



# BUSINESS JOURNAL



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Over Downtown Salinas  
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Exterior design of the entrance to the Professional Development Conference Center, which will be able to accommodate up to 500 people for conferences, training sessions, and events.

## Conference Center Will Open in Salinas in 2027, With a Surprising Host

By Kevin Dayton, Government Affairs Liaison

**O**n April 28, 2026, the Monterey County Office of Education (MCOE), the Monterey County Superintendent of Schools, and the Monterey County Board of Education held a groundbreaking ceremony for a new Professional Development Conference Center off of Blanco Road in the City of Salinas. A representative of your Salinas Valley Chamber of Commerce was in attendance for the event.

This conference center is meant to serve the people of the County of Monterey as “a dynamic hub for professional learning, collaboration,

CONFERENCE CENTER see page 8

## Implementing Long-Awaited Highway Safety Enhancements on U.S. 101 South of Salinas

### Part 2: New Major Interchanges and Frontage Roads of the 'US 101 South of Salinas Corridor Improvement Project'

By Kevin Dayton,  
Government Affairs Liaison

**T**his is Part 2 of a two-part series about the plans of the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans), in coordination with the Transportation Agency for Monterey County (TAMC), to improve safety on the eight miles of U.S. 101 south of the City of Salinas, between Airport Road and Chualar.

Part 1, in the May issue of the Business Journal, described the reasons for the unsafe conditions on this stretch of highway and explained the short-term solution of the “South of Salinas Access Management Project.”

Scheduled to begin in early 2027, the Access Management Project will

SAFETY see page 5



New Chualar Interchange



New Abbott Street Interchange

The proposed U.S. 101 South of Salinas Corridor Improvement Project includes the reconstruction of the existing interchange at Abbott Street, upgrades to the Chualar interchange, and a network of new frontage roads.



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# Salinas Valley Water — The Proverbial Elephant in the Room

By Leonard Batti, SVCC Board Chair



I had the opportunity to attend the annual meeting of the Salinas Basin Water Alliance (SBWA), a coalition of northern Salinas Valley growers, last month and received an eye-opening crash course on the threats facing both agriculture and the residents of Monterey County.

The two primary challenges are seawater intrusion into the northern valley subbasins and the need for major infrastructure investment in the facilities that support our domestic water supply. Each issue carries a potential billion-dollar price tag. For the sake of space, I'd like to focus on the first threat.

The Salinas Valley agricultural community has a long history of coming together to address major threats to America's fresh vegetable supply. In 2006, the industry united to address food safety concerns affecting leafy greens. Growers developed a world-leading set of farming practices that included water, soil, and product sampling protocols based on the best available science and practical common sense.

More importantly, the industry partnered with University of California, Davis to establish the Center for Produce Safety, which continues to fund research into the many factors that can impact the safety of our fresh produce supply.

Long before food safety became a concern, the industry had been working to address both the quality and quantity of the Salinas Valley water supply. In 1946, the California Department of Water Resources identified seawater intrusion in the Salinas Basin. A decade later, valley growers helped fund construction of the reservoir at Lake Nacimiento, one of the few large water projects in California heavily supported by agriculture interests.

Another decade later, growers also helped support development of the reservoir at Lake San Antonio. More

recently, projects such as the Castroville Seawater Intrusion Project (CSIP) and the Salinas River rubber dam have helped slow groundwater overdraft and seawater intrusion, though they have not solved the problem.

In 2014, California passed the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA). Three years later, the Salinas Valley Basin Groundwater Sustainability Agency (SVBGSA), a joint powers authority, was established. Agriculture holds four of the agency's 11 board seats. The California Department of Water Resources oversees SGMA implementation and ultimately determines whether local groundwater sustainability plans satisfy state requirements.

Since 2017, SVBGSA has analyzed groundwater conditions throughout the valley and developed groundwater models and water budgets to identify both deficiencies and potential solutions. As part of this process, the agency created six 20-year sustainability plans, one for each groundwater subbasin, all of which were approved by the state. Those subbasins are Marina, Langley, the 180/400-Foot Aquifers, Eastside, Forebay, and Upper Valley. Of those six, only the two southernmost subbasins, Forebay and Upper Valley, are currently considered to be in balance.

According to SVBGSA's analysis, the valley faces two primary groundwater challenges: seawater intrusion and declining groundwater levels. One of the agency's proposed solutions is the Brackish Groundwater Reclamation Project (BGRP), which it believes could significantly address seawater intrusion.

The BGRP proposal envisions approximately 20 extraction wells along Highway 1 between Castroville and Marina that would collectively pump 67,000 acre-feet of water annually. Those wells would operate continuously except during maintenance periods.

The concept is that continuous pumping would create an inverted pressure gradient designed to prevent seawater from moving farther inland while also limiting freshwater from flowing toward the ocean.

The extracted water would then be piped to a treatment facility, purified to potable standards, and the usable portion, estimated at roughly 70 percent, or 46,900 acre-feet annually, would be injected back into the aquifer through roughly 20 injection wells northwest of Salinas. According to the modeling, this injected water would create a groundwater mound that would both dilute and push back intruded seawater. The estimated cost of the project is approximately \$948 million.

Many within the agricultural community remain skeptical of the proposal due to both the enormous cost and the fact that no identical project configuration currently exists at this scale — anywhere in the world! Regardless of how the project is financed, its capital and operating costs could significantly threaten the future of agriculture in the Salinas Valley, as well as future growth opportunities for the City of Salinas. The economic consequences could be catastrophic.

The SBWA is currently evaluating a series of alternative options that, taken together, may have a strong chance of meeting the state's groundwater sustainability requirements. However, the state will need to provide flexibility on implementation timelines to allow sufficient opportunity to fully analyze and quantify those alternatives.

Some growers in the southern valley believe this is primarily a northern valley groundwater problem and therefore should not require their participation in whatever mitigation strategy is ultimately adopted.

I would argue that much like food safety and long-term water supply, this challenge represents a major threat to the entire agricultural community. As an industry, we are far stronger united than divided. 🌱

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permanently close 11 median crossings. The 70-year era of left-turns and U-turns is soon coming to an end.

But Caltrans and TAMC are also advancing a more ambitious long-term plan for safety improvements. It's the "U.S. 101 South of Salinas Corridor Improvement Project." Caltrans intends to relocate and reconstruct two U.S. 101 interchanges, at Abbott Street and in Chualar. It will also build connecting local frontage roads on the east and west sides of the freeway.

### **Early Planning for This Major Undertaking**

In June 2016, the TAMC Board of Directors approved a Transportation Safety & Investment Plan for a proposed transportation sales tax, which voters approved in November 2016 as Measure X. Included in the plan was \$30 million designated for "US 101 Safety Improvements — South County." Because of this advance planning, Measure X will be a source of local matching funds for future state and federal grants.

Another early effort to obtain funding for the project occurred in 2019, when Caltrans and TAMC initiated a process to sell land acquired in the 1960s through eminent domain for an alternative U.S. 101 route through northern Monterey County.

Known as the "Prunedale Bypass," this proposal to straighten and simplify the route between Espinosa Road (in north Salinas) and State Route 156 (in San Benito County) was never built because of funding and design challenges. Obviously, any effort to move forward with the Prunedale Bypass today would provoke significant public opposition because of perceived environmental impact.

Money obtained from recent sale of the unused Prunedale Bypass surplus land is designated for two future projects listed in the Monterey County Local Alternative Transportation Improvement Program.

One of these is the U.S. 101 South of Salinas Highway Safety Enhancements. (The other is the U.S. 101/State Route 156 Interchange Project, now in a planning stage.)



### **Community Involvement to Make This Project Happen**

As Caltrans and TAMC prepared a base of funding sources for the U.S. 101 South of Salinas Corridor Improvement Project, local residents and business owners with particular interest in the proposed safety improvements organized to promote them. In early 2019, a volunteer community group now named the "South of Salinas US 101 Traffic Safety Alliance" began advocating for improvements along the corridor.

This group has an official mission: "We are committed to working together with our community and local, state and federal officials to find a long-term solution aimed at keeping motorists safe while supporting local, regional, intrastate and interstate commerce along the Highway 101 corridor south of Salinas." Through community meetings, social media outreach (such as a Facebook page), and news media coverage, the South of Salinas US 101 Traffic Safety Alliance has attracted public attention to the need for safety improvements.

### **Public Outreach and Planning**

In October 2024, Caltrans began

comprehensive environmental impact as required under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) for the U.S. 101 South of Salinas Corridor Improvement Project. It issued a Notice of Preparation (NOP) of a Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR). In October 2025, Caltrans and TAMC implemented a community-engagement program and held formal public information (public scoping) meetings in Salinas and Chualar.

Caltrans plans to release the Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR) for the US 101 South of Salinas Corridor Improvement Project in the fall of 2026. The draft EIR will present four project alternatives for public review, including an option to do nothing. A final Environmental Impact Report (FEIR) will be released to the public in the fall of 2027, with design and permitting underway for the selected alternative.

Design and permitting will be completed in the summer of 2031. Construction may start in the fall of 2031.

### **What Are Potential Pitfalls?**

There are potential obstacles to Caltrans moving forward with the U.S. 101 South of Salinas Corridor Improvement Project. One would be the possibility that a landowner or some landowners will resist the eminent domain process for Caltrans acquisition of private property needed for the new interchanges.

Another would be difficulties in coordinating with railroad owner Union Pacific to remove at-grade railroad crossings in order to construct new interchanges. A third would be delays in Pacific Gas & Electric (PG&E) temporary and

permanent relocation of utilities in the project area.

At a broader level, it is possible that some members of the public will use litigation and threats of litigation to try to prevent the project from getting built, through claims that environmental review is inadequate under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA).

Opponents may argue that improving traffic flow on the U.S. 101 South of Salinas corridor will "induce demand" for more highway use and encourage excessive development in South County cities and unincorporated county areas.

But the biggest obstacle to the U.S. 101 South of Salinas Corridor Improvement Project is the cost. In 2019, Caltrans estimated a cost of \$250 million to \$450 million. In 2026, Caltrans officials loose-

*Scheduled to begin in early 2027, the Access Management Project will permanently close 11 median crossings. The 70-year era of left-turns and U-turns is soon coming to an end.*

ly anticipate a design and review cost of \$50-\$80 million and an actual construction cost of \$300-\$400 million. Even if county Measure X

funding ends up much higher than the \$30 million originally designated in 2016, Caltrans and TAMC will need to obtain substantial state grants and possibly federal grants to pay for the project.

### **Your Chamber Supports U.S. 101 Improvements**

Both short-term and long-term highway safety enhancements on U.S. 101 South of Salinas are likely to affect commerce, particularly because of traffic delays resulting from construction. As mentioned in Part 1, Caltrans will implement their traditional strategies designed to minimize traffic delays and maximize traffic safety during construction. The County of Monterey will also play a role in

making sure agricultural transportation operations continue in this area with minimal disruption.

