Shafter
CALIFORNIA

Shafter — Where Industry Meets Opportunity

5-Year Economic Development Strategic Plan

SPRING 2026

Shafter —Where Industry Meets Opportunity.

Built to Produce. Rooted in Community.

Turning industrial strength into shared prosperity—connecting clusters, corridors, and careers across the Central Valley's most competitive platform.

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01 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Shafter — Where Industry Meets Opportunity.

Over the past two decades, Shafter made disciplined bets on infrastructure, land use, and industrial recruitment—and those bets paid off. Traded sectors generate over $1 billion in annual exports. World-class logistics operations anchor the employment base. Rail, highway, broadband, and airport assets rival those of cities many times Shafter's size. Three-quarters of Shafter's jobs are in traded sectors—far exceeding national averages—and a newly operational container exchange adds a structural efficiency advantage that no other Central Valley market currently offers.

But that industrial capacity has not yet translated into the broad-based prosperity the community needs. Wages remain below regional benchmarks despite strong export performance. Population growth is outpacing job creation. Growth is concentrated in logistics and agriculture—two clusters that anchor the economy but leave Shafter exposed if either faces disruption. And while traded sector concentration is exceptional, the economic value generated per job falls short of what those same sectors produce elsewhere. Shafter has built an export economy. The question this plan addresses is how to diversify that economy, increase the value it generates, and ensure that success reaches every household.

What We Did

This plan is grounded in both rigorous analysis and authentic community voice. CivicSol conducted industry cluster analyses across five export-oriented sectors, benchmarked Shafter against fifteen regional and aspirational peer communities, assessed global trends shaping each target sector, and evaluated land use and infrastructure conditions along Shafter's key economic corridors. That analytical foundation was tested and shaped through twelve one-on-one leadership interviews with city officials and key stakeholders, seven sector-specific roundtables bringing together employers, educators, and regional partners, and iterative sessions with a Steering Committee that guided the plan from discovery through strategy. The result is a plan built not on outside assumptions but on Shafter's own strengths, constraints, and strategic opportunities—as understood by the people who know it best.

THE FRAMEWORK: SIX GOALS FOR SHAFTER'S NEXT CHAPTER

The strategy is organized around six interconnected goals. Each addresses a critical dimension of economic competitiveness, and each reinforces the others. Together, they ladder to a single vision: *Shafter—Where Industry Meets Opportunity. Built to Produce. Rooted in Community.*

Goal 1: The Logistics Advantage.

Scale Shafter's logistics advantage by supporting automation-driven, technology-enabled distribution and supply chain operations—deepening the competitive position that already sets Shafter apart.

Goal 2: From Field to Future.

Position Shafter as a hub for value-added agriculture and next-generation agricultural innovation—transforming a foundational sector into a platform for higher-value production and processing.

Goal 3: Make It Here.

Grow Shafter's role in aviation technologies and advanced manufacturing—capturing regional momentum in aerospace and precision manufacturing before it consolidates elsewhere.

Goal 4: Power the Whole Economy.

Support resilient energy systems while growing a cluster of companies that design and deploy these technologies—turning Kern County's energy assets into a competitive advantage for every sector in this plan.

Goal 5: Corridors That Tell Our Story.

Transform Lerdo Highway and 7th Standard Road from industrial pass-throughs into economic destinations that support business growth and reflect the community Shafter is becoming.

Goal 6: Built to Execute.

Strengthen Shafter's economic development capacity to support businesses, deepen partnerships, and deliver this strategy—ensuring the city has the institutional infrastructure to match its physical infrastructure.

The goal is not to reinvent Shafter. It is to build on what Shafter has already proven it can do—and ensure that the next chapter of growth creates pathways to prosperity that are as deliberate and durable as the infrastructure that made it possible.

02 THE BIG PICTURE

Shafter's economic position is not an accident. Over the past two decades, the city made patient, forward-looking decisions—entitling industrial land before demand arrived, investing in infrastructure calibrated to logistics and manufacturing trends, and building a reputation for regulatory competence and follow-through that most communities of any size cannot match. Those decisions compounded into something real.

The Assets

The question is not whether Shafter can compete—it is how deliberately it chooses to do so.

A Multimodal Logistics Platform Few Peers Can Match.

The Wonderful Industrial Park, dual Class I rail, I-5 and Highway 99 access, a newly operational container exchange, available industrial land, and efficient entitlement processes create a physical infrastructure position that appreciates as land-constrained competitors lose capacity.

A Young, Diverse, Growing Population.

Population grew 9% from 2018 to 2023—nearly three times faster than Kern County. The median age is the youngest among regional peers, with a prime-age workforce concentration well above the national average.

Technology-Ready Infrastructure.

A special-district-owned airport features 100+ acres of leasable greenfield land, full hangars, and operational flexibility for drone technology and applied aerospace—plus city-owned dark fiber broadband providing redundancy and connectivity most peer communities cannot offer.

An Energy-Rich Region.

Kern County's diversity of solar, wind, natural gas, and emerging hydrogen assets makes energy not just a sector but a competitiveness platform underlying every cluster in this plan.

Anchor Employers and Institutional Partnerships.

The Wonderful Company provides employer stability, infrastructure investment, and a workforce development dimension rare for a city of Shafter's size. Regional partners—including B3K Prosperity, Kern Economic Development Corporation (EDC), Bakersfield College, and California State University, Bakersfield, among others—amplify what any single city can do alone.

The Challenge

Shafter's growth trajectory is real—but growth alone does not guarantee prosperity. Several structural tensions demand strategic attention:

Demographic Momentum has Not Translated Into Economic Prosperity.

Shafter is young, diverse, and fast-growing, but poverty rates remain elevated, median wages lag, and population growth is outpacing job creation by a factor of three.

The Jobs are Here, but the Value Per Job Is Not.

Three-quarters of Shafter's jobs are in traded sectors, yet economic output per worker falls short of what those same sectors produce regionally and nationally.

Career Pathways Haven't Kept Pace With the Economy's Demands.

Across both regional and aspirational peer comparisons, the connection between residents and credentials is the single largest structural gap, requiring accessible career pathways and industry-recognized certifications, not just traditional degrees.

Growth is Concentrated in Logistics, and Other Clusters Need Attention.

Recent employment gains are driven almost entirely by logistics. Agriculture faces projected decline. Manufacturing and aerospace show regional momentum but minimal local presence.

Corridors Function as Pass-Throughs, Not Destinations.

Lerdo Highway and 7th Standard Road carry industrial traffic but offer limited services, identity, or community-facing amenities—a missed opportunity as residential development accelerates nearby.

The Imperative

The Risk is Not Decline. The Risk is Stagnation Amid Growth.

Shafter's industrial base will continue to generate activity. Logistics will grow. Population will increase. But without a strategic framework that connects industry growth to workforce outcomes, corridor investment to community identity, and institutional capacity to the complexity of the economy, Shafter risks a future where growth continues but prosperity does not follow.

An economy that produces jobs but not careers. That attracts investment but not value. That builds infrastructure but not community. That outcome is not inevitable, but it is the default trajectory without intervention.

This plan provides the intervention. It is built on what Shafter does best—disciplined, infrastructure-driven economic development—and extends that discipline to the workforce pathways, corridor development, and institutional strategies that will determine whether the next decade of growth produces something fundamentally better.

The path forward is building deliberately on what already works—connecting industrial capacity to workforce outcomes, corridor investment to community identity, and institutional capacity to the complexity of what Shafter is becoming.

03 OUR ENGAGEMENT: WHAT WE DID

This strategy only works if it reflects both what the data reveals and what the people closest to Shafter actually know. The engagement process was designed to ensure both—combining rigorous economic analysis with sustained, authentic dialogue with the business leaders, city officials, educators, regional partners, and community members who understand Shafter's trajectory from the inside.

The City of Shafter engaged CivicSol to lead this work, guided throughout by a Steering Committee of local and regional leaders who helped shape the analytical priorities, pressure-test early findings, and build shared ownership of the strategic direction before the plan was finalized.

Rigorous Analysis

The analytical foundation of this plan draws on multiple research streams conducted in parallel.

Benchmarked Shafter against fifteen regional and aspirational peer communities—evaluating competitive position across talent, prosperity, and livability dimensions.

Evaluated five export- oriented industry clusters across competitiveness, talent, and resilience indicators.

Forecasted global trends in each target economic sector, examining megatrends, policy and funding flows, and capital and innovation activity to identify where opportunity is heading.

Assessed land use, zoning, infrastructure, and assets along key economic corridors, including Lerdo Highway and 7th Standard Road—identifying catalytic sites, policy gaps, and investment opportunities.

Deep Community Engagement

Conducted twelve one-on-one leadership interviews with key Shafter leaders and stakeholders—capturing diverse perspectives on Shafter's trajectory, challenges, and opportunities.

Facilitated seven roundtables spanning target sectors, the Lerdo and 7th Standard corridor, and workforce and entrepreneurship—bringing together dozens of employers, operators, educators, and regional partners for sector-specific dialogue.

Facilitated a Steering Committee Collaborative Design Session to stress-test strategic goals, prioritize investments, and build shared ownership of the plan's direction.

Every strategy in this plan is traceable to something we heard, something we measured, or both—grounded in the realities of the Shafter that exists today.

04 DISCOVERY INSIGHTS

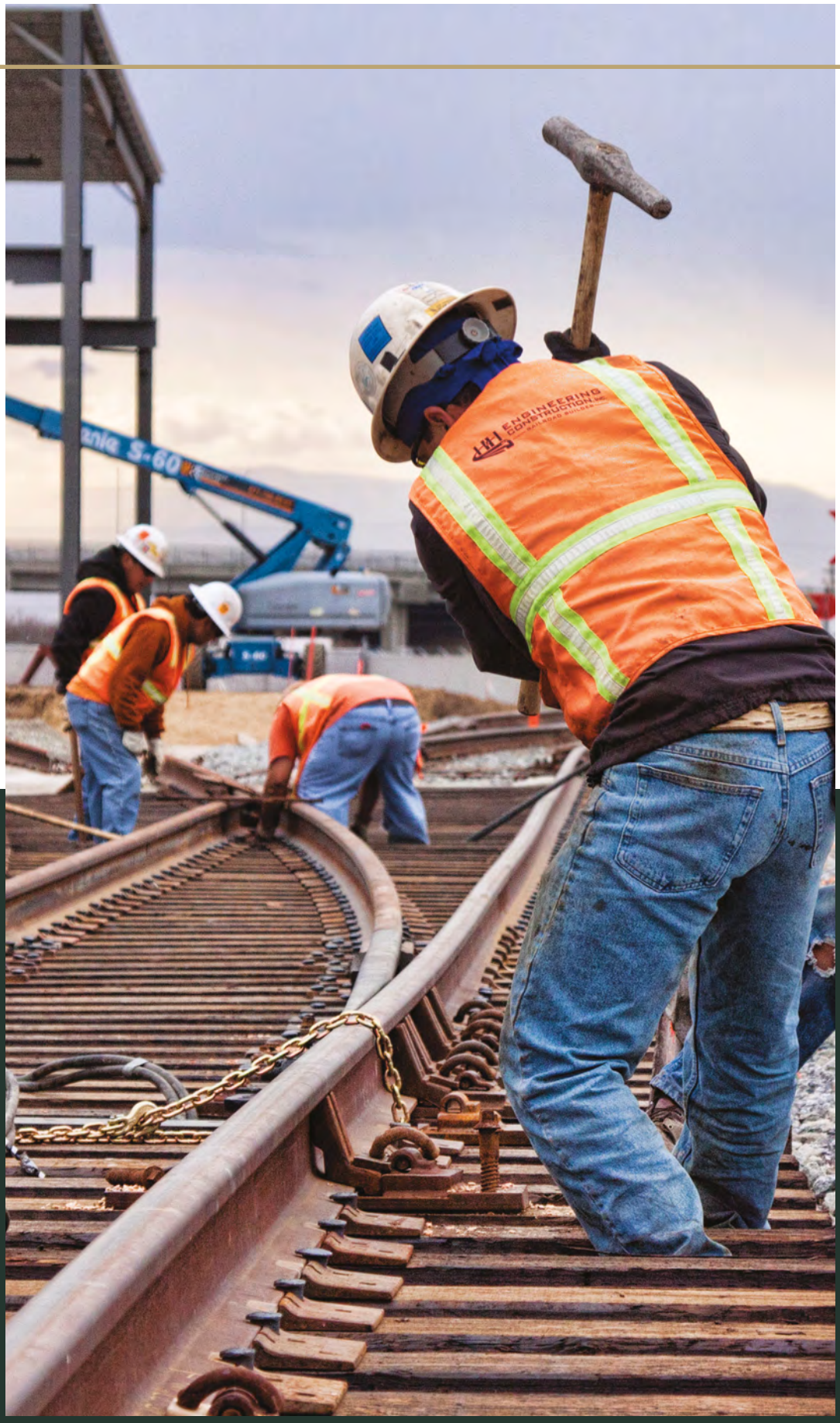
The following insights emerge from months of research, analysis, and engagement. They are not a comprehensive inventory of everything we learned—they are the findings that most directly shaped the strategic choices in this plan. Some confirm what Shafter already knows about itself. Others point to structural gaps that the strategy is specifically designed to close.

DATA PROFILE: SHAFTER BY THE NUMBERS

- 80%+ of residents are People of Color—the most diverse city among regional peers
- 9% population growth from 2018 to 2023—nearly 3x faster than Kern County
- 9 in 10 households include children—the highest concentration in the peer set
- 74% of jobs are in traded sectors—more than double the national average
- $250M in annual supply chain imports—leakage that represents local opportunity
- $1B+ in annual exports generated by Shafter's traded-sector economy
- 70% fewer bachelor's degree holders than the U.S. average—the widest structural gap
- 4.1% housing vacancy rate—the lowest among all peer communities

Source: U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey 2023; Lightcast 2025

“People think this just happened, but it didn’t. It took years of decisions lining up.”



