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# **AVISION 2010**

## **Regional Collaboration as the Blueprint for Prosperity**

A Strategic Plan for the Future of the Antelope Valley  
Presented by  
The Greater Antelope Valley Economic Alliance



October 1, 2009

# **VISION 2010 Report**

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## PREFACE

This Strategic Plan is an update of the original “*AVision...Alliance for Prosperity*,” authored over ten years ago. The original “AVision Report” was first created in 1998 to guide the formation of an economic development alliance that became the Greater Antelope Valley Economic Alliance (GAVEA).

Much of the content of that original instrument is relevant today, but new challenges and opportunities for collaboration and economic diversification have brought renewed sense of urgency to this community.

In the past ten years, the Antelope Valley has seen many changes, while many things have remained the same. For example, the population of the Antelope Valley in 2000 was 333,150, as stated in GAVEA’s 2001 report, and has since grown to 476,845 in 2009. In contrast, the economy continues to diversify, as the total number of people employed in aerospace decreased from 22% of the workforce in 2000 to 7% of the total workforce in 2003; but, over the last 6 years aerospace employment remains stable.

Perhaps the one characteristic of our economy that has not changed is our over-arching goal for prosperity based on regional collaboration. If anything, our recognition of the importance of regional collaboration is more acute than ever as competitive pressures have increased dramatically. The current economic environment, where budget cuts are part of the norm, necessitates greater efficiencies in marketing resources and a greater urgency in achieving quantifiable outcomes in terms of new jobs and revenues.

This new “AVision Report” deals primarily with the role of GAVEA as it has evolved in the past ten years to meet the challenges we are experiencing today, and how we must prepare as a region to meet the challenges of the future.

We have gathered insights from local leadership within key industry clusters, as well as input from regional economic development partners and stakeholders. The new Strategic Plan will help provide direction, goals and success metrics for the next five years and beyond, to be used as a guide for implementing many of the targeted strategies outlined here.

The AVision Report is a working document, a blueprint to help us work together as a region to build prosperity. It is not meant to be all-encompassing, but to provide direction for success, which will change and evolve as the needs of the region dictate. Even if our opinions differ on the importance or timing of some of the proposed tactics, this region requires all of us to participate actively in the vision process so that innovation and prosperity continue.

# AVISION 2010

## Regional Collaboration as the Blueprint for Prosperity

### A Strategic Plan for the Future of the Antelope Valley

Presented by  
**The Greater Antelope Valley Economic Alliance  
(GAVEA)**



### ***The Antelope Valley:***

- *Stands at the threshold of a new economic era*
- *Is poised to be a strong and emerging economic engine, not only for North Los Angeles County and East Kern County, but for California*
- *Because of its natural resources, is one of the few regions in California with the potential to become “California’s Renewable Energy Capital”*

## INTRODUCTION

### 1) STRATEGIC PLAN FOR THE ANTELOPE VALLEY

The Greater Antelope Valley is defined as North Los Angeles County and East Kern County, a region of 3,000 square miles. The overall goal of the Strategic Plan for the Antelope Valley is to accelerate economic development through regional collaboration.

The heart of the Antelope Valley's Strategic Vision is **regionalism** in which public agencies, private businesses, and educational institutions collaborate to enhance the quality of life in the community by promoting wealth-generating economic activities. While we are unified as an economic region by our geographic boundaries, distinct political boundaries exist that must be respected. This being said, we have seen from our mutual successes in attracting new businesses that a victory for one is a victory for all, because material goods and services are not restricted by political boundaries.

To the extent that the various stakeholders transcend their differences and look past artificial dividing lines to work collaboratively, they will succeed in bringing about true prosperity for their citizens. This unity of purpose instills a resonating sense of community pride, transforming the general populist into an ardent advocate for the region.

The keys to regional economic success in the Antelope Valley are:

- A) Growing a resilient, diversified, and sustainable economy by focusing on meeting the needs of targeted industry clusters
- B) Ensuring a high quality of life that preserves the region's history and natural resources, while providing opportunities for residents of all backgrounds to live and work locally
- C) Optimizing the region's opportunities by creating and promoting a unified vision that leverages the energies, resources, and synergies of divergent groups

The new strategic vision is designed to capitalize upon the accomplishments of the past using lessons learned to maximize the opportunities of the future. It employs the region's assets and strengths to offer positive solutions to address the region's restraints and challenges. It includes recommended initiatives for the region to support in order to leverage its human and financial resources and effectively enhance its economic base and quality of life.

## **2) THE CURRENT STATE OF THE ANTELOPE VALLEY ECONOMY**

The national, state and local economies are experiencing a crisis of historic proportion. The economy struggles to recover from a deep recession with the length of the recovery period in question. California's financial position continues to deteriorate while efforts to correct the problem confound its citizens and the legislature. For example, the State's unemployment rate hit a post-war record of 12.2% in August 2009. Compared to the national average of 9.7%, California has the fourth highest unemployment in the nation.

Unemployment in the Antelope Valley is even greater, with Palmdale at 15.5% and Lancaster at 17.4%, based on July 2009 figures, with nearly 20,000 people out of work between the two cities. According to Los Angeles County Economic Development Corporation (LAEDC) economist Jack Kyser, "among the biggest factors in the Antelope Valley's unemployment have been the hard hits taken by the construction industry and retail... Federal spending on aerospace is still fairly strong. The Obama Administration is still backing the development of unmanned aircraft and is investing in development of secret programs, both of which are strong suits for the Antelope Valley." Moreover, in response to reductions in State support, the City of Palmdale and the City of Lancaster are embroiled in a fight to preserve local funds.

The news is not all bad, however. In the face of economic uncertainty, some well-managed and profitable businesses are considering relocating to regions that offer comparatively lower costs of doing business. This is an opportunity for regions such as the Antelope Valley that has the advantage of a much lower total cost of doing business than most cities in the Los Angeles Basin and often of many states outside California.

Additionally, Industrial vacancy in the Los Angeles Basin remains one of the lowest in the nation causing inefficiencies and logistics issues. While the Inland Empire has been the LA region's cost-effective relocation and expansion choice, in many cases, the Antelope Valley is attracting more attention than in past years, as the Inland Empire is reaching the built-out stage.