While recognizing how highway construction can temporarily slow traffic flow and inconvenience businesses, your Chamber supports the planned U.S. 101 safety improvements. It will advance our vision of “a thriving, welcoming Salinas Valley where people, families and businesses succeed via economic growth and opportunity.”

The Chamber will also urge our local investor-owned public utilities to be prompt in making infrastructure changes necessary to complete the Corridor Improvement Project in a timely manner. Delays in utility relocation significantly increased the cost and undermined the schedule for the Highway 156/Castroville Boulevard Interchange Project. This must not happen again.

Please contact Colleen Bailey at (831) 751-7725 or at [colleen@SalinasChamber.com](mailto:colleen@SalinasChamber.com) with questions or comments about the long-awaited highway safety enhancements on U.S. 101 South of Salinas. Or go to the Caltrans and/or TAMC websites for the South of Salinas Corridor Improvement Project. 🌱

# Latest Data Reveals Violent and Property Crime in Salinas Remains Much Lower Than 10 Years Ago

By Kevin Dayton, Government Affairs Liaison

Since 2021, the Business Journal has annually published a table showing multi-year crime data trends for the City of Salinas. In turn, the Chamber encourages its members and the public to use this information when exercising their right to petition the city government regarding law enforcement and crime prevention programs.

Efficiency, transparency, and accountability related to crime data are important for the Chamber, as crime (or the perception of crime) can significantly affect the local and regional economy and the quality of life for the community. In addition, police expenditures (derived from our taxes) comprise about 40% of the city’s annual Operating Budget.

## Checking the Crime Data Yourself

The public can obtain cumulative data for each year at <https://police.salinas.gov/statistics/>. The Salinas Police Department collects and compiles crime data through the National Incident-Based Reporting System (NIBRS), established for

For 2025, the number of serious crimes reported in the city remains significantly lower than in the mid-2010s. Numbers are generally down compared to 2024. The murder rate remains historically low.

the Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) Program of the Federal Bureau of Investigation in the U.S. Department of Justice. Eight types of crimes are tracked:

- Four types of violent crimes: murder and non-negligent manslaughter, rape, robbery, and aggravated assault
- Four types of property crimes: burglary, larceny-theft, motor vehicle theft, and arson

## Findings from 2025 City of Salinas Crime Data

For 2025, the number of serious crimes reported in the city remains significantly lower than in the mid-2010s. Numbers are generally down compared to 2024. The murder rate remains historically low.

According to the Salinas Police

Department 2025 Annual Report (found at <https://police.salinas.gov/annual-reports/>), the police department in 2025 received 133,086 calls for service (slightly up from 132,147 calls in 2024) and made 2,735 arrests (up 29.31% from 2,115 arrests in 2024). Of the 336 cases assigned to the Investigations Division in 2025, 266 cases (82%) were “cleared.” In other words, people who commit serious crimes in Salinas stand a good chance of being caught.

The Salinas Police Department Investigations Division continues to maintain an impressively high homicide solve rate. When accounting for cases solved after the year in which the murder was committed, the Salinas Police Department has achieved final “solve rates” of 91% in 2023, 83% in 2024, and 86% in 2025. This compares to a national average solve rate of 61.4% and a California average solve rate of 63%

As usual, the Chamber asks you to share this crime trend information with other people — especially people who say they avoid Salinas

CRIME see page 8

Annual Crimes in City of Salinas 2015-2025 with Population and Police Budget Trends

	Murders (includes Negligent Manslaughter)	Forcible Rape	Arson	Robberies	Buglaries	Aggravated Assault	Larcenies-Theft	Motor Vehicle Theft	"Part 1" Crimes	Total Including Non-Aggravated Assault	Population at Start of Year	Percentage Change for Population	Adopted Police Department Budget	Amended Police Department Budget	Percentage Change for Police Department Budget
2015	40	72	19	369	679	613	1,534	1,932	6,346	7,430	158,116	N/A	\$44,548,900	\$45,024,381	N/A
2016	36	84	11	325	695	559	2,484	1,563	5,759	6,835	160,220	1.33%	\$45,694,745	\$45,424,345	1.49%
2017	29	69	24	358	964	564	2,589	1,242	5,841	6,933	161,079	0.54%	\$50,091,227	\$49,636,278	10.27%
2018	19	99	31	321	897	541	2,180	1,227	5,316	6,547	161,295	0.13%	\$51,247,420	\$51,790,726	3.25%
2019	8	65	25	241	742	467	1,709	1,081	4,340	5,576	162,008	0.44%	\$52,247,657	\$52,997,357	0.88%
2020	8	68	33	233	790	556	1,779	912	4,380	5,470	161,776	-0.14%	\$52,694,683	\$53,248,983	-0.57%
2021	16	70	30	235	694	563	1,820	732	4,160	5,291	161,835	0.04%	\$53,028,645	\$53,028,645	-0.41%
2022	13	62	42	222	328	461	1,665	683	3,476	4,288	160,587	-0.77%	\$57,452,491	\$57,882,491	8.34%
2023	10	42	21	234	232	468	1,202	505	1,668	3,607	160,870	0.18%	\$60,085,120	\$60,085,120	3.81%
2024	10	63	44	229	240	525	1,899	594	1,945	4,678	162,037	0.73%	\$60,489,450	\$60,489,450	0.67%
2025	8	56	29	234	226	480	1,528	497	1,775	4,026	160,784	-0.77%	\$64,431,730	\$65,712,929	8.64%



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## CRIME - from page 6

based on memories of news stories they saw 10 years ago.

### Advice for the City Council: Examine Data and Propose Policy Changes

The Salinas City Council traditionally has not scheduled study sessions or even routine meeting agenda items to discuss changes in crime rates and inquire why rates go up or down. Some cities do this.

Your Chamber believes that crime and the public perception of high crime rates are obstacles to economic growth and quality job creation in the City of Salinas and the surrounding region. If the community can come together in a structured forum to identify and consider additional strategies and solutions to crime problems, the community can better work together to bring crime rates down even more. 🌱

## CONFERENCE CENTER - from page 1

and community engagement.”

While it's an ambitious project for a government agency unknown to most Monterey County residents (even though voters elect the county superintendent and board of education), the superintendent and board are working to establish their educational agency as a leader in expanding opportunities for county residents to thrive.

In the past few years, the Monterey County Office of Education has grown its programs and more frequently hosted professional development training sessions, events, and even large-scale conferences. The agency's current complex of deteriorating portable buildings and decentralized operations was not suitable for its vision of growth, innovation, and intensified collaboration.

According to the printed program



Monterey County Office of Education leaders complete the ceremonial groundbreaking for the new Professional Development Conference Center. The portable buildings behind them will be demolished.

for the groundbreaking ceremony, the conference center project is “the realization of a County Board of Education goal and the result of the past years of thoughtful planning, collaboration, and commitment.” Attendees of your Chamber's 4th Annual Legislative Affairs breakfast on Feb. 27, 2026, may remember Monterey County Superintendent of Schools Dr. Deneen Guss reporting on the plan for this upcoming project.

Guss is quoted in the program with her description of the purpose of the conference center: “strengthening our ability to provide high-quality professional learning, foster collaboration, and ultimately improve outcomes for students across Monterey County.” The building is meant to pursue a collective

community vision for “ensuring that every student, from preschool through post-secondary, has the tools they need to succeed in life.” This aligns with your Chamber's official vision of “a thriving, welcoming Salinas Valley where people, families and businesses succeed via economic growth and opportunity.”

A current estimate for the cost of the conference center is \$42.8 million. In November 2024, the Monterey County Office of Education borrowed \$32.3 million for the project, to be paid back over 20 years with \$57.4 million, including interest. A contract for \$2,187,000 has already been awarded for demolition of the portable buildings at the site.

With capacity of 500 persons,

the Monterey County Office of Education conference center will also be an asset for the community. As your Chamber leadership has observed over the years, the City of Salinas and the Salinas Valley have few locations appropriate to host professional conferences, and the free market has not worked to fulfill demand for such space in the private sector.

In compliance with the state's Civic Center Act (California Education Code 38130), the Monterey County Board of Education intends to offer use of its conference center facility to community groups. By law, it may not charge an amount to these groups that exceeds the direct costs for use of its facilities.

Your Chamber looks forward to participating in meetings at the Professional Development Conference Center after it opens in 2027. 🌱

# Estate Planning in the Age of Aging

By Sierra Rhodes, Noland, Hamerly, Etienne & Hoss

**B**etween 1948 and 1964, in the years following World War II, more babies were born in the United States than ever before. That generation—the baby boomer generation—became the largest generation in United States history.

Today, the baby boomer generation, ranging in age from approximately 62 to 80 years old, constitutes the wealthiest generation of Americans by trillions of dollars. Between now and 2030, 10,000 Americans will turn 65 each day.

As the wealthiest and largest generation in history ages, wealth transfers will become an inevitability. There are multiple ways a person's wealth and assets can be directed and distributed upon their passing, including by intestate succession, wills, and trusts.

If a person has no estate planning documents, California's laws of intestate succession govern the order in which a person's assets will be distributed to relatives; if the person has no identifiable relatives and no estate plan, their assets escheat, or are transferred, to the State of California.

A will is a relatively simple estate planning document through which a person can direct the distribution of their assets, and a trust is a more complex estate planning document through which a person can direct the distribution of their assets with additional flexibility and control.

Trusts also differ from wills in that they are designed to avoid the probate process, which is a public



and often costly court-supervised process. Trusts are designed to allow their creators—the settlors—to distribute their assets privately, cost-efficiently, and without court intervention.

For both intestate succession and wills, the distribution of an individual's assets will be subject to the probate process in California if those assets

are valued at more than \$208,850 for personal property, or more than \$750,000 for a house. Probate fees are set by statute and are based on

the value of a person's estate.

As of 2022, the average baby boomer's net worth was \$1.2 million. Under California law, the cost to probate an estate of that size would be approximately \$50,000. For the

average baby boomer, a well-constructed estate plan with a trust could save their family tens of thousands of dollars, and ensure their assets are

transferred according to their wishes.

Estate planning is not a niche concern reserved for the ultra-wealthy—it is a practical

*'Today, the baby boomer generation, ranging in age from approximately 62 to 80 years old, constitutes the wealthiest generation of Americans by trillions of dollars. Between now and 2030, 10,000 Americans will turn 65 each day.'*

necessity for millions of aging Americans, especially in California. As the wealthiest generation in history is aging, planning for future wealth transfers has become a necessity.

Absent proper planning, families may face avoidable costs, delays, and uncertainty. As people age, they may also become more vulnerable and dependent on others for daily care and decision-making. Increased dependence can heighten the risk of manipulation or exploitation.

Proactive estate planning can serve as a critical safeguard against undue influence, fraud, financial abuse, asset mismanagement, and capacity challenges, all of which are frequent sources of dispute in trusts and estates litigation.

