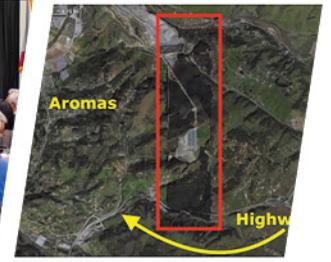


 Salinas Valley
CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

BUSINESS JOURNAL



Mark Your Calendars!
What's Ahead in 2026
page 12



Mystery Solved: Who Planted
the Massive Eucalyptus Grove?
page 18

Go Solve the Housing Problem Yourself — Literally

By Kevin Dayton, Government Affairs Liaison

Q: How do you find more small developers?
A: You don't. You grow them.

This sequence of back-to-back slides summarized the theme of the fourth and final housing summit held in Monterey County in the second half of 2025.

YOU can be a solution to the lack of affordable housing for ordinary residents of Monterey County. And you can do it by becoming a small "incremental" housing developer yourself.

The event was titled "Salinas, California Community Housing Action Plan: Results-Oriented Solutions to Housing Production." Hosted by SPARC (the Salinas Planning and Research Corporation), this informational gathering was supported by a broad group of local organizations. These groups pursue different



Chamber President & CEO Colleen Bailey gives remarks at the Community Housing Action Plan summit.

policy strategies, but all recognize how the lack of housing affordable to ordinary people has a negative impact on the community.

The coalition included traditional business associations such as your Salinas Valley Chamber of Commerce, the Central Coast Builders

Exchange, and the Monterey County Farm Bureau. Another group involved was CHISPA (Community Housing Improvement Systems and Planning Association, Inc.), a major non-profit housing developer in Monterey County.

HOUSING see page 8



The Fort Ord South Chapel is now Grace Church Monterey Bay in Seaside.

The Lost Fort Ord Chapel Has Been Found

By Kevin Dayton, Government Affairs Liaison

A two-part series about the chapels of Fort Ord was published on the front pages of the August 2025 and September 2025 issues of the Business Journal. These articles apparently comprise the first systematic effort to identify all of the Fort Ord chapels and determine their fates after the 1994 base closure.

Publication and circulation of these articles has stirred up community interest in recognizing the remaining chapels as historically significant and worthy of preservation and use. Although the articles revealed the current

CHAPEL see page 5



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Windy City, Chi-Town, Heart of America, Chicago . . . whatever you call the biggest city located along Lake Michigan, it's calling your name in return. A top destination for Monterey Region residents, Chicago is now easier to get to thanks to United Airlines' nonstop service between Monterey Regional Airport (MRY) and Chicago O'Hare International Airport (ORD). Book tickets by visiting www.montereyairport.com.

Why Chicago?

There are so many reasons to visit Chicago. Whether strolling or rolling around this historic and naturally beautiful city, Chicago offers something for everyone year-round.

Cubs

Chicago is home to nine major sports teams and their home stadiums and ballparks, attracting fans from all over the world to come and cheer for local teams.

Wrigley Field, home to the Cubs since 1916, is a must-visit excursion. Located on Chicago's North Side in a vibrant neighborhood filled with sports bars, restaurants, and shops, the affectionally named "Wrigleyville" wraps its arms around sports fans through its homey vibe, energetic baseball culture, and nostalgic

experience: the original scoreboard is still operated by hand.

Culture

There is so much to see and do while visiting Chicago. World-class museums (the Field Museum of Natural History and Art Institute of Chicago are must sees), architecture tours via land and lake, lakefront activities, Chicago blues and jazz clubs, and music festivals are at the top of any itinerary.

Explore the city's famed Magnificent Mile, featuring national and global shopping brands, restaurants, attractions, hotels, and architecture along one iconic street. The "Mag Mile" includes the historic Chicago Water Tower, one of the only buildings to survive the Great Chicago Fire of 1871, and now a symbol of the city's resilience.

Cheese-filled Cuisine

A city with an incredible culinary scene—steakhouses, Italian food, and diverse flavors—a visit to Chicago isn't complete without a deep-dish pizza meal. Hearts and taste buds melt over a pan-baked pie with a thick crust, layers of gooey cheese and toppings, and chunky tomato sauce on top.

While Giordano's, Lou Malnati's,



Nonstop flights from MRY to Chicago O'Hare International Airport (ORD) begin May 23, 2026.

and Nancy's are some of the many iconic pizzerias, visitors are encouraged to get out and explore the city to taste and share their own favorites. Choose Chicago, the city's tourism agency, offers the Chicago Pizza Pass, with digital coupons for discounts, free slices, BOGO deals, and more. Eat a pie during your visit and ship one to family, friends, and your own front door to enjoy a taste of Chicago when you arrive home.

