

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 *Getting to Know Calexico*

To understand the history of Calexico, it is important to understand the history of the Imperial Valley.

Geological evidence indicates that hundreds of years ago a salt-water lake of approximately 4,500 square miles occupied the area that is now the Imperial Valley. This body of water, named Cahuilla after the area's Indian inhabitants, was fed by the Colorado River. The lake gradually evaporated over 600 years ago, leaving a vast depression covered with salt deposits.

Following the discovery of the Colorado River by Europeans in 1540, various expeditions led by Spanish explorers crossed the Imperial Valley. Soon after the initial expeditions, Lt. Juan Bautista de Anza established an overland route from Mexico to the California Pacific Coast for colonists and supplies. This overland route resulted in the first secular European settlements in the State of California. Some of these settlements were founded in the Imperial Valley and served as the way stations for all overland travel from Mexico to California.

In 1892, the Colorado River Irrigation Company, under the direction of C.R. Rockwood, Chief Engineer, began planning to build a canal to bring fresh water into the Imperial Valley. The canal was to connect with the overflow channel of the Colorado River and extend several miles south into Mexico. The first water diversion project was completed in 1901. Construction on the main canal, however, was hampered by financial and legal difficulties as well as by natural disasters. In the period from 1902-1907, the flooding Colorado River changed its course, flowing northward into the Imperial Valley and remaining in the northern portion to create what is now the Salton Sea. In 1940, the All American Canal was completed, creating a means of irrigating land which has become one of the most productive agricultural areas in the nation.

The City of Calexico was incorporated in 1908. Located 198 miles southeast of Los Angeles and 120 miles east of San Diego, the City is situated directly along the U.S./Mexico International border, adjacent to the City of Mexicali, Baja California, Mexico (Figure I-1, Regional Location). Calexico's port of entry is a major entrance point for thousands of persons as well as large amounts of goods traveling between the two countries. Its economy reflects its proximity to the Mexican border and its location in an agriculturally-oriented California county.

To understand Calexico today, it is necessary to understand its relationship with Mexicali, Mexico.

Calexico is a unique community. Economically and given its geographic location immediately adjacent to the international border crossing, the City largely functions as a suburb of the metropolitan complex of Mexicali, Baja California, Mexico. Calexico also functions as one of the Imperial Valley's communities, surrounded by and supported by agriculture (Figure I-2, Vicinity Map). Mexicali is the capital of Baja California and is the larger of the two cities; 1.07 million people in 2002 compared to Calexico's 2002 population of 30,400. Traditionally, Calexico has had a relatively strong retail sector, which is oriented to providing finished goods and services for the Mexicali market. Businesses in Calexico rely heavily on sales to Mexicali residents, and merchants have greatly benefited from this reliance. The concern, however, has been that under this type of economic reliance there have been periods where during economic crisis in Mexico, Calexico's economy suffers. This effect has been evident during the strength of the U.S. dollar versus the devaluation of the Mexican peso. During this period, the Mexican consumer has been unable to benefit from purchasing American goods and services.

Mexicali is situated on the U.S./Mexican border and provides proximity and uncongested access to the U.S.A. via several blue chip freight companies and rail services, resulting in significant savings to exporters and importers. The City of Mexicali has the third largest number of Maquiladora industries on the U.S./Mexican border. Projections show that Mexicali will surpass Tijuana and Juarez to become the City with the most Maquiladora-type industry. Maquiladora industries can be typified as assembly operations that occur where labor rates are less costly – in this case, Mexicali. The growth of Mexicali as a premier industrial City only helps the City of Calexico. Consequently, an assumption can be made that the more industry that exists in Mexicali, the more jobs that exist and the more money there is to be spent in Calexico. In addition, the Maquiladora industries located in Mexicali will eventually establish sister plants in the U.S. to aid in the distribution of the products. The City of Calexico is in an ideal location to attract these sister plants.

Calexico, in recent years, has also been providing alternative housing options for some commuters from Mexicali that choose to live in the U.S. and work across the border. As housing prices become unaffordable in other parts of Southern California, commuters from San Diego County may also be looking to Imperial County for affordable housing options. Calexico's location on Highway 98 and near Interstate 8 make it a logical provider of housing and services for this new segment of future residents.