The Antelope Valley faces additional competition from other areas such as the Victor and Coachella Valley which are quickly upping the stakes with aggressive marketing campaigns and business park expansions. This is in addition to the aggressive and sometimes offensive advertising of Nevada in their attempts to lure California businesses there, along with other states too numerous to mention that are actively enticing California businesses.

The Antelope Valley cannot take its future prosperity for granted, as competition to attract new companies is increasing from other locations though out the nation, and with an increasingly global economy, the world.

### 3) THE ROLE OF GAVEA

Antelope Valley must continue its commitment to provide the financial resources, human resources, the public and private collaboration, and the incentives required to ensure our continued success as a region. The allocation of resources for economic development is neither simply a philosophical nor political issue, but imperative in today's economy.

To substantially improve quality of life in the Antelope Valley, we must break with our old ways of seeing and promoting our region. There was a time that the Antelope Valley was considered the *"Best Kept Secret in LA County."* Simply stated, it is not acceptable for 61,500 residents of our valley to travel to work more than one hour each way to live a compromised life. This situation can no longer be accepted as the norm.

More than making sure that the "secret" is out, since its inception in 1998, GAVEA has worked with other leading organizations and individuals to change the mindset of stakeholders and businesses both within and outside of the Antelope Valley, by promoting the Antelope Valley as the business destination of choice.

GAVEA has weathered changes in the economy, at City Hall, including personalities and philosophies. Throughout, it has maintained a consistent, focused, and competitive marketing outreach, while developing lasting and sustainable partnerships across all political and professional lines, bridging differences with a true commitment to fairness and achieving the greater good for our citizens.

GAVEA's core belief is that the Antelope Valley can and must successfully compete against the best. As leaders and stakeholders, we owe it our citizens to strengthen our approach to economic development. As an alliance for prosperity, GAVEA requires the dedicated support and actions of leaders from all facets of life, including those from government, financial institutions, social service providers, defense industry, school administrators and teachers, manufacturers, economic development agencies, commercial businesses, federal installations, realtors and developers, and the general public.

Improving the economic conditions of the Greater Antelope Valley region means direct and tangible benefits far beyond new jobs, new industries, new tax base, and new income. A highly professional economic development program based on regional collaboration generates benefits well beyond those immediately apparent. As everyone stands to benefit, it is everyone's responsibility to support the program and to do their part within their specific discipline or area of expertise.

On behalf of GAVEA, we invite all the citizens of the Antelope Valley to join our efforts to make the Antelope Valley region the premier location for new economic activity in Southern California. Along with our economic development colleagues and other community stakeholders, we collectively pledge our support to work together to implement this Strategic Plan to help the Antelope Valley reach its full potential as a truly outstanding place to work and live.



## I. VISION AND CHALLENGE

Creating a vision for the future is part of a process, moving from dissatisfaction with the present, developing solutions and then fleshing out a vision with goals and strategic action plans. Antelope Valley is home of noteworthy visionaries, whether they be scientific innovators like Burt Ruttan, or civic entrepreneurs like Ron Carter. While true visionaries may be few in numbers, their positive impact is demonstrated by the many groups of like-minded individuals dedicated to the same ideal, which is to see the Antelope Valley reach its full potential. Like multiple artists working simultaneously, it sometimes appears that each group is painting its own picture, sometimes even competing with each other. The truth of the matter, continuing with this analogy, is that these pictures are all part of a shared vision, painted on one great canvas.

### 1) CHALLENGES AND STRATEGIC OPPORTUNITIES

Rich in history, political and cultural diversity, experience and technology, at any given time, the Antelope Valley is an incubator for ideas and solutions. The process of developing solutions evolves in response to identifying and understanding the challenges or “problems” of the present. During this part of the process, some groups and individuals sometimes get “stuck” on assessing our problems in a way that renders issues “unsolvable.” While some problems are particularly resistant to quick fixes, such as the challenge of raising academic test scores or reducing the “brain drain” resulting from the commute to businesses down below, our responsibility as leaders is to identify and understand the challenges we face as a community to facilitate regional cooperation.

The following is a discussion of some of the major opportunities and challenges that we need to address together in the Antelope Valley:

- 1) Efforts to expand “green technology” including renewable energy as an emerging sector must be deployed in congruence so both aerospace and green industries remain complementary and not adversarial.
- 2) Infrastructure is critical to our current and future economic opportunities. Transportation must be monitored and expanded to assure a level playing field for the potential location of an inland port and development of light rail system. Likewise, infrastructure pertaining to transmission lines, power grids, and substations is critical for the development of new energy sources and new technology, as it provides access to key markets.

## **A) Importance of Regionalism as a Strategy**

The winners in economic development today are the communities that are able to think *regionally*. They recognize the value of leveraging their resources through collaboration and teamwork between private and public stakeholders alike. Particularly in today's economy, in the face of increased demands on decreased budgets, very few organizations possess the financial resources or workforce capacity for long-term sustainability.

Although competition and brand differentiation are important economic drivers, when it comes to decision-making factors for business relocation and expansion opportunities, our best chance of "winning" is leveraging a positive regional Antelope Valley brand. Regional collaboration and innovation should be considered the two main hallmarks of the Antelope Valley brand, along with the mainstays of affordability and quality of life.

In the ten years since its foundation, GAVEA has been able to reaffirm time and time again that a business looking to relocate or expand will consider first the benefits of the region, and then the benefits of the individual city within the region. Everyone wins economically when one of our cities is successful in securing business relocation.

The far-reaching effect that a positive community image has on economic development cannot be underestimated. Communities that can put aside their differences and look past artificial dividing lines to work collaboratively will succeed in bringing to their communities a sense of pride and support of the general populist who becomes the region's greatest asset and advocate, improving the region's image way beyond the capacity of any single organization.

## **B) Investing in Economic Development**

Recently, some writers on economic development have downplayed jobs as the number one priority, and focus on promoting business retention and growth. It is true that economic development is not just about jobs, but requires a direct investment in the fundamentals of attracting, retaining and expanding firms, as well as developing local work force. Jobs are, however, the economic engine that drives all other needs in the local economy. That being said, the economic output of a region should not be measured in jobs alone, but by total economic output as measured by economic impact analyses.