Mid-point USA

The four-hour, 50-minute flight from MRY on a Boeing 737 aircraft will land you in Chicago, the Heart of America. After a few days exploring and celebrating loved ones'

milestones, it's easy to connect through ORD, with flights to all major U.S. cities and many international capitals.

The weekly flight operates on Saturday, with United Airlines expected to increase frequency as demand continues to build.

Book your getaway and stay up to date on all things MRY by visiting montereyairport.com or follow @montereyairport on Facebook, Instagram, and X.

Learn more about MRY and the MRY Metamorphosis SEP at montereyairport.com/transform.



A New Year, New Board Members, and Lots to Do

By Leonard Batti, SVCC Board Chair

As we come together in 2026, there is no shortage of opportunities to explore and member issues to address. The Board will meet in early February to spend a Saturday developing a new strategic plan. As we gather to think strategically, member value will be our north star.

It is not uncommon for volunteer boards to convene and focus primarily on what is best for the organization. As business people, we tend to focus on the bottom line. Your Salinas Valley Chamber of Commerce Board comes together with a different focus: our members. The Board exists to serve its members and member value is what matters most. What is best for our members is ultimately what is best for operating the Chamber.

That is why participation in the annual member survey is so important. This survey serves as the Board of Directors road map to member value. It tells us what is important to you and your business and guides us as we evaluate our strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats.

We are fortunate to welcome three strong new board members this year as we thank retiring board members Jennifer Williams, Tom Moran, and Amy Gibson for their service. They leave big shoes to fill!

Joining us in 2026 are Chris Steinbruner, Liz Hall, and Juan Gonzalez. Each brings experience across a variety of disciplines that will strengthen our board and our work on behalf of the membership. While you can read more about each



of them elsewhere in this month's Business Journal, I would like to share my personal perspective.

I have had the opportunity to work with Chris Steinbruner on a number of issues affecting Chamber members. He is always thoughtful, respectful, and, annoyingly, always right! As a CPA, Chris understands numbers, but more importantly, he understands Salinas and the Salinas Valley.

A multi-generational Salinas native, he knows our valley, its people, and its culture. Chris is a former Chamber Board Chair and served on the Board for more than a decade. He is the epitome of an involved citizen. I am not sure who has served on more community boards, Chris or our CEO Colleen, but I suspect one of them holds the title. Chris has already proven himself to be a valuable asset to our Chamber membership.

Liz Hall is relatively new to our area, having moved to the Salinas Valley from Mississippi with her husband, Joseph, in 2017. Although Liz and Joseph were raised and educated in the South, Joseph has close ties to Salinas through an uncle and aunt who live here and own an agricultural company that Joseph now works for. In a true small world coincidence, I was best man in his uncle and aunt's wedding.

In her role as Public Sector Manager for Waste Management, Liz has immersed herself in all things Salinas Valley. She brings broad knowledge of the business environment throughout the Valley, along with a keen understanding of Monterey County's inner workings and the regulatory impacts on businesses of all sizes. With her infectious personality and sharp intellect, I have no doubt Liz will be a valuable contributor to the Chamber Board.

I am especially excited that Juan Gonzalez has agreed to serve on your SVCC Board of Directors. As Hartnell College's Dean of Career Technical Education and Workforce Development, Juan is a highly

accomplished leader in aligning student education with the needs of the local business community. He has extensive experience developing pathways that equip students with relevant and meaningful skills needed to succeed in today's workforce.

The Chamber recognizes that workforce development is critical, not only to attracting graduates to local businesses, but also to supporting their continued education, growth, and networking once they enter the workforce. Juan will play an important role as the Chamber rolls out its upcoming Junior Chamber program, and we will rely heavily on his counsel and collaboration.

The future looks bright for your Salinas Valley Chamber of Commerce, and we look forward to serving you in the year ahead. 🌱

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status of 11 of the 12 stand-alone Fort Ord chapels, the fate of one chapel remained elusive and speculative.

Building T-1599, known as the South Chapel or the Third Street Chapel, was the only one of the 12 chapels no longer located on Fort Ord when it closed. It was one of the eight identical chapels built just before the U.S. entered World War II.