Thoughtful use of estate planning tools—particularly trusts—offers a way to preserve wealth, reduce administrative burdens, and provide clarity for loved ones.

More importantly, it allows individuals to maintain control over how their legacy is handled. In a cultural, financial, and legal landscape heavily shaped by the baby boomer generation, proactive estate planning stands out as one of the most effective steps individuals can take to protect both their assets and their families. 🌿

*Sierra Rhodes law practice is focused on estate planning, including probate and trust administration and litigation. A Central Coast native, Sierra graduated from CSU Monterey Bay and earned her J.D. from the University of Arizona James E. Rogers College of Law. Prior to law school, she worked at the nonprofit Legal Services for Seniors, and she now serves on its Board of Directors.*

*This article is intended to address topics of general interest and should not be construed as legal advice. © 2026 Noland, Hamerly, Etienne & Hoss.*

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# MEMBER NEWS



## Interim Now Accepting Nominations for The Interim Legacy Award

For decades, individuals throughout our community have helped shape Interim's mission through compassion, leadership, advocacy, philanthropy, and service. This year, they are proud to introduce the inaugural Interim Legacy Award, recognizing those whose lasting contributions have helped strengthen housing, healing, and hope in Monterey County. Nominations are now open for individuals with a meaningful, long-term connection to Interim, including current or former staff, volunteers, donors, board members, community partners, and advocates. Self-nominations and posthumous nominations are also welcome. Selected honoree(s) will be recognized during The Hoedown: Island Style on Oct. 24, 2026.



## Western Growers Announces Three-Year Partnership Renewal with Reservoir

Western Growers announced a three-year partnership renewal with Reservoir. Western Growers represents 2,400-plus local and regional family farmers in California, Arizona, Colorado, and New Mexico — members and their workers provide over half the nation's fresh fruits, vegetables, and tree nuts. The structure: WG-branded tech demonstration days at Reservoir locations; sponsored, hand-selected startup residencies at Reservoir Farms; influence and input on strategic AgTech priorities; and exclusive technology assessments delivered directly to WG's Innovation Committee.

WG President and CEO Dave Puglia was direct about the intent: "Western Growers members will be in the driver's seat to prioritize companies with workable automation and efficiency solutions that can address escalating labor and other food production input costs threatening domestic farm viability." Most startups never talk to a grower until they're trying to sell something. By then, they've already built the wrong thing. Western Growers has the members, relationships, and credibility to change that at scale. Instantly recognizable brands in the produce aisle and thousands of family farms.



## Natividad Gets an "A" for Hospital Safety from The Leapfrog Group

Natividad Medical Center has earned an "A" Hospital Safety Grade for spring 2026 from The Leapfrog Group, an independent national nonprofit watchdog focused on patient safety. Leapfrog assigns an "A," "B," "C," "D," or "F" grade to general hospitals across the country using evidence-based measures of patient safety focused exclusively on errors, accidents, injuries and infections.

"Natividad puts safety first in everything we do," said Natividad CEO Dr. Chad Harris. "We are committed to caring for our community and providing safe, high-quality, award-winning care for all." "An 'A' Grade is a strong sign that Natividad is deeply committed to protecting patients from harm," said Leah Binder, president and CEO of The Leapfrog Group. "We commend the leadership, Board, clinicians, staff and volunteers for the role each played in earning this distinction."

The Leapfrog Hospital Safety Grade stands as the only hospital ratings program focused solely on preventable medical errors, infections and injuries cause more than 500 patient deaths a day in the United States. This program is peer-reviewed, fully transparent and free to the public. Grades are updated twice annually, in the fall and spring.

To explore Natividad's full grade details and to find valuable tips for staying safe in the hospital, visit [HospitalSafetyGrade.org](https://HospitalSafetyGrade.org). Connect with The Leapfrog Group on Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn and Instagram and stay informed through The Leapfrog Group newsletter.



## Hartnell College and Salinas Valley Health Marks National Nurses Day with Announcement of Major Expansion of More Than 20-Year Partnership

Hartnell College and Salinas Valley Health marked National Nurses Day with the announcement of a major expansion of their more than 20-year partnership, aimed at strengthening the regional nursing workforce and increasing access to healthcare careers for local students.

The expansion includes a \$1.5 million, three-year investment from Salinas Valley Health, building on a previous \$3 million contribution to support Hartnell College's nursing program and expand hands-on clinical training. As part of the effort, nursing student capacity at Hartnell College will increase by 50%, from 50 to 75 students annually.

Through these expanded efforts, both organizations will further bolster the pipeline by increasing access to education, expanding clinical training, and providing students with hands-on experience through simulation labs and direct engagement with healthcare professionals already in the field.

"Together, we are building a stronger, healthier Salinas Valley," said Michael Gutierrez, superintendent/president of the Hartnell Community College District. "This work expands opportunity, strengthens our workforce and ensures care reflects the communities we serve. Together, we are supporting economic mobility and building a stronger, healthier future for the Salinas Valley."

Since 1983, Hartnell has trained 1,592 nurses, with more than 1,200 graduating during the formalized partnership with Salinas Valley Health. Leaders say the expansion responds to a nationwide nursing shortage with a "grow-your-own" solution. "This goes beyond adding seats," said Robert Muster, interim dean of nursing and health sciences.

"We are expanding opportunity and preparing students for stable, high-demand careers right here at home during a time where healthcare workers are needed more than ever."

Fourth-semester nursing student Valerie Longoria says the wait to get into nursing schools can be agonizing and she's excited there will be more opportunities for students like her to follow their calling. "I am happy to hear that Hartnell College can now accept more students into the program. Resources like this and those of our community show others that everything is possible. Thank you is an understatement, especially for someone like me."

The collaboration between the two institutions began in 2003 with the launch of the Summer Health Institute, a five-week program designed to introduce high school students to careers in healthcare. To date, the program has produced 458 graduates and continues to serve as an early pipeline into the field.

"The real impact is in the people living in this community," said Joel Hernandez, president of the board of directors at Salinas Valley Health. "Some first-generation college students are now in a position to pursue and achieve financial success in a fulfilling career, caring for and serving the communities where they were born and raised."

Over the years, many participants have continued their education at Hartnell College and gone on to careers with Salinas Valley Health, demonstrating the effectiveness of this collaboration.

As someone who spent time at Hartnell during Summer Health Institute, Paola Godinez Barba became the first in her family to get a college degree and now works as a nurse at Salinas Valley health.

"Growing up in Salinas, I always wanted to serve others," she said. "This partnership made becoming a nurse feel possible, and now I'm living that dream." Leaders from both organizations emphasized that the work is ongoing, and today's celebration is testament to the positive impact of years of collaboration in creating economic mobility by developing and training pathways to stable, high-demand healthcare careers.

What truly sets this partnership apart is the level of collaboration between our organizations. This is not just about clinical placements or hiring graduates. It is about working side by side — aligning education with practice, sharing insight, and continuously improving how we prepare the next generation of nurses," said Carla Spencer, chief nursing officer at Salinas Valley Health. She added that graduates enter a nationally recognized environment of excellence. "We are proud to be Magnet-designated, and most recently Magnet with Distinction, placing us among the top 1% of hospitals for nursing excellence," Spencer said. "That means our graduates begin their careers in a culture where excellence is lived every day."



# CHAMBER NEW MEMBER PROFILES

## Key Safety Compliance Solutions

Key Safety Compliance Solutions partners with local and multi-location employers to improve workplace safety across agriculture and general industry. Based in the Salinas Valley, they provide practical, hands-on guidance to help businesses stay compliant, reduce risk, and support their workforce. Their approach is rooted in real world operations and long-standing relationships. Their mission is to support businesses in creating sustainable safety cultures that value people, accountability, and continuous improvement while meeting regulatory responsibilities.

*Keysafetycompliance.com, solutions@keysafetycompliance.com, (831) 682-5468*



## Salinas Valley Automotive

Salinas Valley Automotive is a full-service automotive repair facility dedicated to providing honest, reliable, and high-quality service. Their technicians specialize in everything from routine maintenance to complex diagnostics on light duty vehicles. They are a heavy-duty auto repair shop that provides specialized maintenance, diagnostics, and complex repairs for commercial trucks, semis, and industrial equipment. Their team is certified to perform BIT inspections for their commercial fleet customers. They offer mobile service for their fleets in order to provide reliable, heavy-duty solutions that keep business moving. They focus on technical expertise and quality service in order to build trust for our customers.

*Salinasvalleyautomotive.com, salinasvalleyautomotive@gmail.com, (831) 208-6797*



## Connections Family Center

At Connections Family Center and Connections Family and Behavioral Services, they work with children, adults and families to provide top-quality, evidence-based mental health and community based-services specializing in individuals with Autism Spectrum, ADHD, developmental and learning disabilities. Our clinicians offer individual therapy, home and community-based coaching by a trained interventionist, and Autism, ADHD, and mental health assessment. We also now offer HIPPA compliant tele-therapy. Since 2016, Connections Family Center and Connections Family and Behavioral Services has been supporting the unique needs of our clients in Monterey and Santa Cruz Counties, providing personalized care plans to build new skills that bring peace and success in home, school, and life.

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# RIBBON CUTTINGS & CHAMBER EVENTS

by Chamber Staff



## Empowering Futures: Grand Opening of Diamond Financial Group

Diamond Financial Group celebrated their grand opening with an afternoon filled with community connection, live entertainment, delicious refreshments, exciting giveaways, and the opportunity to meet the incredible Diamond Financial Group team. We were proud to welcome Diamond Financial Group and celebrate their commitment to helping individuals and families build, protect, and elevate their financial future.



## Lunch and Learn with Alliance On Aging: Resources and Support Systems Available to our Local Seniors

We were delighted to host a Lunch & Learn with MJ Donohue, Executive Director, of Alliance On Aging, who shared insights on how Monterey County's aging population is shaping our community. Key takeaways included how aging trends impact businesses and families, the role of the Alliance On Aging HUB program, available no-cost services in English and Spanish, and ways the business community can help bridge existing gaps.



## Precision Meets Progress: ARCpoint Labs Unveils New Identity

In a dual celebration of Medical Laboratory Professionals Week and a brand unveiling, ARCpoint Labs Monterey Bay hosted a high-energy ribbon cutting. We honored their dedication to diagnostic clarity and clinical excellence. This brand unveiling marks a new era for ARCpoint as they continue to set the standard for accuracy and reliability in local healthcare.



## Pacific Valley Bank Celebrates new South Main Street Location in Salinas

The community turned out to celebrate Pacific Valley Bank's new branch location at 1097 South Main St. for the ribbon-cutting ceremony. Guests enjoyed light bites and networking while connecting with the "Truly Local" banking team, while learning more about the bank's continued commitment to supporting local businesses, fostering strong community relationships, and providing personalized financial services throughout the Salinas Valley.