### ***Protecting Business Incentives:***

One of the greatest threats to sustainable economic development is currently confronting the Antelope Valley. The Enterprise Zone is set to expire in 2012. If it is not renewed, the loss of the Enterprise Zone benefits will remove the major incentive that we have in the Antelope Valley to retain, grow and attract new business and will cripple our marketing efforts. Renewing the Enterprise Zone is an urgent priority and an opportunity for continued regional collaboration between the economic development teams of both the City of Lancaster and the City of Palmdale.

***Sustainable Funding:***

The implementation of a strategic plan for regional economic development, without funding and unquestionable financial support from the city stakeholders, is a setup for failure. Funding must be sustainable, competitive and uncompromising, providing security for a professional staff. This requirement cannot be over emphasized, as it is necessary to avoid the challenges of staff turnover and lack of continuity in leadership. Without it, qualified professionals will gravitate to positions where more financial security and benefits are assured.

### **C) Quality of Life**

Quality of life is an issue that is intimately and inextricably woven through all of the other major issues which confront us, including workforce preparedness, education, job creation and business attraction. Improving the quality of life in the Antelope Valley is a priority that unifies all stakeholders, whether they are employers, or involved in education, economic development, civic government, or the arts. Our success in growing and attracting new businesses to the Antelope Valley directly correlates with our ability to convey a positive quality of life in our region.

Quality of life is made up of many matrices: affordability, public safety, quality of education, and recreation are the obvious basic parameters that most people define as quality of life. While tremendous progress has been made in this arena over the past several years, the collective task of improving the quality of life in the Antelope Valley is a moving target, as each city struggles to maintain current venues and to bring new ones that they believe will enhance life in the Antelope Valley. This task is particularly challenging during the current budget crisis. Whether it is a water park, performing arts center, conference center, new retail, artist lofts, low-cost homes, or a public library – the list of contributing factors is as virtually endless as it is diverse.

Increasingly, however, even the general public is beginning to understand that access to employment, educational and career pathways, advancement, and innovation are the next tier of intangibles that attract the higher levels of skilled employees that will sustain our most important wealth-producing industry clusters. This next tier is also absolutely essential for future generations to reach their personal and professional fulfillment, as well as to attain financial self-sufficiency.

## **1. Workforce Development**

Workforce development is symbiotically related to quality of life and is one of the most important tools in our arsenal for new business attraction. Renewed efforts to recruit new business and help existing businesses to succeed will encourage families to stay in the Antelope Valley region; consequently, vacancies, foreclosures, and unemployment rates will decline and real estate markets will improve.

Over the past ten years, there has not been any significant change in the fact that Antelope Valley residents spend too much time commuting, creating difficulties for parents, schools and law enforcement. The creation of local jobs is necessary to help alleviate this issue. Unemployment and job losses in the Antelope Valley are currently one of the greatest threats to quality of life. Even though the rate of job loss is slowing, this is of little comfort to the nearly 20,000 unemployed in Lancaster and Palmdale (as of July 2009), with more job losses expected. With the construction industry still several years away from recovery, the necessity of a diversified labor base and the need for new, wealth-creating jobs are our most urgent priorities related to quality of life and workforce development.

Continued vigilance in our efforts to improve the quality of life remains a top priority in order to attract and keep employees of major corporations. The aerospace companies have made it clear: they are unable to retain and recruit qualified technicians and engineers. Once local students leave the area, most likely they will not return. Aerospace companies report difficulty retaining employees that are hired from outside the area. Background clearance and workplace ethics issues are becoming almost as much of a barrier as the lack of technical skills or hands-on experience.

Fortunately, the Antelope Valley is a community of solution-builders. Each of our local economic development partners has a specific area of focus, going back to the individual paintings on the one giant canvas. For example, the Career Tech Education group out of Antelope Valley High School District concentrates on giving high school students practical experience and access to future career paths, including the opportunity to build relationships with local employers that will help them acquire job skills and a positive vision for the future.

Other teams, like the one lead by Maggie Drake at Antelope Valley College, are dedicated to preparing college students for high-paid jobs designed to meet the needs of our aerospace and healthcare employers.

## **2. Education**

Education must receive additional and ongoing support, from kindergarten to post-secondary education, including programs such as SOAR, Career Tech Education (CTE), and Bridge. This support will strengthen the local pipeline of qualified graduates who can meet the workforce needs of our major employers.

New leadership programs such as the one sponsored by the City of Lancaster to support young leaders of tomorrow is an example of efforts underway to encourage and support continued education and pathways for future success. This effort must include the majority, not just the few students that are already excelling.

To meet the needs of all students and to be as inclusive as possible, we need to understand and accept demographic changes within the region, rather than turning a blind eye to realities that are controversial or emotionally charged. One such example is the major change in our population mix. Approximately one-third of the total student body is not proficient in English. Accordingly, a combined effort must be initiated by all partners to address this issue.

The Hispanic population composes over two-thirds of our student population in the Antelope Valley. This demographic shift also represents a cultural shift that should be addressed proactively.

By providing up-to-date demographic and economic data specific to the Antelope Valley region, GAVEA helps partners to focus on solutions to challenges as they surface. As GAVEA continues this important service, it is important to strengthen its network of data providers within the state and educational research institutions so that continued access to the most current available is ensured.

## II. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY FOR REGIONAL PROSPERITY

### 1) GENERAL STRATEGY OVERVIEW

As part of its basic methodology, GAVEA establishes goals and identifies challenges that require a clear strategy and dedicated implementation. GAVEA also pledges the accurate and continuous monitoring of results, and timely evaluation of planned outcomes. GAVEA's general economic development strategy for the Antelope Valley region consists of several parts:

- GAVEA will collaborate with other regional organizations, including the Antelope Valley Board of Trade, to promote the interests of its local aerospace and defense industry. GAVEA gathers and disseminates business and demographic information that helps regional stakeholders better serve members of this leading economic cluster. One such example was the study prepared by GAVEA for California Space Authority to identify the workforce needs of the region's top innovative companies. By creating a methodology to attract supply chain and companies involved in R & D related to aerospace, GAVEA became actively involved in expanding and maintaining communication within the region's growing collaborative network.
- GAVEA promotes the economic diversity of the region by identifying and attracting new businesses to the Antelope Valley to become less vulnerable to cyclical and structural changes of the dominant industries and to anticipate emerging economic opportunities. For example, businesses involved in industries related to automobiles, business services, warehousing and distribution have recently established operations in the region. More specifically, the Antelope Valley is becoming a location of choice for manufacturing currently located in the San Fernando Valley and other parts of the Los Angeles metropolitan area facing land pressures, severe environmental issues, and labor problems.
- GAVEA supports the expansion and retention of existing businesses within the region, hereby ensuring that local businesses are afforded the same or better access to incentives and support as new prospects.