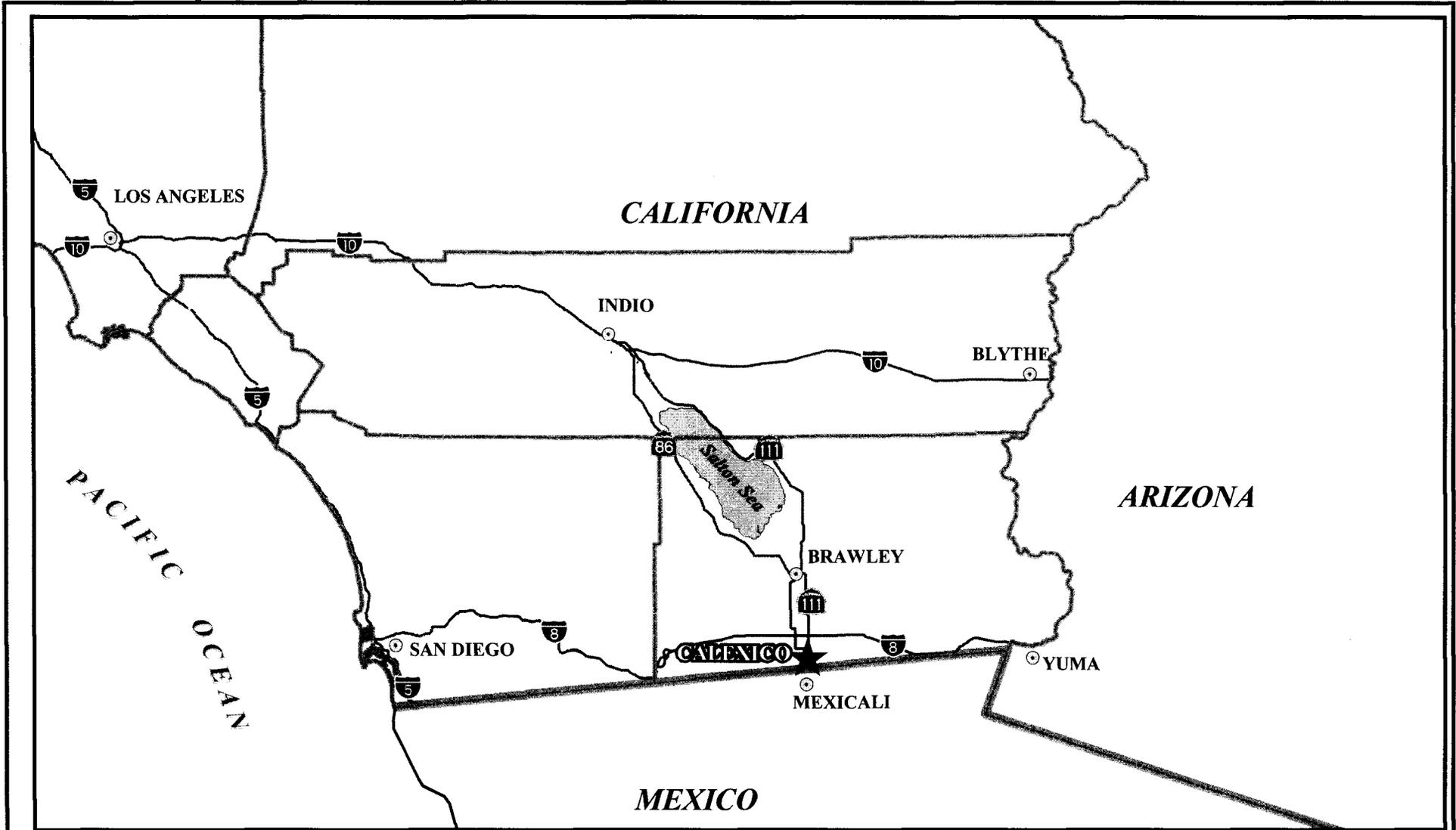
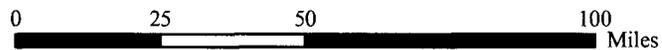
