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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. Oct. 20, 2022) - When Monterey Bay Economic Partnership (MBEP) hosted its 8th Annual State of the Region on Friday, Oct. 14, it brought together a cross-sector gathering of public, private and civic leaders to discuss some of the biggest challenges facing the region, from broadband infrastructure and the digital divide to affordable housing and inclusive economic recovery and development. After two years of virtual events, it was exhilarating to engage — live and in person — with nearly 300 leaders from across the tri-county region at the beautiful California State University, Monterey Bay campus.

Among the [speakers](#) were Rep. Jimmy Panetta, Sen. John Laird, Assemblymember Robert Rivas, UC Santa Cruz Chancellor Cynthia Larive, CSU Monterey Bay President Vanya Quinonez, Monterey County Supervisors Chris Lopez and Wendy Root Askew, San Benito County Supervisor Betsy Dirks, and Chairman Valentine Lopez of the Amah Mutsun Tribal Band. The day fostered the kinds of conversations, collaborations, and conceptual thinking that can help shape the way those big challenges will be met, while intentionally lining the path toward a more equitable economy.

In a deeply engaging and witty talk drawing from decades of research, keynote speakers Dr. Chris Benner and Dr. Manuel Pastor delivered a thought-provoking message for our time, reenvisioning a robust, sustainable, and equitable economy and a road map and conceptual framework for equity-driven economic reform.

Monterey Bay Economic Partnership Board President Cynthia Larive and MBEP President & CEO Tahra Goraya presented the 2022 Community Impact Award to Monterey County Homeless Services Director Roxanne Wilson and to former Watsonville City Manager Rene Mendez.

Formerly executive director of the Coalition of Homeless Services Providers, Wilson's impact serving our most vulnerable residents through a housing-first approach, advocating for increased housing supply, and championing cross-sectoral collaboration, has catalyzed significant and ongoing systems change in our communities.

One of the founders of MBEP, Mendez has made a tremendous impact in our region as a steadfast advocate to reduce the digital divide by helping form the South Salinas Valley Broadband Authority.

Check out this short [video recap](#) of MBEP's 8th Annual State of the Region, then visit [MBEP's website](#) to view individual panel discussions and each of our guest speakers. *(All photos and video are courtesy of [Lucid Sound and Picture](#).)*

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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.