## Hampton Inn & Suites By Hilton Salinas Debuts New Leadership and Modern Renovations

The ribbon cutting for Hampton Inn & Suites by Hilton Salinas brought together Chamber members and community leaders for an afternoon of networking, refreshments, guided hotel tours, and exciting giveaways. Local professionals welcomed the hotel's new leadership and learned more about the amenities and services offered to visitors and the Salinas community. As a premier gateway for tourism and economic growth in our valley, the event showcased their stunningly renovated, vibrant space.



# America's 250th Birthday and a Community Worth Celebrating

By Pastor T.K. Anderson, Compass Church

**T**his year, America turns 250 years old! That is a milestone worth more than a passing mention. It is an invitation to pause, remember, give thanks, and recommit ourselves to the values that have helped shape this nation from the beginning. Freedom. Faith. Courage. Sacrifice. Service. Responsibility. Community.



As we prepare to celebrate America's semiquincentennial, we are reminded of the important role people of faith have always played in preserving the common good, strengthening our freedoms, and passing on the transcendent virtues that make a nation strong.

From the founding of our country to this very moment, faith in God has helped shape the conscience of our nation. It has inspired service, fueled sacrifice, strengthened families, formed character, and called generations of Americans to live for something greater than themselves.

Nations are not held together by geography alone. They are not sustained by economics alone. They are not strengthened by politics alone. A nation is strengthened by the character of its people, the courage of its citizens, the sacrifice of its defenders, the faithfulness of its families, and the moral foundation upon which its freedoms are

built.

From the very beginning, America has been imperfect, but deeply blessed. We have faced wars, divisions, depressions, disasters, injustices, and seasons of uncertainty. Yet through

it all, generation after generation has carried forward the belief that liberty is worth defending, faith in God matters, service is honorable, and the future is something we help build together.

Here in the Salinas Valley, we understand that kind of responsibility. We are a community of farmers, business owners, teachers, first responders, parents, pas-

tors, civic leaders, military families, and hard-working men and women who know that strong communities do not happen by accident. They are cultivated. They are protected. They are passed on. That is why this July 4th is so special.

Compass Church is honored to host our Third Annual Celebrate America Fireworks Show at the Salinas Sports Complex as we join together for America's 250th birthday celebration. This year's event

will be bigger than ever, and along with many generous sponsors, we are thrilled to offer it completely free to our community.

The Family Festival will take place from 3:00 to 7:00 p.m., with fun for kids, families, and people of all ages. Then from 7:30 to 9:00 p.m., we will gather in the Rodeo Stadium for a powerful patriotic service featuring musical artists Charles Billingsley, Lisa Daggs, and Grammy Award-winning John Wineglass.

We will also take time to honor our veterans and active-duty military men and women. These are the men and women who remind us that freedom is never free. It is pro-

protected by courage, preserved by sacrifice, and passed forward by those willing to serve something greater than themselves.

The evening will include a special patriotic message, followed by the largest and most spectacular fireworks and drone show in the Tri-County area. And yes, come early. The Rodeo Stadium will fill up fast for this year's 250th celebration.

At Compass, we believe this is more than an event. It is a moment for our community to stand together

in gratitude. We proudly join with the patriots, pioneers, pastors, parents, veterans, business leaders, farmers, and faithful citizens who have gone before us. They prayed, worked, sacrificed, served, built, defended, and believed that America's best days could still be ahead. Now it is our turn.

We do not secure the future of this nation by nostalgia alone. We secure it through prayer and action. We secure it by teaching our children what freedom means. We secure it by honoring God, loving our neighbors, strengthening our families, serving our community, and refusing to give up on the country entrusted to us. The Bible says, "Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord" (Psalm 33:12). That blessing is not merely something we claim. It is something we steward.

So this July 4th, let's gather as one community. Let's celebrate 250 years of America. Let's honor those who have served. Let's thank God for His blessings. Let's enjoy an unforgettable night with our families and neighbors. And let's recommit ourselves to living with the faith, courage, gratitude, and responsibility that make a nation strong. I hope to see you at the Salinas Sports Complex on July 4th. Come early. Bring your family. Invite your friends. And together, let's Celebrate America! 🍀

# Separately Managed Accounts and Unified Managed Accounts

By Ryan Hastie, Hastie Financial Group



Getty Images

Over the past several decades, investors looking to customize their investments have turned to Separately Managed Accounts (SMAs). According to Cerulli Associates, there are about \$2 trillion in assets in these accounts, up 14.1% from \$1.72 trillion in assets in 2022, and assets in SMAs are projected to reach \$2.9 trillion by the end 2026.

These accounts attempt to boost earnings through active professional portfolio management and tax-efficient strategies. Unlike a mutual fund or exchange-traded fund (ETF) where the investor owns shares of a pool of stocks or bonds



that is invested according to the fund's prospectus, SMAs allow the investor to own the individual stocks, bonds and other assets directly. Doing so affords the investor flexibility in tailoring their strategy to their personal preferences or tax needs.

Each SMA seeks to meet a particular objective, so it is possible to have multiple SMAs with each designed to help meet an investor's asset allocation needs. For example, one SMA may represent the large-cap growth portion of your portfolio, and another may represent the fixed income portion of your portfolio.

One of the benefits of SMAs is enhanced tax management. Since

the investor owns the underlying stocks or bonds directly, there is a cost basis for each individual security. Directly owning the securities allows an investor and their financial professional more control over realizing capital gains/losses (i.e., tax-loss harvesting) to assist in reducing taxes owed and potentially increasing after-tax performance.

Another benefit to the investor is complete portfolio customization. Having increased control over the portfolio, as opposed to the mutual fund manager, allows the investor to implement guidelines in the investment process.

For example, one can increase or restrict exposure to certain companies, industries or sectors. Another

ACCOUNTS see page 23

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Getty Images

# Salinas Valley Speaks: The Future of Healthcare in the Salinas Valley

**S**alinas Valley Speaks convenes influential leaders from across the region to foster collaboration that advances economic growth, strengthens community development, and addresses the Valley's most pressing challenges.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the Salinas Valley demonstrated an extraordinary capacity for partnership and innovation, achieving some of the nation's strongest health outcomes through unprecedented collaboration among healthcare providers, public agencies, and the business community.

Today, the region faces a new healthcare challenge: significant funding reductions that are placing increased financial pressure on hospitals and healthcare systems. These cuts are contributing to compressed operating margins, reduced services, heightened pressure on commercial healthcare rates, and the potential closure of critical facilities, particularly in rural communities.

In response, this year's Salinas Valley Speaks program will bring together the CEOs of all four regional healthcare systems — Salinas Valley Health, Montage Health, Natividad, and Mee Memorial Healthcare System — for an important discussion on how their organizations are adapting to these evolving funding realities. Together, they will share strategies for innovation, sustainability, and regional collaboration aimed at ensuring the Salinas Valley continues to lead the way in delivering strong health outcomes for its communities.

Salinas Valley Speaks is set to take place on Thursday, Aug. 6, from 3:30–5:30 p.m. at Braga Ranch. The event will begin with a casual mixer to connect community members and professionals, followed by a moderated panel discussion led by Monterey County District 3 Supervisor Chris Lopez.

Tickets must be purchased in advance. For ticket pricing and more information, visit [SalinasChamber.com](http://SalinasChamber.com). Sponsorship opportunities are currently available — please contact [Colleen@salinaschamber.com](mailto:Colleen@salinaschamber.com) with any questions or call (831) 751-7725.

A special thank you to our event sponsors for making this event possible (as of publication date):

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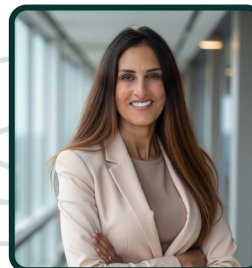


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# AMBASSADOR SPOTLIGHT BRAD AND LAURIE MARTIN



Publishers Brad and Laurie Martin launched "In The Loop" in 2014, for the residents of Corral de Tierra, San Benancio and Robley Roads.

As the publication became more known and beloved in the community, they were able to expand to nearly 5,000 homes on the Highway 68 corridor and River Road in 2019.

The publication was rebranded in 2023 to "Greet Hwy 68 Loop."

Brad and Laurie are in the process of starting a nonprofit organization, On Our Own Feet, a housing community for adults on the autism spectrum to live independently.

They live in Salinas with their son, Mitchell, and their Doxie, Buster. They enjoy time in their beautiful backyard garden and appreciate all that this special place in the Monterey Bay area has to offer.

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# Will California Agriculture Survive?

By Norm Groot, Executive Director, Monterey County Farm Bureau

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For this month's article, I am going to offer a personal perspective on how California is endangering the production of our domestic food supply. Not trying to be alarmist here, but there are many moving pieces to this puzzle that will impact the financial ability of farmers and ranchers to continue operations in our state in the coming three-to-five years. Here is a rundown of six critical concerns facing the agricultural sector of our County and State.

First, water. Both quantity and quality. Farming is done outside in the environment, and the agronomics of producing a crop require sufficient water to grow a marketable yield. As water is now a precious resource, both fresh and reclaimed, the ability to use this resource is coming under greater scrutiny through regulatory mandates.

The Sustainable Groundwater Management Act is forcing rural communities like ours to make some very difficult and costly choices. To solve our groundwater issues here in the Salinas Valley (mainly seawater intrusion), the costs of any project will be a considerable burden for our agricultural landowners and farming operations. Other projects needed to enhance our basin "plumbing problems" will push these costs into the billions.

The state is mandating unworkable deadlines and inflexible thresholds that could force the fallowing of nearly a million acres statewide, possibly some in the Salinas Valley.

Water quality is important to all

of us, whether for consumption or irrigation. Increasingly strict requirements on what is allowed to flow off a farm or into the groundwater must achieve the level of drinking water standards. That means that if you water your houseplant and water runs out the bottom of the pot, it must be drinking water quality. This is a near impossible regulatory requirement when producing thousands of acres of crops outside in the working environment.

Farmers are and have made great improvements in water quality, including managing runoff flows from fields into local streams and rivers, but the regulatory require-

*'We have spoiled our consumer public with plentiful supplies at low prices that don't reflect the risks of production, environmental mandates and regulatory programs, and domestic market quality demands.'*

ments continue to challenge farming realities. Costs of data gathering and reporting are mounting, including complex calculations for all dischargers that increase the burden to

farming operations large and small. Farmers need a reasonable objective for water quality in the working environment that allows for crop production to continue while respecting the natural resources of our region.

Second, nitrogen. The agronomics of farming require the use of nitrogen-based fertilizers to grow a crop to a marketable yield. Just like you would fertilizer your own lawn, farmers must continuously monitor crop growth with an eye focused on when best to apply nitrogen for maximum plant uptake. Water quality regulatory programs have included reductions in nitrogen use through the incorporation of better science and crop management

practices. There remains a point where a basic level of nitrogen is needed for proper crop growth; arbitrary limits established in these regulatory programs are challenging agronomic science.