INSIGHT 1

1. Shafter's Success was Not Accidental—and the Next Chapter Requires the Same Intentionality.

Decades of disciplined decisions built today's position. Stakeholders expect the same strategic intent applied to what comes next.

Shafter's economic position is the product of deliberate, patient decisions—entitling industrial land before demand arrived, investing in infrastructure to match logistics and manufacturing trends, and building a reputation for regulatory competence and follow-through that few communities of any size can match. Stakeholders consistently described this as the foundation of the city's credibility with developers and employers. What looks from the outside like "overnight success" was, in reality, the product of decades of planning and execution—particularly decisions to align rail access, freeway proximity, and entitled industrial land with emerging logistics trends before the market fully materialized.

That legacy now shapes expectations inside the community. There is broad confidence in Shafter's economic fundamentals, paired with a clear expectation that the same level of strategic intent will be applied to the next phase of economic evolution: workforce development, sector diversification, corridor activation, and quality of life. Stakeholders want to see that the city is thinking several moves ahead, not simply reacting to immediate opportunities. The strategy ahead must build on this legacy of intentionality while clearly articulating where new forms of strategic thinking are needed as the city's economy grows more complex.

"We built something solid. The question is how it keeps working when the people who built it aren't here anymore."

INSIGHT 2

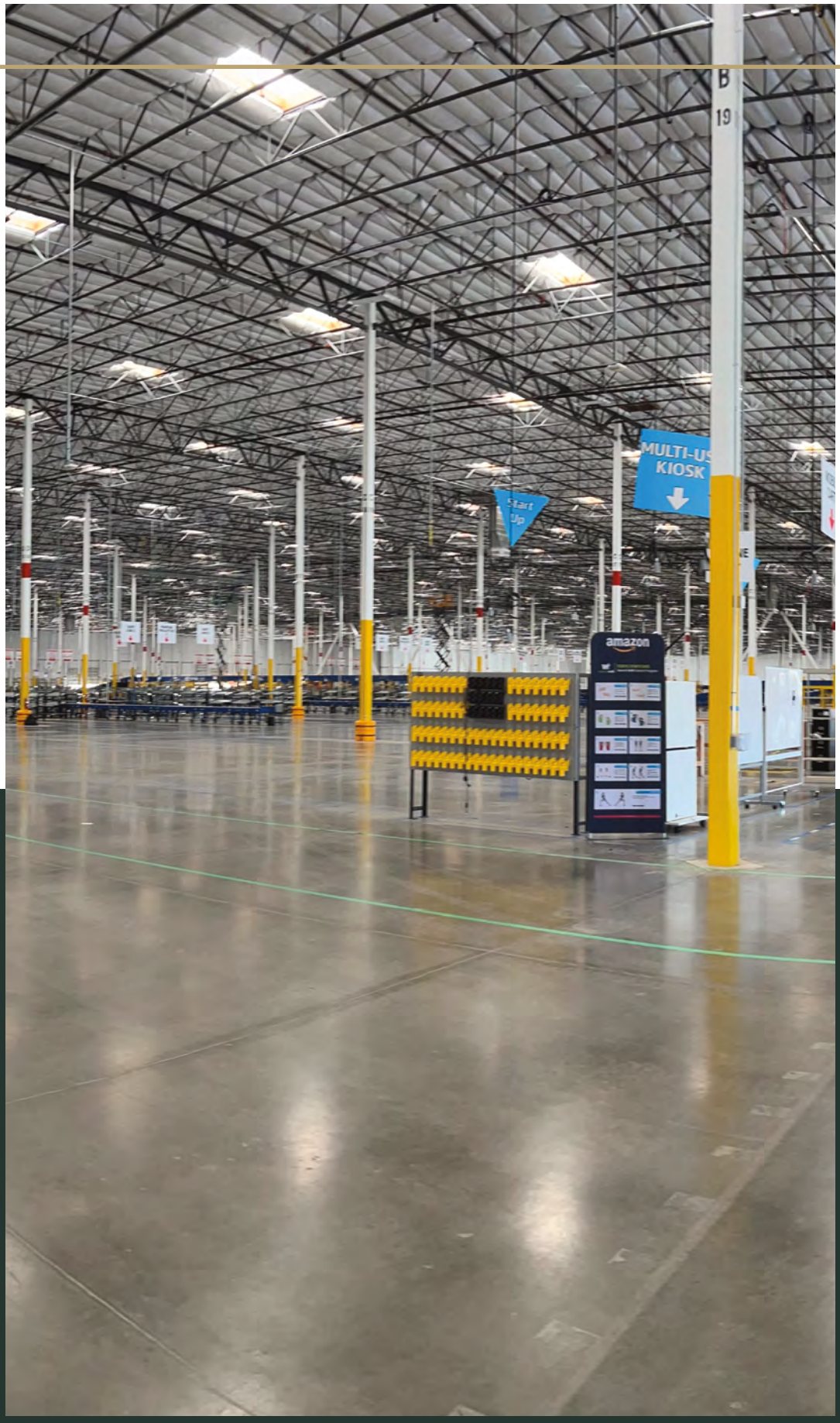
2. Demographic Momentum Hasn't Translated to Economic Prosperity.

Shafter is young, diverse, and growing fast—but growth alone hasn't produced broadly shared economic gains.

Shafter's demographic profile is a genuine strategic asset. Prime-age workforce participation runs 20% above the national average. More than 80% of residents are People of Color, making it the most diverse community among its regional peers. Population grew 9% from 2018 to 2023—three times faster than Kern County as a whole. Nine in ten households include children, signaling a young, family-oriented community with long-term labor force potential that most communities would envy.

But the economic indicators tell a different story. Poverty remains elevated. Median earnings rank lowest among regional peers—37% below Clovis, the highest-earning comparable community. Population is outpacing job creation at a ratio of approximately 3:1. The housing vacancy rate is just 4.1%, the lowest among all peers, putting pressure on affordability and availability. The disconnect is structural: Demographic momentum has not yet been matched by the workforce pathways, wage levels, or economic complexity needed to translate population growth into broadly shared prosperity. Closing this gap—ensuring that Shafter's young, growing, diverse population can build careers and wealth locally rather than commuting to opportunity elsewhere—is the central challenge of this strategy.

"We know how to get projects through the door. The question is whether we're being strategic about which doors we open."



INSIGHT 3

3. Jobs are Here, but Value Per Job is Not.

Shafter has built a traded-sector employment base that most small cities would envy—but productivity and wages lag.

Three-quarters of Shafter's employment comes from traded sectors—more than double the national average—generating over $1B in annual exports. By conventional measures, this is an extraordinary economic base for a city of 22,000. Few communities of any size achieve this level of export-sector concentration.

But there is a mismatch between activity and value. In most export-oriented economies, traded-sector jobs generate significantly more gross regional product per worker than their employment share would suggest—each job punches above its weight in economic output. In both the Bakersfield Metropolitan Statistical Area and the U.S. overall, this pattern holds. In Shafter, however, output closely tracks job count rather than exceeding it. Traded sectors account for roughly equal shares of employment and Gross Regional Product, meaning jobs are present but value per job is lower than benchmarks. Productivity and wages lag regional and national averages across all five target clusters.

Shafter needs more jobs, and it needs better jobs; and the two are not in tension. Higher-value operations—automation-enabled logistics, food processing, specialized manufacturing, cold chain services, and supply chain functions—raise wages, improve fiscal returns per worker, and create career pathways rather than just paychecks. The next phase of growth should ensure that Shafter's residents can build careers locally rather than commuting to opportunity elsewhere, and that every new job contributes more economic value than the last.

"Why are we importing what we already know how to support?"

INSIGHT 4

4. $250M in Supply Chain Leakage is the Most Immediate Opportunity.

Shafter's traded sectors import approximately $250 million annually in goods and services that could be sourced locally or regionally—inputs flowing out of the community that represent unrealized employment, wages, and fiscal return.

These are not exotic products. They are inputs purchased to support industries that already operate here: maintenance services, packaging materials, component parts, professional services, and equipment that existing employers buy from outside the community because local suppliers don't yet exist.

This import leakage represents a fundamentally different kind of economic development opportunity than greenfield recruitment. The demand already exists. The purchasing relationships are established. The industries generating that demand are rooted in Shafter and unlikely to leave. What's missing is local supply—firms that can fulfill existing procurement needs with shorter lead times, lower logistics costs, and the responsiveness that proximity provides. Capturing even a fraction of that $250 million would generate local employment, strengthen fiscal returns, and reduce operating costs for the anchor employers whose purchasing creates the opportunity in the first place.

Supply chain capture also compounds across clusters. Each new local supplier deepens the cross-cluster integration that distinguishes Shafter from competing sites, where a single investment benefits from multiple overlapping systems rather than operating in isolation. The opportunity is concrete, measurable, and aligned with what Shafter already does. It requires execution, not reinvention.

"The thing that Shafter was able to do better than most places is say, okay, this is who we are. This is what we have. And they stayed pretty focused."

INSIGHT 5

5. Successful Places Define Economic Functions Within Value Chains—Not Industries They Want to "Be."

Shafter has built a traded-sector employment base that most small cities would envy—but productivity and wages lag.

The communities that succeed in attracting and retaining traded-sector investment are those that define specific economic functions—processing, logistics, automation-enabled manufacturing, compliance-ready operations, field services—rather than claiming to "be" an industry. Shafter should not try to become "an agriculture city" or "an energy city." It should position around what it does within larger value chains: It processes, stores, ships, maintains, assembles, and complies. That functional identity is both more accurate and more durable than a sector-specific brand.

This framing has direct implications for how Shafter competes. Rather than marketing against peer communities on cost—a race that inland California will rarely win against Nevada, Arizona, or Texas—Shafter should position itself around execution advantages that reduce risk for firms: Water certainty in a state where water is increasingly scarce. Infrastructure reliability in a region where grid constraints are real. California regulatory compliance treated as a competitive differentiator rather than a burden—firms that locate in Shafter gain access to the nation's largest consumer market while operating in a jurisdiction with a track record of getting permits through efficiently. Workforce readiness that demonstrates training capacity, not just promises. And cross-cluster integration that allows a single investment to benefit from multiple overlapping systems. Reducing execution risk matters more than competing on marginal cost. Firms choosing Shafter should do so because the city makes complex operations simpler, not because it is the cheapest option available.

"If we don't get the workforce right, none of the other strategies matter."

INSIGHT 6

6. Workforce is the Prerequisite, Not the Byproduct.

Every cluster analysis reached the same conclusion: Training capacity must be demonstrated before investment arrives.

Across all five target clusters, workforce availability emerged as the binding constraint on growth—not as one factor among many, but as the factor that determines whether investment materializes at all. Communities that demonstrate training capacity attract investment. Communities that promise future training lose to those with operational programs.

The workforce overlap across clusters is remarkable, and it represents one of Shafter's most significant untapped advantages. The same maintenance technicians, controls specialists, industrial electricians, welders, mechatronics specialists, and quality professionals serve logistics, manufacturing, energy, agriculture, and aerospace. A worker trained in energy systems maintenance can serve employers in manufacturing, logistics, and agricultural technology. This means workforce training should be built as a unified platform serving all five clusters—not five separate programs.

Because Shafter has 70% fewer bachelor's degree holders than the U.S. average, the pathway forward is certifications, apprenticeships, and stackable credentials—not four-year degrees. The Bakersfield College partnership must be formalized and operational before major recruitment efforts begin. And workforce cannot be separated from housing: Job growth without housing alignment creates the same vulnerability as housing growth without career pathways. When workers can't afford to live near where they work, recruitment pipelines break down regardless of training quality.

"It's not about walking away from what works. It's about making sure we're not boxed in."

INSIGHT 7

7. Cross-Cluster Integration is Shafter's Competitive Edge.

Five interconnected—not siloed—clusters create compounding resiliency advantages no other Central Valley community can match.

Shafter's five target clusters are not independent industries competing for attention and resources; they are interconnected systems that reinforce each other. Logistics serves agriculture, manufacturing, and energy. Manufacturing is the shared platform across all clusters, with overlapping workforce needs, supplier relationships, and technical skills. Energy infrastructure supports all industrial activity. Agricultural production generates the inputs that processing, cold chain, and distribution systems move to market. And the airport and airspace assets create flexibility for drone operations, agricultural aerial technology, and aerospace testing that complement ground-based industrial activity. That portability will make Shafter's economy structurally more durable than communities where a single cluster's contraction leaves the workforce with nowhere to go.

No other Central Valley community combines Shafter's specific mix of assets in a single location: I-5 and SR-99 highway access, dual Class I railroads, development-ready industrial land at lower costs than the Inland Empire or coastal California, proximity to $70B+ in Central Valley agricultural output, 20,000 MW of renewable energy capacity permitted or planned in Kern County, and rural airspace advantages for drone operations. The compounding effects are tangible: A cold chain fulfillment operation can source from local processors, use solar-powered refrigeration, maintain automated systems with locally trained technicians who also serve manufacturing clients, and ship via the same intermodal infrastructure supporting all five clusters. Each cluster makes the others more viable. The strategy should market Shafter as an integrated supply chain community—not a collection of separate industrial parks.

"Coming up with solutions where you can be in control of your own destiny—not having to rely on legacy power and being independent."

INSIGHT 8

8. Energy is Structural, Not Peripheral.

Every cluster depends on reliable, affordable power—and Kern County sits at the center of California's energy transition.

Energy is not simply another industry vertical for Shafter; it is a competitiveness platform that underlies every other cluster in the strategy. Irrigation systems, cold storage, food processing, warehouse automation, heavy industrial equipment, and freight movement all operate within tight cost margins shaped by electricity and fuel pricing. Shafter's economic base is disproportionately energy-intensive, and as prices fluctuate and regulatory requirements evolve, margin pressure intensifies across every cluster simultaneously.