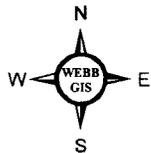
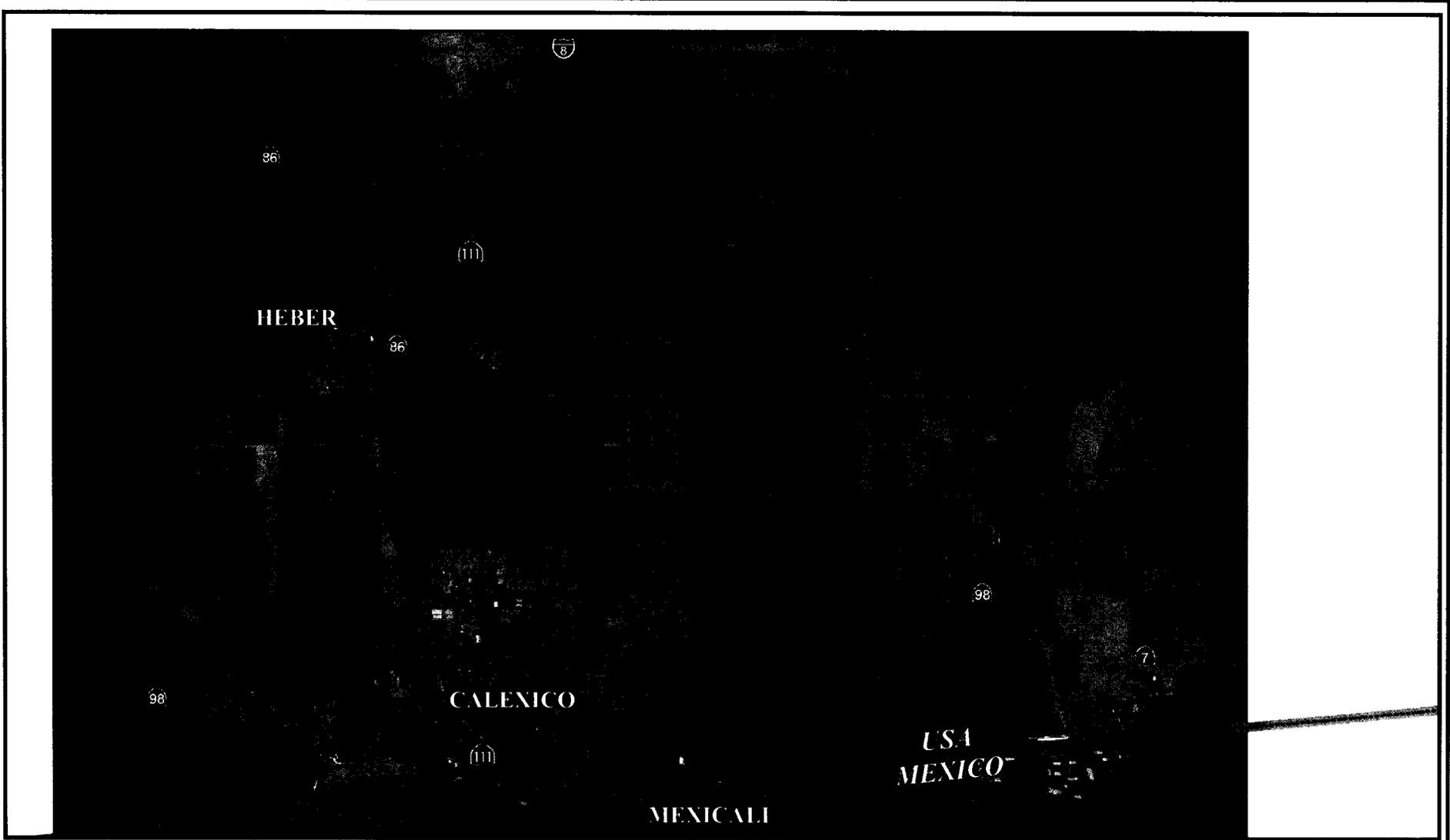