And now our state legislature is considering a bill to limit nitrogen fertilizer applications at such a low limit that many crops grown in the Salinas Valley will become infeasible to grow. Legislation is not the answer to science or experience, and making farmers into criminals is not a desirable outcome.

Third, labor. While most farming operations locally pay rates higher than the minimum wage in California, now \$16.90 an hour, the state Legislature again thinks they know it better by considering a minimum wage of \$19.75 for temporary agricultural workers. This will immediately put pressure on domestic labor wage rates, increasing costs to farming operations and ultimately impacting the prices of our food choices at the supermarket.

When the affordability of California living comes into this discussion, this proposed minimum wage hike will put that affordability index into further spirals upward. Increasing wage rates probably means cuts to labor hours for those working in agriculture. Farmworkers already saw a decrease in hours when the state changed the overtime rules several years ago; documented studies indicate that farmworkers lost over 20% of their take-home pay when this rule changed. Increasing labor costs will force more hard choices that impact the farmworker paycheck.

Fourth, bugs. The bugs are winning, as are many diseases, impacting our crops on a scale not seen in many decades. We've imported exotic pests and diseases that are now causing crop losses in terms of thousands of acres each year. This is not only a financial loss but an environmental disaster.

California's regulatory structure fails to recognize that we have

numerous threats to our environment if these pests and diseases are allowed to spread uncontrolled, without either biological or chemical management. We're already seeing major impacts from INSV, diamondback moth, golden and quagga muscles, Pierce's disease, and citrus greening. Many crops may not survive the impacts of these exotic pests and diseases.

Fifth, competition. The world is experiencing an expanding food production supply that is providing year-round availability of many seasonal crops. Consumers now enjoy citrus, peaches, avocados, and other crops 24/7, 365 where a few generations ago we had to wait for (and anticipate) those seasonal crops. Now, we get supplied by Peru, Mexico, and other farming regions around the world when our costs of production are significantly higher and foreign products often compete with domestic products in quality.

Consumers are unaware of where their food is produced or that there is an actual peach season. We

can't control how those crops are produced the way we can with our domestic food system of food safety practices. Competition is increasingly changing our crop varieties, such as asparagus, that is now a minor crop in California because it's cheaper to produce south of the border.

Finally, market fluctuations. We are experiencing an extreme downturn in wine consumption, impacting our winegrape producers statewide. Cannabis is so overproduced and overtaxed that the wholesale market price has crashed by over 75% in the past five years. Many vegetable crops are produced on razor-thin margins that at times during a season the grower may be selling below the costs of production.

We have spoiled our consumer public with plentiful supplies at low prices that don't reflect the risks of production, environmental mandates and regulatory programs, and domestic market quality demands.

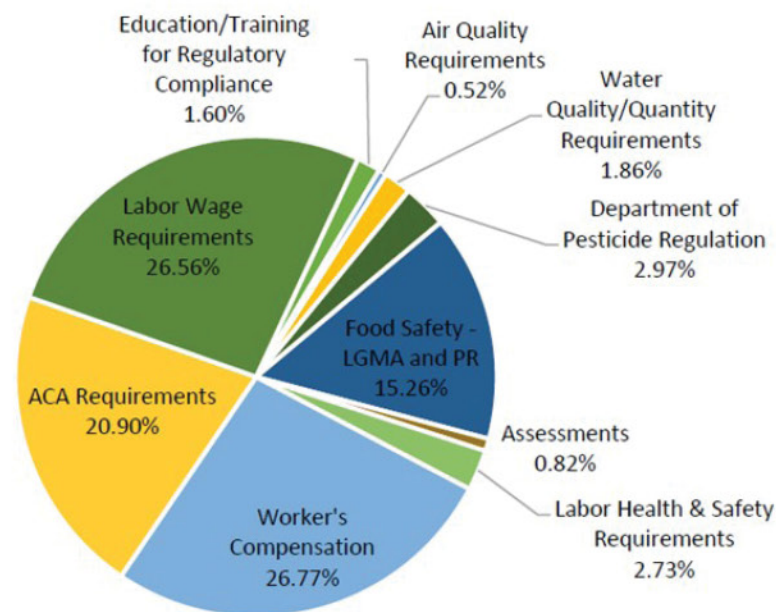
Taken all together, the agricultural community is rapidly coming to a decision point where the small farm

and ranch will no longer be financially sustainable. This is the exact opposite of what the consumer public desires in their food production perception.

Farming is facing several years of change, of consolidation within the agricultural sector, and forcing more investment in science and technology in order to survive all these challenges. Politics and Agriculture are increasingly at odds; regulatory compliance costs now are almost 13% of production costs in California. It may come to be that the crisis in California agriculture has the potential to destabilize our domestic food supply.

Yet, we all enjoy the safest, cost-effective, and plentiful domestic food supply of any nation on a daily basis, proving that farmers can continue to be resilient given the opportunity. Farmers and ranchers continue to feed our nation and support for a domestic food supply is critical to our national security; a new balance is needed to sustain agricultural production in our state. 🌱

## Regulatory Costs = \$1,600 per Acre



Source: "Two Decades of Change: Evolving Costs of Regulatory Compliance in the Produce Industry" Lynn Hamilton and Michael McCullough, Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo, January 2025



## What's Your Chamber's Government Relations Committee Talking About This Month?

### JUNE 2026

By Kevin Dayton, Government Affairs Liaison

**Y**our Salinas Valley Chamber of Commerce Government Relations Committee had 23 members at its meeting on Wednesday, May 13, as it continues to pursue your Chamber's official vision of "a thriving, welcoming Salinas Valley where people, families and businesses succeed via economic growth and opportunity." Here's what they discussed:

**1** Committee members expressed concerns about simmering voter resistance to renewing Measure G, the City of Salinas sales tax that voters originally approved in 2014. The tax will expire in 2030, but voters will be asked to renew it in the November 2026 election. Measure G funding is a significant source of revenue for city activities, including police and fire services. The committee noted that the Chamber may need to play a leadership role in the upcoming campaign to support the renewal of Measure G.

City staff will be asked to make an impartial presentation about the use of Measure G funds at the next Government Relations Committee meeting on June 10. In addition, the committee asked the Government Affairs Liaison to do the following before the next committee meeting: (1) obtain or create a list of all positions and projects funded by Measure G; (2) obtain information about the campaign to pass Measure G in 2014; and

(3) prepare an analysis of Measure G that the committee can use to make a recommendation on board endorsement of Measure G renewal in the November 2026 election.

**2** Chamber members continue to await the scheduling by the City of Salinas of a key meeting to discuss how the city will address traffic impacts related to the Amazon distribution facility in South Salinas. City officials report that their traffic consultant needs additional time to produce a plan.

**3** The May 2026 issue of the Salinas Valley Chamber of Commerce Business Journal includes an article "Implementing Long-Awaited Highway Safety Enhancements on U.S. 101 South of Salinas—Part 1: "Closing Median Crossings Through the 'South of Salinas Access Management Project.'" Caltrans has been working with the Chamber and other business and community groups to prepare people for the permanent closure of the median crossings on Highway 101 between Salinas and Chualar. There may be problems as agricultural drivers choose to use Old Stage Road or even River Road as alternative routes. The County of Monterey has worked in stages to rehabilitate the Old Stage Road/Alisal Road corridor between Salinas and Gonzales, but much of the road remains in poor condition and relatively unsafe. River Road is

promoted as a scenic bicycle route, so agricultural drivers will need to watch carefully for bicyclists.

**4** The Salinas Valley Basin Groundwater Sustainability Agency (SVBGSA) is moving toward selecting the Brackish Groundwater Restoration Project (aka Seawater Intrusion Barrier Project) as the preferred solution to address seawater intrusion in the 180/400-Foot ("Pressure") Aquifer Subbasin and other subbasins in the Salinas Valley. For this project, brackish saline groundwater would be pulled from the 180-foot and 400-foot aquifers near the coast using a row of 20 extraction wells. A reverse osmosis treatment facility would desalinate the extracted groundwater. Then, the desalinated water would be delivered to water customers as needed or put back into the 180/400-Foot ("Pressure") Aquifer Subbasin at 21 inland injection wells.

This project would raise groundwater levels in the 180 and 400-foot aquifers and create a hydraulic barrier to seawater intrusion, thus helping the SVBGSA to fulfill requirements of the California Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA) of 2014. SGMA is meant to end groundwater depletion caused by "overdrafting," a situation in which groundwater extraction from aquifers exceeds the natural or artificial recharge rate. The California



Department of Water Resources (DWR) designates the 180/400-Foot ("Pressure") Aquifer Subbasin of the Salinas Valley as "critically overdrafted."

The desalination process will produce brine (concentrated salty wastewater) that would be released into Monterey Bay through the existing ocean outfall of Monterey One Water (M1W), the regional wastewater treatment/recycling agency. M1W already uses this outfall to dispose of excess treated wastewater that it does not recycle.

California American Water Company (Cal Am) also plans to use this outfall for brine disposal from its long-planned desalination plant. In a letter dated April 15, 2026, the Salinas Valley Basin Groundwater Sustainability Agency (SVBGSA) asked M1W to plan for outfall infrastructure with the capacity to handle the desalination component of the Brackish Groundwater Restoration Project/ Seawater Intrusion Barrier Project.

Estimated cost for this project is currently about \$1 billion, with projected cost per acre-foot (AF) of water at \$3,321. SVBGSA will make a final decision in the fall of 2026



about which projects to pursue to comply with SGMA.

**5** Staff of Monterey One Water (M1W), the regional wastewater treatment/recycling agency serving the City of Salinas and a few surrounding areas, are asking their board of directors to initiate a rate increase under the Proposition 218 process. This proposed rate increase has triggered more public and explicit discussion about the City of Salinas possibly separating from the M1W Joint Powers Authority and establishing its own wastewater treatment/recycling program.

This would cut off much of the source water that M1W currently recycles for Monterey Peninsula drinking water. M1W also recycles some wastewater from Salinas for agricultural irrigation through the Castroville Seawater Intrusion Project - CSIP - and for landscape irrigation of the Marina Coast Water District (MCWD).

**6** The Monterey County Board of Supervisors was scheduled on May 19 to review a draft "Community Climate Action & Adaptation Plan." If the board recommends moving the process forward, a 60-day public comment period will begin. The draft plan was first presented to the Monterey County Board of Supervisors Alternative Energy & Environment Committee on March 27. This plan to reduce greenhouse gas emissions has been in development for several years and has probably cost the county about \$1 million if staff time is taken into consideration. Administering the plan is also expected to be costly for the county.

Agricultural businesses are concerned about the cost impact of the Community Climate Action &

Adaptation Plan on farming operations and want the county to prepare an Economic Impact Report. Housing advocates are concerned about the plan's inclination toward mandating electrification (ending of natural gas service connections) when a residence is transferred to a new owner.

