



Salinas Valley

CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

BUSINESS JOURNAL



Honoring Excellence and Community Impact at Legacy of Leadership Awards page 20



The U.S. Air Force Thunderbirds Will Headline the California International Airshow page 29

Salinas Voters Asked to Renew Sales Tax That Funds One-Fifth of City Budget

By Kevin Dayton, Government Affairs Liaison

Election Day is on Tuesday, Nov. 3. If you're a registered voter living within Salinas city limits, you will vote on Measure G, a permanent continuation of the Measure G sales tax that 62% of Salinas voters approved in 2014. Both the original Measure G in 2014 and the renewed Measure G in 2026 require approval of a simple majority (50% plus 1) of voters to pass. Polls show that Salinas residents have a much more positive opinion about their city in 2026 than they did in 2014. Is this any surprise? Back in 2014, gang murders and protests were regularly in the news, streetlights were out all over town, potholes were everywhere, and the city was full of vacant and blighted residential and commercial properties. Much of downtown Salinas seemed tired and dismal. The city's image statewide and nationwide was terrible. As the city pulled out of years of Great Recession misery, a hopeful highlight of the year was the opening of the Sonic Drive-In on North Davis Road.



SALES TAX see page 7

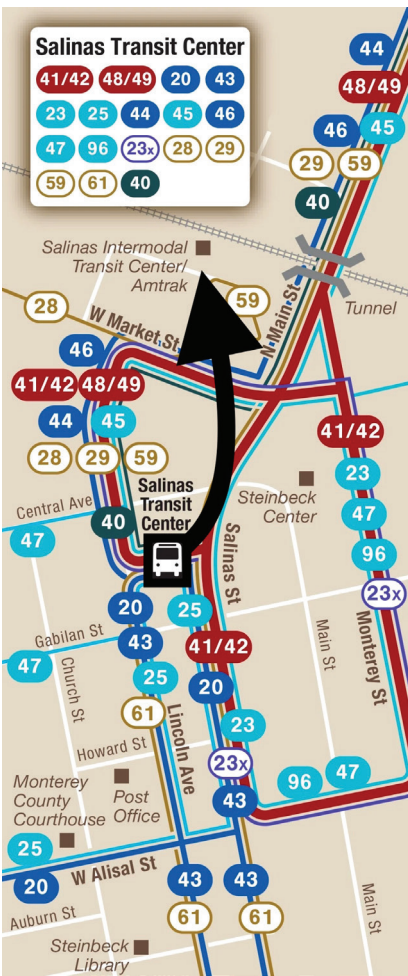
Regional Public Transit Agency Is Unassuming Leader in City of Salinas Economic Development

by Kevin Dayton, Government Affairs Liaison

No public bus system in the United States offers the iconic equivalent of London's red double-decker buses (Routemasters). Although the last Routemaster was built in 1968 and the last routine London bus service using a Routemaster ended in 2005, these buses remain an international symbol for London. Despite lacking an iconic bus vehicle, our county bus system, Monterey-Salinas Transit (MST), is working to establish a legacy in more subtle ways. Monterey County is an exception among American rural counties by having a comprehensive regional public transit agency. It provides safe and affordable transportation for people who cannot drive private passenger vehicles or choose not to drive them. MST also shows an exceptional interest in serving the community as an employer, market participant, and driver of local economic development. Below are current examples of how MST is shaping economic development in the City of Salinas, particularly in the Alisal and downtown.

East Alisal Bus Rapid Transit Between the Alisal and Downtown

More people travel on the East Alisal-Downtown bus route (#41 Salinas-Alisal-Northridge) than any of the other 39 routes in the MST system. In terms of productivity (passengers per hour) the East Alisal route is ranked third among MST's 40 routes. The two most productive routes are special seasonal routes: (1) #40 Salinas-Rancho Cielo, established in 2025 for service during the school year to students



MST may move the Salinas Transit Center to the Salinas Intermodal Transportation Center.

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Choosing to Be Part of the Solution

By Leonard Batti, SVCC Board Chair

One of the blessings, and occasionally a curse, of serving as Chair of your Salinas Valley Chamber of Commerce is having the opportunity to hear what people really think about our community. Every week I have conversations with business owners, nonprofit leaders, elected officials, educators, farmers, and residents from every corner of the valley. They care deeply about where we live, and they are never shy about sharing their opinions.

I hear concerns about city and county government. I hear frustration over economic development, housing, traffic, infrastructure, water, streets, sidewalks, and public safety. Some people believe progress is happening too slowly. Others believe we're headed in the wrong direction altogether.

Every once in a while, I hear genuine praise for a successful project or a positive change, but if I'm being truthful, those conversations are far less common.

Negativity is easy. In fact, it's contagious. It doesn't take much effort to point out what's broken, criticize decisions, or explain why something can't be done. Social media has only amplified that tendency, creating an environment where criticism often receives more attention than collaboration.

But after listening to countless conversations over the past year, I've come to believe that every one of us faces a simple choice.

We can focus on the problems, or we can help create solutions.

My father often asked a question that has stayed with me throughout my life: "Do you want to be part of the problem or part of the solution?" He wasn't just trying to be provocative. He was promoting a philosophy. Complaining rarely changes anything. Showing up, engaging respectfully, and working



Some of our greatest accomplishments have come from partnerships that crossed political, geographic, ethnic, and organizational boundaries. Those successes didn't happen because everyone agreed. They happened because people agreed that progress was more important than winning an argument.

alongside others just might.

That doesn't mean we should stop holding our elected leaders accountable. Accountability is healthy, and constructive criticism is essential in a democracy. Our local governments need to hear when policies aren't working or when priorities need to shift.

But criticism should be paired with a willingness to participate. Attend a council meeting. Volunteer for a committee. Join a community organization. Mentor a young leader. Support local businesses. Offer ideas instead of just objections.

I regularly observe our Salinas City Council meetings. During public comment I hear person after person, some who will be on the November ballot, sharply criticizing the council for one issue or another. Rarely do I hear a constructive solution to the issue they're complaining about, and when they do

offer a solution, I hear no concept of how to pay for it.

Communities are not built by spectators. They are built by people who are willing to invest their time, talent, and energy in making things better.

The Salinas Valley has never lacked for challenges, but we've also never lacked for people who are willing to come together to find a solution. Our agricultural heritage, entrepreneurial spirit, nonprofit organizations, schools, faith communities, and civic leaders have repeatedly demonstrated what is possible when people work together toward a common purpose. Some of our greatest accomplishments have come from partnerships that crossed political, geographic, ethnic, and organizational boundaries.

Those successes didn't happen because everyone agreed. They happened because people agreed that progress was more important than winning an argument.

As we look ahead, there will always be another issue demanding our attention. We will continue to debate growth, infrastructure, housing, water, public safety, and economic opportunity. Those discussions matter, and they should. But the tone of those conversations matters just as much.

Imagine what our valley could accomplish if more of us asked, "How can I help?" before asking, "Who's to blame?"

The future of the Salinas Valley won't be determined by those who complain the loudest. It will be shaped by those who choose to engage, collaborate, and contribute.

We all have a choice.

I know which one my father would encourage us to make. I believe our community will be stronger, more resilient, and more prosperous if we choose to be part of the solution. 🌱

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enrolled in Rancho Cielo educational and vocational programs, and (2) the Monterey Trolley that runs during the summer between Downtown Monterey and Cannery Row.

Based on the popularity of the East Alisal bus route, MST has long considered East Alisal Street as a leading candidate for technology and infrastructure that would create a “Bus Rapid Transit” (BRT) system on this street corridor. A more direct bus route with limited stops and transit priority would “provide residents with a more efficient way to access employment, education, and medical appointments.”

The 2020 Alisal Vibrancy Plan recommended that “future designs of major corridors, such as East Alisal Street, should accommodate service upgrades, such as signal prioritization and Bus Rapid Transit (BRT).”

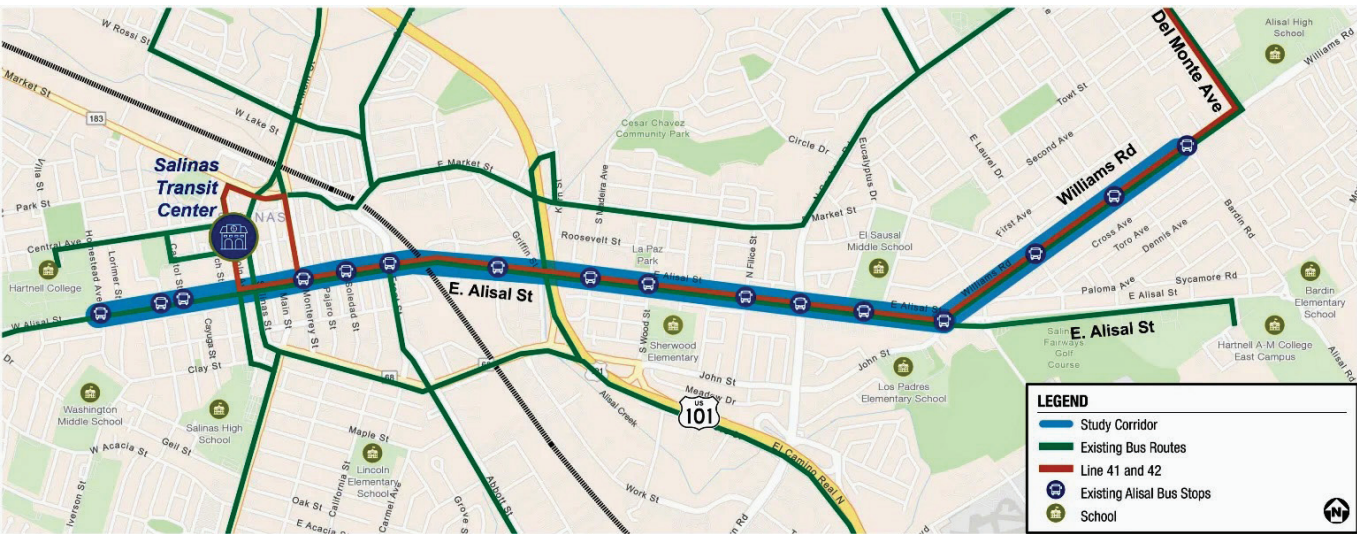
In Fiscal Year 2024-2025, after years of unsuccessful applications, MST obtained a \$463,100 Sustainable Transportation Planning grant from Caltrans (the California Department of Transportation) to fund a study on establishing an East Alisal Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) corridor on East Alisal Street and Williams Road.

MST, the City of Salinas, and Taylor Farms supplemented the state grant with a total of \$163,439. As explained below, this study also analyzes a proposal to move the Salinas Transit Center to another location such as the Salinas Intermodal Transportation Center.

The East Alisal corridor would be MST’s third BRT system. The JAZZ Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) service in the City of Monterey began operating in 2012. The SURF! Busway and Bus Rapid Transit project is now under construction adjacent to Highway 1 between Marina and Sand City/Seaside.

Salinas Transit Center
Relocation in Downtown

Currently, the MST Salinas Transit



The proposed East Alisal Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) project would enhance MST bus reliability and desirability for routes using East Alisal Street and Williams Road that connect with the Salinas Transit Center in Downtown.

Center is located at the intersection of Salinas Street and Central Avenue in downtown Salinas. However, the Salinas Intermodal Transportation Center (ITC) on Market Street, where the train station is located, may now be a more conducive destination for people who use multiple forms of public transportation.

As reported in the July 2026 Business Journal article “What’s Your Chamber’s Government Relations Committee Talking About This Month? - July 2026,” MST lists the ITC as a proposed new location for its Salinas Transit Center.

In 2015, the city’s Greyhound bus station moved from Gabilan Street to the ITC. Also, the Transportation Agency for Monterey County (TAMC) has been planning for a future commuter rail extension between the San Francisco Bay Area and the ITC. In 2021, TAMC completed a series of improvements to the ITC and then transferred jurisdiction of the property to the City of Salinas.

The Salinas Downtown Vibrancy Plan, adopted by the Salinas City Council in 2015, identifies the ITC as the logical place for the convergence of numerous transit options. These include commuter rail, Amtrak rail service, MST buses, Greyhound and other private

buses, bicycles and other personal transportation devices, pedestrian access, and ridesharing services.

One factor in support of locating the Salinas Transit Center at the ITC is the prospect of 500 new residential units in multi-story, multi-unit density housing developments on Market Street and surrounding parcels around the ITC.

This could also include up to 125,000 square feet of commercial space The State of California is pushing local governments to plan for housing development in public transit corridors, where people could live and work without dependence on personal passenger vehicles. Both the Salinas Downtown Vibrancy Plan and City of Salinas 6th Cycle Housing Element identifies parcels around the ITC as potential development parcels.

There are a few potential obstacles to moving the Salinas Transit Center to the Salinas Intermodal Transportation Center. MST would need to create additional bays for buses, which would remove some of the 227 parking spaces. However, conditions of a federal grant provided to TAMC for improvements to the commuter parking lot may prevent the City of Salinas from reducing the number of parking spaces in the ITC lot.