Kern County remains one of the most energy-abundant geographies in California, producing 71% of the state's crude oil while hosting 4 GW+ of wind capacity and 20,000 MW of renewable energy permitted or planned. This creates a dual strategic posture. Defensively, energy strategy means protecting existing firms from cost escalation through microgrids, distributed generation, and wholesale procurement pilots. Offensively, energy represents a growth platform: manufacturing equipment, providing field services, integrating storage systems, and positioning for hydrogen as demand aggregation makes local production viable. The strategic question is not whether Shafter will engage energy strategically, but how deliberately it will prioritize near-term margin protection versus long-horizon energy sovereignty.

"We don't want to become just another place people drive past."

INSIGHT 9

9. Corridors are Economic Strategy, Not Just Infrastructure.

Lerdo Highway and 7th Standard Road carry industrial traffic but don't yet function as economic destinations or community gateways.

Lerdo Highway and 7th Standard Road move goods and workers efficiently, but they operate as conduits rather than destinations. Workers travel them but do not stop along them. Residents pass through but shop elsewhere. As one corridor workshop participant described it, the corridors are a "means to an end"—useful, but not defining.

The risk is that as residential growth accelerates along 7th Standard and employment density increases along Lerdo, the disconnect between industrial function and livability becomes a strategic liability. Lerdo is the front door to Shafter for most visitors arriving from State Route 99, yet the visual narrative is fragmented, without a clear sense of arrival or economic identity. Along 7th Standard, residential development is outpacing the commercial and service infrastructure that new households need. If these corridors remain purely functional roadways, Shafter forfeits the opportunity to convert mobility into value capture and community identity.

Corridors also intersect directly with workforce strategy. Housing supply, type, and location along economic corridors must coordinate with employment growth. Stakeholders want phased, intentional investment: gateway treatments, wayfinding, streetscape improvements, and mixed-use nodes that anchor economic activity rather than allowing corridors to develop as generic, automobile-dependent strips. The goal is corridors that tell Shafter's story—not corridors that could be anywhere.

"We used to be able to coordinate over lunch. Now we need something more formal."

INSIGHT 10

10. Institutional Capacity Must Match the Complexity of the Economy.

Shafter cannot execute this strategy alone, but it also cannot execute it with informal systems designed for a simpler economy.

The engagement surfaced two distinct but related findings. First, regional partnerships are essential. The same partners appeared in every cluster analysis: B3K Prosperity for clean energy and workforce development; Kern EDC for business attraction and incentive navigation; Bakersfield College for training and certifications; and CSU Bakersfield for four-year pathways. Kern County's energy transition, manufacturing modernization, and logistics expansion are regional challenges requiring regional solutions. Shafter's role is not to duplicate what these partners do. It is to position as the preferred site within the broader ecosystem—contributing development-ready land, workforce capacity, and regulatory competence that makes it the location where regional strategies become operational.

Second, Shafter's internal coordination must be formalized. The city's prior success was built through informal networks and responsive leadership—systems that worked when the economy was simpler and the leadership group was smaller. But managing five industry clusters, coordinating regional partnerships, aligning workforce and housing strategies, and executing corridor investments simultaneously exceeds what informal coordination can sustain. Stakeholders recognized this across every engagement channel. As one participant put it, "We used to be able to coordinate over lunch. Now we need something more formal." Leadership continuity, knowledge transfer, dedicated staff capacity, and structured coordination mechanisms are not administrative overhead—they are implementation infrastructure. Without them, even the best strategy stalls at execution.

05 STRATEGIC PLAN

A Framework for Shafter's Future

The strategy is organized around six interconnected goals—each addressing a critical dimension of economic competitiveness, and each reinforcing the others. The system logic matters: Strengthening logistics creates demand for manufacturing. Modernizing agriculture generates need for cold chain and processing infrastructure. Energy affordability protects margins across every cluster. Workforce development is the prerequisite that makes all four cluster strategies viable. Corridor investment shapes whether growth translates into community identity or simply more pass-through traffic. And institutional capacity determines whether the city can execute at the pace this strategy demands. No single goal succeeds in isolation.

Elements of the Strategy: How this Plan is Organized

VISION

A preferred future

GOALS

Desired outcomes

STRATEGIES

How we activate and measure impact

ACTIONS

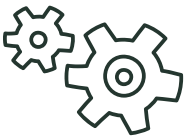
Steps, resources, partners

VISION STATEMENT

Built to Produce. Rooted in Community.

Turning industrial strength into shared prosperity—connecting clusters, corridors, and careers across the Central Valley's most competitive platform.

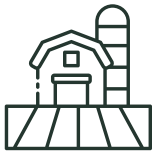
Goals



GOAL 1:

THE LOGISTICS ADVANTAGE

We will scale Shafter's logistics advantage by supporting automation-driven, technology-enabled distribution and supply chain operations.



GOAL 2:

FROM FIELD TO FUTURE

We will position Shafter as a hub for value-added agriculture and next-generation agricultural innovation.

GOAL 3:

MAKE IT HERE

We will grow Shafter's role in aviation technologies and advanced manufacturing.

GOAL 4:

POWER THE WHOLE ECONOMY

We will support resilient energy systems while growing a cluster of companies that design and deploy these technologies.

GOAL 5:

CORRIDORS THAT TELL OUR STORY

We will transform Lerdo Highway and 7th Standard Road from pass-throughs into economic destinations that support industrial growth and enhance quality of life.

GOAL 6:

BUILT TO EXECUTE

We will strengthen Shafter's economic development capacity to support businesses, partnerships, and the delivery of this strategy.

How Will We Know if We're Succeeding?

Clusters are Diversifying and Creating Higher-Value Jobs.

Shafter's economy is scaling automation-enabled logistics and food processing and diversifying into specialized manufacturing and energy services—raising wages and fiscal returns per worker.

Workforce Pipelines are Connecting Residents to Careers.

Bakersfield College partnerships are operational, certificate programs are enrolling, and employers across clusters are hiring locally trained technicians, operators, and specialists—not just recruiting from outside.

Corridors are Becoming Destinations.

Lerdo Highway and 7th Standard Road are showing visible signs of intentional investment: gateway improvements, new services, mixed-use activity, and an identity that signals Shafter's next chapter.

Regional Partnerships are Producing Measurable Outcomes.

B3K, Kern EDC, Bakersfield College, and other partners are collaborating on workforce programs, business attraction, and infrastructure investments with Shafter as a preferred implementation site.

Shafter's Story is Reaching the Right Audiences.

Site selectors, employers, and investors recognize Shafter as a cross-cluster industrial platform—not just a logistics address—and the city has the marketing tools and capacity to sustain that positioning.

Existing Businesses and Entrepreneurs are Supported.

Small businesses have access to resources, technical assistance, and city processes that help them start, grow, and stay in Shafter—and the entrepreneurship ecosystem is becoming more visible and intentional.

GOAL 1: THE LOGISTICS ADVANTAGE

We will scale Shafter's logistics advantage by supporting automation-driven, technology-enabled distribution and supply chain operations.

WHY IT MATTERS

Logistics is Shafter's dominant economic cluster—and its greatest strategic choice. The city's combination of I-5 and SR-99 access, dual Class I railroads, development-ready industrial land, and proximity to $70 billion in Central Valley agricultural output has already attracted significant warehouse and distribution investment. A newly operational container exchange and growing intermodal rail capacity add a structural efficiency advantage that no other Central Valley market currently offers.

But the national logistics industry is undergoing a structural transformation. The vast majority of North American warehouses have not yet adopted automation, and the Inland Empire's saturation is pushing operators to seek Central Valley locations with available land and freight corridor access. This creates both opportunity and risk. Shafter can capture the next wave as higher-value, technology-enabled fulfillment—automated distribution, cold chain operations, integrated warehouse management—or it can accept more commodity warehousing that locks the city into low-wage, low-multiplier activity. The wage gap between traditional warehousing and technology-enabled fulfillment is significant, and cold chain is the highest-wage, highest-growth segment. The choices Shafter makes now about infrastructure standards, tenant recruitment, and workforce preparation will determine which trajectory it follows.

Strategies

1.1 Build automation-ready logistics infrastructure, not commodity warehouse pads.

1.2 Anchor the cluster around cold chain and specialized fulfillment.

1.3 Build the logistics technology workforce before facilities arrive.

1.4 Leverage intermodal rail and the emerging trade gateway to expand Shafter's logistics reach.

1.5 Recruit strategically and market Shafter as an integrated supply chain community.

STRATEGY 1.1

Build automation-ready logistics infrastructure, not commodity warehouse pads.

Why It Matters:

Infrastructure standards determine the quality of investment a community attracts. Logistics facilities built to minimum specifications—low electrical capacity, no fiber connectivity, floors that cannot support robotic systems—lock tenants into manual operations with lower wages and shorter commitments. Facilities built to automation-ready standards attract technology-forward operators that are making longer-term capital investments, hiring higher-skilled workers, and generating stronger economic multipliers. Experience in other master-planned logistics communities confirms that upfront infrastructure investment generates substantially higher long-term returns than reactive permitting. California's regulatory environment reinforces this approach: operators who build to California's emissions, zero-emission vehicle, and energy efficiency standards can serve the entire North American market. Rather than treating regulation as a barrier, Shafter should market compliance-ready infrastructure as a competitive advantage.

What's Needed?

- Establish development standards for new logistics facilities that support automation-ready operations. This may include reinforced floors, high-capacity electrical service, fiber connectivity, and EV charging infrastructure.
  - → Attracts technology-forward operators while discouraging pure-play commodity warehousing that offers lower wages and limited career pathways.
- Assist incoming operators with regulatory navigation, positioning Shafter as a location where compliance is streamlined rather than burdensome. Operators who meet California's standards gain access to the nation's largest consumer market and can serve any market nationally.
  - → Turns regulatory complexity into a value proposition for operators already investing in electric fleets and energy-efficient facilities.
- Phase automation-readiness expectations to allow flexibility for smaller operators while establishing a baseline that elevates the logistics cluster over time.
  - → Standards should raise quality without creating barriers to entry for mid-sized firms that may adopt automation incrementally.
- Coordinate infrastructure investments with energy strategy (Goal 4), ensuring logistics facilities have access to renewable energy, microgrid connectivity, and distributed generation options.
  - → Reduces operating costs for energy-intensive cold chain and automation systems while reinforcing cross-cluster integration.

STRATEGY 1.2

Anchor the cluster around cold chain and specialized fulfillment.

Why It Matters:

Cold chain facilities generate higher wages, longer leases, more jobs per square foot, and stronger economic multipliers than conventional warehousing. Temperature-controlled logistics is among the fastest-growing segments in the industry, driven by e-commerce grocery, pharmaceutical distribution, and food safety requirements. Shafter's proximity to Central Valley agricultural production—combined with freight corridor access—creates a unique "farm-to-frozen-to-fulfillment" advantage that no other Central Valley community can replicate. A cold chain operation in Shafter can source from local processors, maintain automated systems with locally trained technicians, and ship via shared intermodal infrastructure. Setting technology and certification standards from the outset creates a premium market: Operators who invest in compliance-grade infrastructure make longer capital commitments and hire at higher skill levels.

What's Needed?

- Identify and prepare sites with dedicated cold chain infrastructure potential—proximity to agricultural inputs, power capacity for refrigeration, and freight corridor access—to signal market readiness to prospective operators.
  - → Creates a purpose-built environment that reduces development risk for cold chain operators evaluating Central Valley locations.
- Recruit a national cold chain operator as an anchor tenant, with infrastructure, permits, and workforce training aligned before active recruitment begins.
  - → Anchor operators catalyze complementary investment, once a major cold chain facility establishes presence, supplier and adjacent facilities follow.
- Encourage adoption of food safety certification and digital quality monitoring as baseline operating practices for cold chain facilities, through technical assistance and shared infrastructure where feasible.
  - → Creates a premium market environment that attracts operators making longer-term commitments at higher capital investment levels.
- Pursue operator diversity across cold chain, e-commerce fulfillment, third-party logistics (3PL), and specialized distribution to reduce reliance on any single segment or tenant.
  - → Concentration risk is real—diversification across logistics segments protects against single-operator or single-market vulnerability.

STRATEGY 1.3

Build the logistics technology workforce before facilities arrive.

Why It Matters:

The logistics workforce gap is acute and widening. Industry analyses estimate up to 1.9 million U.S. manufacturing and logistics technology jobs could go unfilled over the next decade. Communities that build training capacity before facilities arrive capture investment from operators who consistently cite workforce availability as their top site selection factor. Shafter already has a foundation few small cities can match: High school students enroll in logistics and distribution programs, graduate with industry-recognized certifications, dual-enroll with Bakersfield College, and participate in mechatronics and robotics apprenticeships with national employers. This is not theoretical workforce development; it is operational alignment between employers and educators. The opportunity is to deepen and formalize these pipelines, targeting the technical roles—robotics technicians, automation maintenance specialists, data analysts—that command wages above $60,000 annually and serve every cluster in this plan.

What's Needed?

- Partner with Bakersfield College to expand logistics technology training—robotics maintenance, mechatronics, data analytics, warehouse management systems, and cold chain operations—with stackable credentials that create clear career pathways.
  - → Cross-cluster skill portability means workers trained for logistics automation also serve manufacturing, energy, and agricultural technology employers.
- Expand existing high school career and technical education (CTE) programs to include automation exposure, systems integration, and data literacy aligned with next-generation logistics operations.
  - → Builds on Shafter's existing K–12 workforce ecosystem, one of the city's strongest and least marketed assets.
- Develop employer-driven apprenticeship and on-the-job training programs with logistics operators, ensuring training matches actual job requirements rather than a generic curriculum.
  - → Employer involvement from program design through hiring commitment is what distinguishes effective workforce programs from performative ones.
- Market workforce pipeline capacity as a recruitment tool, documenting graduation rates, certification completions, and employer placement outcomes in business attraction materials.
  - → Transforms workforce development from a support function into a lead competitive advantage in site selection conversations.