Some provisions in the plan seem to assign responsibility for greenhouse gas reductions to users of certain products (such as fertilizer) rather than manufacturers of the products. In addition, the plan occasionally seems weighted toward targeting negative impacts while neglecting positive impacts (such as sequestration of carbon dioxide when crops absorb it through photosynthesis).

**7** The City of Salinas has also prepared a draft Climate Action Plan to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and recently scheduled a public review and comment period for the plan.

**8** Some committee members noted a recent uptick in public objections and critical news coverage of the use of chemicals in agriculture to control pests and weeds.

**9** The Committee reviewed the upcoming "2026 Infrastructure Summit" hosted by the City of Salinas on Friday, June 5 from 8:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. at 1 Main St. in Downtown Salinas. Here's how the registration page on the city's website describes the summit:

"This day-long gathering brings together state and local leaders, regional partners, and local industry leaders to explore innovative opportunities, spotlight major infrastructure projects, and foster the

public-private partnerships essential to building a thriving, connected Salinas. Through insightful panels, real-world discussions, and a keynote from nationally recognized economic development leader Larry Kosmont, attendees will gain a compelling look at the opportunities ahead and how collaboration can unlock the infrastructure our community needs for sustainable growth, housing, mobility, and quality of life."

**10** The Committee reviewed the Chamber's upcoming Salinas Valley Speaks event on Thursday, Aug. 6 from 3:30 to 5:30 p.m. at Braga Ranch in Soledad. This event will feature "an essential conversation on the state of healthcare in our region" with a panel of CEOs from Mee Memorial Healthcare System, Natividad Medical Center, Montage Health, and Salinas Valley Health. Monterey County Supervisor Chris Lopez will be the moderator of the panel. A major topic will be how local health care systems are responding to federal, state, and local policy decisions impacting healthcare delivery.

**11** The Committee reviewed a "roundtable" effort to make recommendations to the City of Salinas on how to improve the performance of the city's Permit Center. Some Chamber members have reported frustrating delays and petty hassles with their recent projects in the permitting process. The Salinas Valley Chamber of Commerce has advocated for more than 20 years for ways to improve the city's permitting process. It will continue to encourage the city to work always toward getting to YES for any reasonable project application. 🌱

benefit is portfolio transparency. The individual holdings are easy to monitor to assess for potential overlap and diversification benefits.

One of the downsides to SMAs is that each strategy requires a separate account. This means the potential to have multiple account numbers, multiple 1099s, and multiple account statements – all of which can be burdensome to an investor.

To alleviate the headache associated with multiple accounts, Unified Managed Accounts (UMA) were established. This professionally managed account utilizes advanced technology to create a simplified investment solution – one that allows an investor to hold multiple investments in one account, offering easier access to and transparency of their overall portfolio allocation and underlying holdings within the portfolio.

In addition, a UMA can incorporate a wide range of investments into the account, including multiple SMA strategies, mutual funds, ETFs, among others. Additionally, most managers have lowered the minimum investment threshold required to utilize UMAs (although minimums still exist), allowing investors to take advantage of many features and benefits previously available only to ultra-high-net-worth and institutional investors.

Always speak with your financial professional to see if an SMA or UMA is appropriate for you and your financial situation. Additionally, your financial professional will be able to explain the benefits and drawbacks of each account so you can make informed decisions. 🌱

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# Updates to Form I-9 Enforcement Policy

By Alyssa Carbonel Matsuhara, Fenton & Keller

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) recently revised its enforcement policy on Form I-9, the mandatory employment eligibility verification form, to reclassify several common technical errors as “substantive” violations, which ultimately increases the risk of employer penalties.

Every employer, regardless of size, must complete Form I-9 each time they hire an individual to perform labor or services in the United States in return for wages or other remuneration (e.g., food or lodging).

Form I-9s and supporting documentation, which may include a list of active and terminated employees, may be inspected by federal immigration agencies. Normally, the inspecting agency

will give employers a minimum of three business days’ notice before starting an inspection.

If the inspecting agency finds technical or procedural violations, the employer will receive at least 10 business days to make corrections. However, substantive violations do not have a cure period. An employer may receive a monetary fine for all substantive violations and uncorrected technical or procedural failures.

The new inspection policy reclassifies certain violations from technical to substantive, effectively eliminating the 10-day cure period for many common and procedural errors.



Examples of substantive violations now include:

- Missing birthdates, hire dates, or signatures in Section 1, which pertains to employee information and attestations.
- Failing to record document titles, numbers, or expiration dates

(even if a copy of the eligibility document is attached to the form) in Section 2, which pertains to the employer’s review and verification.

- Missing employer name, title, or business address in Section 2.
- Failing to check the “alternative procedure” box when using remote verification or

using remote review without being an E-Verify participant.

- Failing to provide a rehire date or missing employer signatures on Supplement B, which is used for

reverifications and rehires.

- Using the Spanish-language Form I-9 for employees outside of Puerto Rico.

Examples of technical violations, which may result in fines if uncorrected after the inspection, include:

- Failing to use the version of the Form I-9 that is current at the time the form is initially completed.
- Failing to record the employee’s complete name in Section 2.
- Failing to record the employee’s complete name in Supplement A or Supplement B.

The new inspection policy with

**‘The new Form I-9 inspection policy reclassifies certain violations from technical to substantive, effectively eliminating the 10-day cure period for many common and procedural errors.’**



expanded substantive violations means that employers have a higher risk of financial penalties for noncompliance. These financial penalties can range from \$288 to \$2,861 per violation.

California employers should also remember their state-specific requirements that are triggered when they receive an inspection notice from a federal immigration agency. Under California law, employers must provide employees with notices before and after the inspection.

The pre-inspection notice must inform all current employees of the federal immigration agency’s inspection request within 72 hours of receipt of the inspection notice from the federal agency. The notice must include the (1) name of agency conducting the inspection, (2) date the employer received the notice, (3) nature of the inspection, if known, and (4) a copy of the notice of inspection.

The post-inspection notice should include a copy of the agency’s inspection results and should also include (1) a description of all deficiencies, (2) the timeframe for correcting any potential identified deficiencies, (3) the date and time of any meetings with the employer to correct identified deficiencies, and (4) the employee’s right to representation during this meeting. The post-inspection notice should be hand delivered to affected employees, if possible.

The I-9 process can be cumbersome. Employers should carefully review the new ICE inspection policy and consider conducting an internal audit of their I-9 practices to ensure compliance with the law to avoid financial penalties. 🌿

*Alyssa Carbonel Matsuhara is a lawyer with the Fenton & Keller law firm in Monterey. This article is intended to address topics of general interest and should not be construed as legal advice. For more information, please visit [www.fentonkeller.com](http://www.fentonkeller.com).*

# Population Decline: The People Get What They Want

By Kevin Dayton, Government Affairs Liaison

**M**onterey County is experiencing the same population stagnation and decline that the State of California as a whole has been experiencing. Based on the table below, it is not surprising that a table in the March 2026 Business Journal showed student enrollment declining in seven of the eight Salinas school districts.

The birth rate has dropped to historic lows. International migration has dropped significantly. And, residents are leaving.

A study released by U.C. Berkeley’s California Policy Lab in March 2026 concluded that “the pandemic-era exodus of Californians to other states has eased, but the sometimes shocking cost of living continues to press

thousands of residents to leave for less expensive locations.” And, “that disparity also appears to be discouraging residents of other states from moving to California.”

The Public Policy Institute of California, which has tracked California population stagnation and migration trends over the past 25 years, has issued two reports in 2026 confirming that “the primary driver of this slowdown has been California residents moving to other states—a trend that remains near record levels, despite having abated somewhat since the pandemic.

Perhaps most striking, California now experiences net losses among higher-income households as well as middle- and lower-income households...The picture painted by these trends illustrates the

frustrations and economic challenges faced by many Californians.”

Where do Californians go? The U.C. Berkeley study and the Public Policy Institute of California have the same answer: a substantial net loss to Texas and Florida, a disproportionate loss to Nevada and Idaho, and notable losses to Arizona, Oregon, and Washington. These states are the preferred alternatives to California.

## Why Are Californians Not Doing Much About Population Decline?

In 2021, when the overall population of California was declining for the second straight year, U.C. San Diego conducted a survey that asked an unusual question:

“Looking ahead to 10 years from

now, do you think that California will be a better place to live if the state’s population rises significantly, stays about the same, or falls significantly?”

As worded, this question gave Californians a chance to be honest. They did not have to consider the socially acceptable answer for sensitive questions related to housing, immigration, poverty, or cultural diversity. The question simply asked what population trend California should take for the state to become a better place to live. The results were stark:

- 35% agreed that “California will be better if its population falls significantly”
- 46% agreed that “California will be better if its population stays about the same”
- 19% agreed that “California will be better if its population rises”

These findings suggest that recent stagnation and decline in the state’s population is in some sense a reflection of the democratic, popular will. Californians generally don’t want more people living where they live. Perhaps this is an unspoken reason why their governments are slow to change policies that stifle population growth.

Your Chamber recognizes how the cost of housing and the cost of child care compels young families to leave California and discourages them from moving to California. Your Chamber also recognizes that California has developed a reputation as a place where governments relentlessly push new taxes and regulations while failing to address visible manifestations of social disorder.

None of these conditions will spur population growth in California. And, apparently some Californians are comfortable with this. ✍

## Population Change in Monterey County 2010-2026 (Last Sixteen Years) and 2020-2026 (Last Six Years)

Source: California Department of Finance <https://www.dof.ca.gov/Forecasting/Demographics/>

	Census 2010	Census 2020	Jan 1, 2026	Population Change 2010-2026	Percentage Change 2010-2026	Population Change 2020-2026	Percentage Change 2020-2026
Salinas	150,441	161,577	159,866	9,425	6.3%	-1,711	-1.1%
Seaside	33,025	32,708	31,681	-1,344	-4.1%	-1,027	-3.1%
Monterey	27,810	28,460	27,504	-306	-1.1%	-956	-3.4%
Soledad	25,738	27,602	27,065	1,327	5.2%	-537	-1.9%
Marina	19,718	21,782	23,322	3,604	18.3%	1,540	7.1%
Greenfield	16,330	18,756	20,918	4,588	28.1%	2,162	11.5%
Pacific Grove	15,041	14,961	14,894	-147	-1.0%	-67	-0.4%
King City	12,874	13,378	14,369	1,495	11.6%	991	7.4%
Gonzales	8,187	8,536	8,398	211	2.6%	-138	-1.6%
Carmel-By-The-Sea	3,722	3,163	3,102	-620	-16.7%	-61	-1.9%
Del Rey Oaks	1,624	1,577	1,539	-85	-5.2%	-38	-2.4%
Sand City	334	368	381	47	14.1%	13	3.5%
Unincorporated Monterey County	100,213	106,167	103,716	3,503	3.5%	-2,451	-2.3%
Monterey County Total	415,057	439,035	436,755	21,698	5.2%	-2,280	-0.5%

# Second Chances, Lasting Impact: How Goodwill Central Coast Transforms Everyday Donations into Opportunity

By Goodwill Central Coast Staff

**O**n any given day along the Central Coast, someone drops off a bag of clothing, donates a piece of furniture, or browses the aisles of a neighborhood thrift store. To many, it's a simple act — a way to declutter, to save money, or to give items a second life.