If MST decides to move the

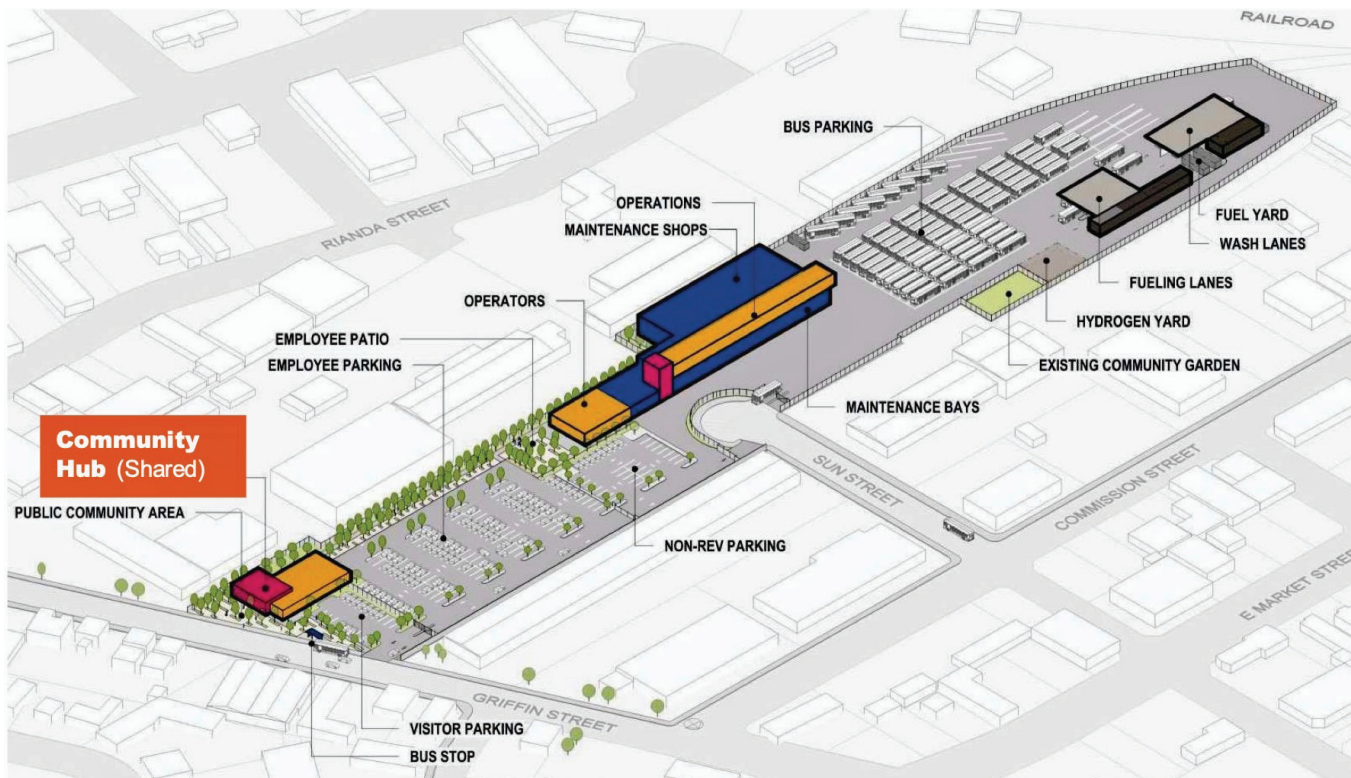
Salinas Transit Center, the agency will need to confirm to the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) of the U.S. Department of Transportation that the relocation complies with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and does not cause a discriminatory disparate impact on minority or low-income populations.

Finally, a recent development that could affect the future of the Intermodal Transit Center is the campaign for formal city recognition of four historic buildings at the ITC as a “Salinas Heritage Park.”

These buildings are the Salinas Amtrak Train Station (formerly the Southern Pacific Railroad Depot), the California Welcome Center/ Salinas City Regional Heritage Center (formerly the Southern Pacific Freight Building), the First Mayor’s House, and the Monterey and Salinas Valley Railroad Museum (formerly the Railway Express Agency).

It can be argued that the extensive foot traffic and related commercial activity generated by the Salinas Transit Center (and adjacent density housing) would complement the objective of preserving and promoting Salinas Heritage Park.

However, the existence of a designated historic park at the ITC could also be cited in



The planned MST operations and maintenance facility at the former Sun Street Transfer Center will be a hub of activity for agency employees and the community.

environmental reviews and other regulatory procedures as a reason not to move the Salinas Transit Center there.

Sun Street Operations and Maintenance Facility in the Alisal

As reported in the April 2026 Business Journal article “New Opportunities for the Once-Controversial Sun Street Transfer Station in the Alisal,” MST is planning to build an operations and maintenance facility at 139 Sun Street in Salinas.

It will include bus parking, an operations center, an employee parking lot, maintenance shops, fueling lanes and charging stations, a fuel yard, a hydrogen yard, and bus washing lanes.

MST is deliberately designing and planning this complex to align with City of Salinas planning documents such as the Alisal District Identity Master Plan, the Alisal Vibrancy Plan (which incorporates plans for the Alisal Marketplace), and the

Visión Salinas 2040 General Plan.

As stated in a staff report to the MST board at its May 11, 2026 meeting, the “community hub” on the edge of the complex facing Griffin Street will include indoor space with a public meeting area, a customer service window, and a training room and office spaces for MST staff. The outdoor space facing Griffin Street “could be an outdoor community location for food trucks and/or community connections.”

There would also be visitor parking for users of the community building. Also, an existing community garden on the property will be retained.

Parking and Commute Solutions for the Amazon Distribution Center

Businesses in the industrial areas of South Salinas continue to worry about the traffic impact of the Amazon distribution center on local streets and Highway 101. This facility is expected to begin operating in 2027.

MST is participating in meetings related to traffic mitigation in this area and has proposed extending an existing route in Salinas to serve the facility. MST is also offering subsidized vanpools for workers associated with the distribution center.

Helping to Make Local Education More Affordable for the Future Workforce

MST offers free bus transportation for all college students attending Hartnell College, Monterey Peninsula College (MPC), and California State University, Monterey Bay (Cal State Monterey Bay).

Students can use MST anytime for any reason during the fall and spring semesters with a valid student identification card. For example, all enrolled, fee-paying Hartnell College students who are 18 years old or older are eligible to use their own CatCard student identification or request a transit-only debit card to ride MST for free. 🌱

AMBASSADOR SPOTLIGHT JASON AVALOS



Jason is a proud alumnus of California State University, Monterey Bay, where he earned his degree in Business Administration with a concentration in Marketing. He previously attended Cabrillo College. Growing up locally shaped his perspective and instilled a strong appreciation for community, connection, and service—values that continue to guide both his personal and professional approach.

New to the Salinas Valley Chamber, Jason is eager to get involved and serve as an ambassador in the local business community. He values collaboration and looks forward to building relationships with professionals who are committed to supporting one another and contributing to the continued growth of the region.

Jason is the newest member of the Business Development team at Disaster Kleenup Specialists, where he applies his marketing and relationship-building background to help strengthen partnerships and expand community outreach. He enjoys connecting with people and supporting clients during times of need, particularly when residential or commercial properties are impacted by a disaster.

Still in his first year at Disaster Kleenup Specialists, Jason is proud to be part of a collaborative, service-driven team and looks forward to growing alongside an organization that aligns with his commitment to service and excellence.

Supporters of Measure G claimed that a new sales tax would provide the city with enough funding to restore services lost during the Great Recession, which would in turn allow the city to address some of its problems. Ballot language for Measure G in 2014 stated the following:

“To improve our quality of life, maintain and enhance city services and facilities, including: crime and gang prevention; neighborhood policing and school safety; safety inspections; police, fire and paramedic response; fixing potholes, streets, and sidewalks; recreation and programs for youth and seniors; and other city services, shall the City of Salinas enact a one cent sales tax, that can’t be taken by the State, with citizens’ oversight, annual independent audits, with all funds dedicated to Salinas?”

But Measure G in 2014 was not permanent. It included a cautious

provision that would end collection of the sales tax in 2030. Voters would get to decide before then if Measure G had changed anything in the city for the better.

Ballot language for renewal of Measure G in 2026 reflects the subsequent 12 years of improvements in the city’s budget and operational situation, including a significant reduction in crime rates (as reported in the June 2026 Business Journal). It states the following:

“Without raising taxes, shall the City of Salinas renew Measure G maintaining the existing 1-cent local sales tax providing approximately \$30 million annually until ended by the voters to continue funding street and sidewalk repairs and other long-term infrastructure projects, parks, youth and senior programs, police, fire, and emergency response, homeless reduction, and other general city services, with independent citizen oversight, annual audits, and all

funds dedicated to and remaining in Salinas?”

Measure G renewal was placed on the November 2026 ballot by the Salinas City Council at their June 2, 2026 meeting with a 6-0 vote (one member was absent). According to the city council’s resolution, “for the last 10 years, the 1-cent general transaction and use tax has been a critical source of funding for many of the City’s most important and popular services including crime prevention, public safety, economic development, and street and sidewalk repairs.”

In addition, the resolution acknowledges that the end of the Measure G sales tax will “stop producing revenues that fund these critical services.” If voters reject Measure G, budget projections show city tax revenue will drop from \$212.3 million in Fiscal Year 2029-2030 to \$172.2 million in Fiscal Year 2030-2031.

Also, the resolution claims that “No amount of budget cuts, fiscal

austerity measures or potential grants from the State or Federal government could replace the general transaction and use tax revenues from Measure G without severe impacts to critical City services.”

If the Measure G sales tax terminates, residents should not expect the state to provide a “bail-out” to maintain the city’s police and fire departments. Nor should anyone expect the city to maintain its services by borrowing millions of dollars from investors that must be paid back with interest over decades.

With a 21% revenue decline, the city council will need to balance its budget by laying off dozens of police, firefighters, code enforcement officers, and park and street maintenance workers. Also, the city council would have to abandon plans for street and sidewalk improvements, as well as projects large and small

SALES TAX see page 9

History of City of Salinas Measure G Receipts and Expenditures

Fiscal Year (FY)	Revenue	Expenditures	Notes
FY 2013-2014	\$0	\$0	Tax collection authorized by Measure G began on April 1, 2015 following voter approval on November 4, 2014.
FY 2014-2015	\$5,374,552	\$0	Source of Data: Annual Basic Financial Statements for the City of Salinas for each fiscal year, which ends on June 30. Measure G revenue includes taxes collected and also includes a relatively small amount of interest earnings and miscellaneous income. There were no expenditures for Measure G in FY 2014-2015 because revenue was only collected in the last three months of the fiscal year. The FY 2014-2015 budget approved by the Salinas City Council in June 2014 did not anticipate voter approval of a sales tax measure.
FY 2015-2016	\$23,156,392	\$14,003,677	
FY 2016-2017	\$24,431,121	\$22,327,124	
FY 2017-2018	\$24,906,775	\$26,268,077	
FY 2018-2019	\$27,761,222	\$23,877,314	
FY 2019-2020	\$26,613,814	\$23,118,702	
FY 2020-2021	\$30,328,146	\$26,821,608	
FY 2021-2022	\$33,491,830	\$32,840,090	
FY 2022-2023	\$35,010,051	\$31,693,213	
FY 2023-2024	\$35,672,745	\$33,694,984	
FY 2024-2025	\$37,313,404	\$39,528,395	
TOTAL - First 12 Fiscal Years	\$304,060,052	\$274,173,184	\$29,886,868 in Measure G revenue was available as of June 30, 2025.
FY 2025-2026 (Amended Budget)	\$36,058,000	\$52,517,568	Source of Data: City of Salinas Adopted Biennial Operating Budget FY 2026/27-2027/28, approved by the Salinas City Council on June 16, 2026, pages 32, 51, 55, 57 and 91. Final numbers for FY 2025/26 not yet available because of modified accrual basis of accounting customarily used for municipal budgets.
FY 2026-2027 (Budgeted)	\$36,305,900	\$39,162,126	
FY 2027-2028 (Budgeted)	\$37,186,900	\$39,014,023	
TOTAL - 14 of the 15 Fiscal Years	\$413,610,852	\$404,866,901	\$8,743,951 in Measure G revenue is anticipated to be available as of June 30, 2028.
FY 2028-2029	N/A	N/A	Budget not prepared yet for this fiscal year.
FY 2030-2031	\$0	Unknown amount from whatever Measure G revenue is not spent.	Tax collection authorized by Measure G ends on April 1, 2030. Page 81 of the City of Salinas Adopted Biennial Operating Budget FY 2026/27-2027/28 projects that General Fund revenue will drop from \$212,338,778 in FY 2029-2030 to \$172,150,780 in FY 2030-2031 (a loss of \$40,187,998, or 18.9%). Freezing expenditures from the General Fund for FY 2030-31 at the FY 2029-30 projected budget amount of \$224,965,902 will result in a projected budget deficit of \$52,815,122 in FY 2030-31, 23.5% of the total General Fund budget. Page 9 states that “revenue loss of over \$40 million in 2030/31, due to the sunset of Measure G...will be a significant challenge, requiring substantial reductions and reprioritization of services, programs, and projects.”

