,000 in small business assistance grants to help more than a dozen local businesses get back on their feet with an injection of capital-to-cash-flow improvements, pay delinquent rents and payroll, and generally help move these businesses into a new and brighter chapter.

In February, the Planning Commission approved a CUP to allow Townsend Market to construct a 7,670-sf rustic metal building to be used for events and allowed a food court area with outdoor dining surrounded by repurposed cargo containers as restaurant kitchens. The Commission determined that the proposal's rustic style designs complement ex-

isting uses and designs on the property.

Old Navy opened in February, first in Victor Valley. Crumbl Cookies opened earlier this year as well. Two grocery stores not presently in the region are proposed on Bear Valley Road. We've also seen a successful adaptive-reuse of the former Lowe's, a 140,000 sq. ft. building on Dale Evans Pkwy to an RV and boat storage facility.

Apple Valley's quality of life and low crime rates remain an endearing trait. In 2021, Apple Valley had the lowest crime rates in the region, with the lowest Part 1 and Part 2 crimes of the tri-cities.

Victorville anticipates completion of the Green Tree Extension project in summer 2023 it will open a third direct access to Interstate 15 for Apple Valley commuters and open the Village Business District for more consumer demand.

Learn more at applevalley.org.



City of Barstow Update

By Maribel Hernandez, Executive Assistant, City Manager's Office, City of Barstow



The City of Barstow is making its first notable infrastructure development by planning the replacement of the city's historic bridge. Built in 1930 and modified in 1943, the North First Avenue two-lane steel and wooden bridge has served as a thoroughfare for several decades. It was deemed a focal point of the railroad industry but no longer meets the structural and functional standards needed as the city undergoes a major

railway-industry transformation.

The new bridge is being funded through various sources, including the Federal Highway Bridge Program, state funds, Measure I funds, and the City of Barstow. Ground is slated to be broken in January 2023. As construction takes place, a temporary bridge will be erected parallel to the existing bridge so traffic will not be impacted.

Domingo Gonzales, Engineering Services Administrator with the City of Barstow, said the new bridge will be more modern and constructed out of concrete. It will have a wider sidewalk on one side for a pedestrian walkway, eight-foot shoulders for bicyclists, and a

lookout point for individuals to view the prominent railroad. It will be approximately 1,179 feet long, with a width of 50 feet that expands to over 62 feet near Hutchison Street to accommodate a left turn lane that extends onto the bridge structure. Its aesthetics will mimic the city's popular destination of the Harvey House with its antique lighting and quaint touches.

The new bridge is the first replacement in a series of three bridges slated for renovation. The next two are over the Mojave River and the river's overflow area. Construction of those will start in two to three years, Gonzales said.

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High Desert Report

An economic overview of the Mojave River Valley



City of Hesperia Update

By Victor Knight – Economic Development Manager City of Hesperia

Hesperia has continued to attract industrial interest with desirable freeway corridor opportunities. The City is currently home to active industrial entitlements exceeding 12 million square feet of building projects. Hesperia Commerce Center One, Building One, has been completed. The first building, exceeding 1 million square feet, is home to Modway Furniture. Grading activity can be seen from Interstate 15, where the remaining two buildings constituting Hesperia Commerce Center One will be constructed, for which permits have been issued.

in new multi-family units were permitted. Formerly known as Tapestry, Silverwood is a master-planned community in southern Hesperia. The first phase of the project is under construction, bringing approximately 2,000 of the total 15,663 homes that are planned across 9,000+ acres. Future residents of Silverwood will be charmed by the natural beauty of the Silverwood community, which boasts a portion of the Pacific Crest Trail running through it and proximity to both lake and mountain destinations. In other housing developments, new model homes have



Hesperia Commerce Center One, Building One and Future Building Sites

Hesperia Commerce Center Two, once constructed, will consist of two buildings exceeding 3.75 million square feet and has been approved by the Hesperia Planning Commission and City Council. Other upcoming industrial developments include the 444,000 square foot Pixior building, located on Amargosa in northwest Hesperia. Entitlement for the Pixior project has been approved and, when complete, will have capacity for over 180 trucks and 250 parking spaces.