STRATEGY 1.4

Leverage intermodal rail and the emerging trade gateway to expand Shafter's logistics reach.

Why It Matters:

Shafter's logistics position is evolving from a regional distribution hub into something structurally more significant. The Wonderful Logistics Center sits on the BNSF main rail line and has partnered with the Port of Los Angeles to improve goods movement between the Central Valley and global markets. An international rail terminal expected to begin operations in 2026 will enable containers to move directly by rail between Shafter and the San Pedro Bay ports, reducing truck congestion at coastal facilities and strengthening export capacity for Central Valley agriculture. The facility effectively functions as an inland port, linking production, logistics, and international shipping through a rail-connected container exchange. This is a structural shift: from a community that stores and distributes goods to one that connects Central Valley producers directly to global markets. The question is whether Shafter capitalizes on this infrastructure to attract trade-dependent operations and higher-value freight activity or treats it as a standalone facility without broader economic integration.

What's Needed?

- Integrate the intermodal rail terminal and container exchange into Shafter's economic development positioning, marketing the city as a Central Valley trade gateway—not just a logistics park with available land.
    - → The rail-to-port connection is a structural competitive advantage that no other Central Valley community currently offers. Recruitment messaging should lead with it.
- Target trade-dependent operations—exporters, importers, customs brokers, freight forwarders, and 3PLs serving international supply chains—that benefit from direct rail access to coastal ports.
    - → These operations generate higher-value employment and deeper supply chain relationships than domestic-only distribution.
- Coordinate with the Wonderful Company and the major ports of California to ensure the container exchange facility is integrated into broader logistics recruitment and that capacity expansion aligns with demand growth.
    - → Partnership alignment ensures the facility serves Shafter's economic development objectives—not just the logistics needs of a single operator.
- Connect the intermodal advantage to agricultural export strategy (Goal 2), positioning Shafter as the point where Central Valley production meets global markets through integrated rail, cold chain, and processing infrastructure.
    - → The "farm-to-frozen-to-export" value chain becomes Shafter's defining logistics narrative—uniquely enabled by the rail-to-port connection.

STRATEGY 1.5

Recruit strategically and market Shafter as an integrated supply chain community.

Why It Matters:

Shafter's defining advantage over competing logistics locations is not cost—it is integration. Operators who locate in Shafter benefit from co-located agricultural processing (reducing inbound freight costs), a shared technical workforce (reducing training overhead), renewable energy access (reducing operating costs), and multimodal freight connectivity (reducing outbound distribution costs). No other Central Valley community offers this combination. But integration only becomes a competitive advantage if it is marketed deliberately. Site selectors and operators evaluating Central Valley locations need to understand Shafter as a supply chain platform—not just another logistics park with available land. Strategic recruitment also means being selective: pursuing operators who align with the city's automation, workforce, and quality standards, rather than accepting any project that simply adds square footage.

What's Needed?

- Develop sector-specific marketing materials for logistics and fulfillment that articulate Shafter's cross-cluster value proposition—freight access, co-located processing, shared workforce, intermodal rail, energy infrastructure—with data and case examples.
  - → Moves Shafter from competing on cost to competing on compound value, differentiating the city from other Central Valley warehouse sites.
- Pursue operator diversity across logistics segments—cold chain, technology-enabled fulfillment, 3PL, and specialized distribution—to build a diversified tenant base rather than concentrating in any single category.
  - → Two or more anchors across different logistics segments create resilience and catalyze complementary investment.
- Proactively address community impact—truck routing, emissions controls, air quality mitigation, visual buffers, and design standards—before opposition emerges.
  - → Warehouse development without community engagement generates opposition that can halt economic development entirely. Proactive management is strategic, not optional.
- Coordinate messaging with regional partners (Kern EDC, B3K Prosperity) to position Shafter within the broader Central Valley logistics corridor while maintaining a distinct identity.
  - → Regional positioning amplifies visibility while Shafter's unique cross-cluster integration differentiates it from competing sites.

Goal 1: Measuring Impact and Success

Logistics Value and Wage Growth

Track average wages in logistics and fulfillment operations, share of logistics jobs in technical/automation roles (Tier 2), and fiscal revenue per logistics employee. Compare against baseline to measure whether new investment is raising value per job, not just job count.

Workforce Pipeline Activity

Measure Bakersfield College's logistics technology program enrollment, certification completions, apprenticeship placements, and employer satisfaction ratings. Track high school CTE participation rates and dual-enrollment numbers to monitor pipeline depth from entry through technical placement.

Infrastructure and Tenant Quality

Monitor share of new logistics development meeting automation-ready infrastructure standards, cold chain square footage as a share of total logistics inventory, average lease terms for new tenants, and capital investment per facility. Track operator diversity across cold chain, e-commerce, 3PL, and specialized segments.

We will position Shafter as a hub for value-added agriculture and next-generation agricultural innovation.

Why It Matters

Agriculture is foundational to Shafter and the Central Valley. But the most significant opportunities ahead are not driven by increased production—they are driven by where economic value is shifting within modern food systems. Processing, packaging, cold storage, distribution, and technology-enabled operations are capturing a growing share of food system value, while primary production faces mounting pressure from water constraints, labor costs, and commodity price volatility. Shafter sits next to $70 billion in annual Central Valley agricultural output, yet much of that output is shipped out for processing and shipped back as finished product. Co-locating processing, cold storage, and distribution eliminates that round-trip inefficiency.

The opportunity is to position Shafter as the place where Central Valley production becomes Central Valley product: where raw agricultural output is processed, packaged, certified, stored, and distributed through facilities that integrate with the city's logistics infrastructure and shared technical workforce. At the same time, the technology layer reshaping agricultural operations is increasingly seeking deployment sites closer to Central Valley production, creating a parallel opportunity in ag-tech services and innovation. This is not about expanding acreage or headcount. It is about capturing more value per unit of production through fewer but more capital-intensive facilities with higher productivity and wages.

Strategies

2.1 Position around processing and packaging, not primary production.

2.2 Build food safety, traceability, and water efficiency as competitive differentiators.

2.3 Lower barriers for small and mid-sized producers and emerging AgTech.

2.4 Train the food manufacturing workforce of the future.

2.5 Establish Shafter as a precision agriculture and ag-tech services hub.

STRATEGY 2.1

Position around processing and packaging, not primary production.

Why It Matters:

Successful agricultural communities do not try to "be" an industry; they define specific economic functions within larger value chains. The research consistently shows that economic value is moving downstream and becoming more capital-intensive, shifting from production toward processing, packaging, cold storage, and distribution. Shafter's advantage is not in growing more—it is in doing more with what the Central Valley already grows. Food processing is rapidly evolving into an advanced manufacturing activity, with robotics, AI, and capital-intensive production systems rewarding scale, specialization, and technical capability. "California-grown" branding commands 30%–50% price premiums in domestic and international markets. Shafter should position itself around processing, logistics, automation-enabled food manufacturing, and compliance-ready operations rather than branding itself broadly as a food hub.

What's Needed?

- Target food processing and packaging firms that add value to Central Valley commodities—nut processing, produce packaging, frozen food preparation, specialty food manufacturing—with recruitment materials emphasizing co-location with agricultural inputs and logistics infrastructure.
  - → Reduces inbound freight costs for processors while connecting directly to Shafter's fulfillment and cold chain cluster (Goal 1).
- Plan for fewer but more capital-intensive facilities with higher productivity and wages, rather than maximizing firm count or land absorption alone.
  - → Aligns with the industry shift toward automation-enabled processing, where value per worker matters more than headcount.
- Recruit firms positioned to leverage "California-grown" and "California-compliant" branding for premium domestic and export markets.
  - → Turns California's regulatory environment into a value proposition for processors serving quality-conscious buyers.
- Coordinate agricultural recruitment with logistics strategy (Goal 1) to market the "farm-to-frozen-to-fulfillment" value chain as a unified offering.
  - → Cross-cluster integration is Shafter's defining competitive advantage—marketing it deliberately differentiates the city from competing agricultural communities.

STRATEGY 2.2

Build food safety, traceability, and water efficiency as competitive differentiators.

Why It Matters:

Digital traceability, food safety certification, and water efficiency are no longer optional—they are becoming primary site-selection filters and market access requirements. Retailers and export markets increasingly require FSSC 22000 certification, blockchain-enabled traceability, and documented sustainability performance. Water availability under SGMA (Sustainable Groundwater Management Act) constraints will increasingly shape competitive outcomes across the Central Valley. Communities that can demonstrate water certainty and efficiency will attract investment that others cannot. Shafter should proactively position itself as a location for water-smart, SGMA-aligned, compliance-ready food and industrial operations—turning constraints into differentiation.

What's Needed?

- Establish food safety and traceability readiness as baseline expectations for food processing facilities, with city-provided navigation support for industry-standard certifications and digital traceability adoption.
  - → Creates a premium operating environment that attracts processors making longer-term commitments and serving higher-value markets.
- Position Shafter's water infrastructure as a competitive advantage, documenting water certainty, efficiency investments, and SGMA compliance readiness in business attraction materials.
  - → As water constraints intensify across the Central Valley, Shafter's proactive positioning converts a regional challenge into a local advantage.
- Support adoption of digital monitoring, cold chain certification, and quality management systems among existing and incoming food processors, potentially through shared infrastructure or technical assistance.
  - → Shared digital infrastructure lowers adoption barriers for small and mid-sized processors who cannot justify standalone investment in monitoring, traceability, and certification systems.

STRATEGY 2.3

Lower barriers for small producers and emerging AgTech.

Why It Matters:

Not every food producer can afford standalone processing, packaging, and compliance infrastructure. Co-packing facilities, shared commercial kitchens, and modular processing reduce capital barriers and enable small and mid-sized firms to access markets that require certified production environments. For Shafter, this approach complements the larger-scale recruitment in Strategy 2.1 by building a broader base of food producers, supporting local entrepreneurship, and creating a pipeline of growing firms that may eventually need their own facilities. The ag roundtable also surfaced a related need: AgTech ecosystem connectivity. Stakeholders described a need for someone to introduce startups to growers, vet technologies, organize pilot programs, and attract aligned capital. Shafter's active agricultural operations, logistics infrastructure, and available land create conditions that AgTech incubators are actively seeking: a living laboratory where innovation can be tested against real production environments.

What's Needed?

- Explore development of shared-use food processing infrastructure—co-packing facilities, commercial kitchens, cold storage access—designed for small and mid-sized producers.
  - → Reduces capital barriers for entrepreneurs and value-added producers who need certified facilities but cannot justify standalone investment.
- Connect small food producers with technical assistance, business development resources, and market access support through partnerships with regional organizations and Bakersfield College.
  - → Production capacity alone does not create market success—connecting producers to institutional buyers, retail channels, and export markets matters more than increasing output.
- Align shared infrastructure with food safety and traceability standards (Strategy 2.2) so that small producers can access the same premium markets as larger operators.
  - → Ensures that shared facilities produce to the quality and certification levels that major retailers and export markets require.
- Position Shafter as an AgTech testbed by connecting growers willing to host pilots with agricultural technology startups, partnering with educational institutions on applied research, and exploring partnership with an established incubator or accelerator to formalize the ecosystem over time.
  - → This begins as a coordination function, not a facility. If executed well, it evolves into a physical incubation presence—and Shafter becomes known not just as a production center but as a commercialization node where agricultural innovation is tested and scaled.

STRATEGY 2.4

Train the food manufacturing workforce of the future.

Why It Matters:

Food processing is becoming an advanced manufacturing activity. Automated packaging lines, robotic palletizing, AI-driven quality inspection, cold chain monitoring, and digital traceability systems require workers with technical skills that overlap significantly with logistics and manufacturing clusters. Industry analyses estimate that workforce availability and technical skills are a primary constraint on food system growth; firms invest where they can find workers capable of operating automated and regulated facilities. The same mechatronics technicians, industrial maintenance specialists, and quality control professionals needed in logistics (Goal 1) and manufacturing (Goal 3) serve food processing operations. Training should be built as a shared platform, not a standalone program.

What's Needed?

- Establish an Ag Sector Partnership connecting growers, food processors, education providers, and workforce intermediaries to identify emerging skill needs, co-design credentials, and aggregate training demand across small and mid-sized agricultural operations.
  - → Small farms cannot individually drive training program development. A structured partnership aggregates demand signals and ensures education providers build capacity aligned with where the industry is heading, not where it has been.
- Expand Bakersfield College workforce programs to include food manufacturing technology: automated processing, packaging systems, cold chain operations, food safety compliance, and quality control.
  - → Builds on the same technical training platform serving logistics and manufacturing, creating career mobility across clusters.
- Partner with existing food processors in the region to develop employer-driven apprenticeship and on-the-job training programs aligned with automation adoption timelines.
  - → Ensures training matches actual facility needs rather than generic curriculum, increasing placement rates and employer satisfaction.
- Market food manufacturing workforce capacity alongside logistics and manufacturing pipelines in business attraction materials, emphasizing cross-cluster skill portability.
  - → Workforce availability is the top site-selection factor—demonstrating a trained pipeline is more compelling than promising future training.

STRATEGY 2.5

Establish Shafter as a precision agriculture and ag-tech services hub.