City of Salinas Capital Expenditures

New Police Facility	\$9,238,057	Recreational Facility at Salinas Municipal Aquatic Center	\$280,000	Natividad Creek Silt Removal	\$75,000
Fire Station Renovations	\$4,238,655	Community Development Department Vehicle	\$261,005	Recreation Vehicle Replacement	\$75,000
Fire Vehicle Apparatus Replacement	\$4,167,662	Farmworker Housing Study	\$245,501	Rotunda & City Manager Conference Room Upgrade	\$74,999
East Boronda Road Widening Improvements	\$3,979,361	Parks Vehicles Replacement	\$236,620	Salinas Train Station Improvements	\$74,222
New Police Facility Debt Service Financing	\$3,893,484	East Laurel Drive Sidewalk & Lights	\$220,000	NPDES Compliance	\$72,392
Street Preventative Maintenance Program	\$3,722,220	Fire Station Alerting Systems Upgrade	\$215,782	City Facilities Repainting	\$70,000
Police Vehicle Replacement	\$3,580,000	Shelter Operations	\$200,000	Freight Building Rehabilitation	\$66,451
Police Department Records Management System	\$2,630,413	Parking Enforcement	\$200,000	District 5 Community Center	\$55,458
Sidewalk & Drainage Repairs	\$2,343,357	Community Center Improvements	\$199,435	Congestion Management Agency - City Percentage	\$51,500
Alisal Vibrancy Plan - Economic Development Element	\$2,334,788	Body-Worn Cameras	\$192,990	Alisal Safe Routes to School Project	\$50,327
Sanborn Road/US Highway 101 Interchange Improvements	\$2,264,324	Financial & Human Resources Management Enterprise	\$190,000	Ag-Industrial Park EIFD	\$49,846
IWTF Flood Damage Repairs	\$2,097,475	Street Maintenance Equipment	\$173,919	Irrigation Control Systems Retrofit	\$42,400
Annual City Streets Rehabilitation Program	\$1,200,000	Economic Development Element - Project Management	\$168,579	Gabilan Creek Silt Removal	\$40,000
City Cleanup Program	\$1,130,000	Women's Club Upgrade	\$166,477	Facilities Vehicle Replacement	\$38,583
Soccer Field - Cesar Chavez Park	\$1,017,349	Reroof Public Buildings	\$160,941	Mobile Command Vehicles Recurring Cost	\$35,081
Personal Computers & Networking	\$920,500	Park & Open Space Master Plan	\$154,317	Natividad Creek Detention	\$35,000
Street Tree Trimming	\$904,606	Chinatown Homeless Center Improvements	\$152,626	Traffic Signal Installations and Upgrades	\$35,000
Chinatown Navigation Sprung Shelter	\$900,595	U.S. Housing and Urban Development Consolidated Plan	\$146,799	Steaming Ahead Historic Railroad	\$30,573
Downtown Complete Streets Project	\$886,272	Downtown Vibrancy Plan Parking	\$146,261	Traffic Improvements - Skyway/Airport	\$30,000
Urban Forestry Equipment Replacement	\$738,189	Athletic Field Repairs	\$145,309	Fire Safety Gear & Equipment	\$30,000
Fleet Service Trucks	\$695,123	Alisal Greening, Beautification and Safety Project	\$145,075	Alisal Corridor Complete Streets Plan	\$29,820
Telephone System City-Wide	\$643,218	Economic Development Element Analysis	\$139,448	Fire Staff Management Software/Subscription	\$29,286
Public Safety Radio System (NGEN)	\$550,000	Permanent Homeless Shelter	\$125,000	Park Drinking Fountain Replaceent	\$28,482
Fire Vehicles	\$547,200	Wireless Network Coverage	\$123,208	Active Transportation Plan	\$26,761
El Dorado Park Improvements	\$528,701	Geographic Information Systems (GIS)	\$120,000	Fire Training Tower Maintenance	\$21,718
Downtown Streets Team	\$525,000	Homeless Warming Shelter	\$119,866	Fleet Vehicles Replacement	\$19,799
Cesar Chavez Trail	\$470,889	Street Maintenance Vehicles	\$118,786	Fit Testing Equipment	\$15,502
Sherwood Tennis Center Improvements	\$451,594	Fire Hose & Nozzle Replacement	\$117,999	Park Lights Replacement	\$13,724
Motorola Radios	\$450,740	Downtown Vibrancy Plan Infrastructure	\$112,918	General Plan Update	\$12,908
Fire Radio Command/Mobile Data Computer	\$433,674	NPDES Professional Services	\$110,686	Fleet Replacement	\$8,839
Fire Command/Staff Vehicles	\$418,291	Downtown Traffic & Parking Study	\$107,279	Downtown Vibrancy Plan State Highways	\$7,149
Playground Improvements at Parks	\$391,771	Hebbron Family Center (683 Fremont Street)	\$101,983	Fire Station 7 - Scoping	\$5,517
Fleet Replacement	\$373,948	Traffic Calming Improvements	\$100,000	Tasers and Body-Worn Cameras	\$3,240
NPDES Storm Water Monitoring	\$359,770	Digital NEST	\$100,000	Bicycle Lane Installations	\$1,757
Fire Station Repairs	\$352,500	NPDES Public Education	\$99,313	Street Maintenance Equipment	\$1,654
Economic Development Element Amendment EIR	\$350,000	Downtown Vibrancy Plan General Plan	\$89,279	Emergency Operations Center/Response Planning	\$905
Fleet Consolidation Replacement	\$335,100	City Web Page	\$80,000	ADA Facilities Transition Plan & Improvements	\$180
West Wing - Fire Department Renovation	\$307,775	10 Soledad Street Homeless Sanitation Facility Renovation	\$79,987		
Network Equipment Upgrades	\$280,000	Safety Tree Trimming - City Parks	\$77,723	TOTAL	\$67,836,785

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GROWN *Deeper*



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The Dangers of Procrastination and the Immorality of Political Gamesmanship

Some Salinas residents are asking why they should vote for Measure G renewal in 2026. After all, the tax actually doesn’t expire until 2030, after the 2028 election. Why jump early to renew a tax?

Your Chamber recognizes that the mayor, city council, and city staff need reasonable assurances — years in advance — that money will be available for city programs and projects. It takes

years to develop an effective, efficient workforce and plan for construction of capital improvement projects.

Some organizations and individuals reportedly see a strategic advantage if they can persuade Salinas voters to reject Measure G renewal in the 2026 election. If the mayor and city council are subjected in 2028 to intense time pressure to either get the sales tax renewed or lose 21% of the city’s budget revenue, they’ll be compelled to make significant concessions to organizations and individuals to win their campaign support. A budget crisis becomes an opportunity for organizations and

individuals to demand things from the city government — and get them.

Although some people may argue it’s politically sophisticated to create a crisis and then don’t let it go to waste, your Chamber has chosen not to engage in this kind of plotting. Sabotaging the city’s future with political ploys and tactics does not align with the Chamber’s official vision of “a thriving, welcoming Salinas Valley where people, families and businesses succeed via economic growth and opportunity.”

Vote for Measure G

No one likes to pay taxes, but

Measure G sales tax revenue has paid for 12 years of city personnel, services, and projects meant to improve the quality of life for residents, workers, and visitors in Salinas.

Your Chamber has data showing improvement in many measures of city performance from 2014 to 2026 — plummeting crime rates just being one prominent example. Your Chamber’s official vision of “a thriving, welcoming Salinas Valley where people, families and businesses succeed via economic growth and opportunity” will be undermined if the Measure G sales tax is not renewed. 🌱

City of Salinas Full-Time Positions Funded by Measure G - FY 2015-2026 and FY 2025-2026

Department	Fiscal Year 2013-2014	Fiscal Year 2015-2016		Fiscal Year 2025-26	Fiscal Year 2026-2027		Fiscal Year 2027-2028	Fiscal Year 2030-2031
Police: Sworn Positions	0.0	15 Police Officers in the Patrol Division 1 Police Sergeant in Community Services 1 Police Sergeant as a School Resource Officer	17.0	12.0	1 Deputy Chief of Police 11 Police Officers (existing) 5 Police Officers (new hires) 2 Police Sergeants 1 Police Commander	20.0	20.0	0.0
Police: Non-Sworn Support Positions	0.0	5 Community Service Officers in the Patrol Division 3 Police Services Technicians in Records 1 Administrative Secretary 1 Crime Analyst 1 Police Services Administrator 1 Word Processing Operator	12.0	17.0	1 Administrative Analyst I 2 Administrative Secretaries 1 Community Outreach Assistant 1 Crime Analyst 1 Police Records Coordinator 9 Police Services Specialists I/II 3 Supervising Police Services Specialists	18.0	18.0	0.0
Fire: Sworn Positions	0.0	N/A	0.0	6.75	2.875 Fire Captains 6.51 Firefighters 1.00 Fire Engineer	10.385	7.775	0.0
Fire: Non-Sworn Support Positions	0.0	1 Office Technician	1.0	1.0	1 Administrative Analyst I	1.0	1.0	0.0
Community Development	0.0	2 Code Enforcement II 1 Code Enforcement I 1 Office Technician	4.0	10.0	1 Administrative Aide 1 Administrative Analyst I 1 Administrative Clerk I 1 Code Enforcement Manager 4 Code Enforcement Officer I 2 Code Enforcement Officer II 1 Senior Code Enforcement Officer	11.0	12.0	0.0
Public Works	0.0	1 Inmate Crew Coordinator - Streets - Clean-Up 1 Park Maintenance Worker 3 Public Service (PS) Maintenance Worker II - Streets 2 Public Service (PS) Maintenance Worker III - Streets 1 Public Service (PS) Maintenance Worker IV - Streets	8.0	36.25	2 Assistant Engineers 1 Engineering Aide II 1 Environmental Compliance Inspector I 1 Environmental Compliance Inspector II 1 Inmate Crew Coordinator 1 Junior Engineer .25 Maintenance Manager 1 Public Service Maintenance Crew Supervisor 1 Public Works Resource Coordinator 1 Public Service (P.S.) Maintenance Worker I 13 Public Service (P.S.) Maintenance Worker II 5 Public Service (P.S.) Maintenance Worker III 3 Public Service (P.S.) Maintenance Worker IV 1 Senior Urban Forestry Worker 1 Street Maintenance Manager 1 Traffic Engineer (Division Manager) 1 Urban Forestry Crew Supervisor 3 Urban Forestry Worker I 3 Urban Forestry Worker II	41.25	41.25	0.0
Parks & Recreation	0.0	1 Recreation Coordinator - Administration 1 Administrative Analyst 1 Neighborhood Services Coordinator 1 Recreation Assistant - After School Programs 1 Senior Recreation/Sports Program Assistant - After School Programs 1 Recreation Coordinator - After School Programs	6.0	15.50	1 Administrative Analyst I 3 Neighborhood Services Coordinator 6.5 Park Maintenance Worker 2 Recreation Coordinator 2 Senior Recreation Assistant 1 Sports Program Assistant	15.5	15.5	0.0
Finance	0.0	1 Senior Accounting Clerk 1 Senior Accounting Technician 1 Information Systems Specialist - Dedicated to Police 1 Information Network Systems Specialist	4.0	4.0	1 Computer Systems Administrator 1 Network System Specialist 1 Senior Accounting Clerk 1 Senior Finance Management Analyst	0.0	0.0	0.0
Administration	0.0	1 Community Safety/Prevention Program Coordinator 1 Executive Assistant	2.0	2.0	1 Community Relations Manager 1 Executive Assistant	0.0	0.0	0.0
Human Resources	0.0	1 Human Resources Analyst I	1.0	2.0	1 Confidential Office Technician 1 Senior Human Resource Analyst	0.0	0.0	0.0
TOTAL	0.0		55.0	106.5		117.135	115.525	0.0



MEMBER NEWS



Salinas Valley Fair Seeks Applicants for Chief Executive Officer

The Salinas Valley Fair Board of Directors has begun its search for a motivated CEO, with a goal to fill the role by the end of the year. The Salinas Valley Fairgrounds is home to the annual Salinas Valley Fair, Monterey International Wine Competition, MCCA Ranch Rodeo, weekly King City Flea Market, and the King City Stampede. With a mission to showcase the annual Fair, provide a year-round setting for the South County community, and a vision to ensure the facility is a hub of the Salinas Valley, the Board of Directors is seeking the right person to lead the multi-purpose event facility located in King City. The suitable candidate is an energetic, community-minded leader who values the Fair's strong traditions, while adopting new opportunities to ensure growth of the Salinas Valley Fair. The next CEO will have the opportunity to lead a respected nonprofit organization, oversee year-round events and facility operations, implement the Fair's long-term strategic vision, and support meaningful relationships that contribute to a positive work environment. Working alongside a dedicated staff, the Salinas Valley Fair Board of Directors, the Heritage Foundation Board, community partners, volunteers, exhibitors, local agencies and organizations, the CEO will play a vital role in preserving the traditions that generations have valued. The ideal applicant will be an experienced executive leader with a passion for community engagement, agriculture, and event management. The Board is seeking those with proven success in fair management, large-scale event production, or comparable leadership roles overseeing similar events, operations, and/or facilities. Qualified candidates should have experience in executive leadership, including human resources management, business administration, public relations, facility maintenance and operations, ticketing and admissions, and marketing. The candidate will demonstrate the ability to manage budgets, payroll, financial reporting, business development initiatives, grant writing, and sponsorship cultivation. Strong communication skills, sound decision-making, crisis management experience, and proficiency with computer technology are essential. Familiarity with agriculture organizations and youth leadership programs, including FFA & 4H, is highly valued, as is a commitment to serving the community through collaboration, innovation, and stewardship.



Salinas Valley Health Earns Leapfrog Full Transparency Badge

Salinas Valley Health has earned the inaugural Leapfrog Full Transparency Badge, a new national designation recognizing hospitals that voluntarily and publicly report comprehensive patient safety and quality data through the annual Leapfrog Hospital Survey. The Full Transparency Badge is awarded to hospitals that complete, affirm and submit all sections of the Leapfrog Hospital Survey, one of the nation's leading voluntary reporting programs focused on patient safety, quality and transparency. While hospitals report quality data to a variety of accrediting organizations and regulatory agencies, Leapfrog is the only national reporting program designed exclusively to provide patients and families with meaningful, publicly accessible information about the safety and quality of their care. "At Salinas Valley Health, our consecutive 'A' Hospital Safety Grades from Leapfrog reflect the quality of the care we provide and the new Full Transparency Badge reflects the integrity behind our commitment to quality," said Allen Radner, MD, Salinas Valley Health President/CEO. "We are proud of both recognitions because they represent our mission and our staff's dedication. Especially as healthcare systems across the country face an increasingly challenging fiscal environment, being transparent about our performance is an important part of maintaining the trust our community places in us every day." The new transparency designation complements Salinas Valley Health's longstanding record of excellence in patient safety and clinical quality. In addition to earning consecutive "A" Hospital Safety Grades from The Leapfrog Group, Salinas Valley Health has received a Four-Star Overall Hospital Quality Rating from the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services, earned Magnet with Distinction® recognition for nursing excellence, and has been recognized by U.S. News & World Report as a High Performing Hospital in multiple adult procedures and conditions. "



Bay Federal Credit Union Welcomes Chris Heck as Vice President, Business Services

Bay Federal Credit Union is pleased to announce the appointment of Chris Heck to Vice President, Business Services. In this role, Heck will lead the development and growth of Bay Federal's Business Services Department, overseeing business loan origination, underwriting, portfolio management, business deposit services, and treasury management, while expanding the credit union's lending and deposit products for local business members. Heck brings more than 30 years of commercial banking experience with banks and credit unions. He began his career as a teller and worked his way up to senior leadership. Most recently, he served as VP, Business Services at Peak Credit Union. Prior to that, he was VP, Commercial Banker at First Citizens Bank, and held roles at Venture Bank, starting as a Commercial Loan Assistant before advancing to VP, Commercial Banker. Heck holds a Commercial Lending Certification and completed the Western CUNA Management School program from 2015 to 2017. He previously served on the board of the United Way of Lewis County in Chehalis, Washington, including a term as Board President, from 2005 to 2013.



