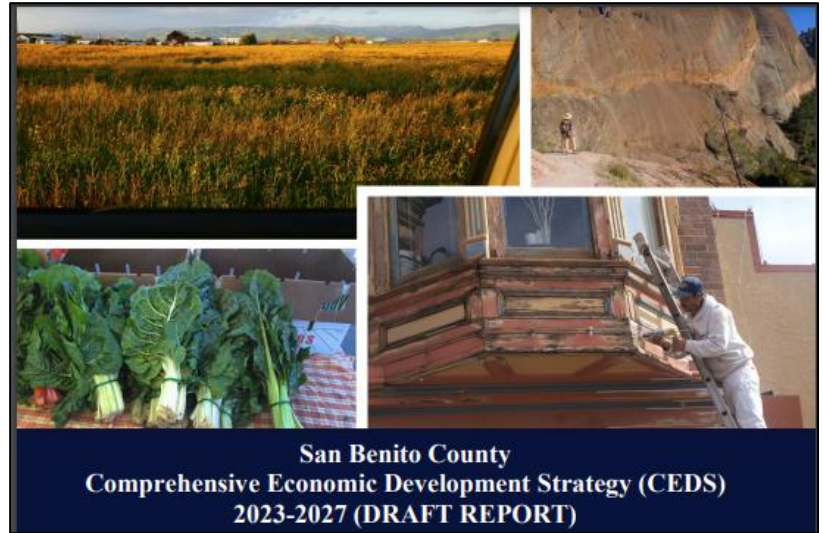


PRESS RELEASE

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EDC Announces 30-Day Public Review of the San Benito County *Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy* for 2023-2027

The Economic Development Corporation of San Benito Countyⁱ (EDC) is pleased to announce that after receiving an \$80,000 grant from the Economic Development Administration (EDA), as well as a \$5,000 contribution from the City of San Juan Bautista, it has completed a final draft update of San Benito County’s *Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy* (CEDS) for the period 2023-2027.

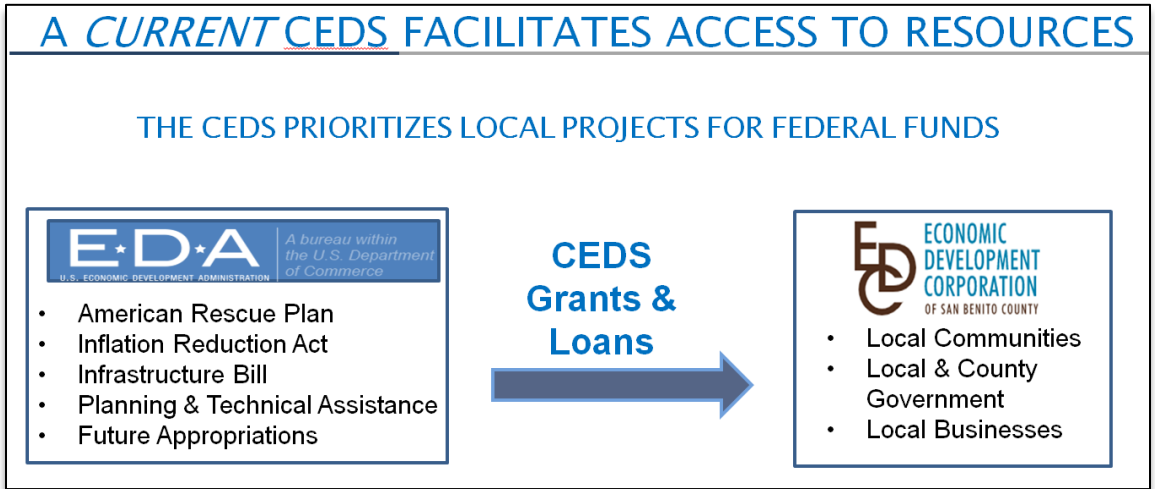
What is the CEDS? The CEDS is a 5-year strategy-driven plan that is a partnership between the County of San Benito, the Cities of Hollister and San Juan Bautista, and the EDC that contributes to effective economic development in communities and regions through a locally-based, regionally-driven planning process that engages economic agencies; community leaders; educators; and the public, private, and nonprofit sectors to engage in meaningful conversations and debate about what best serves economic development in the region. It also establishes a strategic “roadmap” for regional collaboration and prosperity and builds on the strengths of the region as well as identifies gaps in resources or expertise.



Why is the CEDS so Important and How Often is it Updated? With a current CEDS in place, agencies seeking funding are *more likely* to attract state/federal funding, and it is a prerequisite for any agency to qualify for EDA funding. The CEDS must be:

- Current;
- Updated every 5 years;
- List *specific* projects that each jurisdiction expects to seek funding from the EDA to support; and
- Adopted by the County of San Benito Board of Supervisors and approved by the EDA.