Why It Matters:

The Central Valley produces $70 billion in annual agricultural output, but much of the technology enabling that production—drone-based crop monitoring, satellite imagery analytics, precision application systems, soil and water sensing—is developed elsewhere and deployed as a service from outside the region. Ag-tech firms headquartered in the Bay Area and Southern California are actively seeking inland pilot sites and demonstration partnerships closer to actual production. Shafter's combination of large-scale agricultural operations, industrial land, airport infrastructure, and proximity to Bakersfield College and CSU Bakersfield research capacity creates the conditions for a localized ag-tech services cluster. The opportunity is not to compete with Silicon Valley on software development—it is to become the place where ag technology is tested, demonstrated, commercialized, and deployed at field scale. This creates a natural bridge to the aviation and drone cluster, where agricultural aerial systems represent one of the most commercially viable near-term uncrewed aircraft systems (UAS) applications.

What's Needed?

- Identify and market sites suitable for ag-tech field testing, demonstration, and co-location—particularly parcels with proximity to both agricultural operations and airport/UAS infrastructure.
    - → Ag-tech firms need affordable space near real production environments. Proximity to Minter Field strengthens the value proposition for drone and aerial systems companies.
- Facilitate partnerships between Central Valley growers, ag-tech companies, and research institutions (Bakersfield College, CSU Bakersfield, UC Davis Extension) to host pilot deployments and applied research.
    - → Creating structured pilot opportunities keeps technology deployment—and the jobs and revenue it generates—anchored locally rather than managed remotely.
- Develop shared ag-tech infrastructure—data platforms, equipment access, testing facilities—that reduces adoption barriers for small and mid-sized farms unable to independently invest in precision systems.
    - → Large operators are already adopting precision technologies, but smaller farms lack the resources and technical support to participate. Shared infrastructure aggregates demand and lowers per-farm costs.
- Coordinate ag-tech positioning with the aviation and drone strategy to create a unified narrative around Shafter as a hub for applied agricultural technology and aerial systems.
    - → Positioning these together strengthens both clusters and avoids fragmented recruitment efforts.

Goal 2: Measuring Impact and Success

Agricultural Value Capture

Track food processing employment, wages, and output relative to primary agricultural production in the region. Measure growth in processing, packaging, and cold storage square footage. Monitor the share of Central Valley agricultural output processed locally versus shipped out for processing elsewhere.

Food Safety and Compliance Readiness

Measure the number of food processing facilities operating with FSSC 22000 or equivalent certification, digital traceability adoption rates, and water efficiency performance. Track Shafter's positioning in water-smart site selection conversations.

Small Producer and Entrepreneurship Activity

Monitor utilization of shared processing infrastructure, number of small food producers accessing certified facilities, business development program participation, and firms graduating from shared to standalone facilities.

GOAL 3: MAKE IT HERE

We will grow Shafter's role in aviation technologies and advanced manufacturing.

Why It Matters

Shafter's advanced manufacturing base is not aspirational—it is measurable. The cluster analysis shows a concentration of industrial activity tied to building materials, fabricated components, and energy-adjacent manufacturing. These firms are embedded in export supply chains that extend well beyond Kern County, benefiting from central market access, freight connectivity, available industrial land, and a workforce accustomed to production environments.

The opportunity analysis also identifies aerospace and advanced air mobility as a significant forward-looking opportunity. Kern County remains one of California's most aviation-intensive geographies, national projections show a structural shortage of aircraft maintenance technicians, and Shafter's airport presents a rare asset: greenfield land, leasing flexibility, agricultural adjacency for drone testing, and operational flexibility not available at larger commercial airports.

The sector is not starting from zero; it is starting from fragmentation. Shafter has industrial density but limited cluster cohesion, aviation adjacency but limited aerospace capture, workforce capacity but incomplete employer integration, and airport flexibility but no defined recruitment thesis. The strategies that follow are designed to organize these assets into a coherent platform.

Strategies

3.1 Formalize the manufacturing cluster narrative and recruit complementary firms.

3.2 Leverage the airport as an economic platform for applied aviation and drone technology.

3.3 Build shared manufacturing and aerospace workforce infrastructure.

3.4 Prepare sites and streamline processes to compete for reshoring investment.

STRATEGY 3.1

Formalize the manufacturing cluster narrative and recruit complementary firms.

Why It Matters:

Existing advanced manufacturers did not choose Shafter because of branding campaigns. They located here because of practical competitive advantages: proximity to raw materials, central access to West Coast markets, available natural gas, favorable weather conditions, and reliable labor. This is a deeply rational, materials-based competitive logic. But it has not yet been translated into a formal cluster narrative that builds density or recruitment momentum. Manufacturers operate successfully but largely independently. There is no shared identity around building products, industrial materials, or applied manufacturing systems. Industrial clusters do not form organically at scale—they are named, articulated, and reinforced. Formalizing this narrative enables targeted recruitment of complementary building product manufacturers, industrial component fabricators, and materials processors who benefit from supplier adjacency and shared infrastructure.

What's Needed?

- Develop an "Advanced Industrial Materials" positioning narrative that highlights raw material access, Central California logistics, a reliable industrial workforce, and favorable operating conditions.
  - → Creates a recruitment identity that connects existing manufacturers to a broader cluster story, making Shafter visible to complementary firms.
- Identify supply chain gaps among existing manufacturers and target recruitment of complementary firms that reduce import leakage and strengthen local supplier networks.
  - → The $250 million in annual supply chain imports represents a concrete supplier attraction opportunity—density reduces costs and strengthens retention.
- Engage existing manufacturers through Kern EDC and direct outreach to understand expansion plans, workforce needs, and supply chain relationships.
  - → Anchor employer retention through modernization support is often more impactful than recruiting new firms—existing employers who expand locally generate jobs faster and at lower public cost than greenfield recruitment.
- Coordinate manufacturing recruitment messaging with cross-cluster value proposition (Goals 1, 2, 4), emphasizing that manufacturers in Shafter benefit from shared logistics infrastructure, agricultural processing adjacency, and renewable energy access.
  - → Cross-cluster integration differentiates Shafter from competing manufacturing sites that offer land and labor but not compound value.

STRATEGY 3.2

Leverage the airport as an economic platform for applied aviation and drone technology.

Why It Matters:

Few communities possess underutilized airport land with leasing flexibility, adjacent agricultural testing grounds, and limited commercial congestion. Shafter does—with more than 100 acres of greenfield airport property available for long-term lease, hangar space at capacity with waiting lists, and operational flexibility for testing and experimentation. Shafter is unlikely to displace Mojave's defense-heavy aerospace legacy, and attempting to compete directly would misallocate resources. Instead, the city should define a targeted aerospace positioning centered on applied, civilian-facing aviation technologies: drone manufacturing and agricultural aerial systems, advanced air mobility testing, maintenance and repair operations aligned with FAA training capacity, and aviation-adjacent component manufacturing. The airport's leasing model—where operators lease rather than purchase land—lowers upfront capital requirements and creates a structural advantage for early-stage and capital-constrained aviation firms.

What's Needed?

- Define a clear aviation recruitment thesis centered on applied aviation—agricultural drones; advanced air mobility testing; maintenance, repair, and overhaul (MRO) operations; and aviation-adjacent component manufacturing—rather than broad "aerospace" positioning.
  - → Specificity enables proactive outreach to California-based advanced air mobility firms, drone manufacturers, and maintenance operators seeking lower capital entry costs.
- Identify priority airport parcels for aviation-adjacent manufacturing and maintenance, pre-entitle land where feasible, and develop long-term lease frameworks attractive to advanced manufacturing users.
  - → Converts the airport from a reactive leasing asset into a proactive economic development platform with clear target segments and ready sites.
- Market the airport as a flexible industrial campus, emphasizing greenfield acreage, agricultural adjacency for drone testing, rural airspace advantages, and proximity to FAA-certified training programs.
  - → These combined conditions are rare in California and create a differentiated positioning that competing airports cannot replicate.
- Position as part of the broader Kern County aerospace ecosystem rather than competing independently, partnering with Mojave and regional institutions to capture complementary activity.
  - → Regional approach is essential: Some opportunities require a critical mass that Shafter may not achieve alone, but partnership positions the city to capture specific segments.
- Advance a long-term vision for the airport as a core economic development asset, positioning the city to play a leadership role in guiding its future growth, partnerships, and investment.
  - → Strategic stewardship of the airport strengthens its role as a platform for aviation innovation, drone technology, aerospace manufacturing, and future logistics applications.

STRATEGY 3.3

Build shared manufacturing and aerospace workforce infrastructure.

Why It Matters:

Every successful manufacturing and aerospace case study demonstrates the same finding: Workforce infrastructure precedes industry attraction. Communities that wait for companies before building training capacity lose opportunities. The U.S. faces a potential shortfall of 1.9 million manufacturing workers by 2033, with skilled workforce availability ranking as the top site selection factor—ahead of taxes, tariffs, and regulations. Shafter already has building blocks: FAA-certified maintenance training nearby, Department of Labor–approved apprenticeship programs, and CTE pipelines. But apprenticeship programs are underutilized, manufacturers are not systematically connected to workforce intermediaries, and training capacity operates below its strategic potential. The same mechatronics technicians, computer numerical control (CNC) operators, welders, and quality professionals serve logistics, food processing, energy, and aerospace—training should be organized as a shared platform.

What's Needed?

- Establish a formal Sector Partnership anchored by the city, Bakersfield College, California Aeronautical University, airport leadership, major manufacturers, and emerging aviation stakeholders—serving as a workforce-forecasting intermediary, a recruitment-alignment forum, and a coordination platform.
  - → This is not a networking group. It is a structural convening mechanism that aligns training capacity with industrial growth strategy.
- Launch manufacturing and aerospace training programs before major recruitment efforts, targeting the highest-demand entry-level positions—quality inspection, CNC operation, composites technician, industrial maintenance—through short-term certificate programs.
  - → Short-term certificates get people working fast and let employers evaluate fit, with stackable credentials creating pathways to higher-wage technical roles.
- Develop incumbent worker training programs that enable existing manufacturers to transition to aerospace-adjacent production through targeted upskilling in composites, precision machining, and quality certification.
  - → Existing manufacturers represent the fastest pathway into aerospace supply chains—upskilling is faster and less risky than greenfield recruitment.

- Market workforce pipeline capacity—graduation rates, certification completions, apprenticeship placements, employer satisfaction—as a lead recruitment differentiator in manufacturing and aerospace business attraction.
    - → Workforce availability is the decisive factor. Demonstrating a trained pipeline is more compelling than promising future training.
- Expand K-12 career and technical education pathways aligned with advanced manufacturing and aviation, and increase employer participation in high school career signaling through facility tours, mentorship, and project-based learning.
    - → If aerospace and advanced manufacturing are to scale meaningfully over the next decade, upstream technical exposure must be treated as economic infrastructure, not a parallel conversation. Students who encounter manufacturing and aviation career pathways in high school are significantly more likely to enter local training programs and stay in the regional workforce.

STRATEGY 3.4

Prepare sites and streamline processes to compete for reshoring investment.

Why It Matters:

Approximately 63% of $1 trillion in announced advanced manufacturing investments will be within commuting distance of rural communities, creating a once-in-a-generation reshoring opportunity. But manufacturers choose locations where they can begin operations quickly. Site readiness—pre-developed parcels with utilities, access, entitlements, and environmental clearances in place—is a decisive competitive factor. Communities that have captured major reshoring investments have consistently won not through superior incentives, but because pre-developed sites enabled rapid operational start-up. Shafter has available industrial land and strong freight infrastructure, but site readiness must be proactive, not reactive. Layered incentives—state tax credits, local property tax agreements, training subsidies—are table stakes for competitive recruitment. Communities that combine ready sites with workforce partnerships and streamlined permitting capture reshoring investment; those that offer land alone lose to better-prepared competitors.

What's Needed?

- Pre-entitle and infrastructure-ready a portfolio of industrial sites with utilities, access, and environmental clearances in place before recruitment—targeting parcels suitable for mid-scale manufacturing operations.
  - → Eliminates the 12- to 18-month entitlement timeline that causes manufacturers to choose other locations with ready sites.
- Develop a streamlined permitting and approval process for manufacturing facilities, with clear timelines, single points of contact, and documented predictability.
  - → Speed and certainty matter more than incentive size for manufacturers evaluating multiple locations simultaneously.
- Coordinate with state incentive programs—California Competes Tax Credit, Manufacturing and R&D Equipment Sales Tax Exemption, Employment Training Panel—to assemble layered incentive packages competitive with other states.
  - → Individual incentives alone don't differentiate. Layered packages combining state credits, local agreements, and workforce support create a compelling total value proposition.
- Maintain and update a real-time inventory of available industrial sites with specifications, utility capacity, and development timelines for use in site selector conversations and marketing materials.
  - → Removes uncertainty about where manufacturers can locate and demonstrates site readiness—a critical differentiator in competitive recruitment.

Goal 3: Measuring Impact and Success

Manufacturing Cluster Growth and Diversification

Track new manufacturing establishments, employment, wages, and capital investment. Monitor supply chain import substitution—the share of the $250 million in annual imports captured by local or newly recruited suppliers. Measure cluster density through firm count, supplier relationships, and cross-firm workforce sharing.

Airport and Aerospace Activation

Measure airport land under active lease for aviation-related manufacturing, maintenance, or technology operations. Track aviation-related employment, firm count, and capital investment. Monitor progress against defined recruitment thesis targets—drone, MRO, advanced air mobility, component manufacturing.

Workforce Pipeline and Site Readiness

Track manufacturing and aerospace training program enrollment, certification completions, apprenticeship starts, and employer placement rates. Monitor portfolio of pre-entitled, infrastructure-ready industrial sites and average time from inquiry to operational start-up for new manufacturers.

We will support resilient energy systems while growing a cluster of companies that design and deploy these technologies.

Why It Matters

Energy is not simply another industry vertical for Shafter. It is a competitiveness platform underlying every cluster in this plan. Irrigation systems, cold storage, food processing, warehouse automation, heavy industrial equipment, and freight movement all operate within tight margins shaped by electricity and fuel pricing. Shafter's economic base is disproportionately energy-intensive, and energy costs in California are among the highest in the nation.