Every Baby Born at Natividad Gets 400 Free Diapers

Every baby born at Natividad Medical Center now receives 400 free diapers, thanks to the Golden State Start program. The hospital is one of the first in California to provide this benefit to new parents. There is no paperwork, no income limits and no forms to fill out. Every family who gives birth at Natividad July 13, 2026, and later qualifies. "With nearly half of Monterey County families choosing to have their baby at Natividad every year, Golden Gate Start is helping us put free diapers right into the hands of thousands of families," said Natividad Interim CEO Nancy Buscher, DNP. "We're proud to partner with this program so parents can focus on what matters most — caring for their new baby."



NHEH Welcomes Attorney John P. Gutierrez

Gutierrez has joined the litigation practice group at Noland, Hamerly, Etienne & Hoss. John's practice is focused on contract, real property, corporate, and landlord-tenant matters. His experience in Sacramento involved those areas, from national business clients to local industry leaders. A native of Sacramento, he earned his J.D. from McGeorge School of Law at University of the Pacific, where he also earned his B.A. He now lives in Marina and is based in NHEH's Salinas office.





Meet Your Vendor HUMMUS HEAVEN

For more than two decades, Hummus Heaven has brought the flavors of Tunisian and Middle Eastern cuisine to farmers markets throughout the region. What began with traditional family recipes has grown into a favorite offering more than 40 varieties of hummus, including flavors like artichoke jalapeño, beetroot, and spinach jalapeño feta. Customers can also enjoy garlic spreads, labne, salads, olives, stuffed grape leaves, and other specialties. With fresh ingredients and plenty of variety, Hummus Heaven brings something flavorful and unique to every farmers market visit. 🌿

Meet Your Vendor CAFÉ GUARANI

Café Guarani is a family-owned South American bakery and cafe. Started by Liliana Rodes de Araujo after a lifetime of experience, offering traditional Paraguayan, Argentinian foods, pastries, and beverages. Their signature looks include; empanadas and chipa (paraguayan cheese bread). 🌿



Fresh This Month SEPTEMBER PRODUCE & RECIPE



September brings an abundance of fresh, locally grown produce to the Salinas Valley. Visit your local farmers market and look for seasonal favorites like lettuce, broccoli, cauliflower, celery, tomatoes, peppers, zucchini, strawberries, artichokes and apples.



Try This: Roasted Vegetable & Quinoa Bowl

Turn your farmers market finds into a fresh and healthy meal! Toss zucchini, bell peppers, tomatoes, and broccoli with olive oil, garlic, salt, and pepper. Roast at 425°F for about 20 minutes, or until tender. Serve over cooked quinoa and top with fresh greens, avocado, and a squeeze of lemon. This colorful and nutritious bowl is packed with seasonal vegetables, fiber, and plant-based protein, making it an easy way to enjoy the flavors of the season. 🌿





RIBBON CUTTINGS & CHAMBER EVENTS

by Chamber Staff



Ribbon-Cutting Celebration: Salinas Valley Chamber Foundation Assumes Management of the Salinas Farmers' Market

Bright and early on July 25, the Salinas Valley Chamber of Commerce Foundation officially cut the ribbon to celebrate assuming management of the Downtown Salinas Farmers' Market! Thank you to all the community members, business leaders, and dignitaries who joined us for the morning. A heartfelt thank you to Joel Panzer and Frank Savino for their years of dedicated service to the market. The Foundation is deeply committed to supporting local small entrepreneurs and farmers, driving economic vitality, and keeping the market a welcoming, vibrant destination for families and visitors alike.



40 Years of Excellence: K&D Landscaping Milestone Celebration

The Salinas Valley Chamber was thrilled to join forces with our friends at the Aptos, Pajaro Valley, and Santa Cruz Chambers in Watsonville to celebrate a massive milestone: K&D Landscaping's 40th Anniversary! Over 240 guests—including clients, neighbors, suppliers, local dignitaries, and Chamber members—came out to celebrate four decades. Between the delicious tri-tip and tacos, live music, photo booth, and a joint ribbon cutting with all four chambers, it was truly an unforgettable evening.



Grand Opening of Alebrijes & Nahuales: Fantastic Animals from Mexico hosted by Mershops Northridge Mall

The community gathered on July 31 at Mershops Northridge Mall to welcome Alebrijes & Nahuales exhibition! Guests enjoyed La Guelaguetza performances, hands-on craft sessions, and an inspiring look at the monumental sculptures displayed across Salinas through Sept. 4.



Shaping Healthcare: Highlights from Salinas Valley Speaks

The Salinas Valley Chamber hosted leaders at Braga Ranch for an eye-opening healthcare panel. Emceed by Supervisor Chris Lopez and Chamber CEO Colleen Bailey, hospital executives Dr. Allen Radner of Salinas Valley Health, Dr. Chad Harris of Natividad Medical Center, and Dr. Mike McDermott of Montage Health shared vital updates on local and national care trends. Thank you to Braga Ranch and all our generous event sponsors for making this critical conversation possible.



Alebrijes & Nahuales: Fantastic Animals from Mexico Exhibition Opening Ceremony at One Main Street

On Aug. 7, we kicked off Alebrijes & Nahuales during First Friday Salinas in partnership with Arts4MC and featured La Guelaguetza dancers, live music from the Latin Jazz Collective, an official ribbon cutting, and over 30 handcrafted miniature works by artisan masters from Mexico. Special thanks to the City of Salinas, Salinas Public Arts Commission, Artistic Producer Romain Greco, curator JC Gonzalez, our community partners, and presenting sponsor Hospice Giving Foundation.



Lunch and Learn with TPO 'The HR Experts'

Salinas Valley employers gathered for an impactful session on mastering compensation and workforce retention. Led by TPO "The HR Experts," attendees unpacked rising regional labor costs, evolving workforce expectations, and practical strategies to build competitive offer packages. Attendees walked away equipped with actionable tools to attract and keep top local talent.

Salinas Valley Health Nurse Residency Program Prepares New Graduates for Career Success

By Chris Haubert, Salinas Valley Health

A group of recently graduated and licensed registered nurses is about to take one of the biggest steps of their professional lives.

While the transition from nursing school to bedside practice can be both exciting and intimidating, on Sept. 14, the new graduate nurses will begin their careers through Salinas Valley Health's New Graduate Nurse Residency Program.

Guided by highly skilled specialty educators, experienced preceptors and a structured, evidence-based curriculum, the six-month program provides an immersive, supportive environment where new nurses gain confidence, clinical judgment and real-world experience.

This level of support reflects Salinas Valley Health's commitment to developing the next generation of nurses at a time when healthcare organizations nationwide are working to expand their nursing staff.

By investing in a comprehensive new graduate nurse residency program, Salinas Valley Health is helping newly graduated registered nurses bridge the gap between nursing school and professional practice while building a strong foundation for long-term career growth.

Bridging the Gap from Nursing School to Professional Practice

Designed to ease that transition, the program combines classroom instruction and on-unit clinical experience with dedicated preceptors.

The goal is to support newly graduated registered nurses by helping them refine their clinical skills, prepare for independent practice, build confidence, and develop the competencies needed to deliver exceptional patient care.

The six-month residency program



Salinas Valley Health's 2025 Fall New Graduate Nurse Residency Cohort with Chief Nursing Officer, Carla Spencer, seated in the middle.

is offered each spring and fall for newly licensed registered nurses. Applications for the spring program open in January.

"Salinas Valley Health's New Graduate Nurse Residency Program is successful because of the commitment of our specialty educators, preceptors, and clinical leaders who support the growth and development of every new graduate nurse," says Stephanie Frizzell, Director of the Education Department at the medical center. "The program combines a comprehensive curriculum with individualized learning tailored to each cohort, providing support, mentorship, and clinical foundation needed to transition into professional practice confidently."

Building Skills, Confidence and Clinical Expertise

Newly graduated nurses complete the program as a cohort while gaining experience in a variety of nursing specialties.

During the first six weeks, participants receive intensive competency-based education with sessions such as: Collaboration

and Partnerships, Foundations of Patient-Centered Care, Health Across the Continuum, Integration of Healthcare Technology, Leadership and Professional Development, Nursing Knowledge and Theory, Nursing Scholarship, Principles of Quality and Safety, Professional Value, and System-Based Resource Management.

Professional development seminars at four, five, and six months include curriculum focused on topics such as wellness, evidence-based practice and individualized topics based on the cohort's identified needs, helping residents grow personally while advancing their careers.

The program is part of Salinas Valley Health Medical Center's broader commitment to nursing excellence as an American Nurses Credentialing Center (ANCC) recognized Magnet® with Distinction organization. That commitment is further demonstrated through accreditation with distinction from the ANCC's Practice Transition Accreditation Program®.

This international standard honors evidence-based nurse residency

programs that successfully support newly licensed nurses as they transition into professional practice. The distinction reflects Salinas Valley Health's dedication to fostering a culture of continuous learning, clinical excellence and high-quality patient care.

Mentorship that Makes a Difference

Steffi Cadiz, Staff Nurse I, entered the program with a strong desire to continue learning and growing and was grateful for the framework of the program.

"The support I received helped me realize that becoming a confident nurse is a process and that it is OK to continue asking questions," she explains. I especially valued having a structured environment where I could learn from experienced nurses on every unit, and reflect on the challenges and successes that come with being a new nurse."

"Mentoring, guiding and orienting new residents are some of the most rewarding aspects of my role," explains Nancy Guillen, Clinical Nurse Educator. "I appreciate witnessing their professional growth and gratitude throughout the program."

The New Graduate Nurse Residency Program is one of the many ways Salinas Valley Health invests in its workforce while helping meet the region's growing healthcare needs.

By preparing newly licensed nurses for long-

term success, the organization is building a pipeline of compassionate, highly skilled professionals dedicated to serving the Salinas Valley community well into the future. 🌱



Scan the code to learn more about nursing careers at Salinas Valley Health.

Local Health Care Systems Worry About How to Pay for Services

By Kevin Dayton, Government Affairs Liaison

INTRODUCTION

Your Chamber recognizes there are many perspectives on American health care policies and practices. Chamber members recently had an opportunity to hear perspectives from top executives of three independent community-based health care systems based in Monterey County — two public and one private.

Attendees of the Salinas Valley Speaks event on April 6 at Braga Barn in Soledad heard from Dr. Mike McDermott of Montage Health, Dr. Allen Radner of Salinas Valley Health, and Dr. Chad Harris of Natividad. A schedule conflict prevented participation of Rena Salamacha of Mee Memorial Healthcare System, a rural non-profit service provider with a small hospital in King City and clinics in King City and Greenfield.

Montage Health, based on the Monterey Peninsula, is a private non-profit health care system with a hospital (Community Hospital of the Monterey Peninsula, or CHOMP). Salinas Valley Health is a public health care district with a hospital in Salinas (Salinas Valley Health Medical Center). Natividad is a public hospital in Salinas with a health care system owned and operated by the County of Monterey.

Monterey County Supervisor Chris Lopez was the panel moderator. Here's a concise, organized summary of the complicated issues discussed at the forum.

TODAY'S TOP PROBLEM: PAYING FOR THE SYSTEM

All three executives emphasized that local community-based health care providers face significant financial challenges but have limited opportunities to implement solutions at the local level. They implied that their problems are not a result



Chamber President & CEO Colleen Bailey welcomes attendees to the Salinas Valley Speaks event on Aug. 6, 2026, where three local health care system CEOs discussed health care policies affecting county residents. Monterey County Supervisor Chris Lopez served as the moderator.

of internal management, but a result of misguided public policies and fundamental flaws in how the American health care system is organized and funded.

Most Monterey County Residents Are Covered by Government Health Insurance Programs, But Government Reimbursement Rates Are Insufficient

A majority of Monterey County residents have health care coverage through huge federally funded government health care programs established for low-income households, senior citizens, and disabled younger people. These programs are Medi-Cal (the state administrator for Medicaid, the federal health insurance program for lower-income people) and Medicare (a federal health insurance program for people age 65 or older and younger individuals with specific disabilities or conditions).

As of June 2026, 179,821 Monterey County residents were enrolled in Medi-Cal through Central California Alliance for Health (CAAH), which is a regional public

administrator of Medi-Cal benefits. This number is down from enrollment of 189,615 Monterey County residents in July 2025.

In 2024, California began offering Medi-Cal to all income-eligible adults, regardless of immigration status, and it is claimed there may be about 30,000 Monterey County residents without documentation who have enrolled in Medi-Cal.

Medicare is a federal health insurance program for people age 65 or older and younger individuals with specific disabilities or conditions. About 74,000 Monterey County residents are on Medicare.

As of Jan. 1, 2026, Monterey County is reported to have a population of 436,755. This means about 41% of residents are on Medi-Cal and about 17% are on Medicare. Add a couple more percent of residents who are covered by VA Health Care and the TRICARE military health program, and the federal government is paying for health care services of about 60% of the county's population.

Medi-Cal reimburses health care

systems at a rate of about 50 percent. Medicare reimburses health care systems at a rate of about 70%. Obviously, 70% and 50% is less than 100%. According to its CEO, Salinas Valley Health loses about \$200 million on serving patients covered by Medi-Cal and Medicare.