Without a current CEDS in place, funding would not have been possible to support the County’s Broadband Strategic Plan that’s being developed; support disaster recovery efforts; or support infrastructure and other crucial initiatives. The update of the CEDS for 2023-2027 will align San Benito County, the Cities of Hollister and San Juan Bautista, and nonprofits in the region around priorities and projects that are important to the community—such as retaining hospital facilities, generating electrical power to support commercial development, improving Broadband access, increasing water and sewer storage, workforce training, and fire resiliency—that would not be considered for funding had they not been included in the updated CEDS.



“Updating the CEDS is an important effort for our community to proactively address some of the challenges that we face as a region and to build on our strengths and recognize and work to correct gaps in resources or expertise of the region,” said Renee Wells, EDC Executive Director. “The strategy we develop will serve as a bridge that connects funding at the federal level to much needed projects at our local level.”

Over the last 6–7-months, the EDC worked with its CEDS Consultants and CEDS Strategy Committee—made up of local stakeholders (community leaders, educators, and the public, private, and nonprofit sectors) from the County of San Benito (including those from the Cities of Hollister and San Juan Bautista)—to develop a viable CEDS that creates a strong sense of regional cooperation and partnerships between local businesses and government. The EDC is developing a “CEDS Implementation Plan” that covers the next 5-year term and will guide its administration of the strategic plan over that period, including meeting yearly with the CEDS Strategy Committee to ensure timelines and goals are met.

EDC 5–YEAR CEDS WORK PLAN

<p><u>Implement the CEDS:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Assist Partners in Accessing Grant Funding Resources, Particularly Funding through the EDA <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Distribute grant announcements to project partners (i.e., County, Cities, Special Districts) – Provide resources for assistance in writing grant proposals ▪ Meet at Least Yearly with the CEDS Strategy Committee & Provide Annual CEDS Updates to Regional Leaders & the EDA ▪ Work with Regional Leaders to Support their CEDS Projects 	<p><u>Economic Development Activities:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Engage in Business Retention & Expansion Efforts ▪ Assist Businesses or Entrepreneurs in Obtaining Resources for Loans/Grants, Preparing a Business Plan, Locating Commercial Properties, Accessing Permitting or Other Requirements, etc.
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To develop a thorough, concise CEDS, the EDC contracted with Stephen Wahlstromⁱⁱ (Wahlstrom & Associates) in association with Marie Jonesⁱⁱⁱ (Marie Jones Consulting) who bring years of experience and expertise to the effort.

CEDS PROCESS & CONTENT

1. **Identify Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, & Threats Analysis**
2. **Develop Economic Analysis**
3. **Develop Vision Statement**
4. **Identify & Describe Community Projects via Survey & Interviews**
5. **Develop EDC Strategies**
6. **Develop Resiliency Strategy**
7. **Prepare Draft CEDS**
8. **Obtain Community Review & Feedback**
9. **Prepare Final CEDS & Submit to the EDA and Board of Supervisors for Approval**

The EDC will host the following two “Town Hall” meetings to provide an overview of the CEDS, and the draft document will be made available for public review through July 31st.

- **June 30th from 6:00 – 7:00 p.m. at the County Administration Building (in the Board Chambers at 481 4th Street, 1st Floor, Hollister, CA)**
- **July 6th from 5:30 – 6:30 p.m. at the San Juan Bautista City Hall (in the Council Chambers at 311 2nd Street, San Juan Bautista, CA)**

We appreciate all feedback by July 31st in order to finalize the updated CEDS and present it to the EDA and the County of San Benito Board of Supervisors for final review/approval. Following is a link to the CEDS document:

<https://edcsanbenito.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/Draft-Report-6-15-2023.pdf>

All comments on the CEDS should be addressed to EDC staff, as follows:

- Renee Wells, EDC Executive Director at rwells@edcsanbenito.org
- Amy Paris, EDC Coordinator at aparis@edcsanbenito.org

ⁱ The Economic Development Corporation of San Benito County promotes economic growth and development in San Benito County, California through business attraction, retention, expansion and creation, while maintaining and preserving our agricultural land and rural environment. For more information, see www.edcsanbenito.org.

ⁱⁱ Stephen Wahlstrom has been engaged in the economic development consulting business for 30+ years. During this time, he has completed nearly 200 consulting assignments in California and 15 other states, mostly in the western US. His portfolio of work includes the preparation of economic development strategies for large regions, counties, cities, and/or neighborhoods. Past projects include the San Bernardino County Five-Year CEDS, the Fresno County Five-Year CEDS, and the Santa Ynez Band of Mission Indians (near Solvang) 2021 annual CEDS update.

ⁱⁱⁱ Marie Jones has 30 years of economic development experience providing land use planning, economic development, market analysis, project feasibility, grant writing, and sustainability expertise to public, non-profit, and private clients in California. Her focus is on developing practical solutions that enhance the economic performance and sustainability of projects, organizations, and communities. Past clients include the Cities of Fort Bragg, Benicia, Long Beach, Pasadena, Roseville, San Francisco, Santa Cruz, and Scotts Valley, among others.