At the same time, Kern County occupies a unique dual position in California's energy landscape. The region produces 71% of the state's crude oil while hosting 4+ GW of wind capacity and 20,000 MW of renewable energy permitted or planned—making it the state's energy transition pivot point. This creates a dual strategic opportunity. Defensively, Shafter must protect existing businesses from cost escalation through microgrids, distributed generation, and emerging wholesale procurement tools. Offensively, the city can pursue the manufacturing, field services, storage, and equipment assembly that support the region's expanding energy infrastructure. Construction jobs are temporary; manufacturing and services create permanent, higher-wage positions.

The strategic question is how deliberately Shafter prioritizes near-term margin protection alongside longer-horizon energy sovereignty and sector development.

Strategies

4.1 Protect existing businesses through microgrids, distributed generation, and energy cost management.

4.2 Target energy-adjacent manufacturing and field services—not generation.

4.3 Position hydrogen as a targeted pilot, not a speculative bet.

4.4 Build an energy systems workforce aligned with cross-cluster technical skills.

4.5 Assess municipal power feasibility for future growth areas.

STRATEGY 4.1

Protect existing businesses through microgrids, distributed generation, and energy cost management.

Why It Matters:

Microgrids are the most actionable near-term lever for business retention and margin protection. Unlike municipal power conversion for existing service areas—which involves litigation risk, capital-intensive infrastructure, and multi-year timelines—microgrids operate within existing utility frameworks and can be deployed now. They enhance reliability during outages, reduce peak demand exposure, and enable storage and alternative generation integration. In a state where outage risk and price volatility are part of the business environment, facilitating microgrid adoption is a tangible economic development strategy tied directly to retention and expansion. California's gradual expansion of wholesale market access adds another layer: Pilot programs allowing large users to procure power directly from wholesale markets have produced dramatic savings for participants. Energy management is becoming a strategic discipline, and firms that understand pricing structures, storage arbitrage, and hybrid supply models will outperform those that treat utilities as fixed overhead.

What's Needed?

- Establish an Energy Competitiveness Task Force composed of major industrial users, agricultural operators, logistics firms, utilities, and technical advisors—focused on coordination, not advocacy.
  - → Identifies firms most exposed to energy volatility, facilitates education around procurement pilots, and aligns city processes with distributed generation needs.
- Streamline permitting for distributed generation and storage, pre-identify industrial parcels suitable for microgrid clustering, and coordinate with utilities to clarify interconnection pathways.
  - → Moves the city from passive approval to active enablement—lowering friction signals Shafter's understanding of the operational realities of energy-intensive businesses.
- Explore partnership-based microgrid demonstration projects at city-owned or partner facilities to evaluate costs, reliability improvements, and potential applications for local industry.
  - → City-led demonstration reduces perceived risk for private operators and creates a visible proof point for business attraction.
- Facilitate education and advisory support for businesses interested in wholesale procurement pilots, storage integration, and behind-the-meter generation.
  - → Energy procurement capability may become a competitive differentiator among firms—businesses need knowledge and infrastructure to participate.

STRATEGY 4.2

Target energy-adjacent manufacturing and field services—not generation.

Why It Matters:

Every market analysis and case study confirms that the durable employment opportunity in clean energy lies in the industrial supply chain, not in power generation itself. Hosting solar farms or wind turbines provides minimal permanent employment. Manufacturing the equipment, assembling storage systems, providing field maintenance, and producing balance-of-plant components create permanent, higher-wage positions. With 20,000+ MW of renewable capacity permitted or planned in Kern County alone, the regional maintenance and field services market presents a significant employment opportunity that can be served from Shafter's industrial base. Clean energy manufacturing added 10,000 jobs nationally in 2024 while overall manufacturing declined. The wage profile for energy equipment manufacturing and specialized field services ($60,000–$95,000 for experienced technicians) aligns with this strategy's emphasis on career-wage employment.

What's Needed?

- Focus recruitment on electrical equipment manufacturers, energy storage system integrators, field service operations, and balance-of-plant component producers—marketing Shafter as an "energy systems manufacturing and services hub."
  - → Positions Shafter to serve Kern County's expanding renewable fleet with permanent, higher-wage jobs rather than temporary construction employment.
- Target specific manufacturing opportunities within the energy supply chain—equipment components, storage system integration, testing and certification services—that use the same industrial infrastructure and workforce skills as Shafter's existing manufacturing base.
  - → These are the higher-value, durable segments within the energy supply chain—and they use the same industrial infrastructure and workforce skills as Shafter's existing manufacturing base.
- Coordinate energy manufacturing recruitment with the broader industrial strategy (Goal 3), positioning energy equipment as a complementary segment within Shafter's Advanced Industrial Materials cluster.
  - → Cross-cluster integration means energy manufacturers benefit from shared workforce, logistics infrastructure, and supplier networks.
- Diversify across energy technologies—solar, wind, storage, hydrogen equipment—to reduce vulnerability to any single federal policy cycle.
  - → Recent experience with wind component manufacturers idling facilities for years at a time during federal tax credit lapses demonstrates the risk of single-technology dependence.

STRATEGY 4.3

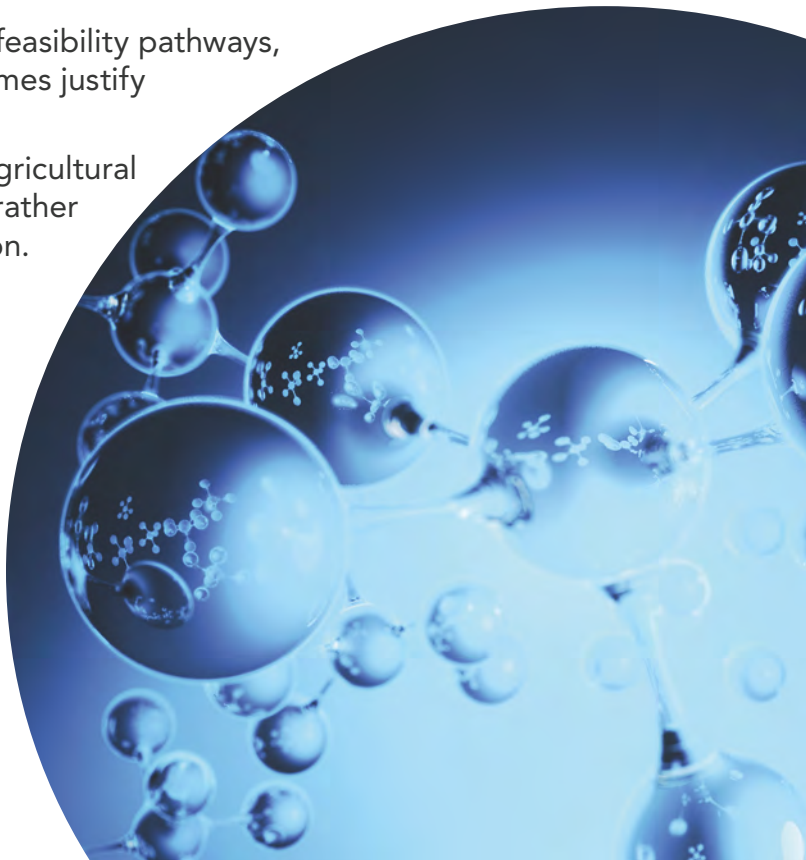
Position hydrogen as a targeted pilot, not a speculative bet.

Why It Matters:

Hydrogen presents a dual opportunity: infrastructure diversification and sector development. But its economics hinge on aggregated demand and defined use cases. The California ARCHES hydrogen hub program—originally $12.6 billion in combined investment—was disrupted by the cancellation of federal funding in 2025, though the state is pursuing alternative funding through cap-and-trade revenues and private investment. Rather than pursuing hydrogen as a broad narrative, Shafter should take a "watch, don't chase" approach while positioning for targeted pilots that could anchor both infrastructure resilience and a niche energy cluster. Hydrogen is viable when demand is aggregated—production economics improve dramatically when multiple off-takers coordinate. This creates a potential ecosystem opportunity if Shafter can identify concentrated demand.

What's Needed?

- Assess aggregated local hydrogen demand potential across fleet fueling, industrial use, and natural gas blending applications.
  - → Demand aggregation precedes production—understanding whether sufficient local off-takers exist determines a pilot's viability.
- Partner with existing regional initiatives to stay connected to evolving funding and technology pathways.
  - → Leverages Shafter's existing relationships with regional partners already advancing hydrogen strategies.
- Identify agricultural waste-to-hydrogen feasibility pathways, evaluating whether local feedstock volumes justify production investment.
  - → Connects hydrogen to Shafter's agricultural base, creating cross-cluster value rather than standalone energy speculation.
- Monitor state funding developments and position Shafter to respond quickly if cap-and-trade revenues or private investment create viable hydrogen deployment pathways.
  - → Being prepared matters more than being first. When funding materializes, communities with defined use cases and aggregated demand will capture investment.



STRATEGY 4.4

Build an energy systems workforce aligned with cross-cluster technical skills.

Why It Matters:

The clean energy workforce gap is the industry's binding constraint. Communities that demonstrate training capacity attract investment; those that promise future training lose opportunities. Critically, the energy systems workforce needs to overlap substantially with logistics, manufacturing, and food processing: The same industrial electricians, controls technicians, mechatronics specialists, and maintenance professionals serve all four clusters. Fewer than 5% of Bakersfield-area oil and gas workers are projected to find comparable employment in direct renewable energy production—but energy-adjacent manufacturing and services offer realistic transition pathways for workers with transferable industrial skills. Training should target career-wage occupations—energy equipment manufacturing technicians, industrial maintenance specialists, controls engineers, and field service technicians—where experienced workers command wages well above regional medians.

What's Needed?

- Formalize Bakersfield College partnership for energy systems training with short-term certificates in industrial electrical systems, energy equipment maintenance, and controls technology.
  - → Builds on the same cross-cluster technical training platform serving logistics, manufacturing, and food processing—creating career mobility across all industrial clusters.
- Leverage state workforce programs and displaced worker retraining grants to support training for workers transitioning from oil and gas into energy-adjacent manufacturing and services.
  - → Connects existing state funding to local workforce needs, reducing the cost of building training capacity.
- Develop employer-driven training partnerships with energy equipment manufacturers and field service operators, ensuring curriculum matches actual job requirements.
  - → Industry-designed curriculum improves placement rates and employer satisfaction—abstract training without employer input wastes resources.
- Market energy systems workforce capacity alongside manufacturing and logistics pipelines, emphasizing that Shafter's technical workers serve multiple clusters from a shared skills foundation.
  - → Cross-cluster workforce portability is Shafter's defining workforce advantage—a technician trained for energy equipment maintenance can serve logistics automation, food processing, and aerospace manufacturing.
- Formalize CSU Bakersfield partnership to monitor emerging energy technologies, industry conditions, and applied research opportunities.
  - → This provides regional intelligence on the ever-evolving energy industry, ensuring workforce training, infrastructure planning, and business attraction strategies remain aligned with current trends and industry demand.

STRATEGY 4.5

Assess municipal power feasibility for future growth areas.

Why It Matters:

Municipal power for existing service territory involves litigation, capital intensity, and extended timelines that make it impractical as a near-term strategy. But Shafter's growth trajectory includes master-planned developments and new industrial areas that are not yet served by any utility. For these greenfield areas, the calculus is different: The city could explore establishing city-controlled distribution zones from the outset, avoiding the conversion battles that derail most municipal power efforts. A feasibility assessment—not a commitment—would determine whether the economics, regulatory pathway, and operational requirements justify further pursuit. If viable, city-controlled energy in new growth areas would provide a structural cost advantage for recruiting energy-intensive employers and a long-term revenue tool for the city.

What's Needed?

- Commission a municipal power feasibility study focused exclusively on future growth areas: new master-planned developments, industrial expansion zones, and greenfield parcels not currently served by an existing utility.
  - → Narrowing the scope to unserved areas avoids the legal and political friction associated with converting existing utility customers, while testing whether city-controlled distribution is viable where development hasn't yet occurred.
- Model generation, transmission, and rate design scenarios to evaluate whether city-controlled distribution could offer competitive energy pricing for industrial and commercial users in new development areas.
  - → The value proposition for employers depends on rate competitiveness. Modeling must account for capital costs, wholesale procurement options, renewable integration, and long-term rate stability compared to incumbent utility pricing.
- Evaluate governance and operational requirements—staffing, regulatory compliance, infrastructure investment, and ongoing management—to determine whether Shafter has or can build the institutional capacity to operate as a municipal utility in targeted zones.
  - → Municipal power requires sustained operational commitment. A feasibility assessment should be candid about capacity requirements, not just financial projections.
- Coordinate findings with the Energy Competitiveness Task Force (Strategy 4.1) and long-term land use planning to ensure energy strategy and growth management are aligned.
  - → Energy infrastructure decisions in new growth areas should be made in conjunction with corridor planning, site readiness investments, and industrial recruitment targets.

Goal 4: Measuring Impact and Success

Energy Cost and Reliability

Track energy costs per unit of output for major industrial users, microgrid deployments and capacity, distributed generation adoption rates, and wholesale procurement participation. Monitor reliability metrics, including outage frequency and duration, for businesses participating in distributed generation programs.

Energy Manufacturing and Services

Measure energy-adjacent manufacturing employment, wages, and capital investment. Track number of energy equipment manufacturers, field service operators, and storage system integrators operating from Shafter. Monitor diversification across energy technologies to assess policy vulnerability.

Hydrogen and Long-term Positioning

Track progress against hydrogen pilot milestones: demand assessments completed, partnerships formalized, funding applications submitted. Monitor state funding developments and Shafter's readiness to respond when deployment pathways become viable. Track municipal power feasibility study completion, governance capacity assessment, and decision milestones for new growth area energy strategy.

We will transform Lerdo Highway and 7th Standard Road from pass-throughs into economic destinations that support industrial growth and enhance quality of life.