Private Insurance Companies Subsidize Health Care of Patients Covered by Government Programs, But Not Many Monterey County Residents Have It

How do health care systems pay for health care services they provide to patients whose bills are paid by government programs with incomplete reimbursements? They bill private, commercial insurance companies at higher costs, which subsidize health care provided to patients with inadequate reimbursements from government programs. The CEOs asserted that about 20-25 percent of Monterey County residents have employer-provided private health insurance.

Federal Cuts to Government Health Care Reimbursement Programs

In 2025, President Trump signed H.R. 1 (now Public Law 119-21), also known as the "One Big Beautiful Bill Act." It includes provisions to limit Medicaid payments and establishes more stringent procedures for eligibility determination and enrollment. Over 10 years, these changes may reduce Medicaid spending by more than \$1 trillion, with California's Medi-Cal program receiving \$200 million to \$300 million less over those 10 years.

As of June 2026, the Central Coast Alliance for Health (CAAH) claims its enrollment will drop 27% from January 2025 through December 2028 because of the loss of participants who are no longer eligible for

Medi-Cal. Beginning Jan. 1, 2027, certain Medi-Cal members will have their eligibility checked and must renew every six months instead of having a “redetermination” conducted once a year.

Undocumented residents will no longer be able to access Medi-Cal benefits, so they will need to seek reimbursements through a fee-per-service model. CCAH anticipates that many health care providers will decline to participate in this model because of poor reimbursement rates.

For low-income undocumented residents without health insurance, the County of Monterey, the Monterey County Health Department, and Natividad have established a state-funded pilot program for 500 residents called Esperanza Care.

The first attempt to attract residents to Esperanza Care reportedly did not meet expectations and experienced poor attendance at enrollment events, especially in South County. Cal Fresh social workers have been engaged to try to enroll people. A second attempt to boost enrollment for Esperanza Care is now underway. It is scheduled to continue through June 30, 2027, or until funding is gone.

While the State of California has enacted some programs to try to neutralize the impact of federal policy changes, the CEOs expressed concern about other changes on the state level that will reduce funding.

This includes possible cuts to a “state-directed payments” program that helps fund public hospitals. According to the Natividad CEO, state-directed payments of \$76 million to Natividad comprise 14 percent of its annual budget.

Spending Cuts Will Spur Cost Increases

Local community health care systems expect that residents who fall off of Medi-Cal coverage will refrain from routine medical visits and early treatment of ailments.

Instead, they’ll go to their hospital emergency rooms (ERs) when their conditions are dire.

Under a federal law called the Emergency Medical Treatment and Labor Act (EMTALA), all hospitals that receives Medicare funds must provide an appropriate medical screening exam to anyone who comes to an emergency room.

If an emergency medical condition is confirmed, the ER must treat it until the emergency condition is stabilized. This may be followed by an appropriate transfer to another hospital if necessary for additional treatment.

The CEOs asserted that ER services are more expensive than routine services, and people without insurance typically show up at the ER with a need for more expensive treatment because they chose to wait for medical intervention until their health situation becomes severe.

Before the 2011 enactment of the

Affordable Care Act (Obamacare), about 20% of people in California lacked health insurance, and they generally showed up at the ER for health care. That number of uninsured in California had dropped to about 6% in 2024. For all of its flaws, the Obamacare program did succeed in its purpose of getting more Americans covered by some sort of health insurance. But now the era of lower-income people going to the ER as their doctor will be returning.

But Aren’t Hospitals and Health Care Systems Flush With Money?

The idea that the local community health care systems are socking away big annual surpluses is not true, according to the CEOs. This cannot happen for a variety of reasons, including the reality that government insurance programs pay for health services of most residents.

Attendees were told that the Montage medical group loses money, and so does the Aspire Health program for senior citizens. Some decisions are made for the benefit of patients at the expense of finances; for example, Montage chooses to run a Medicare Advantage plan, in which 8,500 participants avoid the unexpected coverage limits and rejected coverage practiced by other Medicare plans promoted in relentless cable TV commercials.

The Montage CEO claimed a 1.4% operating margin for the system. Apparently that margin is generated in part through scheduled, elective hospital surgeries and procedures that have decent commercial insurance reimbursement rates.

Local hospitals increased their capacity during the first few years of COVID by halting those scheduled, elective hospital surgeries and procedures. At the time, the federal government directed funding

2024 Estimates of Monterey County Resident Health Insurance Coverage

Medi-Cal (through Central Coast Alliance for Health - CCAH)	154,000	35%
Medi-Cal (Other)	27,000	6%
Medi-Cal Total	181,000	42%
Traditional Medicare	47,000	11%
Medicare with Supplement Insurance	13,000	3%
Medicare Advantage	6,000	1%
Medicare Total	66,000	15%
Commercial - Medium Group (50–250 employees)	59,000	14%
Commercial - Large Group (250+ employees) Self-Insured	46,000	11%
Commercial - Large Group (250+ employees) Fully Insured	27,000	6%
Commercial Total	132,000	30%
Individual Private <i>For example, through Covered California health exchange (Obamacare)</i>	16,000	4%
Other <i>May include Commercial - Small Group, TRICARE, VA Health Care, Mutual Aid Networks and Health Sharing Ministries, Direct Primary Care (DPC) and Concierge Medicine, Fixed Indemnity/Discount Plans, Uninsured, Unknown</i>	40,000	9%
TOTAL POPULATION	435,000	100%

Source: personal photo of Aspire Health Market Demographics presentation slide, June 14, 2024.

to hospitals to make up for the losses and keep them from going bankrupt. Now, the federal government is retreating from providing funding for hospitals.

The CEOs despaired about the future of small rural hospitals. Many Monterey County residents are aware of the recent predicaments of Watsonville Community Hospital in Santa Cruz County and Hazel Hawkins Memorial Hospital in San Benito County. Mee Memorial Hospital in King City is at risk, with about 60% of its patients on Medi-Cal. There are predictions that one-third of the country's small rural hospitals may close in the next few years as H.R. 1 takes full effect.

SEEKING SOLUTIONS

Community Cohesion and Leadership

Isolated by mountains and the ocean but close to a major metropolitan area, Monterey County has an unusually strong sense of community. This becomes evident to local residents in many subtle ways. One measurable example that caught the attention of outsiders was the exceptional success of the county's organized and effective response to COVID-19.

Monterey County health care systems, public agencies, non-profit organizations, industry associations, private companies, and individual philanthropists and volunteers came together and made a difference.

This was evident in the consistently low rates of severe COVID cases and deaths among essential workers in the county's dominant agricultural and hospitality industries, as well as among the population at large.

Several stories appeared in national news media trying to explain Monterey County's exceptionally low COVID rates compared to the rest of the country. And Biden Administration officials recognized Monterey County as an unexpected outlier and investigated what the county was doing to maintain such

low infection and death rates.

The answer was apparently subjective and personal. It was based on local strengths of leadership, relationships, partnerships, cooperation, heritage, and community commitment. The local character that makes the Salinas Valley Chamber of Commerce an outstanding organization also makes Monterey County an outstanding respondent to crises.

People are asking if the same type of people could come together with the same type of attitude, perhaps through a summit or conference, to initiate a countywide, county-based response to upcoming public health threats and financial instability in the local health care system. Lopez emphasized that solutions will have to be locally-conceived and locally-driven — no one should expect the federal and state government to solve our county's health care problems.

Reducing Operational Costs by Hiring Local People for the Local Workforce

All three CEOs talked about the necessity of recruiting and training local residents to fill positions in the county's health care system, including doctors, nurses, technicians, service workers, and administrators. Then, the second challenge is keeping them from being lured away to live and work in other places, such as the San Francisco Bay Area.

Living in Monterey County is expensive, and (as mentioned above), it is a bit separate from the high-profile, world-class metropolitan area to the north. The local community health care systems have to spend a lot of money to recruit and retain employees at all levels, from administrators to doctors to nurses to service workers. For Salinas Valley Health, salaries, wages and benefits are 54% of the budget.

The CEOs talked about their partnerships with Hartnell College,

HEALTH CARE see page 23

California Water Service Celebrates 100 Years of Trust on Tap

A century of service, growth, and commitment to Salinas and communities across the West

By Brenda Granillo

In 2026, California Water Service—known to generations of customers simply as Cal Water—celebrates an extraordinary milestone: 100 years of providing safe, clean, and reliable water service.

What began in 1926 as a vision shared by three World War I veterans has grown into one of the nation's leading water utilities, serving more than 2.2 million people in hundreds of communities across California, Hawaii, New Mexico, Texas, and Washington.

Cal Water's story began when Christopher T. Chenery, Thomas Hollis Wiggin, and George Lewis Ohrstrom founded Federal Water Service, acquiring water systems in Chico, Visalia, Bakersfield, and Fresno.

Their early investment in water infrastructure helped meet the needs of growing California communities and laid the foundation for a company built on reliability, accountability, and public service.

Over the past century, Cal Water has continued to evolve with the communities it serves. The company expanded from its original four California service areas into a multi-state organization. Today, Cal Water is recognized as the largest regulated public water utility west of the Mississippi River and the third-largest in the United States.

Throughout its history, Cal Water has met the moment through innovation, infrastructure investment, environmental stewardship, and customer-focused service. From



Today, Cal Water is recognized as the largest regulated public water utility west of the Mississippi River and the third-largest in the United States.

modernizing water systems and advancing water quality treatment to supporting customers through storms, fires, earthquakes, and the pandemic, the company's work has always been rooted in a simple but essential promise: When customers turn on the tap, they can trust what flows from it.

Here in Salinas, that promise is personal. Cal Water employees take great pride in serving the community where families, schools, businesses, farms, health-care providers, and local organizations depend on safe and reliable water every day.

Providing water service is not simply a job; it is a responsibility that requires vigilance, professionalism, technical expertise, and a deep commitment to public health.

The skill required of Cal Water employees is extensive. Water professionals must understand water distribution systems, treatment processes, regulatory compliance, emergency response, customer service, and the safe operation of complex infrastructure.

CAL WATER see page 27



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

SEPTEMBER 2026

By Kevin Dayton, Government Affairs Liaison

Your Salinas Valley Chamber of Commerce Government Relations Committee had 18 members at its meeting on Wednesday, Aug. 12 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 cited examples of community leaders expressing appreciation for the public policy and political content of "What's Your Chamber's Government Relations Committee Talking About This Month," the monthly report that the Business Journal has now published for two years. Your Chamber will continue to produce and publish this report.

2 The second annual Salinas Valley Speaks event at the Braga Ranch in Soledad on Aug. 9 was sold out and deemed a success. Some attendees reported that the policies addressed by health care system CEOs were complicated and unfamiliar. The Chamber's Government Affairs Liaison will write a summary for the Business Journal that explains some of the issues.

3 An article in the August issue of the Business Journal outlines the City of Salinas plan for improvements in permitting. As part of the plan, the City of Salinas on July 23 issued a "Request for Statement

of Qualifications for Permitting, Licensing, and ERP [Enterprise Resource Planning] System Assessment and Procurement Consulting Services." This is a step toward updating the city's permitting software and possibly combining all functions into one centralized platform.

The Regenerative California - Monterey County organization is focused through its "Streamlined Approvals" team on permitting reform for the County of Monterey. After six months of deliberation, the team has produced "cross-jurisdictional recommendations to increase predictability, reduce risk, and strengthen the entitlement and permitting pathway for attainable housing." Committee members noted that the County of Monterey and the City of Salinas should seek opportunities for coordination on permitting reform.

4 The Chamber's Government Affairs Liaison has been creating tables that explain the revenue and expenditures of Measure G, the sales tax measure approved by City of Salinas voters in 2014. Measure G expires in 2030, but renewal is on the Nov. 3 ballot for voters to consider. To support renewing Measure G, an organized campaign is preparing arguments and rebuttals for inclusion in the voter guide for the election.

5 A working group continues to meet to discuss the impact of

increased truck traffic on South Salinas streets and Highway 101 that will be generated by the new Amazon distribution center. Businesses submitted a set of traffic mitigation recommendations to the City of Salinas, including street striping and traffic signal synchronization.

On Feb. 14, 2025, the City of Salinas received \$10,215,127 from Scannell Properties, the developer of the Amazon distribution center, as a payment for the city to address traffic impacts. The city deposited the payment in the city's Arterial Development Impact Fee fund (Account #2306).

The Fiscal Year 2026/27 Fund Balances and Budget Summary on page 34 of the City of Salinas Adopted Biennial Operating Budget (FY 2026/27 – 2027/28) shows a total of \$13,935,755 in the Arterial Development Impact Fee fund as of June 30, 2026. The City of Salinas has not yet spent any money on traffic mitigation for the Amazon distribution center.

6 Committee members had positive remarks about Caltrans public outreach for the upcoming South of Salinas Access Management Project (Near-Term Safety Project) and the US 101 South of Salinas Corridor



Improvement Project (Long-Term Mobility Project). The Monterey County Farm Bureau is hosting a meeting with Caltrans officials on Sept. 1 concerning these construction projects.

7 The Monterey County Farm Bureau, the Monterey County Association of Realtors, and SAGE Monterey County are among the parties that submitted comments to the County of Monterey about its draft Community Climate Action and Adaptation Plan (CCAAP). The county has not released the public comments for review.

8 On Aug. 13, the board of the Salinas Valley Basin Groundwater Sustainability Agency (SVBGSA) is scheduled to vote on a preferred "Integrated Implementation Strategy" portfolio of "Projects and Management Actions" for a long-term plan to address seawater intrusion in the Salinas Valley underground aquifers and comply with the Sustainable



Groundwater Management Act (SGMA) of 2014.

The recommended strategy to reverse seawater intrusion includes a small industrial plant that extracts and desalinates brackish groundwater, diversion of excess winter Salinas River flows through Castroville and Eastside canals and pipelines, and expansion and improvement of the existing Castroville Seawater Intrusion Project (CSIP). Total construction cost for these projects is expected to exceed \$1 billion, and the SVBGSA has not determined who should pay for it.