- GAVEA promotes advantages related to relocation: available workforce, affordable and liveable housing, industrial land, and building space availability.
- GAVEA helps to promote an identifiable image and reputation for the Antelope Valley by providing an accurate and positive account of the economic progress being made in the region. For this reason, GAVEA will continue to collect, track, interpret, and publicize the economic conditions in the Antelope Valley region.

## **2) GAVEA'S KEY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVES**

The economic development strategy for the Antelope Valley region consists of the following six core program areas:

- a. Wealth-Creating Clusters
- b. Business Attraction, Expansion and Retention
- c. Industrial Land and Building Readiness
- d. Workforce Excellence
- e. Image and Reputation Management
- f. Outreach

### **A) Wealth-Creating Clusters**

GAVEA recommends developing an industry cluster strategy to enhance business-to-business collaboration within the aerospace cluster and ancillary local businesses. An industry cluster is defined as a grouping of related industries and institutions in an area or region. The industries are inter-linked and connected in many different ways. Some industries in the cluster are suppliers to others; some are buyers from others; some share labor or resources. The important characteristic of a cluster is that the industries within the cluster are economically linked, they collaborate and compete and are, to some degree, dependent upon each other; and ideally, they take advantage of synergies.

At the time of this report, GAVEA has just completed a cluster study for the Antelope Valley. Whereas ten years ago, the Antelope Valley economy was defined almost exclusively in terms of the impact of the aerospace, military and defense industries, our awareness has expanded to include emerging clusters with the potential to create wealth-producing jobs. This methodology is developing at a time when we can see the detrimental effects of fluctuations in the construction and retail clusters on the Antelope Valley job and housing market.

The Greater Antelope Valley, because of its natural resources of sun, wind, minerals and advances in green technology, is poised to become the “Renewable Energy Capital” of California. Emerging sectors such as green technology and healthcare, along with aerospace and defense, provide the potential to further diversify our local base for employment and wealth creation, guard against the collapse of any one major industry.

### ***Aerospace, Military and Defense***

According to local sources, with the reduced Defense budget in the future, opportunities to participate in new aerospace programs are becoming increasingly rare. The Joint Strike Fighter is the last new manned aircraft on the books for the foreseeable future. Most of the new aircraft are going to be uninhabited vehicles that are manufactured throughout the country, thereby reducing potentially new contracts in the Antelope Valley significantly. However, historically modifications and upgrades to existing aircraft continue for years after an aircraft goes operational. For example, upgrades to F-22, F-15, C-17, B-1, B-2, and the Global Hawk are expected to continue for some time into the future. Most of this work is performed at Edwards Air Force Base and Plant 42.

During the last Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC), the Antelope Valley formed the Edwards Community Alliance (ECA). The Alliance consists of the communities of Lancaster, Mojave, Rosamond, California City, Boron, and Tehachapi. Edwards Community Alliance promotes Edwards Air Force Base as the ideal location for Department of Defense consolidations of Research, Development Test and Evaluation, and training. The ECA has dedicated itself to developing the strongest possible program to support the one, truly unique, industrial cluster in the region. The Alliance will create focused and substantial regional leadership to support that industrial cluster-both military and commercial aerospace and defense activity and opportunities in the Antelope Valley region.

The Mojave Air and Space Port is gearing up for a potential new space tourism industry. The Spaceship II and White Knight II mother ship are designed to carry passengers into a low earth orbit on a regular schedule that will enable numerous passengers to experience space flight and weightlessness on a somewhat routine basis. Such an adventure will develop into a major economic program with tourists and passengers spending days in motels, restaurants, and other business establishments for space-related training, actual flights and to just witness space flight.

Attracting companies which are part of the aerospace supply chain requires further study in order to determine what can be done to increase local purchases by defense contractors or other industry clusters. GAVEA proposes a detailed supply chain analysis for the region to help identify opportunities to grow the local network of related businesses within the aerospace cluster as part of its 2010 deliverables.



### ***Renewable Energy/Green Technology***

Availability of resources and infrastructure are the major factors driving innovation in East Kern County. As illustrated by the “Red-Yellow-Green Map,” the region east of Tehachapi is rich in renewable energy resources, comprising both wind and solar. East Kern partners are encouraging a new paradigm: Go where the wind is; go where renewable energy is; designate the area as a renewable resource area using proactive zoning as a tool to create appropriate, business friendly ordinances. The opportunity exists for greater collaboration with Kern County, giving Los Angeles County access to collaborative processes, new jobs and tax revenues.

Access to the grid is key to the development of this industry. In August, 2009, Monte Vista Solar, LLC, a subsidiary of Edison Mission Energy, revealed a proposal to install a solar photovoltaic (PV) electricity generating facility, capable of producing 140 megawatts (MW) of emission-free electricity, in southeast Kern County. Electricity produced by this project would be sold to a California utility at fixed prices under a 20-25 year contract.

Like the expansion surrounding the California Gold Rush, the renewable energy industry in California is a bit like the “wild wild west.” Careful planning and coordination of projects from a regional perspective is important to insure the best use of land and resources. East Kern has been successful in developing ordinances and expediting environmental impact reports and can offer other communities in the Greater Antelope Valley region the benefit from experience and best practices. GAVEA represents a regional conduit for some of this innovation that crosses jurisdictions and county lines.

### ***Healthcare***

The **Health Care Sector** has been identified as the third important area of opportunity for wealth-creating jobs in the region. Anticipating and meeting the workforce needs as this cluster grows in the Antelope Valley is becoming a priority. Our local hospitals, such as Kaiser Permanente and Lancaster Community Hospital, are firm supporters of workforce development. They are working to support Palmdale High School Health Careers Academy students as they gain exposure by shadowing allied health care workers and hosting nursing and radiology students from Antelope Valley College; they also include OB/GYN students from UCLA during their clinical rotations.