Why It Matters

Lerdo Highway and 7th Standard Road are not simply roadways. They are Shafter's economic frontage—the spatial stage on which the city's next phase of economic development will either consolidate or diffuse. Lerdo serves as the primary gateway from the 99 into the city and its industrial employment base. 7th Standard links emerging residential neighborhoods to job centers and regional retail markets. Together, they carry the daily flow of workers, freight, and households that sustain the local economy.

Yet these corridors operate as conduits rather than destinations. Workers travel them but do not stop along them. Residents pass through them but shop elsewhere. Industrial traffic flows across them, but little economic activity anchors to them. The risk is significant: If these corridors remain purely functional, Shafter forfeits the opportunity to convert mobility into value capture. Three structural tensions define their future. First, mobility versus value capture—traffic flows through, but economic activity along the corridors remains thin. Second, infrastructure sequencing versus market timing—growth ambitions are moving forward, but sewer capacity, electrical coordination, and grade separations must keep pace. Third, cohesion versus bifurcation—as new housing emerges along 7th Standard and industrial investment accelerates along Lerdo, the relationship between "new Shafter" and the historic core becomes more consequential.

These tensions do not suggest failure. They signal a transition—and the strategies that follow are designed to resolve them.

Strategies

5.1 Sequence infrastructure ahead of frontage activation.

5.2 Anchor catalytic nodes rather than attempt uniform corridor redevelopment.

5.3 Align corridor land use with industrial competitiveness and workforce capture.

5.4 Develop a unified corridor identity that bridges new growth and the historic core.

5.5 Launch a downtown activation program.

STRATEGY 5.1

Sequence infrastructure ahead of frontage activation.

Why It Matters:

Infrastructure capacity—sewer extensions, electrical coordination, water quality, grade separations, canal alignments—is the silent determinant of corridor evolution. Without coordinated sequencing, private development either stalls or bears disproportionate cost. Industrial expansion, residential development, and long-term diversification ambitions are all moving forward simultaneously, but the physical systems that support them must keep pace. With poorly sequenced investment, financial feasibility stalls. With anticipatory investment, the city creates development-ready corridors that attract private capital rather than repelling it. This is not about widening roads—it is about ensuring that land use ambition and infrastructure capacity move in parallel.

What's Needed?

- Adopt a formal Corridor Infrastructure Strategy aligned with the General Plan update, mapping phased sewer and utility expansion west along Lerdo and fully through 7th Standard.
  - → Creates a documented public investment timeline that developers and investors can rely on when making location and timing decisions.
- Align grade separations and north–south arterial improvements with economic node development, prioritizing intersections designated as catalytic nodes (Strategy 5.2).
  - → Concentrates infrastructure investment where it will generate the greatest frontage activation and private capital response.
- Identify financing mechanisms—including enhanced infrastructure financing districts or similar tools—that distribute cost across future assessed value rather than front-loading burden onto early frontage projects.
  - → Reduces the financial penalty for being the first developer along the corridor, enabling earlier private investment.
- Coordinate infrastructure phasing with industrial site preparation (Goal 3) and energy infrastructure planning (Goal 4) to avoid redundant investment and ensure industrial parcels along Lerdo maintain utility capacity for advanced manufacturing and logistics uses.
  - → Cross-goal coordination prevents corridor infrastructure from inadvertently constraining industrial competitiveness.

STRATEGY 5.2

Anchor catalytic nodes rather than attempt uniform corridor redevelopment.

Why It Matters:

The Lerdo Highway and 7th Standard Road corridors are both long, linear systems. Attempting to activate them evenly will dilute investment and produce incremental, inconsistent frontage. The more effective approach is strategic concentration—formally designating 2–3 priority nodes at key intersections as corridor anchors. These nodes function as mixed-use service clusters that serve workers and residents, visually distinct gateways that signal entry into Shafter, and sites for coordinated public-private investment. By concentrating infrastructure upgrades, streetscape standards, and development incentives at specific intersections, Shafter can convert traffic volume into visible economic centers rather than dispersed strip activity.

What's Needed?

- Formally designate priority nodes—particularly at intersections such as Lerdo & Cherry and 7th Standard & Cherry—as corridor anchors with concentrated public investment, design standards, and development incentives.
  - → Strategic concentration creates visible proof points that build investor confidence and market momentum along the broader corridor.
- Develop node-specific development frameworks that define desired uses, density, design standards, and public realm improvements for each designated intersection.
  - → Provides clear expectations for developers, reducing negotiation time and creating predictable outcomes that attract private capital.
- Concentrate workforce-serving and visitor-serving commercial uses at designated nodes—food service, child care, convenience retail, health care access, lodging, and fuel—that capture spending from daily worker flows along Lerdo, residential growth along 7th Standard, and the business travelers, operators, and freight traffic generated by Shafter's industrial base.
  - → Converts the estimated 10,000+ daily worker trips along Lerdo—plus visiting operators, business travelers, and freight-related traffic—into local economic activity rather than leakage to Bakersfield.
- Use public realm investments at nodes—streetscape, lighting, landscaping, gateway signage—as catalytic anchors that signal quality expectations for adjacent private development.
  - → Public investment in the right locations sets the standard for private development rather than reacting to it.

STRATEGY 5.3

Align corridor land use with industrial competitiveness and workforce capture.

Why It Matters:

Lerdo sits adjacent to Shafter's industrial base—an adjacency that is a competitive advantage, but one that requires discipline. Premature parcel fragmentation or speculative strip-commercial zoning along Lerdo undermines large-lot industrial flexibility that logistics, manufacturing, and food processing operators require. At the same time, intentionally layering complementary uses—workforce-serving retail, flex office, small-format food and service businesses—in proximity to employment clusters allows the corridor to remain industrially competitive while capturing multiplier effects from daily worker flows. On 7th Standard, zoning and frontage policy must anticipate residential density sufficient to support retail viability. Rooftops alone will not produce a commercial spine—density thresholds and frontage quality standards must align. The structural goal is coherence among land use, wage composition, and retail capture.

What's Needed?

- Protect large-lot industrial flexibility along Lerdo's south side, avoiding premature commercial zoning that fragments parcels needed for logistics, manufacturing, and food processing expansion.
  - → Industrial land is a finite, non-renewable competitive asset—once fragmented into strip-commercial parcels, it cannot be reassembled.
- Intentionally layer workforce-serving commercial uses along Lerdo's north side and at designated nodes, creating service density that captures daily worker spending without competing with industrial land.
  - → Calibrated layering allows the corridor to serve both industrial competitiveness and retail capture objectives simultaneously.
- Align 7th Standard zoning and frontage policy with residential density thresholds sufficient to support sustainable retail—ensuring that housing growth translates into commercial viability rather than additional leakage.
  - → Without sufficient density, commercial frontage along 7th Standard will fail to attract tenants, producing vacancy rather than activation.
- Coordinate corridor land use decisions with the General Plan update to ensure economic development priorities, zoning frameworks, and infrastructure investments are mutually reinforcing.
  - → The concurrent timing of the Economic Development Strategic Plan and General Plan creates a rare alignment opportunity—misalignment now will create conflicts for a decade.

STRATEGY 5.4

Develop a unified corridor identity that bridges new growth and the historic core.

Why It Matters:

Participants consistently expressed concern about a perceived divide between newer residential areas and older parts of Shafter. The corridors physically mediate that relationship—they are the connective tissue between "new Shafter" and the historic core. If corridor evolution orients outward toward Bakersfield, leakage deepens. If it aligns inward, corridors reinforce citywide cohesion. Identity is not cosmetic. It influences investor perception, household orientation, and long-term retail loyalty. A corridor that feels unmistakably Shafter reinforces internal cohesion and reduces outward leakage. Today, both corridors signal utility more than identity—they read as rural-industrial edge rather than economic gateway. Lerdo is the front door to Shafter, yet drivers experience miles without a clear sense of arrival. Along 7th Standard, drivers may not know when they are in Shafter versus surrounding jurisdictions.

What's Needed?

- Adopt a Corridor Identity Framework that establishes cohesive standards for lighting, landscaping, and signage along both corridors—integrating agricultural heritage and industrial strength into gateway elements.
    - → Creates visual continuity from the 99 to downtown, making the corridor experience communicate Shafter's identity rather than generic suburban development.
- Design gateway treatments at key entry points—particularly the Lerdo/99 interchange and 7th Standard approaches—that signal arrival into a confident, intentional community.
    - → First impressions shape investor perception, business attraction conversations, and resident pride—a strong gateway communicates that growth is managed, not accidental.
- Reinforce north–south connections that link new residential areas along 7th Standard to the historic core, downtown, and Mannel Park, preventing the emergence of functionally separate communities.
    - → Physical connectivity sustains social and economic cohesion as the city grows—without it, "new Shafter" and "old Shafter" become separate markets with separate loyalties.
- Integrate the airport into the corridor's identity and development patterns, creating visible signals of aviation and advanced manufacturing as part of Shafter's economic story.
    - → The airport is a latent diversification asset whose relationship to corridor identity is currently underexpressed—making it visible reinforces the city's forward-looking economic narrative.

STRATEGY 5.5

Launch a downtown activation program.

Why It Matters:

Downtown Shafter has strong bones and existing momentum: First Fridays draw residents into the core, and the city's façade grant program signals investment in the area. But stakeholders consistently noted that downtown struggles to compete for attention and resources in a city focused primarily on major industrial projects. Small businesses and local retail are what make Shafter feel like home, not just a place to work. Activation doesn't require major capital investment upfront—it requires consistent programming that builds foot traffic, tests demand, and gives residents reasons to spend locally rather than drive to Bakersfield.

What's Needed?

- Build on First Fridays by expanding regular community programming—markets, seasonal events, vendor nights—that establishes downtown as a consistent social anchor rather than an occasional destination.
    - → Consistent programming builds habit. Residents who come regularly begin to see downtown as theirs—and that loyalty creates the spending base that attracts permanent businesses.
- Create a pop-up and temporary-use program that lowers barriers for small vendors and food entrepreneurs to test concepts in downtown spaces before committing to permanent leases.
    - → Reduces vacancy risk, generates foot traffic, and builds a pipeline of businesses that may become permanent tenants as demand grows.
- Coordinate downtown activation with corridor strategy (Goal 5) and small business support (Strategy 6.3) to ensure that programming, permitting, and business development resources work together rather than in parallel.
    - → Downtown and corridors serve different functions but the same community—coordinated investment prevents competition for limited resources.
- Implement small-scale placemaking improvements—temporary seating, parklets, lighting, murals, and shade structures—to make downtown spaces more comfortable for gathering and events.
    - → People stay longer in places that feel welcoming and comfortable. Low-cost placemaking improvements can significantly increase dwell time and support downtown businesses during events and daily activity.

Goal 5: Measuring Impact and Success

Corridor Infrastructure and Activation

Track infrastructure investments completed along Lerdo and 7th Standard—sewer extensions, utility upgrades, grade separations, canal alignments. Measure linear feet of corridor with development-ready infrastructure. Monitor private development applications and investment at designated catalytic nodes.

Value Capture and Retail Performance

Measure retail sales tax capture along both corridors relative to baseline. Track new commercial establishments, square footage, and employment at corridor nodes. Monitor retail leakage reduction—the share of local spending retained within Shafter versus captured by Bakersfield.

Identity and Cohesion

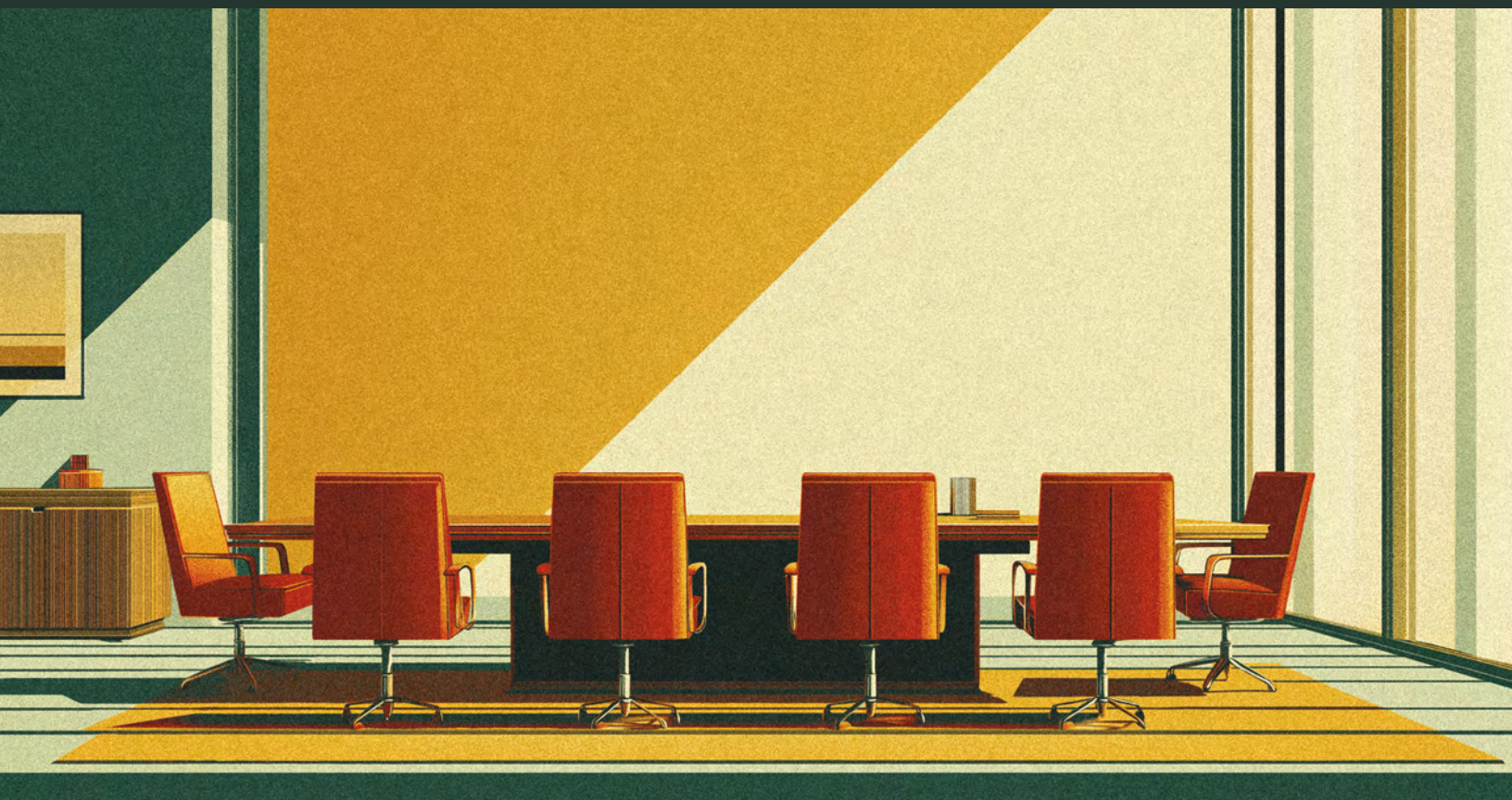
Track implementation of Corridor Identity Framework elements: gateway treatments installed, streetscape standards adopted, signage and wayfinding deployed. Monitor resident and business perception of corridor quality through periodic surveys. Assess north–south connectivity improvements linking new residential areas to the historic core.