At Goodwill Central Coast, those everyday moments are part of something far more meaningful. Each donation and purchase helps power a cycle of opportunity that is quietly transforming lives across Monterey, Santa Cruz and San Luis Obispo counties.

What begins as a jacket no longer worn or a lamp tucked away in storage becomes a resource — one that funds job training, career services, and employment programs for individuals working to overcome barriers and build stable, independent futures.

The idea behind this model is both simple and enduring. More than a century ago, Goodwill's founder, Edgar J. Helms believed that access to meaningful work could restore dignity, confidence and purpose. Today, that philosophy continues to guide a global network of Goodwill organizations focused on workforce development. Locally, GCC carries that mission forward with measurable impact and deeply personal results.

In 2024 alone, the organization served more than 23,000 individuals — a 34-percent increase over the previous year. Among 152 Goodwill organizations worldwide, it ranked No. 6 in donations per household and No. 4 in sales per household, reflecting the strong community support that makes its work possible.



Yet behind every statistic is a story — often one shaped by challenge, resilience and the search for a second chance.

Many individuals who turn to Goodwill are navigating difficult transitions. Some are reentering the workforce after periods of instability. Others are stepping into adulthood without a reliable support system. Some are

rebuilding after experiences with homelessness, substance abuse, or involvement with the justice system. Still others are veterans adjusting to civilian life, seeking direction and purpose after service.

While each journey is different, a common thread runs through them all: the need for opportunity.

At Goodwill Central Coast, that

*'More than a century ago, Goodwill's founder, Edgar J. Helms believed that access to meaningful work could restore dignity, confidence and purpose. Today, that philosophy continues to guide a global network of Goodwill organizations.'*

opportunity takes shape through a range of programs designed to meet people where they are and help them move forward. Career services often begin with foundational support — building résumés, practicing interview skills, and strengthening digital literacy. These are the tools that allow individuals to approach the job market with confidence, particularly in an economy that increasingly demands adaptability and technical competence.

From there, participants can access job training programs that provide hands-on experience in real-world settings. These opportunities help individuals develop practical skills aligned with in-demand industries, offering not just theoretical knowledge but the kind of experience that employers value.

For many, the journey doesn't end with securing a job. Ongoing support — including mentorship, goal-setting guidance, and financial literacy resources — helps participants maintain stability and continue growing. The goal is not simply employment, but long-term independence.

The impact of this approach is perhaps best understood through the types of transformations it makes possible.

For individuals emerging from cycles of hardship — whether related to incarceration, addiction, or prolonged unemployment — access to structured support can provide a critical turning point. With guidance, training, and the chance to rebuild professional skills, many are able to secure steady employment and begin charting a new course. Over time, some advance into leadership roles, using their experiences

to encourage others who are just beginning their own journeys.

For those who enter adulthood without a safety net, the challenges can be equally daunting. Without stable housing, financial resources, or mentorship, finding a foothold in the workforce can feel overwhelming. Through job readiness training and career placement support, individuals in these circumstances gain not only employment, but also a sense of direction. As skills develop and confidence grows, new opportunities emerge — including pathways into leadership and the chance to mentor others.

For individuals facing major life transitions — such as returning from military service or recovering from periods of instability — the ability to learn new skills and regain a sense of purpose can be transformative. Access to technical training

and workplace experience helps rebuild both competence and confidence, opening doors to careers that once may have seemed out of reach.

These are not isolated outcomes. They are part of a broader pattern — one made possible by a community that actively participates in creating opportunity.

At the heart of GCC's model is the connection between local generosity and local impact. Donations of clothing, books, electronics, and household goods are sold in retail stores throughout the region. The revenue generated from those sales directly supports the programs that help individuals prepare for, find, and sustain employment.

In this way, an item that no longer serves a purpose in one home can become a stepping stone in someone else's journey.

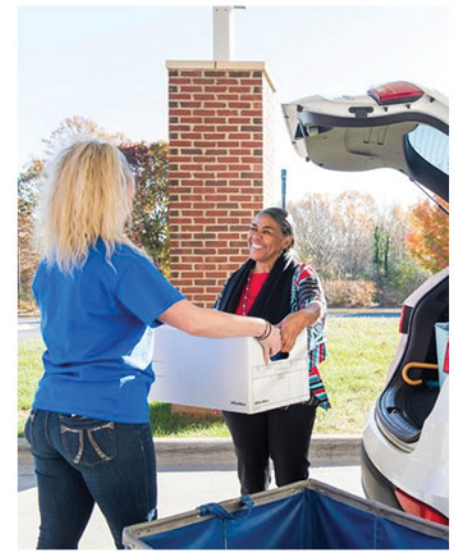
The process is accessible by design. Donation centers throughout the Central Coast make it easy for residents to contribute, while free home pickup is available for larger items in Monterey and Santa Cruz counties. What might begin as a simple act of clearing space becomes part of a larger system — one that turns unused goods into meaningful opportunities.

The ripple effects extend far beyond the individuals directly served. When people gain access to meaningful work, families experience greater stability. Communities become stronger and more connected. Local economies benefit from a more engaged and capable workforce.

It is a model built not on one-time interventions, but on sustained support and shared responsibility.

At a time when many individuals

face complex and often overwhelming challenges, that model offers something both practical and hopeful: a pathway forward, supported by a community that believes in second chances. 🌱



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# Salinas Valley Chamber of Commerce Foundation Takes Over Downtown Salinas Farmer's Market

By Colleen Bailey, CEO/President, SVCC

The Salinas Valley Chamber of Commerce is committed to advancing business growth, strengthening economic vitality, and cultivating community leadership to ensure a vibrant, innovative, and inclusive local economy. Through these efforts, the Chamber continues to play a central role in shaping a thriving future for the Salinas Valley.

As the Chamber's philanthropic arm, the Salinas Valley Chamber of Commerce Foundation has expanded its menu of program offerings to include impactful initiatives such as the Career Pathways program and the Junior Chamber program, which develops leadership skills and civic engagement opportunities for emerging young professionals. Together, these programs create meaningful pathways for workforce development, mentorship, and long-term community investment.

Beginning in July, the Foundation will expand its portfolio of community initiatives further by assuming ownership of the Downtown Farmer's Market. A premier regional destination, the market draws thousands of visitors to downtown Salinas every Saturday from 9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. The Foundation is committed not only to preserving the market's longstanding success, but also to strengthening its role as a vibrant community gathering place that celebrates local agriculture, entrepreneurship, and culture.

As part of this transition, the Foundation is exploring thoughtful enhancements through strategic partnerships that build upon the exceptional foundation established by Joel Panzer and Frank Savino.



Beginning in July, the Salinas Valley Chamber of Commerce Foundation will assume ownership of the Salinas City Center Farmer's Market. Photo by Community Alliance with Family Farmers.

Among these collaborations is a partnership with Hartnell College, made possible through a recent College Corps subaward. College Corps is a statewide initiative that provides students with paid, service-based internship opportunities while supporting community organizations.

Through Hartnell's Handshake career platform, students can now apply for paid internships connected to the Farmer's Market, gaining

valuable professional experience while contributing to the vitality of downtown Salinas.

The Foundation is also partnering with the Arts Council for Monterey County to create opportunities for local artists and performers to showcase their talents at the market, enriching the visitor experience and celebrating the region's creative community. In addition, the Foundation hopes to further expand access to fresh, locally

'The Foundation is committed not only to preserving the market's longstanding success, but also to strengthening its role as a vibrant community gathering place that celebrates local agriculture, entrepreneurship, and culture.'

grown produce through collaborations with organizations such as the Agriculture and Land-Based Training Association (ALBA).

The Chamber's vision for the Downtown Farmer's Market extends beyond the market itself. Its broader goal is to elevate the entire downtown business ecosystem by supporting both the small pop-up vendors that animate the market and the brick-and-mortar shops, restaurants, and cafés that give downtown Salinas its unique character and year-round appeal.

After many years of extraordinary service, Panzer and Savino are stepping away from their leadership roles to enjoy more time with family and friends. Together, they have dedicated thousands of volunteer hours to ensuring the Farmer's Market became a cornerstone of the community. Their commitment reflects the spirit of civic pride and generosity that defines the Salinas Valley and makes this community such a special place to live and work.

On behalf of the entire community, we extend our deepest gratitude to Joel and Frank for their remarkable leadership and lasting contributions. The greatest way to honor their legacy is to ensure the continued success and growth of the Downtown Farmer's Market for generations to come. 🌱