The health care industry in the Antelope Valley is expected to expand significantly in the next five years, offering additional services to meet the needs of the community, as economic vitality returns to the region and businesses move and expand here. For this goal to happen, organizations such as GAVEA must be successful in their efforts to entice local industry growth and attract diverse organizations. As national debates continue, we cannot predict the economic impact that federal health care reform on Antelope Valley health care providers or

employers. However, we do anticipate the increased need of skilled nursing care and health care workers to meet the needs of an aging population and are collaborating with local universities to meet that requirement.

## ***B) Business Attraction, Expansion and Retention***

Attraction of new companies to the Antelope Valley is GAVEA's primary mission. GAVEA represents the interests of the entire region. It is therefore uniquely positioned to take on whatever role the opportunity warrants, whether it is to initiate, spearhead, compliment and support the attraction efforts of its primary partner agencies, the economic development teams of the cities of Lancaster, Palmdale, Tehachapi, California City, Ridgecrest, Rosamond and Mojave.

Leads developed by GAVEA are shared with these teams for collective and individual responses. This synergistic relationship allows GAVEA and its partners to present the full benefits of the greater Antelope Valley region, particularly its quality of life, affordability, and lower cost of doing business. The favorable impression created by this united front speaks to the very heart of the Antelope Valley brand, which is based on *regional collaboration*.

In addition to recruiting and building strength in the aerospace and defense industries, and the solar, wind, and green technologies, the Antelope Valley must support the successes and help solve the problems of its existing base of companies. Firms already located in Antelope Valley are the best source of new employment growth. These firms have proven that they can operate successfully in the region, and with increased success, should come additional jobs and income for the region.

GAVEA also works closely the LAEDC to identify businesses within Los Angeles County that are potentially considering relocation or having the need to expand. Due to the shortage of available space in Los Angeles County, the LAEDC Business Assistance Team is able to present the Antelope Valley as a solution, fulfilling one of the key components of its mission to keep businesses in Los Angeles County.

Using a combination of technologically advanced tools and a highly trained team of Business Assistance specialists, together, GAVEA and the LAEDC have initiated an expansion and retention program designed to enhance the connectivity between existing businesses and the leadership of the Antelope Valley. The program affords the opportunity for business and governmental leaders to meet the business owners in a setting that is positive and not charged with problem solving. The program also serves to provide advanced warning about companies who may be experiencing difficulties. Local leadership can then take actions to solve the problem or find resources to assist the companies before the problems turn into crises.

Essentially, a business expansion and retention program requires coordinated regional collaboration from various partners within the Antelope Valley to ensure that current “customers” are totally satisfied with the services and products of the region. GAVEA provides this coordinated, “one-stop-shop,” providing information, resources and access to regional partners who can help. The specific goals of this coordinated business expansion and retention program are:

- To implement a comprehensive expansion and retention program that is implemented equally well across all geographical parts of the Antelope Valley region.
- To develop an understanding about the important goals, strategies, needs and characteristics of existing businesses so that professional economic developers and other local leaders can best serve local companies.
- To partner with such as LAEDC, Small Business Development Center, Antelope Valley College, South Valley WorkSource Center, economic development teams and elected officials, to provide a clearing house of local resources where local businesses start-ups and entrepreneurs can be assured of finding the right kind of public and private sector assistance needed to solve their problems.
- GAVEA supports an initiative by Supervisor Antonovich to assist in the establishment of an incubator in the Antelope Valley for startup businesses. A business incubator is an economic development tool primarily designed to help create and grow new business in a community. Business incubators help emerging businesses by providing various support services such as assistance with developing business and marketing plans, building management skills, obtaining capital and access to more specialized services, or bringing a product to market. They also may provide flexible space to rent, shared equipment, and administrative services in a managed workspace.

### ***C) Industrial Land and Building Readiness***

One of the prime advantages of the Greater Antelope Valley, especially compared with other areas within LA County, is its wealth of available sites. Keeping an accurate inventory of available sites and buildings is critical for our region to be proactive in attracting and retaining a

diverse base of manufacturers and other types of businesses. Quoting from a Site Selector: “If there are no land and building sites on your website, we will go on to the next website.” To this end, the Southern California Edison Economic and Business Development team is finalising a new online GIS Toolset and Industrial Building and Site Database to facilitate site research and access.

GAVEA updates its Industrial Building and Vacancy reports on an ongoing basis, such as those published in 2004, 2007 and a newly updated report was just released. In addition to providing valuable information, these reports serve as an important component of GAVEA’s marketing efforts. For example, the 2004 report indicated that the area was in desperate need of speculative industrial space. The vacancy rate had moved to 1.05%, which for all practical purposes was at or near zero vacancy. The buildings that were available were obsolete and most remained vacant years later.

The updated Industrial Vacancy Report in 2009 revealed that because of the robust building of the past three years, the vacancy rate had increased dramatically causing yet a different problem of available space with few tenants. The results of these reports are distributed to investors and developers, and highlight their importance to GAVEA’s marketing efforts. New issues that have surfaced since the publication of these reports include:

- 1) Some businesses (about 50%) are still profitable in a recession and they are looking at locations to move in bargain times
- 2) Others want to expand or relocate but are waiting until the economy starts to recover

Other challenges continue to exist such as the short supply of available land parcels with infrastructure large enough to accommodate the relocation or expansion of a new locate or local business. Palmdale has a couple of large parcels but does not have the infrastructure in place to support a business park. Lancaster has a few land parcels available yet faces a rather long process of eminent domain to assemble enough parcels to merit the cost a business park.

Given this background, in the area of industrial land and building readiness, GAVEA’s prime objectives are to:

- 1) Continue marketing efforts to help lease out available space
- 2) Work with the cities to assure that ample industrial land will be available for businesses after the recovery

#### **D) Workforce Excellent Initiative**

As previously noted, GAVEA provides current and prospective employers with demographic information illustrating the Antelope Valley's skilled and available workforce. It also supports and offers employer referrals to the full range of job training and career preparation programs available throughout the region. GAVEA serves as a Board Member of Employment Development Department and is a member of the Business Advisory Council of the South Valley WorkSource Center.

