

Union
tribute

South County visioning survey yields results

By [Allison Sampite-Montecalvo \(/staff/allison-sampite-montecalvo/\)](#) 5:01 p.m. March 10, 2014

SOUTH COUNTY — The results are in for a South County visioning survey conducted by a local nonprofit.

"South County is distinctive, it's young, super diverse and very dynamic," said Cecilia Estolano, a consultant with Estolano LeSar Perez Advisors LLC. "That's what the data shows."

The South County Economic Development Council received feedback from about 4,600 South County residents and business members between June and November on topics vital for the region's development.

The results were sent to a consulting firm to analyze and create a profile of what South County looks like.

The survey looked to residents, workers and others around South County for various economic strategies to be pursued in the next five years.

Four investment strategies were described and respondents were asked to rate their importance.

"We wanted to find out what are people thinking, what are the issues they care about?" Estolano said. "How do they view various economic development strategies?"

The survey was one of many tools used to show the priorities for South County residents.

Participants were asked to identify emerging industries or businesses likely to grow in South County that would create high quality jobs for the community because of the workforce, existing economic strengths and location.

Overall, respondents chose health care as the No. 1 emerging industry, energy efficiency and clean energy as No. 2 and tourism third, the latter of which barely beat out advanced manufacturing.

Participants were also asked to rank the importance of workforce development or investing in people to create an educated and highly skilled workforce in order to attract businesses and industries that innovate, invent new products and pay high wages.

They ranked internships and training academies the highest.

The third was the importance of investing in neighborhoods, which focuses on building new communities that combine residential neighborhoods with other uses such as shopping, offices and plazas within walkable districts. This concept allows residents to live, work and play without having to leave their community.

South County residents rated two programs -- housing options for all income levels and the construction of new neighborhoods into areas where public transportation already exists -- as very important.

The fourth strategy asked about moving people and goods more easily in and around South County.

Respondents ranked trolley extension as their No. 1 preference, rapid bus lines as second and shuttles and rail third.

They were also asked to rank land, sea and airports in order of importance for upgrades.

Regardless of whether they never crossed the border or crossed it consistently, they rated border crossings as most important, specifically to San Ysidro residents.

Finally, participants were asked to rank the top strategies based on importance. They listed investing in people as No. 1 and investing in emerging industries as No. 2.

Next steps include finishing up the visioning project and drafting a vision plan with action items and marketing messages.

"Marketing messages are critical in trying to project the amazing diversity and opportunity in the South County, but we need to know and exactly who we need to tailor them to," she said. "This data will help us home in on these messages and some of the educational pieces that will be part of the vision plan."

The five-year action plan is expected to be ready this spring.

"This is a snapshot in time," said Cindy Gompper-Graves, CEO and president of the South County Economic Development Council.
<http://www.utsandiego.com/news/2014/mar/10/south-county-economic-development-survey-results/all/?print> 3/11/2014

Launched in July, the goal is to develop a five-year strategic plan for the region by coming up with action items to connect the region's major economic engines.

The projects include the Chula Vista Bayfront Master Plan, an idea that envisions world-class destination with residential and commercial zoning, a conference center and parks, a South County university and new port of entry, among others.

"The reason why we're doing this is we do not want to miss an opportunity by not connecting these projects," Gompper-Graves said. "We started this whole effort because opportunity is knocking on South County's door right now."

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