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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**Broadband Infrastructure, Housing, and a More Equitable Economy: Deep Discussions
Come Together at MBEP's Annual State of the Region**

(Marina, CA) - Monterey Bay Economic Partnership (MBEP) announces the addition of informative panels to its 8th Annual State of the Region lineup next week.

Broadband - Building Infrastructure to Reduce the Digital Divide & Advance Economic Growth, a panel discussion moderated by MBEP Broadband & Farmworker Housing Manager Alexia Garcia, will explore how a mix of infrastructure, forward-thinking, and collaboration are helping bridge the digital divide in the Monterey Bay region, with a look at local successes and what the future of digital equity could look like for our communities. Panelists include Cruzio Internet Business Operations & Development Director James Hackett, Monterey County Supervisor Chris Lopez (District 3), Rural County Representatives of California Legislative Advocate Tracy Rhine, and Joint Venture Silicon Valley Wireless Communications Initiative Executive Director David Witowski.

Housing, Homelessness, and 6th Cycle RHNA, a panel discussion moderated by MBEP Director for Strategic Initiatives - Housing and Broadband Alyssa Kroeger, will examine the needs, challenges, and opportunities to create affordable homes in our communities as we embark on our region's 6th Cycle Housing Element process and explores how community engagement and plans to end homelessness intersect.

Updated every eight years, the Housing Element is a critical component in community development planning and an opportunity to think outside the box in planning for the specific needs of a resilient community. As the needs of populations fluctuate, Housing Elements create a roadmap to ensure that a supply of quality, affordable housing is available throughout the region. Panelists will include Monterey County Supervisor Wendy Root Askew (District 4), Coalition of Homeless Service Providers Executive Director Genevieve Lucas-Conwell, and San Benito County Supervisor Betsy Dirks (District 1).

MBEP's 8th Annual State of the Region, taking place on Friday, Oct. 14 at CSUMB's University Center, will also feature **Sen. John Laird**, UC Santa Cruz Chancellor and MBEP Board Chair **Cynthia Larive**, and California State University, Monterey Bay President **Vanya Quiñones**, **Rep. Jimmy Panetta**, **Dr. Chris Benner** and **Dr. Manuel Pastor** of Solidarity Economics, **Assemblymember Robert Rivas**, world-renowned photographer **Frans Lanting**, and writer and videographer **Chris Eckstrom**. Read more about these presenters [here](#).

For interview requests or media access, please contact media@mbep.biz or call (831) 224-2132.

About Monterey Bay Economic Partnership (MBEP):

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