Because GAVEA's membership and leadership includes executives and leaders in regional schools and colleges, it is able to facilitate effective communication between employers and educational institutions, both public and private. Antelope Valley College, particularly the Technical Education Department, is a vital and active partner with GAVEA, demonstrating that this region works proactively with our leading employers to anticipate and meet the current workforce needs, as well as the needs of those companies GAVEA seeks to attract.

Raising the level of Workforce Excellence in the Antelope Valley is definitely a "team sport." GAVEA, under the CSA WIRED Grant, 3.1, was able to conduct some highly targeted research to determine the current and future challenges that our area innovators face. The findings of this study were amplified by a community forum that included businesses of all sizes and types. Interestingly enough, some of the challenges expressed by our top innovative companies roughly mirrored those of less technical enterprises: work ethic, common sense, problem solving, and communication. Work ethic has been added as a required component of all of the new aerospace course offerings.

Many of the specific challenges faced by the aerospace leaders in the Antelope Valley are being proactively addressed by such programs as AVC's Aircraft Fabrication Program, which began in 2003 and expanded to a fully approved Certificate and Associate of Science Degree by the California Community College Chancellor's Office in 2004. The advisory committee for the program includes representation from Lockheed Martin, Northrop Grumman, Boeing, Scaled Composites, Edwards Air Force Base and General Atomics. Students have been successfully employed as aircraft structures mechanics or composites technicians with all of the companies.

The new innovative partnership between AVC and Northrop Grumman's integrated Systems site in Palmdale is an exciting example of the positive effectiveness of collaboration and innovation on the local economy, as the College and Northrop Grumman are providing cost-effective training and quality education necessary for high-skill, high-wage local jobs with the nation's premier aerospace companies.

In East Kern, Cerro Coso College has forged similar successful collaboration with the Wind Industry to prepare the workforce needed for the renewable energy industry. Cerro Coso Community College, located in the upper Mojave Desert, has developed an Energy Technician program to support the renewable energy industry. In the new industrial technology certificate and degree programs, students complete an 18-unit core set of courses to provide for a well-rounded skilled technical worker. Courses in computer literacy, technical communication, blueprint reading, basic hand tools, applied technical math, oxyacetylene welding, and industrial safety are in the core of the program. Within the degree program are three initial areas of specialization: energy, engineering technology, and electronics. The energy emphasis will include wind and solar technologies and will expand to geothermal, hydro, and other energy alternatives.

GAVEA maintains a strong alliances supporting the high schools, colleges, and training programs within the Antelope Valley region. As workforce excellence becomes the predominant theme for economic development, the Antelope Valley has a splendid opportunity to become the model for how education and economic development professionals can work together.

Part of the long-range vision for the Greater Antelope Valley region is the prospect of attracting a four-year university. Advocates of this proposal, who have named the project the High Desert University, maintain that the university, along with the associated R & D affiliated with it would create an incubator for innovation, attracting industrial clusters. With a polytechnic curriculum, including hands-on, practical experience across multiple disciplines, graduates would already have connections and experience upon completion to enter the local workforce.

Developing a Research Park as part of the university is a major economic benefit. The Research Park would not only generate many high tech jobs by attracting supply chain companies, it would also help offset the operational costs of the university, attract top research professors and provide key opportunities for students to work side-by-side with research scientists.

Some within the community feel that attracting a four-year university is improbable due to several major factors, one of which is the State's current economic crisis and competition for resources, projecting that it may take as long as 25 years for this idea to become actualized. As stated in the opening of this report, the Antelope Valley is an area where dreams become visions, visions become plans, and plans become reality. Visionaries make an important contribution of the innovative process necessary for this community to become the best it can be for present and future generations.

## ***E) Image and Reputation Management***

For many years, the Antelope Valley has been “image-challenged” with a public brand perception that does not adequately reflect the innovation and opportunities that are unique to our region. Both the City of Lancaster and the City of Palmdale have done much to enhance public perception of the region and continue to take a proactive stand to promote the brand of the Antelope Valley as a positive destination and a great place to raise a family.

GAVEA is in a unique position to promote the Antelope Valley as a positive brand, and is continuously in front of site selectors promoting the unique opportunities of the Antelope Valley. GAVEA makes sure that its marketing outreach materials are professional and attractive and give a positive and professional impression of the Antelope Valley. GAVEA maintains a positive relationship with the local press, which plays the most critical role in enhancing the image of the Antelope Valley. GAVEA shares reports and statistics openly with the local press that it uses for its own efforts to promote a positive business climate for advertisers and citizens alike.

Unfortunately, local, regional and national news coverage of events in the area often contributes to a negative image, focusing on crime, economic and other challenges that part of daily life in the Antelope Valley and in all cities in the United States. The role of the local press cannot be underestimated. To quote a national Site Selector, “Show me your press and its headlines and I will tell you if I want to recommend your community as a possible location to my corporate client. Save all of your demographic and community information until I have read a month of your newspaper, then I will tell you if I am interested in your community.”

Despite this negativity, the image of innovation and opportunity is evident in the press, with a sea change underway. Recent trends include a continuous pipeline of progressive stories about opportunities and innovation in the Antelope Valley: stories highlighting new programs at AVC, successes with corporate sponsored educational partnerships, and technological breakthroughs in Mojave. In fact, that very fact that CSA recognizes the unique innovation and regional collaboration found in the Antelope Valley is in itself an indication of the success of the Antelope Valley rebranding as part of California’s Innovation Corridor.

GAVEA has accepted, as much as its resources will allow, a mission to be partially responsible for shaping the image of the Antelope Valley in and through its outreach materials and advertisement in national site selector and national trade magazines. GAVEA’s image as a leading economic development organization continues to be enhanced. GAVEA maintains the following objectives as it relates to brand management and marketing in the Antelope Valley:

- a) To provide businesses and media with factually accurate stories of successful economic development activities in the Antelope Valley, providing data and

information about the local economic conditions, moving beyond the anecdotal and isolated incidents that can too easily become a defining focus

- b) To provide opportunities and resources so that local, regional, and national media can obtain in-depth understanding and background to local economic events

GAVEA takes a proactive role to support the Cities and the region as a whole to put forward a positive and progressive brand with these strategies:

- GAVEA is constantly monitoring local economic development events for newsworthy articles and then making these opportunities known to the press and media. Business openings, new product introductions, financial success, contract awards, and other significant events need to be brought to the media's attention.
- GAVEA continues to strive for excellence by improving its economic materials for distribution both locally and nationally. Materials focus building a positive, professional image and reputation.