9 Committee members discussed candidates for local public offices and ballot measures for the Nov. 3 election. The Candidate Review Committee will interview candidates in September and make recommendations to the Chamber Board of Directors for potential endorsements.

10 A representative of Monterey Bay Economic Partnership (MBEP) informed committee members about an artificial intelligence (AI) summit sponsored by MBEP at Cal State Monterey Bay on Sept. 10. "AI & The Future of Our Region" will "bring together business, government, education, nonprofit, and

technology leaders to explore how AI is transforming our economy, our communities, and the future of work."

In case you've been wondering, AI has not yet transformed the Business Journal's public policy articles. Like any other medium that transmits informational content (such as books, journal articles, news organizations, websites, videos, and government reports), AI can be a useful (if not always accurate) tool for public policy research, especially for obscure statistical data. However, your Chamber's Government Affairs Liaison persists in entirely writing Business Journal articles using a human brain.

Please contact Colleen Bailey at Colleen@salinaschamber.com or at (831) 751-7725 if you would prefer AI to write future public policy articles in the Business Journal.

11 Committee members praised Chamber leadership for managing the Fantastic Beasts/Alebrijes y Nahuales art exhibition in Salinas. Chamber staff pointed out that arts and culture should be considered as a driver of commercial activity and economic prosperity. The eight 20-foot-tall Alebrijes y Nahuales sculptures are deliberately displayed at commercial centers throughout the city. 🌿



Sept. 4 will be the final opportunity to see the companion Small Animal Exhibition of Alebrijes y Nahuales at One Main Street in downtown Salinas.

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Honoring Excellence & Community Impact at the Legacy of Leadership Awards

Excitement is building for the Salinas Valley Chamber of Commerce's prestigious annual Legacy of Leadership Awards. It's set to take place on Thursday, Oct. 1, from 5:30 – 7:30 p.m. at Portobellos on Main Courtyard, in Salinas.

This signature strolling event offers attendees the opportunity to connect with fellow business owners, executives, and community leaders

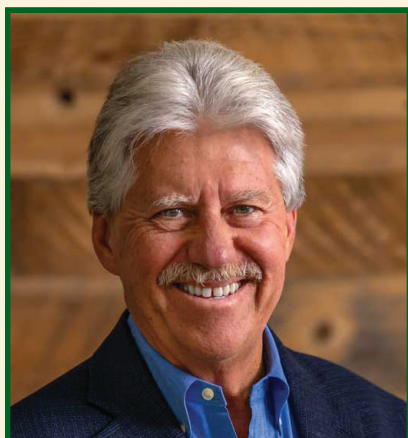
while enjoying premium local wines, beautifully curated hors d'oeuvres, and vibrant live networking.

The evening shines a spotlight on the remarkable individuals and organizations whose dedication and service shape the heart of the Salinas Valley. The highlight of the night will be the presentation of the Legacy Award, along with honors for demonstrating outstanding achievements

in public service, philanthropy, volunteerism, and community engagement.

"The Legacy of Leadership Awards is a celebration of the incredible talent and generosity that defines the Salinas Valley," says Event Chair Veronica Plascencia. "I'm honored to chair this inspiring event that recognizes respected community pillars to rising leaders who shape our community's growth, spirit, and future."

The Chamber extends its warmest congratulations to this year's honorees:



Legacy Honoree: Harry Wardwell, former Executive Director of the California International Airshow Salinas

Harry Wardwell was born and raised in Salinas. He attended local schools and went into business with his father in the early 1970s at Del Monte and Northridge Centers at Wardwell's Magnavox. While running the family business, Harry joined the Salinas Jaycees and got involved in the community with several projects such as the Colmo del Rodeo Parade, Haunted House, Christmas Shopping Tour, and the Junior Miss pageant. Harry learned about community involvement and leadership development. In 1986, Harry joined the

Bank of Salinas Board of Directors, where he served until 1993 and started to work for the bank. His banking career went for 26 years serving Bank of Salinas, Cypress Bank, Community Bank, and finally Rabobank. Harry retired in 2019 as Executive Vice President of Rabobank overseeing and mentoring over 100 retail branches in Northern California.

During his business career, Harry was involved in many community organizations. He served as Director of the California Rodeo, National Steinbeck Center, and Aspire Health. He served as President of the Salinas Jaycees, Salinas Rotary Club, Salinas Valley Chamber, California Int'l Airshow, the Salinas Valley Memorial Hospital Foundation and President of the Board of Trustees of SVMH. He is also a Past chairman of the CSUMB Foundation and the International Council of Airshows. Harry also served as Executive Director of the California International Airshow for 28 years.

Recognized throughout North America as one of the best organized airshows in the Country which has raised over \$9 million for local charities. He also served as

Chairman of the Board of ICAS, the association representing 450 airshows throughout North America and was awarded ICAS Sword of Excellence (highest award in the airshow industry) in 2005.



Public Servant of the Year Honoree: Dr. Deneen Guss, Monterey County Superintendent of Schools

Monterey County Superintendent of Schools Dr. Deneen Guss was first elected Monterey County Superintendent of Schools in January 2019 and began her second term in January 2023. She provides leadership and support to Monterey County's 24 school districts, eight charter

schools, and the more than 72,000 students they serve.

A 39-year veteran educator, Guss holds a doctorate in Educational Leadership. She taught for 10 years before serving more than 29 years as an educational administrator in Monterey County. Throughout her career, she has remained dedicated to expanding educational opportunities and ensuring every child has the support needed to succeed.

Driven by a deep commitment to public service, Guss has championed collaborative efforts that strengthen partnerships among schools, families, local agencies, and community organizations. She believes that supporting children and families is the foundation of thriving communities and has led initiatives that improve student achievement, well-being, and access to critical resources.

Her leadership reflects a steadfast commitment to equity, innovation, and improving the lives of others. Guss has received numerous honors, including the 2021 Ruth Vreeland Memorial Public Official of the Year Award and recognition as the 2026 California Woman of the Year for Senate District 17.



ARTS COUNCIL for Monterey County

Non-Profit of the Year Honoree: Arts Council for Monterey County

For over 40 years, the Arts Council for Monterey County (Arts4MC) has built a legacy of leadership by proving that creativity is essential to a thriving society.

Their mission is to champion the arts to enrich our community through education, healing programs, and vital support for local creatives. Arts4MC turned this vision into measurable impact, having last year awarded over \$474,000 in grants and scholarships to nurture individual artists and invested \$2.2 million to empower local cultural projects.

This deep commitment is vibrantly alive across the Salinas Valley. Arts4MC cultivates connection through hubs like ArtWorks @Salinas Gallery & Studios and dynamic events that bring neighborhoods together. These include the immersive Open Studios Art Tour across Monterey County, the cinematic celebrations of The Pinnacles Film Festival in King City, and First Friday Salinas, where Main Street comes alive with music, dance, and art performances. While these events celebrate their vibrant present, Arts4MC also drives systemic, long-lasting change. Arts4MC has delivered 26,000-plus hours of instruction to 64,000 elementary students and invested \$250,000 to build career pathways for future arts educators. By making art accessible to all, we foster healing, joy, and a deeply connected community.



Young Professional of the Year Honoree: Celia Garcia, Mershops Northridge Mall

Celia Garcia is a seasoned Marketing Manager with 14 years of experience developing strategies that drive brand growth, strengthen customer loyalty, and elevate brand presence.

Throughout her career, she has combined strategic thinking, creativity, and a strong understanding of consumer behavior to make impactful marketing initiatives that deliver meaningful business results.

Born in Mexico City and raised in Texas, Celia's early life was shaped by exposure to diverse cultures, communities, educational environments, and ways of life as her family relocated to various countries and cities due to her father's career in the oil and gas industry, giving her a unique appreciation

for adaptability, cultural awareness, and the importance of understanding different audiences.

In 2020, Celia moved to Monterey County in pursuit of new experiences, personal growth, and opportunities where she has established meaningful connections within the community and discovered that community involvement is at the heart of how she defines impact — both personally and professionally.

Currently, in her role at Mershops Northridge Mall, Celia oversees marketing, public relations, special events, sponsorships, and community outreach initiatives that aim to enhance brand visibility and solidify the mall's position as a regional destination for commerce, culture, and fashion.

Celia has partnered with various organizations to craft unforgettable event experiences, including "Dia de los Reyes Magos" a beloved holiday tradition featuring camel rides, immersive activities, and a 500-toy distribution donated by the Salvation Army. Additionally, other nonprofit-held events such as Pink Shirt Day — a bullying prevention resource fair with Harmony at Home, Rodeo Roundup in partnership with the California Rodeo Salinas, and The Children's Shopping Tour with the Chamber Foundation have brought together the community, store participation and visitor engagement.

The success of these events has attracted 10 million annual visitors, marking a significant milestone for a 50-year-old mall. One of the key highlights this year will be the long-awaited return of the carousel to the center after a 12-year absence. This ongoing success will generate interest from more national retailers and restaurants, paving the way for future redevelopment of the center.

Space is limited for this highly anticipated evening, and tickets are expected to sell quickly. Registration is open, with tickets available at \$85 for Chamber members and \$100 for non-members. Sponsorships are also available, call the Chamber office at (831) 751-7725, email Membership@salinaschamber.com, or visit the Chamber's event page online for more details .🌿

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How Food and Agriculture Power the U.S. Economy

By **Daniel Munch**, American Farm Bureau Federation

Every year, the Feeding the Economy report offers one of the most complete pictures of how food and agriculture shape the U.S. economy.

While we often think of agriculture in terms of farms, crops or livestock, the report makes something else clear: food and agriculture are far bigger than what happens in the field. They form a massive economic engine that supports millions of jobs, generates trillions in activity and delivers essential tax revenue in every state.

In the 2026 report, food and agriculture were tied to \$10.4 trillion in economic output — about one fifth of everything the U.S. economy produces. The system also supports nearly 49 million jobs across the country.

At the heart of it all are farmers and ranchers. Their work provides the raw ingredients that feed families, supply businesses, keep supply chains running and help ensure that the value created from food production stays here at home.

The strength of food and agriculture becomes even clearer when looking at jobs. According to the report, nearly one in every three

U.S. jobs is connected in some way to this system.

That might be surprising when you consider how small the on-farm workforce is. Direct farm employment totals about 2.5 million jobs, less than 2% of the national workforce.

But the picture changes when you include the people who turn the raw products into food on store shelves — those working in food manufacturing, transportation, distribution, grocery stores and restaurants. Once you add in those sectors, the number of directly employed workers climbs to more than 24 million, or about 15% of all U.S. jobs.

An additional 24 million jobs come from industries that support or benefit from food and agriculture — from trucking and construction to finance, energy and retail. These jobs exist because the food

and agriculture system generates spending that ripples across the broader economy.

The wages tied to food and agriculture are just as significant. In 2026, direct food and agriculture activity generated just over \$1 trillion in wages. Supplier industries added another \$1 trillion, and household spending connected to the sector contributed roughly \$900 billion more. Altogether, food and

agriculture supported more than \$3 trillion in wages and salaries.

With total U.S. wages around \$11.7 trillion, that means more than one quarter of all earnings

nationwide can be traced back to food and agriculture. Farmers and ranchers may be the starting point, but most of the income and jobs are created beyond the farm gate — highlighting how production fuels an entire economic ecosystem.

The economic value of food and agriculture — and the fact that so much of it remains within the U.S. — is essential not just for food security, but for long term economic stability. The data show a system that supports nearly a third of all jobs, generates one-fifth of the nation's output and contributes a similar share of tax revenue.

But those benefits are not guaranteed.

Some sectors are already feeling pressure. Since 2000, U.S. vegetable production has fallen by about 39% and fruit production by 24%. These declines reflect challenges such as high labor costs, stricter regulations and increased global competition. When domestic production shrinks, the jobs and economic value tied to processing, transportation and supply chains increasingly shift outside U.S. borders.

At its core, this is about much more than food. It's about whether the economic engine that feeds, fuels and clothes the nation remains rooted in the U.S. — or gradually moves elsewhere.

Daniel Munch is an economist at the American Farm Bureau Federation. 🌱

In the 2026 Feeding the Economy report, food and agriculture were tied to \$10.4 trillion in economic output — about one-fifth of everything the U.S. economy produces. The system also supports nearly 49 million jobs across the country. At the heart of it all are farmers and ranchers.

Food Safety: Our Top Priority!

By Norm Groot, Executive Director, Monterey County Farm Bureau

In recent months there has been a lot of media attention on food safety, and specifically, adulteration of fresh food products that cause people to become ill.

Each adulteration event causes distrust in our food supply chain without taking into perspective the extensive safety practices that keep our food safe to eat on a daily basis.

There are several key points that need to be made about food safety in our American food supply chain that rarely shows up in media reports:

- Food recalls happen primarily out of caution, not because of an actual adulteration. There are many steps in which food products are tested in the food supply chain and a precautionary recall of a product ensures that a pathogen is not entering into the food we all eat.
- Actual adulteration incidents are fairly low compared to all recalls, but receive high-profile media attention. It is indeed newsworthy when people become ill, but speculating on the cause without proof causes unnecessary fear and distrust in both our food supply and those who investigate the source

causes.

- Some adulteration organisms are difficult to detect with testing, such as cyclospora. This organism is hard to detect outside of the human body and even harder to produce in a laboratory for research programs. With these types of organisms, the focus is on prevention rather than relying on testing.
- Food safety science is continually evolving, and has made significant gains since the spinach adulteration event of 2006. The farmers of fresh produce formed the Leafy Greens Marketing Agreement (LGMA) that mandates strict practices for the production of lettuce, spinach, and other leafy greens products. Most producers of these products cannot gain mass market access without LGMA membership and adherence to the required practices.
- Routine audits are conducted throughout the supply chain to maintain food safety integrity. With the most recent adulteration events, agricultural producers have relied on the U.S. Food & Drug Administration (FDA) for guidance in tracing the source of

any illnesses caused by food products. When tracing these types of foodborne pathogens, FDA investigates all possible sources, but has limitations:

- Many of us cannot remember what or where we ate a week ago, the usual time it takes for these pathogens to be identified if food-borne illnesses are detected. Many instances a single source cannot be identified due to this lack of mental recall and the wide variety of food items each individual may consume in a week's time.
- The complexity of the food supply chain hampers investigative efforts when multiple farms and fields may be included in a bagged salad, for example.
- Different products are provided for consumer use and commercial use; restaurants are often supplied with bulk products not offered to consumers in their supermarket.
- FDA has been challenged by budgetary restrictions and personnel reductions.