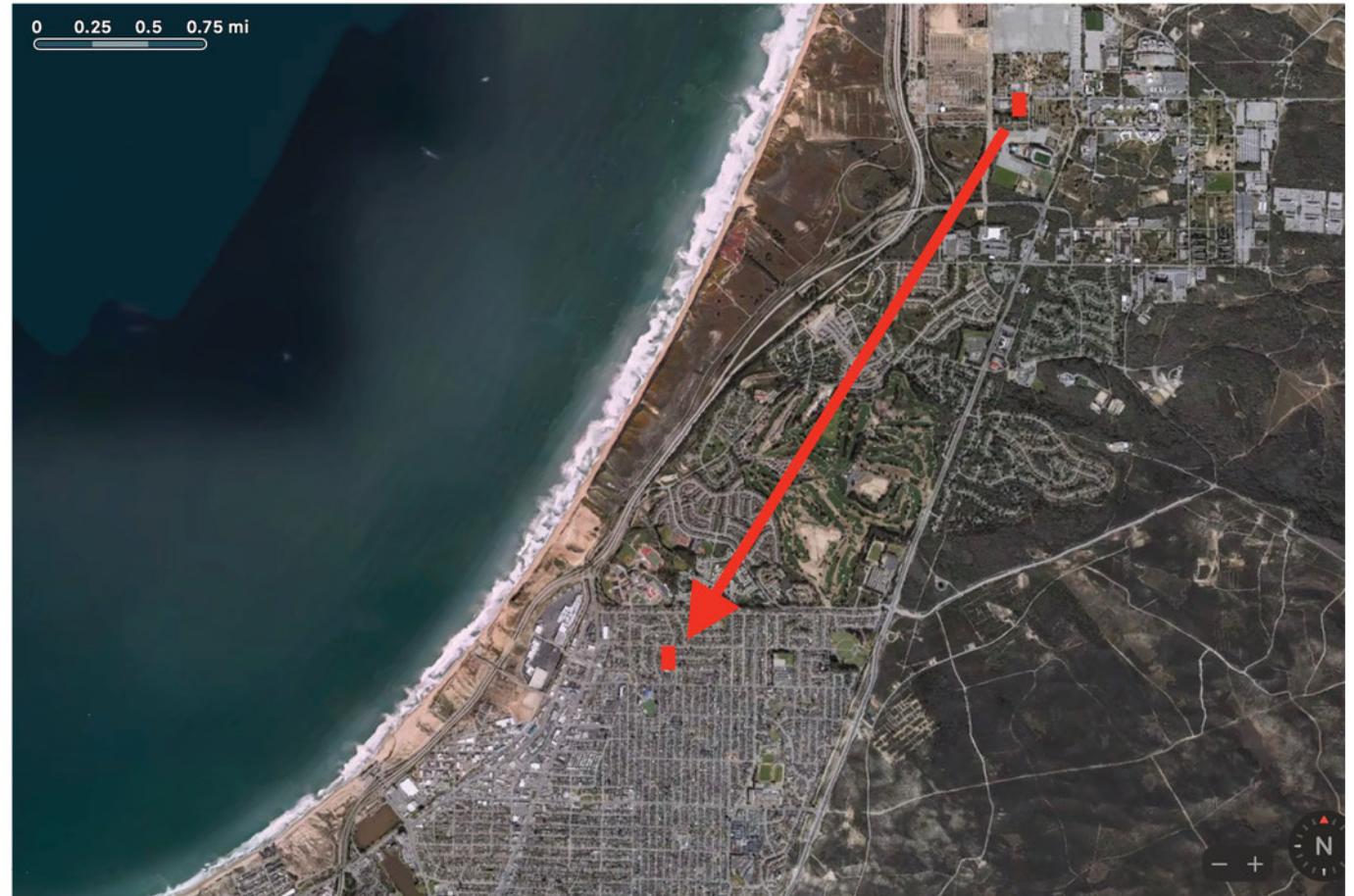
In 2025, no one seemed to know what happened to it. The site where the chapel was located is now land close to the Child Development Center at California State University Monterey Bay. Newspapers and accessible military archives do not mention anything happening to the chapel. Even “using AI” couldn’t track it down.

A U.S. Army construction project in 1987-1988 had realigned streets where the chapel had been located, which suggested that the chapel was moved or demolished in preparation for that project. But no record was available to prove this theory. Maps and photos at the time vaguely indicated either a building or the footprint of a former building where the street realignment would happen.

Any records about what happened to the chapel would most likely be in a box stored in a massive warehouse near Washington, D.C. And such a box may not even exist. Unless someone still alive remembered and came forward to explain what happened, the fate of the South Chapel would never be known.