We will strengthen Shafter's economic development capacity to support businesses, partnerships, and the delivery of this strategy.

Why It Matters

The first five goals of this plan define what Shafter should pursue. This goal defines how. Every cluster analysis, engagement summary, and case study in this plan converges on the same structural finding: The assets are present, but coordination is the missing ingredient. Apprenticeship programs are underutilized. Manufacturers operate independently. Airport land lacks a defined recruitment thesis. Regional partners exist, but relationships are informal. Existing businesses receive limited systematic support. Marketing materials do not yet reflect the city's competitive position.

Shafter's early growth model centered on land, infrastructure, and project attraction. The next phase requires ecosystem management: convening, coordinating, aligning policy, and managing complexity across five industry clusters, two corridors, and a network of regional partners. This may require dedicated staff capacity focused on sector strategy, formal convening structures beyond ad hoc meetings, clear performance metrics tied to value capture rather than job counts alone, and state and federal alignment strategy around available funding programs. Economic development is no longer only about attracting the next warehouse or facility. It is about managing a system. If Shafter intends to lead across logistics, agriculture, manufacturing, energy, and aviation, it must invest in the institutional capacity to do so.



Strategies

6.1 Formalize regional partnerships and define Shafter's role within the Kern County ecosystem.

6.2 Build sector-specific marketing and storytelling that positions Shafter competitively.

6.3 Support small business and entrepreneurship as economic development infrastructure.

6.4 Build internal institutional capacity to manage a multi-cluster economic development strategy.

STRATEGY 6.1

Formalize regional partnerships and define Shafter's role within the Kern County ecosystem.

Why It Matters:

No cluster in this plan can be pursued alone. The same regional partners appeared in every analysis: B3K Prosperity for clean energy, advanced manufacturing, and workforce development; Kern EDC for business attraction, incentive navigation, and regional positioning; Bakersfield College for workforce training, certificates, and apprenticeships; CSU Bakersfield for four-year pathways and research partnerships. Kern County's energy transition, manufacturing modernization, and logistics expansion are regional challenges requiring regional solutions. But partnerships require intentionality—without clear objectives and consistent engagement, they become performative rather than productive. Shafter should position itself as the preferred industrial site within a broader Kern County ecosystem, leveraging regional training, incentives, and employer relationships through a division of labor, not duplication.

What's Needed?

- Formalize partnership agreements with B3K Prosperity, Kern EDC, Bakersfield College, and CSU Bakersfield that define specific roles, shared objectives, and coordination mechanisms for each cluster strategy.
  - → Converts informal relationships into structured collaboration with clear expectations—ensuring regional partners actively support Shafter's cluster strategies rather than operating in parallel.
- Coordinate with Kern EDC on business attraction, incentive navigation, and site selector engagement—contributing Shafter-specific site data, workforce capacity information, and cross-cluster value propositions to regional marketing efforts.
  - → Positions Shafter within regional conversations rather than competing independently, increasing the city's visibility in site selection processes that it would not reach alone.

- Participate actively in B3K Prosperity's implementation teams for clean energy, advanced air mobility, advanced manufacturing, and workforce development—ensuring Shafter's priorities are reflected in regional programming.
    - → Regional implementation teams allocate resources and set priorities—consistent participation ensures Shafter captures its share of regional investment and programming.
- Engage the Wonderful Company, major employers, and agricultural stakeholders as strategic partners beyond their roles as individual employers—incorporating their expertise, networks, and resources into cluster strategy execution.
    - → Large employers and institutional partners have capabilities and connections that amplify city-led initiatives—formalized engagement ensures these assets are leveraged systematically.
- Develop a coordinated state and federal policy advocacy strategy—in partnership with Kern EDC, B3K Prosperity, California Association for Local Economic Development (CALED), and industry groups—focused on protecting freight rail capacity, ensuring energy reliability for industrial users, positioning the region for emerging fuel and electrification transitions, and capturing available economic development funding.
    - → California's regulatory and funding landscape presents both friction and opportunity across every cluster in this plan. Communities that engage proactively on freight, energy, workforce, and industrial policy help shape rules rather than simply comply with them. A coordinated regional posture amplifies Shafter's voice on issues no single small city can influence alone.

STRATEGY 6.2

Build sector-specific marketing and storytelling that positions Shafter competitively.

Why It Matters:

Generic marketing does not win business attraction competitions. Site selectors and businesses need specific information—workforce data, cost comparisons, available sites, incentives, cross-cluster value propositions—presented professionally and persuasively. Sector-specific materials demonstrate that Shafter understands what different industries need and can articulate competitive advantages. But marketing is not just external. Celebrating wins and communicating progress builds internal momentum. Annual reporting that showcases economic development achievements demonstrates accountability, builds community pride, and creates a narrative of momentum that attracts additional investment. When residents, businesses, and stakeholders see tangible progress, they become advocates for continued growth. Shafter has extraordinary assets—but these strengths mean nothing without strategic communication that makes them visible.

What's Needed?

- Develop sector-specific one-pagers for each priority cluster—logistics, agriculture/food systems, manufacturing/aerospace, energy—that articulate workforce, cost, infrastructure, site availability, and cross-cluster value propositions.
  - → Provides targeted materials for site selector conversations and business attraction outreach, demonstrating that Shafter understands what each industry needs.
- Create a comprehensive community profile with detailed demographic, economic, workforce, quality of life, and infrastructure data organized for business decision-making.
  - → Serves as the authoritative reference document that answers common business attraction questions with credible data—replacing ad hoc responses with professional materials.
- Design site inventory materials with professional specifications, maps, utility capacity, and development timelines for key industrial and commercial sites along Lerdo, 7th Standard, and the airport.
  - → Removes uncertainty about where businesses can locate and demonstrates site readiness—a critical differentiator when competing against communities with more mature marketing programs.
- Produce annual economic development reporting that highlights business attraction outcomes, workforce pipeline metrics, corridor progress, partnership milestones, and strategic plan implementation progress.
  - → Creates accountability, builds community pride, and generates the narrative of momentum that sustains political support and attracts additional investment.

STRATEGY 6.3

Support small business and entrepreneurship as economic development infrastructure.

Why It Matters:

Traded-sector recruitment and anchor tenant attraction are essential—but they are not the whole economy. Small and existing businesses employ the majority of Shafter's workforce, serve local households, activate corridors, and provide the commercial density that makes a community function. Entrepreneurship creates pathways for residents—particularly in a community where barriers to educational attainment limit access to corporate employment but do not limit ambition or capability. Small business support is not a separate program from economic development strategy—it is infrastructure. Reducing friction in permitting and licensing, connecting entrepreneurs to capital and technical assistance, and creating visible support systems for local business formation signal that Shafter invests in its own residents, not just outside recruitment. Every corridor node (Goal 5) needs local businesses to activate it. Every workforce program (Goals 1–4) produces workers who may eventually start their own businesses. Small business strategy reinforces every other goal in this plan.

What's Needed?

- Streamline permitting, licensing, and business formation processes—creating clear timelines, single points of contact, and documented guidance for entrepreneurs starting or expanding businesses in Shafter.
    - → Reducing friction is the single most impactful thing a city can do for small business—complexity and unpredictability discourage formation more than cost.
- Connect small business owners and aspiring entrepreneurs to regional resources—Small Business Development Centers, SCORE mentorship, Kern EDC programs, and Bakersfield College business development services.
    - → Shafter does not need to build all capacity internally—connecting entrepreneurs to existing regional infrastructure multiplies impact at minimal cost.

- Develop a small business retention and expansion program that systematically engages existing businesses to understand needs, identify expansion opportunities, and address challenges before they become relocations.
    - → Retaining and growing existing businesses is more cost-effective than recruitment—systematic engagement ensures the city learns about problems early enough to act.
- Support local business activation at corridor nodes (Goal 5)—prioritizing food service, child care, health care access, and workforce-serving retail that captures spending from daily worker flows.
    - → Corridor activation depends on small businesses filling commercial space at designated nodes—without targeted support, nodes remain planned but unactivated.
- Promote local spending and visibility for Shafter businesses through initiatives such as shop-local campaigns, business spotlight programs, and coordinated promotions that highlight local entrepreneurs.
    - → Increasing awareness of local businesses helps retain more spending within the community and strengthens the long-term viability of Shafter's small business ecosystem.

STRATEGY 6.4

Build internal institutional capacity to manage a multi-cluster economic development strategy.

Why It Matters:

This plan asks the City of Shafter to coordinate five industry clusters, two corridor strategies, a network of regional partnerships, and an accountability system—simultaneously. That represents a fundamentally different organizational demand than the project-by-project attraction model that built the city's initial industrial base. Managing sector partnerships, convening stakeholders, maintaining business retention relationships, tracking performance metrics, coordinating with regional partners, and executing marketing strategy requires dedicated staff capacity, defined roles, and management systems designed for ecosystem complexity. Without intentional investment in internal capacity, strategies will be adopted but under-executed—not because of insufficient ambition, but because of insufficient bandwidth.

What's Needed?

- Assess current economic development staffing against the implementation demands of this plan and identify capacity gaps—particularly in sector strategy management, business retention, stakeholder coordination, and marketing.
  - → The gap between strategy ambition and organizational capacity is the most common reason economic development plans underperform. An honest assessment ensures the city invests in execution, not just planning.
- Define dedicated roles or responsibilities for sector partnership management, ensuring that each cluster's convening structure (logistics, agriculture, manufacturing/aerospace, energy) has a consistent city point of contact.
  - → Sector partnerships lose momentum without consistent staffing. Convening structures that depend on ad hoc availability rather than assigned responsibility become performative rather than productive.
- Invest in professional development and technical capacity for economic development staff—including training in incentive navigation, site selection processes, data analysis, and stakeholder facilitation.
  - → The sophistication of this strategy requires staff who can engage credibly with site selectors, regional partners, state agencies, and industry leaders across multiple sectors.
- Develop a project evaluation or scoring framework tied to economic impact when considering incentives.
  - → Establishes criteria that clarify which types of projects the city prioritizes and when incentives may be appropriate.

- Establish management systems that enable consistent implementation oversight without depending on institutional memory, including shared project tracking and knowledge management tools.
    - → Systems reduce the vulnerability created by staff turnover and ensure that implementation progress, partnership commitments, and pipeline activity are transferable.
- Establish an economic development concierge program that provides businesses and investors with a single coordinated point of contact and structured project support throughout the development process—from initial inquiry through permitting, site selection, incentive navigation, and ongoing relationship management.
    - → Reduces friction for businesses navigating city processes and signals that Shafter treats economic development as a service, not just a regulatory function.
- Create a concise economic development priorities and incentive reference guide that outlines target sectors, development standards, and the conditions under which incentives or negotiated support may be considered—replacing the current case-by-case approach with a transparent, standardized framework.
    - → Gives staff a consistent decision-making tool, gives businesses and site selectors a clear picture of what Shafter is looking for, and serves as the front door to the full EDSP.
- Conduct a supply chain mapping initiative across all five target clusters—identifying the goods, services, and components that existing local industries currently purchase from outside the region and building a targeted recruitment list of supplier companies that could fill those gaps locally.
    - → Converts the $250 million supply chain leakage finding into an actionable recruitment pipeline. When the city knows exactly which precision machinery, specialized components, maintenance services, or packaging suppliers its employers need, business attraction becomes targeted outreach rather than general marketing.

Goal 6: Measuring Impact and Success

Partnership Activity and Regional Positioning

Track formalized partnership agreements, joint initiatives executed with regional partners, business leads generated through Kern EDC and B3K Prosperity collaboration, and Shafter's participation rate in regional implementation teams and workforce programs.

Marketing and Business Attraction Readiness

Measure completion and deployment of sector-specific marketing materials, community profile, and site inventory. Track website engagement, site selector inquiries, and business attraction conversations generated through marketing efforts. Monitor annual report production and distribution.

Small Business and Entrepreneurship

Track new business formations, permitting and licensing timelines, small business retention and expansion program participation, and local business activation at designated corridor nodes. Monitor connections made to regional business development resources.

Institutional Capacity and Implementation Readiness

Track economic development staffing levels against plan implementation requirements. Monitor sector partnership meeting frequency, participation rates, and action item completion. Assess management system adoption and utilization. Conduct annual capacity review to identify emerging gaps as strategy execution matures.

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