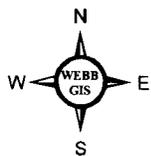
Figure I-1

Regional Location





Source: Aerial Photograph by
 Inland Aerial Surveys
 April 2004



Not to Scale

LEGEND



CITY LIMITS



INTERNATIONAL BORDER

Figure I-2

Vicinity Map

The Calexico General Plan was last comprehensively updated in 1992, and substantial changes have occurred both within and outside the community during the last 12 years. Calexico has grown from a population of approximately 16,400 persons in 1984 to over 30,000 in 2002, while the population in Imperial County has increased 27,000 from a population of approximately 116,000 to over 142,000 during that same period. This indicates that Calexico absorbed 52 percent of Imperial County's growth within that period. The community of Calexico faces challenges ahead as it attempts to accommodate future growth, while protecting its agricultural heritage, international border community ties and quality of life.

Calexico is also a key employment center of Imperial County, supporting approximately 14% of all jobs in the County. Business services constitute the majority of jobs in Calexico. The wholesale/retail sector is second most followed by agricultural related jobs, including manufacturing. Calexico is projected to have a significant countywide employment growth over the next twenty years, with most of this employment occurring in the business services, wholesale/retail, and agricultural sectors.

To protect the strength of this employment resource, including valuable agricultural resource, international relationship and economic base, Calexico must continue to actively manage its future growth and development expectations. Planning for future growth requires a clear understanding of the employment and housing demands in order to meet the needs of an anticipated increase in population growth, while also providing the necessary urban services and facilities to maintain the existing community's quality of life. This can be accomplished by: stimulating new economic growth; revitalizing older areas; finding new uses for underutilized land; assuring public safety and quality urban services; and developing new land adjacent to the existing City.

1.2 Vision for the Future of Calexico

Building on the unique history of Calexico, the *Vision for the Future* provides the foundation of the General Plan and an expression of what the community wants to maintain or become:

- Calexico offers excellent quality of life and a livable community for its residents by maintaining an appropriate balance among its various interests. High quality mixed-use development provides a variety of land uses close to one another, so that residents can live, work, shop, and play in the community. A variety of housing types are available to meet the needs of all residents.
- While allowing for new growth in prescribed areas, agricultural lands are preserved. Agriculture and retail continue to be the primary economic bases for Calexico, although expansion of other industries is beginning to provide job opportunities that allow greater upward mobility in the community. Upward mobility is also encouraged through training and educational

opportunities that create a more educated work force.

- Surrounded by and instilled with the natural beauty of mountains and desert, the community of Calexico values both the natural and human-made resources that contribute to its character. To protect these resources and community character, management of future growth is important.

1.3 Purpose of the General Plan

California law requires each city to adopt a comprehensive, long-term General Plan to guide the physical development of the incorporated area and land outside municipal boundaries that bears a relationship to its planning activities (Government Code Section 65300). In addition to areas located within the City Limits, the City of Calexico General Plan addresses areas located within its Sphere of Influence (shown on Figure LU-1). Undeveloped land within the City Limits and Sphere of Influence is projected to be built out within the next 20 years. The State General Plan law also provides for planning outside the jurisdiction's territory to guide and address issues that extend beyond political boundaries such as: regional roads and highways, and agricultural and biological resources. The City has chosen to include some discussion and possible plans for areas where it may experience growth in the future beyond the current Sphere of Influence ("SOI"). Figure LU-2 shows future development (beyond the 20-year horizon) extending east of the current SOI to Barbara Worth Road and north to Heber Road. These areas are not proposed for annexation into the City's Sphere of Influence at this time, but are included to begin evaluating and directing growth the City may experience over the next approximately 50 years.

In essence, a City's General Plan serves as the blueprint for future growth and development. As a blueprint for the future, the plan must contain policies and programs designed to provide decision makers with a solid basis for decisions related to land use and development.

According to state law, the General Plan ("Plan") is the primary document the City uses to regulate land use. Consequently, the Zoning Code, Specific Plans, and individual public and private development proposals must be consistent with the Plan goals, policies, and standards.

The Calexico General Plan addresses many issues that are directly related to and influence land use decisions. In addition to land use, state law requires the Plan to address circulation, housing, conservation of natural resources, preservation of open space, noise environment, and protection of public safety (Section 65302 of the California Government Code). These issues are discussed in the General Plan to the extent that they apply to Calexico. The Plan also addresses public facilities and services, parks and recreation, and economic development/community design, a topic of special interest.

The Economic Development/Community Design Element is an integral component of the General Plan and is essential in achieving the community's vision for the future. The Economic Development/Community Design Element addresses actions the City can take to protect its image and identity, preserve and maintain its neighborhoods, and establish a Business Recruitment and Retention Strategy and the Downtown Revitalization Plan. The community development principles and practices contained within the element promote land uses, design guidelines, preservation of the downtown's economic viability balanced with the need for neighborhood services and facilities that enhance quality of life and promote a vibrant community.

1.4 Organization of the Plan

The City of Calexico's General Plan contains goals, objectives, and policies that are intended to guide land use and development decisions in the future. The General Plan consists of a Land Use Map and the following key elements, or chapters, which together fulfill the state requirements for a General Plan:

- Land Use
- Circulation
- Public Facilities/Services
- Open Space/Conservation
- Parks and Recreation
- Noise
- Safety
- Economic Development/Community Design

1.5 How to Use the General Plan

The City of Calexico General Plan is intended for use by all members of the community.

