Mega economic region gets boost with agreement

By ELIZABETH VARIN
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SAN DIEGO — A move to cement Imperial County, San Diego County and Baja California together reached a major milestone Monday as representatives from the three areas signed on their support of marketing the region as a mega region.

Officials signed a memorandum of understanding Monday to begin marketing efforts under the Cali Baja brand. The move is part of a plan to market the areas as part of a bi-national mega region.

Monday’s signing was an opportunity to formalize what’s been in discussion for quite a while, said Mega-Region Initiative Director Christina Anne Luhn.

Before now it’s been a series of stakeholder meetings, but this put down formal groundwork to work together as a region.

“I’m pretty darn excited about this,” she said.

The idea of promoting the three areas as a mega region came years ago when the economy was looking better, she said. However, it’s just as important now to continue to work together.

“With the challenges even more and with the resources, working together just makes sense,” she said.

The event Monday was a sort of celebration of more than a year of hard work, but it’s not finished yet, Luhn said.

“Now we roll up our sleeves and get to work,” she added.

Valley officials were on hand for the signing of the memorandum at San Diego State University’s main campus.

“We are excited to get under way in marketing Cali Baja with our partners,” said Imperial Valley Economic Development Corp. President and Chief Executive Officer Timothy Kelley. “We believe there is huge market potential out there, and together we are stronger in capturing those companies than
we are as separate regions.”

IVEDC is working with its San Diego counterpart as well as Mexicali’s industrial promotion commission and other groups hoping to spur economic development in the area.

The Cali Baja region is set to help capitalize on the region’s diversified assets and maximize its marketing efforts, according to a press release from the organization.

The partnership is set to work in the coming months to develop an online “asset map” for selecting sites in the region, according to the press release.

“Together with our partners we are committed to marketing the assets of the region as a whole,” said Julie Meier Wright, president and chief executive officer of the San Diego Regional Economic Development Corp. “Under the MOU, deal flow and transactions with client companies interested in locating to or expanding in Cali Baja will be driven by a regional approach to economic development.

“This unique collaborative model will create a significant competitive advantage for our region,” she added in a statement.

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