The City persistently attracts future purchasing power and workforce potential. Last fiscal year, 287 single-family residential homes and nearly 200 units

been opened by Richmond American near Tamarisk Ave. and Hercules St. and Pacific Communities between Escondido Ave. and Interstate 15. Multi-family construction is ongoing with the Olive Tree, Sonoma, Tamarisk and Eagle Housing projects underway to produce more than 400 new units combined when complete.

The future infrastructure needs of the City's businesses and residents are carefully considered today. Hesperia demonstrates this with its investment in infrastructure projects as evidenced by the City's adopted Capital Improvement Program budget of \$54 million this fiscal year. The much-anticipated Rancho

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City of Barstow Update

Continued

Willie Hopkins, city manager for the City of Barstow, said the bridges are one of several infrastructure changes that will take place in the city prior to BNSF breaking ground on its massive railway project, which was announced in October. BNSF Railway plans to invest more than \$1.5 billion to construct a state-of-the-art master-planned rail facility in Barstow.

“A lot of positive changes are in the works for Barstow, and we are excited to see it all come to fruition over the next several years,” Hopkins said.

More information on the City of Barstow can be accessed at: www.BarstowCA.org.



High Desert Report

An economic overview of the Mojave River Valley

City of Hesperia Update

Continued



Silverwood Phase One Grading

Road Widening Project broke ground in January 2022, with five miles of roadway being widened between Interstate 15 and the BNSF underpass. This project represents a \$50 million investment in Hesperia, benefiting motorists across the Mojave River Valley. Hesperia has partnered with San Bernardino County and San Bernardino County Transportation Authority to fund and deliver this project, anticipated to be complete in 2023.

Other notable improvements include the completion of the Peach Avenue drain-

age project, and the upcoming sewer infrastructure to be constructed in the Interstate 15 corridor. The Peach Ave. drainage project involved the construction of a reinforced concrete box, vastly improving stormwater drainage where Peach Ave. intersects the City's historied golf course. Expected to be completed in 2023, the Caliente Rd. Sewer Liftstation will extend sewer to users near the Rancho Interchange and be capable of conveying 1.6 million gallons per day to the City's system.



Peach Ave. Drainage Improvement

Opening their doors for eager shoppers, retail and dining options that have been added across Hesperia in the last year are:

- Ulta Beauty at the High Desert Gateway – Main St. and Cataba Rd.
- Raising Cane's – Main St. and Escondido Ave.
- Crumbl Cookies – Main St. and Cataba Rd.
- Ace Hardware – Main St. and G Ave.
- Big Lots – Main St. and C Ave.
- Dollar General – I Ave. and Danbury Ave.

Restaurants the City will be welcoming soon include Dairy Queen and Rosa Maria's Mexican Food, both located at Bear Valley Rd. and Cypress Ave.

Hesperia prioritizes attracting development that will add to the strength and character of the community, while carefully considering today the needs of the City's businesses and residents in the future. Whether it's scarce rail-served property, freeway-visible commercial vacant land or another opportunity, the City can be reached at econdev@cityof-hesperia.us for discussions about what Hesperia offers.



High Desert Report

An economic overview of the Mojave River Valley

Victorville City Update

By Keith Metzler, City Manager, City of Victorville



Victorville continues to experience explosive growth with new retail, industrial, and residential development within the city. This growth points to a thriving economic environment for our local businesses and new, good-paying jobs beneficial to our residents. This tremendous growth is especially evident at our Southern California Logistics Airport (SCLA), long the driver of the High Desert Economy.

Increased Building Permit Activity

Despite the challenges of the pandemic, we finalized 594 single-family home permits as of September, a 33% increase over the number of finalized permits all of last year. This year, seven commercial permits were finalized, keeping pace with last year.