If you are a Calexico resident, the Plan indicates the general types of uses that are permitted around your home, the long-range plans and changes that may affect your neighborhood, and the policies the City will use to evaluate development applications that might affect you and your neighbors.

The Plan indicates how the City will attract business that provides goods and services to meet your daily needs. It will address how the City will attract new business and job opportunities that match a wide range of educational skills.

The Plan also addresses how the City intends to improve transportation infrastructure and continue to provide adequate public services and facilities.

Cumulatively, the Plan identifies the actions the City will take to ensure that the City and your neighborhood remain a great place to live.

If you are a Callexico business, the Plan outlines the measures the City will take to protect your investment and encourage your future success. Expectations of the City's business districts are spelled out, while policies ensure that business operations will be compatible with other businesses and nearby residential areas.

If you are interested in developing land within the City or moving your home or business to the City, the Plan will introduce you to the community. The Land Use Plan (Figure LU-1) is a useful starting point however, it is important to review maps and policies throughout this document and the Callexico Municipal Code to get a complete perspective on how and where development may take place.

If you are City staff, on a City Commission or the City Council, the General Plan is also a tool to help make land use and public investment decisions. It provides the framework for the City's Zoning Ordinance. It identifies the economic development, transportation improvements, community service and facility improvements, and environmental programs needed to sustain and improve the quality of life in the City. Future development decisions must be consistent with the Plan.

The Plan is a legal document and much of its content is dictated by statutory requirements relating to background data, analysis, maps, and exhibits. The legal adequacy of the General Plan is critical, since many City actions and programs are subject to legal challenge if the Plan is found to be deficient.

1.6 Implementing and Amending the Plan

After the General Plan is adopted, it will be implemented through a variety of ordinances, programs, and activities. It will be especially important to review local land use regulations and procedures to ensure that they are consistent with the General Plan. The zoning map should be consistent with the General Plan; Land Use Plan and the Zoning Code should be consistent with the land use classification system and density/intensity and design and development policies stipulated by policy.

The General Plan is intended to be a dynamic document and must be periodically updated to respond to changing community needs. An annual review of the General Plan should be conducted and reported to City Council regarding the status of the plan and progress toward its implementation pursuant to the State General Plan Guidelines and California Government Code Title 7, Division 1, Chapter 3, Article 7, Section 65400(b). The status of items in the Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program prepared for the General Plan EIR should be part of the annual report. See also the Housing Element for annual reporting requirements associated with meeting housing targets.

Moreover, generally speaking, the mandatory elements of the General Plan (Land Use, Circulation, Housing, Conservation/Open Space, Noise and Safety) may be amended no more than four times per year (Government Code Section 65358(b)) except for requests related to affordable housing, compliance with court orders,

and other specific circumstances outlined in the law. Requests for amendments may be submitted by individuals or initiated by the City itself. Most amendments propose a change in the land use designation for a particular property. Policy and text amendments also may occur. Any proposed amendment will be reviewed to ensure that the change is in the public interest and would not be detrimental to public health, safety, and welfare. Amendment requests may be grouped so that changes can be handled during the four annual hearings. Environmental review is required for all General Plan amendments.

1.7 General Plan Update and Public Input Process

In February 2004, the City initiated the process of updating the General Plan. With the assistance of Albert A. Webb Associates (“Consultant”), the City formed a General Plan Advisory Committee (“GPAC”). The committee consisted of representatives from: all City departments; other local agencies such as the County, Calexico Unified School District and Imperial Irrigation District; Caltrans; Calexico Arts Commission; the hospital district; and developers with applications submitted to the City for major projects. For a full list of GPAC members, attendees, and meeting notes, see Appendix A of the General Plan, bound herein.

On March 18, 2004, the GPAC met with the Consultant to discuss the vision for the City. On May 13, 2004, two conceptual land use plans were presented to the GPAC for consideration and input. On July 12, 2004, a Planning Commission workshop/EIR scoping public meeting was held to gather input with respect to the proposed land use plan and potential environmental issues. The Draft General Plan and Environmental Impact Report (“EIR”) were presented for information at a City-sponsored economic development strategy meeting, October 13, 2005 and circulated for public review in December 2005.