## **F) Outreach**

**Website:** GAVEA recently updated its website, [www.aveconomy.org](http://www.aveconomy.org). The website is one of the primary sources of information about the Antelope Valley region and its resources, providing valuable links and downloadable reports. GAVEA's goal is to continuously update its website and its information platform in order to reflect the technological innovation of the region to its stakeholders and prospects.

**Niche Marketing:** In addition to the primary site, in 2009 GAVEA created a new site to address the renewable energy/green technology niche: [www.WindSolarCalifornia.com](http://www.WindSolarCalifornia.com), along with a corresponding collateral piece highlighting the region's assets and opportunities.

**Sustainability, Frequency and Consistency:** In 2007 GAVEA entered into a "Three Year Service Agreement" with the two largest cities in GAVEA membership, Lancaster and Palmdale. The intent was to provide certain deliverables to the cities and to the region as a whole on a contractual basis. The new agreement was all-inclusive, allowing for much greater cost efficiency than in the past.

As a result of this new longer term approach, GAVEA was able to look to the future as never before and develop a long range, progressive marketing plan designed to meet the ongoing needs of the cities for new leads, marketing, outreach and reports. This increase in funding was the first step to provide GAVEA with the resources necessary to move to the next level of excellence.



With the increased support from the cities, in mid-2007 GAVEA launched a new outreach campaign to contact over 10,000 business decision makers in the Los Angeles Basin, local and national site selectors, and local industrial brokers. The campaign has two main objectives:

- 1) Reach out to potential location decision makers with a consistent message of the economic benefits of locating in the Antelope Valley
- 2) Use the message as an opportunity to strengthen our brand and to improve the image of the Antelope Valley

GAVEA continues to use a layered marketing campaign that includes: selective advertising, direct mail, email and telemarketing campaigns; dynamic webs sites; personal site tours, follow-up calls and events to convey positive marketing messages to targeted companies and industry groups. These efforts must continue to be highly informative about the benefits of locating in the Antelope Valley. The marketing materials contains factual information of relevance to the targeted industries on area advantages such as Enterprise Zone, Foreign Trade Zone, Cost of Doing Business, comparatively low taxes, workforce training, green jobs and green technology, etc.

**Results:** GAVEA successful 2007 launch of a sustained marketing campaign has resulted in contacts made to over 10,000 businesses and is on target to reach 15,000 by the end of its 3-Year Service Agreement with the cities in 2010. The number contacted is double the number stipulated in the agreement. The efficiencies and effectiveness of this 3-Year Agreement are tremendous, as it allowed GAVEA staff the power of negotiating a lower cost based upon volume.

The results have met the target of five qualifying businesses per 3,500 business contacted. A qualifying business is one that is planning to move, relocate, or expand within two years, and expresses an interest in the Antelope Valley as a possible destination.

GAVEA maintains a database of those business leads interested in locating in the Antelope Valley. A new database for follow-up has been purchased and GAVEA periodically sends additional information to all interested parties. The database allows GAVEA to search a number of different ways to help target the follow-up. It is also intended to bring about continuity of contact and marketing in the event of a staff change.

GAVEA seeks new ways to work with the local and regional press, and selected national publications that are read by industry executives from the targets established by GAVEA. Because of the 3-Year Service Agreement with the cities, GAVEA has been successful in placing a number of ads in national economic development trade publications at a 70% savings. By knowing what resources are available, GAVEA has the tools necessary to maximize its coverage and power in negotiations.



AVISION 2010

Regional Collaboration as the Blueprint for Prosperity

The Agreement, which is due to be renewed in July 2010, has been instrumental to GAVEA's success in marketing and to serve the region in a responsible, orderly, and consistent way. The journey toward excellence is not without its challenges, but this effort has allowed GAVEA to gain the respect of the community and its economic development peers outside the Antelope Valley.

## III. SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN THE ANTELOPE VALLEY

### 1) GAVEA'S ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

The following attributes characterize GAVEA's organizational structure, from its formation to its present form:

- In 1998 a 501 (C) (6) organization was formed and named the Greater Antelope Valley Economic Alliance (GAVEA). A sister 501 (C) (3) corporation, the Antelope Valley Economic Research Education Foundation (AVEREF) was formed in 2004 to enhance the ability to fund economic development and to produce and fund material required for marketing the Antelope Valley, such as the Annual Economic Roundtable Report.
- GAVEA defined its responsibilities with the cities, LA County, and other economic development organizations in the region by developing a 3-Year Service Agreement covering specified deliverables and a process allowing progress to be reported and monitored.
- In its infancy, GAVEA funded a capital campaign but there was little ongoing success for various reasons. Thereafter, GAVEA has required management to raise the funding. Other than ensuring the maximum value to members, actively soliciting new membership would divert existing GAVEA resources away from its primary mission. Therefore, it is recommended that new ways to enhance and extend GAVEA's funding be explored.
- The GAVEA Board of Directors establishes performance objectives, reviews progress, and takes actions needed to ensure that the economic development strategy is being implemented in the most effective manner possible.
- GAVEA reports on its progress and successes by producing an Annual Economic Output Analysis and involves its members in defining future directions and programmatic priorities.

Membership of the GAVEA's Board of Directors and Members represents a cross-section of industry leaders:

**Private Sector**

Defense and Aerospace  
Manufacturers  
Financial Services  
Real Estate Developers  
Medical Industry  
Commercial Businesses  
Service Businesses  
Utilities  
Press and Media  
Renewable Energy

**Public Sector/Organizations**

All Greater Antelope Valley Cities  
Los Angeles County Government  
Los Angeles County Economic Development Corporation  
Kern County Government & Economic Development  
Kern County Economic Development Corporation  
School Districts and Antelope Valley College  
East Kern Airport District  
Antelope Valley Board of Trade  
Antelope Valley Aerospace Alliance

GAVEA continues to be built from the same types of organizations, and members are invited and expected to contribute effort and financial support.

## **2) SUPPORT FOR GAVEA**

In order to achieve the results originally anticipated, GAVEA requires stable and consistent funding. The lack of consistent financial support remains a challenge for effectiveness and sustainability of programs necessary to represent the Antelope Valley in a professional way.