The media plays a big part in our food supply chain integrity. Recently, media reports have classified broad categories of products

in food adulteration events, rather than reporting the narrow scope of the actual product involved.

Headlines like "When is it safe to eat lettuce again" do not accurately reflect the factual situation and only cause fear and distrust in the minds of consumers. Interviewing of casual consumers in front of a supermarket, who are not well informed of the actual issue, is a disservice to our farmers and food processors.

Social media is also damaging our food supply chain with unfounded claims and a lack of fact checking. Anyone can obviously post their personal opinion on social media platforms, but unsubstantiated claims against our food supply chain are disruptive to our domestic affordable fresh food supply.

Yes, farming has risks just like any other product in the marketplace, but there are practices in place to ensure that our food supply chain provides the healthiest choices for our dinner tables each night. Nothing can be perfect, but farmers and processors are as close to perfect as the science currently allows. Food safety is the top priority of every farmer in our Salinas Valley region. 🌱

Health Care - from page 17

Monterey Peninsula College (MPC), and California State University, Monterey Bay (Cal State Monterey Bay) to respond to workforce challenges and recruit residents to train for jobs in nursing and as laboratory technicians (lab techs) and radiology technologists (rad techs).

They have adopted special residency programs for doctors. There are even programs to provide job opportunities for residents

who are on probation or recently incarcerated.

Reducing Operational Costs Through Artificial Intelligence and Robotics

The CEOs saw Artificial Intelligence (AI) as something that could allow for more efficient and affordable care. For example, AI may allow nurses to reduce their significant amount of time working at a computer, which would allow them more time to interact with

patients and their families.

Community Hospital of the Monterey Peninsula (CHOMP) has been using an AI-powered service robot named Moxi to handle non-patient-facing logistical tasks like delivering lab samples, fetching supplies, and transporting medications. It was noted that the health care workforce may object to AI and robots replacing work they currently perform.

Government as the Answer

The CEOs of the two public health care systems (Natividad and Salinas Valley Health) touted the value of public hospitals and the role they play (and could play) in ensuring health care is affordable and available for all people in America. It was noted that some of the challenges for health care in America are a result of maintaining an employer-sponsored health care system in which health insurance is provided as part of employee compensation. 🌱

Alebrijes y Nahuales Exhibition Connects Salinas and Guanajuato Through Art and Culture

By Colleen Bailey, SVCC CEO/President

What began as a trip to Guanajuato in the fall of 2025 has evolved into something I could never have fully imagined when our delegation first set out to experience Día de los Muertos in our Sister City of Guanajuato.

As the principal organizer of the Alebrijes y Nahuales Exhibition, I have had the privilege of watching an idea rooted in cultural exchange grow into a citywide celebration that is bringing people together, showcasing extraordinary art and creating new economic and cultural opportunities for Salinas.

Our delegation included Mayor Dennis Donohue, Elizabeth Jimenez, a Salinas resident with deep ties to Guanajuato, Assistant City Manager Lisa Murphy, Salinas artist and Urban Arts Collective founder JC Gonzalez, former City of Salinas employee and current City of King City Manager Jose Arreola, my husband and me.

That trip was transformative. We traveled to Guanajuato to experience its Día de los Muertos traditions, but we returned to Salinas with something much more valuable: relationships. The friendships and connections we made during that visit became the foundation for a partnership that has now brought the extraordinary art of Mexico to our community.

The result is the Alebrijes y Nahuales Exhibition, a collection of large-scale, colorful sculptures inspired by the fantastical Mexican traditions of alebrijes and nahuales.

Rather than confining the exhibition to a single venue, we intentionally brought the art into the community, placing sculptures at locations throughout Salinas and



The Alebrijes y Nahuales Exhibition of colorful large-scale sculptures opened at several locations around Salinas and will be on display through Sept. 4.

inviting residents and visitors to experience them as part of their everyday lives.

That decision has made a tremendous difference. Thousands of people have visited the sculptures, as well as the distinctive areas of our city, taking photographs and sharing their experiences on social media. To date, the exhibition has generated more than 1 million social media impressions, making it, by our measure, one of the most widely engaged cultural programs Salinas has ever hosted.

For me, that number is exciting, but it is not the most important measure of success. What matters most is seeing families discover

the sculptures together, watching people visit parts of Salinas they may not otherwise have explored, seeing local artists connect with international artists, and hearing residents talk about how proud they are to see our community embrace art and culture in such a visible way.

None of this could have happened without an extraordinary network of partners. I am deeply grateful to the businesses and organizations that opened their doors and helped bring this vision to life, including One Main Street, the Hartnell College Foundation and the National Steinbeck Center; Vineyard Church; Northridge Mall;

Star Market; the Salinas Regional Soccer Complex; and the City of Salinas at Sherwood Hall.

I also want to recognize the City of Salinas, Dennis Donohue and Lisa Murphy for embracing this vision from the very beginning. The Public Works and Parks & Recreation departments deserve special recognition for the tremendous amount of work that went into preparing locations and installing these large-scale sculptures throughout the city.

Additional support has come from the Salinas Public Art Commission, Hospice Giving Foundation, Arts Council for Monterey County, Mag One Media and Northridge Mall.

and Northridge Mall.

Local businesses and creative professionals have also played an important role. Daniel Barrera of Sigma Signs & Graphics in Park Row beautifully wrapped the sculpture bases, while Daniel Morales of San Andreas Entertainment created the lighting that brings the exhibition to life each evening.

The exhibition has also become much more than an outdoor display of sculptures. It has grown into a broader cultural program involving some of Salinas' most talented artists and arts organizations.

JC Gonzalez and the Urban Arts Collective curated the Small Animal Exhibition, which will remain open through September 4. YOSAL, La Guelaguetza Salinas and Artists Ink have contributed programming and artistic energy, while local artist Ricardo Navarro has been an important part of the project and its connection to Salinas' creative community. The Arts Council for Monterey County was an essential partner in the planning of major programs at One Main Street as part of First Fridays, and in featuring Marta Turok Wallace, a cultural anthropologist with expertise in Mexican folk art in their Business Works programming.

The community will have one final opportunity to experience the exhibition together during the closing celebration on Friday, Sept. 4, beginning at 4 p.m. at One Main Street, as part of the Arts Council for Monterey County's First Friday event.

The celebration will feature the

When our delegation traveled to Guanajuato in 2025, none of us knew where those relationships would lead. We certainly could not have predicted that a cultural experience would result in an exhibition spanning Salinas, involving so many community partners and reaching hundreds of thousands of people online.



The community will have one final opportunity to experience the exhibition at the closing celebration on Friday, Sept. 4, beginning at 4 p.m. at One Main Street, as part of the Arts Council for Monterey County's First Friday event.

final Brush Wars competition and an awards presentation recognizing the top artist, presented by Artists Ink. The Salinas High School Jazz Band will perform, along with cultural performances

and a featured appearance by Qiensave, one of our area's most popular bands.

It will also be the final opportunity to see the Small Animal Exhibition of Alebrijes y Nahuales and to purchase original artwork from artists

whose creations inspired the large-scale sculptures. Exhibition merchandise will also be available at the National Steinbeck Center. The complete event schedule is available at SalinasChamber.com.

For me, however, the significance of this project goes well beyond the closing celebration. The Alebrijes y Nahuales Exhibition has demonstrated what can happen when a community is willing to think differently about the role

of arts and culture. Art is not simply an amenity. It is a powerful economic and community-development tool.

When we bring people into Salinas for cultural experiences, they visit restaurants, shop at local businesses, explore our neighborhoods and often discover places they may not have otherwise visited. Cultural events create opportunities for artists, musicians, designers, hospitality workers, retailers and other small businesses.

They also give visitors another reason to put Salinas on their itinerary and give residents another reason to be proud of where they live. In other words, investing in arts and culture is also an investment in our local economy.

But the economic impact is only part of the story. Art has a unique ability to transcend language, culture, age and background. It creates opportunities for people who might otherwise never meet to stand together, share an experience and find common ground.

That is exactly what happened in Guanajuato. When our delegation traveled there in 2025, none of us knew where those relationships

would lead. We certainly could not have predicted that a cultural experience would result in an exhibition spanning Salinas, involving so many community partners and reaching hundreds of thousands of people online.

Those initial relationships have grown into partnerships throughout our community, making Salinas more connected, more creative and more confident in telling its own cultural story.

And we are not finished. Plans are already underway to bring the artists who fabricated the large-scale sculptures back to Salinas for a three-week workshop in April. During that time, they will work with local artists and teach them the techniques involved in creating large-scale works of art.

That next phase is especially exciting to me because it moves the project from simply bringing art to Salinas to building artistic capacity in Salinas.

Our long-term vision is even bigger. We want to build a Día de los Muertos celebration here that becomes recognized as one of the finest cultural celebrations anywhere outside Mexico — a celebration that reflects the rich diversity of our community while creating meaningful cultural, artistic and economic opportunities.

The Alebrijes y Nahuales Exhibition is therefore not simply an exhibition. It is a bridge between Salinas and Guanajuato, between artists and audiences, between culture and commerce, and between where our community is today and where we can go tomorrow.

I am incredibly proud of what our community has accomplished together. More importantly, I am excited about what comes next.

Because when we invest in relationships, when we invest in artists, and when we invest in culture, we are investing in the future of Salinas.

This is only the beginning. 🌱

Highlights from 2nd Annual Salinas Valley Speaks



Event sponsor West Coast Community Bank's Team, post-event.



A full house at the Braga Ranch enjoys networking prior to the program.



Emcees Colleen Bailey & Supervisor Chris Lopez joined by panelist Dr. Allen Radner (SVH), Dr. Mike McDermott (Montage Health), Dr. Chad Harris (Natividad).



Dean Juan Gonzalez (Hartnell College), Dr. Zandra Galvan (Superintendent of SUHSD), Dr. Margarita Contreras (Salinas High), Isabel Meza (CSUMB), Mike LaPlante (CSUMB).



Event sponsor, The Soledad Community Healthcare District Team, enjoying the event.



Audries Blake (UCSC) & Cristina Medina-Dirksen from event sponsor Kaiser Permanente.



SALINAS VALLEY SPEAKS

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What AI Actually Looks Like in a Valley Built on Real Work

By Jen Seregos, Ridgebeam AI

Everyone is talking about AI. I wanted to know who in the Salinas Valley is actually using it. So I asked.

Over the past month I sat down with four people whose work keeps this valley running: a produce operations manager, the CEO of a community health system, the owner of a cleaning company, and the executive director of the Farm Bureau.

What I found was adoption that is more practical, and more human, than the headlines suggest.

At Watsonville Produce, production and operations manager Ignacio Fregoso uses AI to stay on top of the regulations governing his trucking operation. Compliance documents that once took two or three hours now take minutes. But he is clear about where the responsibility sits.

"I don't look at AI as the answer," he told me. "I look at it as a tool to get the answer."

At Clinica de Salud del Valle de Salinas, CEO Dr. Maximiliano Cuevas has taken AI into the exam room. During a visit, a tablet listens and drafts the clinical note, which the doctor reviews and

approves. The recording is then deleted.

Physicians now spend the visit facing the patient instead of the keyboard. And the clinic wrote an AI policy and trained its people before rolling anything out.

"AI is going to enhance the human ability to work with huge amounts of information," he told me. "It is not going to replace humans."

Tony Sanchez, owner of Spiffy Cleaning Services, fed AI his routing data and asked it to find where his service days were unprofitable, then rebuilt his marketing around the answer. His AI-drafted outreach emails have won him new contracts. And when a national firm invited him to bid on a contract far beyond his capacity, he asked for an honest assessment and got one: not yet, and here is what would have to change.

"I liked that it was honest with me," he said.

At the Monterey County Farm Bureau, executive director Norm Groot offered the view from agriculture. His two-person office barely uses AI, and after 16 years



This valley feeds the world by knowing its soil better than anyone. AI is simply the newest ground to learn, and your neighbors are already working it.

he can write a comment letter faster than he can explain it to a machine. The real change he sees is in the field: laser weeders, automated planting, equipment that reads crops as it works.

"We're building a lot of data in agriculture," he told me. "At some point that's going to come to a critical mass where people are going to have to use AI to analyze it."

So what can you take from them? Four moves, one per business:

Start with the task you dread.

Ignacio did not adopt AI. He handed it the paperwork that ate his afternoons. Pick the recurring task you put off every week and start there.

Give it your real numbers.

breakthrough came when he stopped asking general questions and gave AI his actual route data. Your schedule, your pricing, your customer list: that is where the useful answers live.

Ask it to disagree with you. Tell it to be honest, not agreeable. The most valuable answer Tony ever got was no.

Write the rules before the roll-out. Clinica trained its people and set a policy before the tools went live. Decide what information can and cannot go into AI before your team decides for you.

Nobody in these four organizations is chasing AI for its own sake. They are using it to pass audits, keep doctors present with patients, and win contracts. The tool does the work. The human makes the call.

This valley feeds the world by knowing its soil better than anyone. AI is simply the newest ground to learn, and your neighbors are already working it. 🌱

Jen Seregos is the CEO of Ridgebeam AI and Founder of the Monterey Bay AI Association. She can be reached at jen@athena-digital.com.

Cal Water - from page 17

Many employees earn and maintain state certifications as water distribution and water treatment operators, demonstrating the knowledge and discipline needed to protect water quality and serve customers dependably.