Opening a Long-Neglected File Cabinet

For many years, a locked file cabinet sat neglected in the pastor’s office of Grace Church of Monterey Bay in Seaside. No one affiliated with the church knew where the key had gone. Church officials had even talked about hiring a



Old location and new location of the Fort Ord South Chapel. It was moved in 1958.

locksmith to open the file cabinet and find out what was inside. It was presumed that nothing in there was relevant to present church operations, so it remained locked and ignored.

In December 2025, Pastor Sam Salerno at Grace Church was mulling over a collection of about 50 random unidentified keys that had accumulated over the 70-year history of the church. On a hunch, he starting trying the keys in the file cabinet and was elated when one of them worked.

Looking through the file folders of yellowing papers, Rev. Salerno found one packed with correspondence related to the 1958 construction of the church building. Actually, the correspondence seemed to indicate that the church wasn’t built from the ground up, but was a Fort Ord building moved to its current location.

Not one person who was a founding member of that church is known to be still alive. The origins of the building were no longer remembered by anyone in 2025.

Another church — Covenant Presbyterian Church of Monterey Bay — was leasing the Grace Church building for worship services, and Pastor Salerno told their pastors about his surprising discovery in the file cabinet. Those pastors—Rev. Joel Robbins and Rev. Tim Walker—had read the recent Business Journal articles about the Fort Ord chapels and suggested he contact the Chamber’s Government Affairs Liaison for insight. Was it possible that the building used for worship by their congregations was the missing World War II chapel at Fort Ord?

On Dec. 15, 2025, your Chamber’s Government Affairs Liaison reviewed the files with Rev.

Salerno at his office and confirmed that the worship building of Grace Church of Monterey Bay is indeed Building T-1599, the former South Chapel/Third Street Chapel on Fort Ord. He and the pastor organized, scanned, and electronically compiled the documents, to allow the church to elaborate on its history to its membership and to the public via its website. In fact, this unexpected discovery of the building’s historical significance comes as Grace Church of Monterey Bay is preparing a capital campaign to pay for deferred maintenance on the building.

Your Chamber’s Government Affairs Liaison also provided the church’s documents to the U.S. Army Command Historian Office of the Defense Language Institute Foreign Language Center (DLIFLC) at the Presidio of Monterey, which maintains the library of Fort Ord

historical records. Officials there were pleased that the missing chapel had been located. A gap in the official Fort Ord historical record has now been filled.

Why Was the Fort Ord Chapel Relocated to Become a Church in Seaside?

Correspondence among the records indicates the chapel was “partially destroyed by fire,” “recently damaged by fire,” and “declared excess due to damage by fire.” Any entity acquiring the chapel would need to be “treating wood for fire damage.”

There is no evidence that the Fort Ord weekly newspaper or the local Monterey County newspapers published any stories about a chapel fire at Fort Ord in 1957. However, the Fort Ord weekly newspaper routinely listed Sunday services at the Third Street Chapel through the first two weeks of May 1957 and then never listed that chapel again. It’s therefore likely that the fire occurred in May 1957.

A Sept. 3, 1957 letter from Rev. Mulholland to U.S. Army officials states that “We are interested in securing the Third Street Chapel, Ft. Ord, which was recently seared by fire. Our three-acre piece of property is located in the Ord Terrace section of Seaside and because of this close proximity to Ft. Ord we believe it would be possible to move the Chapel to our location as a unit. At present we have a draftsman working on plans for a new building. If it is possible to secure the Chapel we would discontinue these plans before any further expense has been incurred.”

This began five months of constant correspondence as First Baptist Church of Seaside competed against other churches for U.S. Army transfer of the damaged building. On Nov. 5, 1957, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers issued an Invitation for Applications on the sale and removal of Chapel No. T-1599, located at the Fort Ord

Military Reservation, California. Four churches based in Seaside were listed as interested parties.

On behalf of his congregation, Mulholland engaged in an aggressive lobbying campaign with the help of the local Congressman and allies who were officials in places such as the Office of the Chief of Chaplains. He emphasized

that the planned location of the church was close to Fort Ord and that 50 or 70 percent of its Sunday School and church membership were military service personnel.

On Dec. 12, 1957, the U.S. Army announced that four congregations had applied for purchase and removal of the chapel on an “as is” and “where is” basis. Based on the criteria of a March 7, 1946 Presidential Directive and U.S. General Services

Administration (GSA) regulations, the Army gave first priority to Sunnyvale Presbyterian Church in Sunnyvale. This church planned to designate the chapel as a memorial to a late chaplain (Keith Munro, a Northern California native who was killed in action in New Guinea during World War II) and also had significant attendance from military personnel. First Baptist Church of Seaside was named as the alternate.