Commercial Development

Victorville has long been known as a retail leader and the region's preferred dining destination. In 2021, Victorville added more than 100 new retail businesses, including the long-awaited Chick-fil-A on Mariposa Road. This year, the City has received plans for more than 35 retail businesses, increasing the dining and shopping choices for Victorville's growing population.

CarMax is joining our auto dealers in Victorville. Work has begun at the project site, which is located on Civic Drive near In-N-Out. The new CarMax will include 7,600 square feet in sales, service, and presentation building. Right now, crews are doing the earthwork to prepare the lot for construction. This expansion of our Auto Park is reflective of our strong Victorville economy.

The Victorville Planning Commission approved plans for a new Superior Grocers store to be located on La Paz Drive & 7th Street next to Harbor Freight in the location of the former indoor swap meet. The new grocery store will occupy 35,000 square feet of space. Renovations will be made to the interior of the building and improve-

ments will be made to the façade. Victorville's large retail centers are experiencing a resurgence. These larger "anchor" stores draw customers to shopping centers, which increase the success of small anchor stores.

Southern California Logistics Airport

During the last year, four large industrial buildings totaling nearly three million square feet have either been constructed or are nearing completion at Victorville's SCLA. This equates to a whopping 65 acres under roof. This new construction nearly matches all the development at SCLA over the past 22 years.

Anchoring this new development is an Amazon Fulfillment Center. This 1.3-million-square-foot facility is expected to bring 1,000 new jobs to our community. It's located on 71.4 acres just north of the Keurig Dr Pepper bottling plant just west of SCLA's primary runway. Amazon will use this fulfillment center to distribute large items like patio furniture, outdoor equipment, and rugs.

The remaining three industrial buildings amount to just under 2 million square feet and are being constructed near the Amazon fulfillment center.

Green Tree Extension Update

Last year, we were excited to break ground on our Green Tree Extension. This is one of the most-anticipated infrastructure projects we've undertaken in Victorville. We're very proud to bring this vision to reality for the benefit of our entire region. The City of Victorville is extending Green Tree Boulevard one and a half miles from Hesperia Road to Ridgecrest/Yates Road. Integral to this 47-million-dollar-project is a 600-foot bridge that will travel over the BNSF railroad.

Since breaking ground in June 2021, the City has made significant progress on this massive project that will provide another East/West corridor in the Victor Valley, reducing congestion on Bear Valley Road and Highway 18.

The bridge construction over the BNSF railroad, including pedestrian walkway, has

been completed. In the upcoming weeks, a portion of Green Tree Blvd. located on the west side of the bridge will be paved, including Coad Road. The intersection of Green Tree Blvd. and Ridgecrest Road has been graded and underground utility work is underway. Barring any delays, construction of the Green Tree Extension will be completed by Summer 2023.

Homelessness Solutions

In December 2021, the City was awarded a \$28 million dollar Homekey Grant from the California Department of Housing and Community Development for construction and operational support of its Wellness Center Campus. Combining a low-barrier emergency shelter, recuperative care facility, medical clinic, interim housing, and wraparound support services; Victorville's Wellness Center Campus will be the first facility of its kind in San Bernardino County.

The center will support homeless and those at risk of becoming homeless. The non-congregate design of the modular housing will offer 110 separate units with a minimum capacity of 170 beds. A variety of support services like substance abuse counseling, job training and placement, and housing navigation will help end the cycle of homelessness.

The 4.5-acre campus will be located on City-owned land at 16902 First Street. Construction is underway and is expected to be completed and occupied in 2023, bringing the total number of shelter beds in Victorville to 301, an increase of 56%.

Digital Newsletter

In 2021, we launched our first-ever digital newsletter to increase connections with our community. Victorville Connect is a quick and easy way to stay informed of important city happenings like road improvement and infrastructure upgrades, city services, new business development, small business resources, recreational programs, special events, and much more. I invite you to subscribe to our newsletter by visiting our website at VictorvilleCA.Gov/StayConnected.

High Desert Report

An economic overview

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