Behind every service call, water quality test, infrastructure improvement, and emergency response is a team of dedicated professionals

who understand the importance of their work.

Their efforts help confirm that residents can fill a glass, businesses can open their doors, firefighters can respond to emergencies, and the community can continue to grow with confidence.

As Cal Water celebrates its centennial, the company also celebrates a culture that has guided it for generations: doing the right thing for the customer, the

community, and the business.

That commitment is reflected in everyday decisions—investing in infrastructure, protecting water quality, supporting local communities, and serving with integrity.

For 100 years, Cal Water has delivered more than water; it has delivered trust on tap. As the company looks ahead to the next century, its mission remains clear: to provide quality, service, and value while caring for customers,

employees, communities, and the resources entrusted to its stewardship. In Salinas and beyond, Cal Water's legacy continues to flow—one customer, one community, and one drop at a time. 🌱

To celebrate this significant milestone, Cal Water is hosting a customer appreciation celebration on Sept. 10, 2026, between 5-7 p.m. at the National Steinbeck Center at One Main Street. Visit Cal Water resource stations, meet team members, and learn about our programs and services. It will be a family-friendly event with complimentary food and refreshments and special anniversary fun in the heart of downtown.



UPCOMING EVENTS —

- **Lunch Connect with The Steinbeck House**

Wednesday, Sept. 2, 2026, 12:00– 1:30 p.m., 132 Central Ave., Salinas

Looking to grow your local network in a relaxed, inspiring setting? Join us for our upcoming Chamber Lunch Connect on Wednesday, Sept. 2, from 12:00 to 1:30 p.m. We're gathering at the beautiful, historic Steinbeck House (132 Central Ave., Salinas) for an afternoon of great conversation, delicious food, and meaningful connections with fellow Chamber members. Whether you're looking to meet new partners or catch up with familiar faces, this is the perfect mid-week break for your business.

- **Ribbon Cutting and Open House with CaliDental**

Tuesday, Sept. 8, 2026, 5:00 - 7:00 p.m., 272 Reservation Road, Marina

Join us as we welcome CaliDental into our Chamber community with a special Ribbon Cutting and Open House! Since opening their doors in February 2025, the CaliDental team has been dedicated to crafting beautiful, confident smiles through expert general, restorative, and cosmetic dentistry. As a true dental home for all, they provide specialized care tailored to the individual needs of children, teens, and adults. Come meet the staff, tour the new facility, and learn about exclusive new patient specials. This is a family-friendly celebration. We will have snacks, popcorn, ice cream, face painting, and fun activities for the kids! We look forward to seeing you there!

- **Centennial Celebration & Chamber Mixer with California Water Service**

Thursday, Sept. 10, 2026, 5:00 - 7:00 p.m., 1 Main St., Salinas

Celebrate a century of service and community. We cordially invite Chamber members, Cal Water customers, and community partners to join us for a special milestone event as we honor California Water Service's 100th Anniversary. Since 1926, California Water Service has been a cornerstone of our region, and they've been a proud partner of our Chamber since 1962. We highly encourage you to register if your business is a California Water Service customer or if your organization has been supported by California Water Service. More information is at SalinasChamber.com.

- **Lunch and Learn with Salinas Valley Health**

Thursday, Sept. 17, 2026, 12:00 - 1:00 p.m., 119 E Alisal St., Salinas

Join us for an informative Lunch and Learn with the Salinas Valley Health Foundation. Dr. Bazillia "B" Gutierrez, DBA, MBA, CEO and Chief Philanthropy Officer of the Salinas Valley Health Foundation, will present "Philanthropy in Action." Her presentation will provide an overview of how the Foundation connects community generosity with vital healthcare needs throughout our region. The Lunch and Learn will highlight several Foundation-supported initiatives, including the Mobile Clinic, patient and pediatric assistance programs, workforce development scholarships, and the Emergency Department capital campaign. Join us in person or via Zoom. Register today.

- **Grand Opening with Read to Me Project**

Tuesday, Sept. 22, 2026, 5:00 - 6:00 p.m., 272 S. Main St., Salinas

Read to Me Project (RtMP) is opening their doors in the heart of the community they serve by debuting their office space in downtown Salinas. RtMP is a nonprofit empowering children, caregivers, and communities to lead through literacy. Through no-cost, equitable, student-led, and family-centered programs, they build confidence, strengthen reading skills, and have supported more than 40,000 students across Monterey County. As they reach over 165 classrooms in the county, RtMP wants to welcome you to their new space with a fun ribbon-cutting event filled with sweet treats and raffle prizes!

RSVP at salinaschamber.com

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The U.S. Air Force Thunderbirds Will Headline the 45th Annual California International Airshow Salinas

By Esmeralda Montenegro Owen

The California International Airshow Salinas celebrates 45 years of economic and entertainment impact on the Central Coast on Sept. 26 and 27, 2026 at the Salinas Municipal Airport. Returning to Salinas will be the U.S. Air Force Thunderbirds, flying six F-16 Fighting Falcons, showcasing the power and precision of the Air Force team.

The 2026 Salinas Airshow has the jets: Greg Colyer with AceMaker Airshows will demo the T-33 Shooting Star; Mark Petersen will show off the rare and loud A-37 Dragonfly; and Jason Somes will burn holes in the sky with the afterburner of his MiG-17. High-energy aerobatics will be performed by long-time favorite Michael Goulian. Aviation Hall of Fame Inductee Sean D. Tucker will make an appearance with the Bob Hoover Academy.

Returning this year will be a crowd favorite, Monster Trucks, a show that audiences of all ages look forward to at the Airshow.

“The Airshow is so much more than what happens in the sky — it is about inspiring the next generation, bringing our communities together, celebrating the people who make this event possible, and giving back to the organizations doing important work across the Central Coast,” said Kristine Ware, Executive Director of the California International Airshow Salinas. “As we celebrate 45 years, we are proud to honor that legacy while looking ahead to what’s possible for the future.”

There is fun for the whole family. The Airshow offers amazing civilian and military static display aircraft. In addition, children and adults will experience the STEM Zone, agricultural displays, educational



‘The Airshow is so much more than what happens in the sky — it is about inspiring the next generation, bringing our communities together, celebrating the people who make this event possible, and giving back to the organizations doing important work across the Central Coast.’

Alex Garcia

exhibits from NASA and the Naval Postgraduate School, and a fun-filled Kids’ Zone. There will be several exhibits and food booths on the field to delight our guests’ palates.

Maverick’s Lounge

As it has become a tradition, the Salinas Airshow kicks off the airshow weekend with the award-winning Maverick’s Lounge on Friday, Sept. 25 starting at 5:00 p.m. This is an extraordinary culinary event with wine, spirits, and brew tastings, featuring the best chefs, restaurants, and catering establishments in the tri-county area. This 21-and-over event has a lot to offer, including a special twilight air show, with a fireworks extravaganza, and dancing under the stars.

President’s Club

The Salinas Airshow is an all-volunteer non-profit organization that has donated over \$9 million to local charities and service groups since its inception in 1981. The President’s Club membership is available for members to enjoy the VIP experience in the wonderful and all-inclusive President’s Tent while at the same time supporting a local nonprofit. It is a win-win.

Volunteers are the Backbone

Those interested in volunteering should visit www.salinasairstow.com for information and to submit an application. Volunteers are always welcome and are the backbone of the Salinas Airshow. Non-profit groups looking to raise money may also inquire. This is a great way for

organizations to volunteer and earn dollars to help fund their community projects. For any questions, email info@salinasairstow.com or call at (831) 754-1983.

Thank You Sponsors

The California International Airshow Salinas would not be possible without the support of a number of sponsors and partners who year after year look forward to being part of this momentous event in the community.

The Salinas Airshow will be held on Sept. 26 and 27, 2026. Gates open at 9:00 a.m. both Saturday and Sunday. Depending on the weather, the flights start around 11:30 a.m. at the Salinas Municipal Airport. Tickets are available at www.salinasairstow.com.



NON-PROFIT EVENTS

Jacob's Heart Golf Tournament

Sept. 11, 2026, Seascape Golf Club, 610 Clubhouse Drive, Aptos

Registration is now open for our Jacob's Heart Golf Tournament. We are excited to hit the green again with our incredible community. Tee up for a beautiful day on the course while making a difference for families battling pediatric cancer! For more information, check out jacobsheart.org/golf.

Touch-A-Truck — Coastal Kids Home Care

Sept. 13, 12:00– 4:00 p.m., 1034 North Main St., Salinas – Rodeo Grounds

A day of fun for kids and kids at heart to climb and explore their favorite trucks and other vehicles. Join us on Sept. 13, 2026, from 12-4 p.m. at the Salinas Rodeo Grounds to explore more than 50 vehicles, food trucks, raffles and other entertainment. Children and adults can climb onto a big rig and explore a fire engine. They can learn about CPR, build a toy vehicle, and enjoy carnival games all while enjoying tasty treats. The event has grown from a grassroots effort to an eagerly anticipated community event. Proceeds from Touch-A-Truck benefit Coastal Kids Home Care — the area's only provider of in-home medical, social service, and therapy visits to children living with illness in our community.

California International Airshow Salinas

Sept. 26-27, 9:00 a.m. –5:00 p.m.,

240 Mortenson Ave., Salinas – Salinas Airport

Gates open at 9:00 a.m. and close at 5:00 p.m. Flying performances begin at approximately 11:30 a.m. Come early and spend the day with your family exploring a wide variety of educational and entertaining exhibits. Enjoy numerous vendors, hands-on aviation and STEM displays, and a popular Kids' Zone for all ages. Save by purchasing tickets online in advance. Tickets will also be available on the day of the show. Children 5 and under and active duty military (with valid ID), both free. The Board of Directors of the California International Airshow are excited to announce the 45th annual anniversary of the Airshow, taking place Sept. 26–27, 2026, at Salinas Airport, featuring the U.S. Air Force Thunderbirds. The California International Airshow inspires families through aviation and STEM education and proudly celebrates its long-standing community impact. Since 1981, the airshow has raised nearly \$9 million in support of local nonprofit organizations.

Important ticket & event information: All ticket purchases are final. The California International Airshow is a nonprofit organization and maintains a no-refund policy. Schedule and performer appearances are subject to change without notice.

See the website www.salinasairshow.com for more information and tickets.

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

Taste of Markon – Rancho Cielo

Oct. 2, 5:00– 8:00 p.m., 710 Old Stage Road, Salinas – Rancho Cielo Campus

Celebrate the 11th Annual Markon Chef Summit with an unforgettable culinary event featuring top chefs from across the country — all in support of Rancho Cielo's Drummond Culinary Academy. More details to come soon.

Youth of the Year – Boys & Girls Club of Monterey County

Oct. 28, 5:00– 7:15 p.m., 1441 Canyon Del Rey Blvd., Seaside, Embassy Suites by Hilton

Youth of the Year is the highest honor awarded to a Boys & Girls Club member — a recognition of leadership, service, academic excellence, and commitment to community. Outstanding teens from Boys & Girls Clubs compete for scholarship awards and the opportunity to advance to regional and national levels of the competition. Held at The Embassy Suites by Hilton Monterey Bay Seaside, this inspiring evening features a welcoming reception, powerful speeches from Club youth, and the announcement of the Monterey County Youth of the Year. Join in the event for a night that honors courage, celebrates achievement, and uplifts the next generation of leaders.

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Diversification – When It’s Good, and When It’s Not

By Bill Hastie, Hastie Financial Group

One of the first tidbits of investing wisdom we hear is diversification — don’t put all your eggs in one basket. While the intent is good, diversification is far more involved than simply spreading your money out among different investments.

It is important for Investors to understand what diversification really is and how it can benefit the investor and their investment portfolio.

There are two types of risk that investors face, market risk — also referred to as systematic risk, and idiosyncratic risk — referred to as unsystematic risk. The investor cannot use diversification to reduce market/systematic risk. Idiosyncratic risk, the risk associated with a particular stock, industry or economic sector, can be reduced with diversification.

At its core, diversification has to do with the price movement of one investment relative to the price movement of another. To measure this, we consider the correlation coefficient of the two investments.

If the prices of both investments move in exactly the same direction during a given market cycle, their correlation coefficient is 1.0. If their respective prices move in exactly opposite directions, their correlation coefficient is -1.0, and if their price movements are



completely random, their correlation coefficient is 0. The range is from -1.0 to 1.0.

Complete diversification can be achieved when the correlation coefficient of two investments is -1.0. The most likely result would

be that when the price of one investment rises, the price of the other investment falls, and vice versa. This means that the value of a portfolio will stay in the same relative range regardless of whether the market rises or falls.

A high degree of diversification is often associated with more conservative investors who wish to avoid substantial declines in their portfolio’s value. The “cost” of

the protection against sharp portfolio declines is the lack of sharp or substantial gains in value. This trade-off is often appealing to the investor who just wants slow and steady gains and/or losses in their portfolio value.

Diversification can play against the aggressive investor who is willing to accept a

high degree of idiosyncratic risk seeking to maximize gains over time.

Let’s assume an aggressive investor purchases 50 technology stocks. While this investor spreads their investment dollars among many different individual stocks, the stocks are all basically from the same industry. Because of this, the prices of the 50 technology stocks are likely to move roughly

in the same direction, meaning diversification was not achieved to a significant degree.

But what this investor had intended to achieve — maximum returns regardless of risk — is likely to be achieved when tech stocks rally.

The degree of diversification in a given investment portfolio will likely be a function of the investor’s acceptable level.

The conservative investor is likely

to invest in large company stocks, maybe some international stocks, and bonds of different types, because their price movements tend to have low correlation.

Conversely, the aggressive investor may avoid a high degree of diversification in order to increase idiosyncratic risk from the areas of the investment market with what is believed to have the best growth potential. 🌱

The investor cannot use diversification to reduce market/systematic risk. Idiosyncratic risk, the risk associated with a particular stock, industry or economic sector, can be reduced with diversification.



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