Recent efforts have greatly enhanced the organization's ability to function and perform its duties in economic development and have resulted in substantial efficiencies. Seeking sponsorship for expensive publications should at the very minimum, cover costs. This effort is carried out by GAVEA's sister organization AVEREF.

The implementation of the 3-Year Service Agreement with its larger cities has facilitated many improvements in services. Likewise, the agreement had led to many of those services being enhanced and expanded because of GAVEA's ability to negotiate on the cost efficiency of continued service and volume.

New ways to fund economic development must be explored, such as the tax-based funding as successfully launched by our competition, Texas. Providing longevity, independence, and financial security to GAVEA and its staff is not an option but obligatory; this will allow staff to concentrate on the mission of economic development.

Competitive financial support, at the very minimum, must be in line with other California regional economic development organizations. However, minimum support levels would still be far below our out-of-state competition. The problem exacerbated by the state's lack of interest in economic development is compounded by the erroneous idea that businesses will be attracted to California regardless of how difficult we make it for them.

Sustainable financial support will encourage and persuade private investors to continue their support assuring community collaboration and success. An investment in the economy today is an investment in our future. It is not just a way of "giving back" to the community but helps to assure a strong economy from which quality of life and economic prosperity derive. As GAVEA continues its outreach to new potential members, the community support for the goals of benefits of economic development will expand as well. The final allocation of funds and efforts should be the responsibility of the GAVEA Board of Directors working in concert with its Executive Director.

## IV. SUMMARY

The leadership of the Greater Antelope Valley region consists of many organizations playing important yet varied roles in economic development. City redevelopment authorities, local and regional development corporations, partnerships, boards, and others all perform a variety of economic development functions, some for political units of the Valley and some for the entire Antelope Valley. GAVEA has the financial strength, staff, geographic, and political support to implement the economic development strategy outlined above. From its very inception GAVEA continues to be uniquely positioned to successfully represent the region and deliver the high performance economic development and outreach that this region needs to remain competitive.

Far from competing or seeking to duplicate the efforts of existing organizations that are successful, GAVEA seeks to provide value in areas not currently being provided by existing entities, so as to be able to extend their reach and resources by eliminating the unnecessary use of precious resources.

By its very structure, GAVEA is designed to be as “impartial” as possible, operating with transparency and accountability. Top managers from all participating cities are invited to attend GAVEA meetings to provide feedback and direction. The cities are basically GAVEA’s “customers” and GAVEA is a customer-focused organization.

Although it has not been “perfect,” GAVEA has had the benefit of ten years of experience, feedback – both positive and negative, which it has applied with determination in order to evolve to meet the rising challenges of the Antelope Valley economy. With an innovative approach to technology and collaboration, GAVEA is well-positioned to face the challenges of the next ten years.

As aptly stated in the original “AVision, Alliance for Prosperity”

“The Valley through its businesses and governments must make an investment in its future prosperity. The Antelope Valley and GAVEA’s Alliance for Prosperity is the proper investment and initiative worthy of your support.”

Regional Economic Development is an investment with the greatest return for the people and businesses of the Antelope Valley. Although the challenges and even the crises continue, we are hopefully as wise as we are resilient as we face them together.

## V. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

GAVEA wishes to thank the thought leaders who generously shared their time, passion and input for this report:

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Josh Mann, Antelope Valley Board of Trade  
Margaret Drake, Antelope Valley College  
Thomas Berard, Air Force Flight Test Center  
Ken Williams; Malia McKinney, Independent Contractors with GAVEA

## VI. Addendum

### GAVEA 2009 – 2010 Members and Board of Directors

Berard, Thomas	Air Force Flight Test Center
<b>Fisher, Dr. Jackie</b>	<b>Antelope Valley College</b>
<b>Atkinson, George</b>	<b>Atkinson &amp; Associates</b>
Banks, Bret	AV AQMD
Seefus, Jack	AV Bank (Cal. Bank & Trust)
<b>Davey, Mark</b>	<b>AV Federal Credit Union</b>
Shea, Karen	AV Hospital
Bryant, Cherie	AV Press
Holland, Pam	AV Transit Authority
<b>Fuller, Russell</b>	<b>AVEK Water Agency</b>
Bradford, Laura	Burkey, Cox, Evans, Bradford, & Allden
<b>Lunsford, Linda</b>	<b>California City</b>
Globa, Sasha	California Statewide CDC
Hoey, Chuck	Charles Hoey & Associates
<b>Lawson, Vern</b>	<b>City of Lancaster</b>
<b>Roberts, Danny</b>	<b>City of Palmdale</b>
<b>Parsons, Gary</b>	<b>City of Ridgecrest</b>
<b>James, David</b>	<b>City of Tehachapi</b>
<b>Holloway, Harvey</b>	<b>Coldwell Banker (Valley Realty)</b>
<b>Hickling, Norm</b>	<b>County of L.A. (Supervisor Antonovich)</b>
Witt, Stuart	East Kern Airport District
Vose, Pamela	GAVAR
Massari, John	ISU Insurance Services - VINSA
Burcham, June	Kaiser Permanente
Chapman, Richard	Kern County EDC
Allen, Bill	LAEDC
Burleson, Michel	Lancaster Community Hospital
Knippel, Dianne	Lockheed Martin
Jack Pigott	NextLight Renewable Energy LLC.
Roger Gallizzi	Palmdale School District
Paxton, Curtis	Palmdale Water
Emard, Ron	Robertson's Palmdale Honda
<b>Stewart, Jack</b>	<b>Rosamond CSD</b>
<b>Shockley, Laurel</b>	<b>So. Cal Edison</b>
Flodine, Eric	Strata Equity Group
<b>Duchow, Rob</b>	<b>The Gas Company</b>
Fregoso, Patricia	Time Warner Cable
<b>Amaya, Pete</b>	<b>Union Bank of California</b>
Anderson, Mickey	Wal-Mart
Walsh, Bill	Walsh, Delany, & Yep
Pursley, Sandra	Waste Management
<b>Schimelpfening, Brian</b>	<b>Wells Fargo Bank</b>
Voss, Kathleen	Wells Fargo Bank
Zamrzla, Johnny	Western Pacific Roofing
Eliopulos, Dixie	Honorary member