

Regions Rise Together Releases Investment Blueprint for the Monterey Bay Region

Roadmap identifies critical investment areas and actionable strategies to achieve a more inclusive economy in Monterey, Santa Cruz and San Benito counties

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*Tahra Goraya, Monterey Bay Economic Partnership
President and CEO*

[Together](#) (RRT) Collaborative has released its newly revised Investment Blueprint, an inclusive economic development plan for the Monterey Bay region identifying \$510.5 million in priority investment areas.

The result of collaboration between 38 community organizations across Monterey, Santa Cruz, and San Benito County, the release of the updated Investment Blueprint marks a historic milestone in the development of a comprehensive and truly collaborative regional vision centering community and resident priorities.

Led by the [Monterey Bay Economic Partnership](#) (MBEP) with support of CA Forward and funded by the James Irvine

Foundation, the Regions Rise Together initiative supports the creation of an inclusive economic development initiative that seeks to achieve inclusivity and prosperity for all residents in the tri-county region, to synchronize and leverage existing efforts, enable and empower communities through the co-creation of investment plans, and ultimately demonstrate that our region is investment ready and worthy.

Since February 2020, under the umbrella of Regions Rise Together (RRT), the region has been cultivating a collaborative ecosystem of cross-sector partners focused on identifying and resourcing implementable solutions that address the region's most pressing socioeconomic challenges. While an initial Investment Blueprint outlining collective priorities for the Salinas Valley was released November 2021, the scope of RRT has expanded to include a broader geography of the Monterey Bay defined by the three counties of Monterey, Santa Cruz, and San Benito; a wider set of stakeholders to participate and contribute; and alignment with other complementary regional initiatives that have surfaced since the collaborative's inception.

The Investment Blueprint showcases high-level priority areas and strategies that have been

vetted by a diverse set of leaders and community residents in the Monterey Bay region and pinpoints areas of investment for interested public and private partners. Those four Priority Investment Areas, totaling \$510.5 million, include:

Community Leadership and Power Building (\$183 million): The goal is to empower Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC) members of the community, and those historically marginalized, to participate in decision-making and civic processes.

Child Care (\$87.5 million): The goal is to shift the public perception of child care to a necessary public investment that will enable economic growth and mobility for the region.

Housing (\$103.25 million): The goal is to increase available and affordable housing as a critical component in achieving regional economic growth and mobility.

Economic Opportunity Expansion (\$136.75 million): The goal is economic growth and shared economic prosperity through formation of new businesses and creation of jobs that provide livable salaries and benefits.

“Our region’s attributes and assets are ripe for growth and advancement,” said MBEP President & CEO Tahra Goraya. “This document is a testament to the impact of regional collaboration and alignment. The multi-sector, community-based collaborations that have shaped this strategic blueprint will continue to build a more equitable and inclusive economy for our region.”

Embracing the opportunities and challenges of our region: The tri-county Monterey Bay region – more than 5,115 square miles encompassing Santa Cruz, Monterey, and San Benito counties – stands at a significant crossroads. Its natural beauty, robust agricultural output, significant tourism, and emerging technology sectors distinguish this vibrant region from other parts of California. Yet the region also is marked by significant socio-economic inequities, with many residents struggling to cover basic costs of living such as housing and child care. Those twin truths are at the heart of this Investment Blueprint. With the right partners and investments, it is possible to forge a future that builds on the region’s assets while addressing its challenges.

Racial equity is a core building block of the Regions Rise Together collaborative, acknowledging that current socioeconomic inequities were created, and are perpetuated by systemic racism, and as such require solutions that eliminate or transform these forces. Race, class, economic and social status are intricately connected and require root cause analysis as the basis of developing effective and long-lasting solutions. People-centered solutions in partnership with traditional business- and industry-centered solutions lift all in the economic ecosystem and help create thriving economies.

The updated Investment Blueprint addresses those current socioeconomic inequalities and the systemic challenges that prevent communities from thriving: a dire lack of affordable child care, particularly for infants and toddlers and for the low-income families already struggling to make

ends meet; a housing affordability crisis in which the majority of the tri-county region's renting population spends 30% or more of their income on rental costs, with a quarter of renters spending half or more of their income on housing; a lack of sustainable job opportunities in a region whose economy remains heavily reliant on low-wage industries such as agriculture, hospitality, retail, and tourism.

The critical investment areas and actionable strategies identified in the Investment Blueprint are designed to collectively forge a stronger future for the Monterey Bay region. The region stands at a pivotal moment, poised to harness its potential for inclusive economic growth and community prosperity. The Blueprint offers a roadmap – and a promise – for a better future for all who live here.

Read the full Investment Blueprint here: <https://www.mbep.biz/regions-rise-together-2-0>

About Monterey Bay Economic Partnership (MBEP): Monterey Bay Economic Partnership (MBEP) is a regional member-supported nonprofit organization consisting of public, private, and civic entities located throughout the counties of Monterey, San Benito, and Santa Cruz. Founded in 2015, our mission is to improve the economic health and quality of life in the region.

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