# UPCOMING EVENTS

- **Lunch Connect with The Valley Restaurant and Catering**  
*Wednesday, June 3, 2026, 12:00 - 1:30 p.m.,  
9 E. San Luis St., Salinas*  
Join us on Wednesday, June 3, 2026, from 12:00– 1:30 p.m. at The Valley Restaurant & Catering for our Chamber Lunch Connect series — a great opportunity to meet fellow Chamber members, network in a relaxed setting, and enjoy a delicious meal. Don't miss this fun way to connect with your business community and support member restaurants!
- **Lunch and Learn with MCSC Women's Business Center and Pacific Community Ventures**  
*Thursday, June 11, 2026, 12:00 - 1:00 p.m., 119 E. Alisal St., Salinas*  
Join us for an informative Lunch and Learn with MCSC Women's Business Center and Pacific Community Ventures. You will learn about the resources and support available to small business owners and entrepreneurs in Monterey County, including MCSC Women's Business Center's services that are available to you at no cost: business development workshops, a business planning course, and one-on-one meetings with expert business consultants. Pacific Community Ventures will also share funding opportunities, resources, and support for small business owners in underserved communities, including access to affordable capital, investment options for small business owners, and pro bono business advising and lending to guide entrepreneurs in sustainable growth, building resilience, and navigating new opportunities in a changing economy, while promoting economic empowerment. Plus, learn about some of the local businesses we support! Lunch will be provided.
- **California Rodeo Salinas & Monterey Regional Airport Chamber Mixer**  
*Tuesday, June 16, 2026, 5:30 - 7:00 p.m.,  
200 Fred Kane Drive, Suite 200 Monterey*  
Join us for the Annual California Rodeo Salinas and Monterey Regional Airport Chamber Mixer with the Salinas Valley and Monterey Peninsula Chambers of Commerce as we gear up for the California Rodeo Salinas in July. Dust off your boots, throw on your cowboy hats, and join us for a fun evening in celebration of one of Salinas' most loved events. Tickets cost \$10 for members and \$20 for non-members.
- **Business After Hours: K&D Landscaping — 40th Anniversary Ribbon Cutting**  
*Thursday, July 30, 2026, 5:00 - 7:00 p.m.,  
62 C Hangar Way, Watsonville*  
Join the Salinas Valley Chamber of Commerce, Pajaro Valley Chamber of Commerce and Agriculture, and the Santa Cruz Area Chamber for Business After Hours on July 30 from 5:00–7:00 p.m. at K&D Landscaping in Watsonville. Network with fellow business professionals, enjoy a relaxed evening of conversation, and experience a unique behind-the-scenes look at a local business. The evening will also include a special 40th anniversary ribbon cutting celebrating K&D Landscape's milestone year. Help us commemorate this exciting achievement while building connections with the Chamber's vibrant business community.
- **Salinas Valley Speaks**  
*Thursday, Aug. 6, 2026, 3:30 -5:30 p.m., Braga Ranch*  
The Salinas Valley Chamber of Commerce invites you to "Salinas Valley Speaks," an essential conversation on the state of health-care in our region featuring a panel of hospital CEOs from across the Salinas Valley. This forum will explore the most pressing issues impacting residents, employers, and policymakers, while providing timely insight into federal, state, and local changes affecting health-care delivery. Attendees will also hear how regional healthcare leaders are responding—both individually and collaboratively—to ensure continued access to high-quality care in our community. The event will take place on Thursday, Aug. 6, 2026, from 3:30 to 5:30 p.m. at Braga Ranch and will be moderated by Monterey County Supervisor Chris Lopez. Featured speakers include Rena Salamacha, CEO of Mee Memorial Healthcare System; Chad Harris, MD, CEO of Natividad Medical Center; Mike McDermott, MD, MBA, CEO of Montage Health; and Allen Radner, MD, CEO of Salinas Valley Health. The program begins with a networking mixer at 3:30 p.m., followed by a moderated panel discussion at 4:15 p.m. Tickets are \$30 for members and \$40 for non-members.
- **Lunch Connect with The Steinbeck House**  
*Thursday, Aug. 13, 2026, 12:00– 1:30 p.m.,  
132 Central Ave., Salinas*  
Mark your calendar for our upcoming Chamber Lunch Connect on Thursday, Aug. 13, 2026, from 12:00– 1:30 p.m. at The Steinbeck House. This gathering offers Chamber members and local professionals an opportunity to build new connections, strengthen business relationships, and enjoy lunch in one of Salinas' historic landmarks. Registration opening soon — save the date!

RSVP at [salinaschamber.com](https://salinaschamber.com)



# NON-PROFIT EVENTS

## First Fridays! – Salinas City Center Improvement Association

**June 5, 5:00 – 9:00 p.m., Salinas City Center, Oldtown Salinas**

Every first Friday of the month, the heart of Downtown Salinas comes alive with creativity, culture, and community. Local galleries, restaurants, coffee shops, and businesses open their doors to showcase the incredible talent of artists, musicians, and makers from across the region. Stroll through Main Street and beyond to discover vibrant art exhibits, live performances, and interactive experiences. Whether you're here to support local artists, enjoy live music, or simply connect with friends and neighbors, First Friday is your chance to see downtown in a whole new light. Come hungry, come curious, and come ready to celebrate the best of Salinas' art, culture, and community.

## 2026 Infrastructure Summit — City of Salinas

**June 5, 8:30 a.m. – 3:30 p.m., 1 Main St., Salinas**

Join the City of Salinas and their partners for the 2026 Infrastructure Summit. This day-long gathering brings together state and local leaders, regional partners, and local industry leaders to explore innovative opportunities, spotlight major infrastructure projects, and foster the public-private partnerships essential to building a thriving, connected Salinas. Through insightful panels, real-world discussions, and a keynote from nationally recognized economic development leader Larry Kosmont, attendees will gain a compelling look at the opportunities ahead and how collaboration can unlock the infrastructure our community needs for sustainable growth, housing, mobility, and quality of life.

## \$10,000 Grant Opportunity — MCSC Women's Business Center

**June 9, 4:00 – 5:00 p.m., remote through Zoom**

Join in for a walk-through workshop on how to access and apply for the Verizon Small Business Digital Ready \$10,000 national grant! It is suggested you have a second device available (laptop, tablet, etc.) so that you can sign up and complete some of the requirements to qualify along with other attendees during the presentation. Who can apply? Owners of for-profit small businesses based in the United States, Puerto Rico, or the U.S. Virgin Islands who are 18 or older may apply. Owners of multiple businesses may apply for one business only. Apply once in 2026 and you'll remain eligible for \$10,000 grants awarded throughout the year. Register here: <https://mcscorp.ecenterdirect.com/events/3161>.

— BE SURE TO VISIT THE CHAMBER —  
WEBSITE FOR UP-TO-DATE LISTINGS

## Monster Truck Throwdown – California Rodeo Salinas

**June 14, 2:00 p.m., 1034 N. Main St., The Salinas Sports Complex**

The Monster Truck Throwdown will roar into the Salinas Sports Complex on Sunday, June 14, delivering high-flying stunts, car-crushing power, and nonstop excitement to the Central Coast. Fans can expect an all-new, larger, and more challenging track designed to push drivers and machines to the limit, along with the notorious Farmer 500 race, with some new twists this year. Tickets are on sale now. The event is presented by Gold Star GMC.

### TICKET PRICING:

Box Seats (Ages 2+) – \$45

All Grandstands:

Adults & ADA (ages 13+) – \$32

Kids (ages 2-12, except box seats) – \$15

Monster Meet Up – \$10 (must be purchased separately and must accompany an event ticket).

Gates will open at 10:30 a.m., with the show kicking off at 2 p.m. Fans can get up close to the massive trucks and meet the drivers during the Monster Meet Up from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. (separate ticket required; must accompany an event ticket). Don't miss this thrilling day of monster truck action at the Salinas Sports Complex on June 14! Get your tickets early at [www.carodeo.com](http://www.carodeo.com) before they're gone!

## Third Annual Sweetheart Soiree – California Rodeo Salinas

**July 9, 11:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m., Salinas Sport Complex, Salinas**

After back-to-back sold-out events in 2024 and 2025, the California Rodeo Salinas is thrilled to welcome back the Sweetheart Soiree Cowgirl Luncheon for its third annual celebration on Thursday, July 9, 2026. This fan-favorite event will be held in the Exhibition Mall at the Salinas Sports Complex from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m., bringing together cowgirls from across the region for an afternoon of connection, celebration, and western flair.

The Sweetheart Soiree is more than a luncheon — it's a spirited celebration of the confidence, camaraderie, and unmistakable style of cowgirls. Guests can look forward to mimosas, music, and a vibrant, high-energy atmosphere that captures the heart of rodeo week. The event is proudly presented by Kaiser Permanente. With the past two years seeing quick sellouts, demand is expected to be high once again. This year, 300 seats will be available at \$100 per person. A limited number of donor opportunities and reserved tables will be offered to returning 2024 and 2025 table purchasers, who will receive early access via email. Tickets went on sale to the public at 10 a.m. on April 8, at [carodeo.com](http://carodeo.com). Beyond the fun, the Sweetheart Soiree continues to make a meaningful impact. A portion of event proceeds, including those from the always-popular silent auction, will benefit the California Rodeo Scholarship Program. By attending, guests are not only part of a memorable afternoon but also helping support local students in their pursuit of higher education.

## A WORLD-CLASS EXPERIENCE WITH A HOMETOWN AIRPORT FEEL

*Sneak Peek of Monterey Regional Airport's Replacement Passenger Terminal, Arriving Early Summer 2027*

Construction is progressing at a rapid pace for Monterey Regional Airport's (MRY) replacement passenger terminal. Airport users and passersby can now see the terminal's structural beams rising and the permanent Long-Term Parking Lot will open soon. With these major developments, it's a good time to share a sneak peek of what MRY locals and visitors will experience when the new terminal opens in early summer 2027.

### Replacement Passenger Terminal

From design to construction to opening, MRY's new passenger terminal will deliver a world-class experience with a hometown airport feel. The MRY team and HOK architects listened to what residents and airport tenants envisioned for their airport and designed a welcoming, comfortable, innovative, and timeless terminal that showcases the beautiful Monterey Region to its residents and visitors.

#### Exterior

Approaching the new terminal from a newly built roadway, signage will guide motorists to the premium and long-term parking lots, rental car drop-off, or the efficiently designed terminal curbside with separate areas for passenger drop-off and pick-up, and ground transportation providers.

Rental car counters and vehicles will be located at a separate building footsteps from the terminal, with no shuttle ride required.

Plants and trees native to the local area and suitable to grow well in the Monterey Region's climate will line the terminal roadway and parking lots, and make a dramatic statement within the terminal curbside and courtyard areas. Landscaping will be irrigated with recycled water.

#### Interior

While the new, single-level terminal will be similar in size as MRY's existing (legacy) terminal, the 62,754 square-foot space is designed to efficiently move travelers from the curbside to five airline gates equipped with boarding bridges.

Key features of the terminal include common-use airline ticketing and boarding gate counters to enhance operational flexibility; ample space for security screening; a central gate lounge with The Cockpit restaurant (operated by Chef Tim Wood, owner and operator of Woody's at the Airport) and a retail shop; hold rooms with plenty of seating and room for boarding; an open-air, windowed observation deck; and baggage claim. To achieve LEED\* Platinum certification and net-zero carbon ready



*A welcoming, innovative, and timeless passenger terminal that showcases the beautiful Monterey Region.*

sustainability goals for the terminal, innovative features include an all-electric, onsite renewable energy design; floor-to-ceiling windows to maximize natural daylight; high-performance window glazing and smart-shade systems to minimize glare and enhance user comfort; and acoustic panels to mitigate noise.

### Legacy Terminal

The airport campus is being completely transformed through local skilled contractors while MRY continues its sizable economic and tourism contributions to the Monterey Region through operations in the legacy terminal. The most common questions asked are: will the existing terminal remain, and what will happen to Woody's?

The good news is that the legacy terminal will stay and Woody's will continue to deliver its award-winning food, beverages, and service to locals and visitors. Also remaining

in the current terminal are the Airport Administration Office and the MRY board room, where public meetings will continue to be held.

### Stay Informed During Construction

As the MRY Metamorphosis continues, the airport team remains committed to providing our customers with a convenient, hassle-free travel experience. Please visit [montereyairport.com](http://montereyairport.com) or follow @montereyairport on Facebook, Instagram, and X for travel advisories.

**Learn more about MRY and the MRY Metamorphosis at [montereyairport.com/transform](http://montereyairport.com/transform).**

*\*Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design from the U.S. Green Building Council*





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DELIVERED LOCALLY  
FOR EVERYONE



I'm immensely proud of our nurses and every member of our team whose contributions made this possible."

— Carla Spencer, MSN, RN, NEA-BC  
Chief Nursing Officer

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