Mulholland and the Sunnyvale church pastor began a respectful, even friendly dialogue via phone and letter. In the end, the board of the Sunnyvale church unanimously voted to decline the offer of the chapel from the U.S. Army. “Your desire for the chapel was a major consideration,” the Sunnyvale

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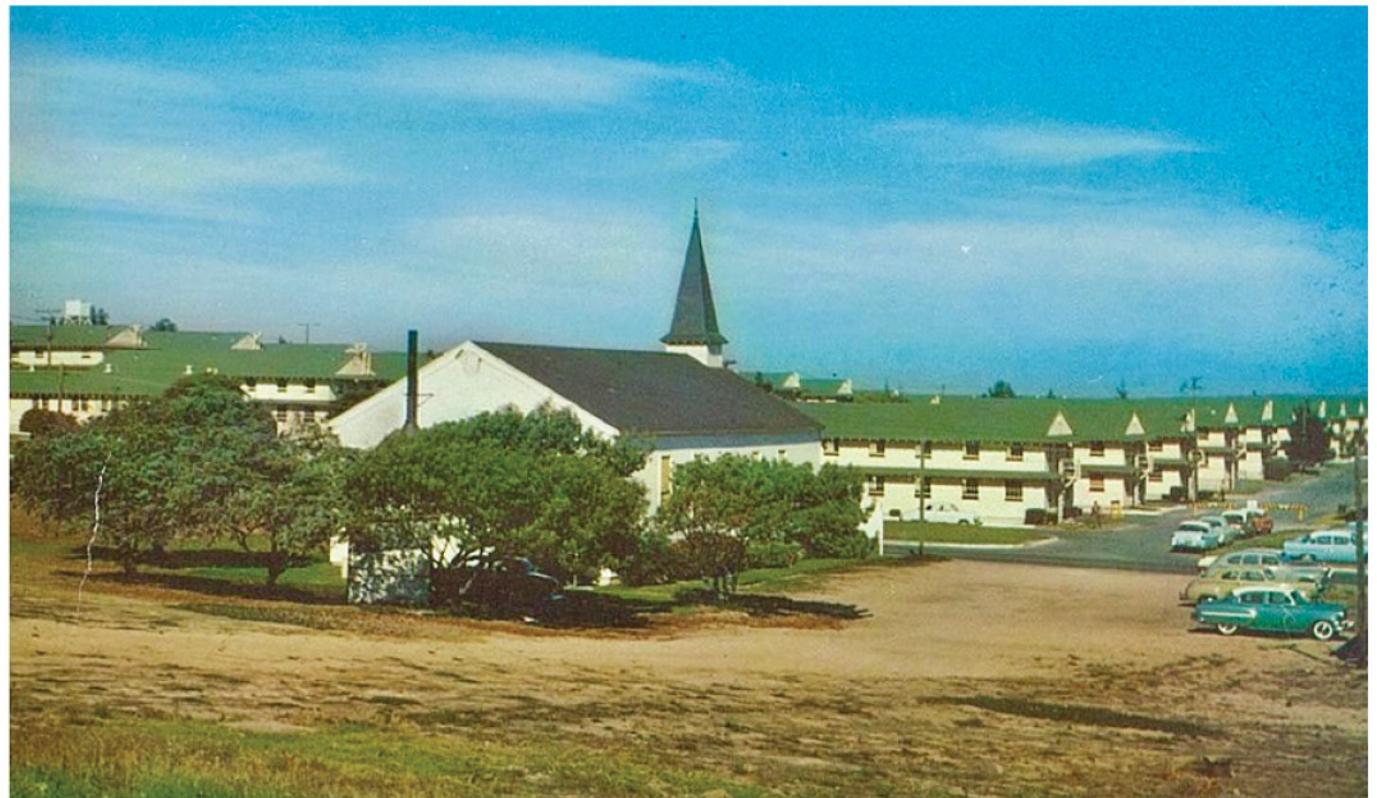
Mulholland and the Sunnyvale church pastor began a respectful, even friendly dialogue via phone and letter. In the end, the board of the Sunnyvale church unanimously voted to decline the offer of the chapel from the U.S. Army. “Your desire for the chapel was a major consideration,” the Sunnyvale

pastor wrote on Dec. 19, 1957. The Seaside church gave the chapel’s heating plant, steam radiators, and fire extinguishers to the Sunnyvale church. On Dec. 23, 1957, Mulholland signed a contract with the Army to take possession of the South Chapel/Third Street Chapel, Building T-1599.

On Jan. 8, 1957, the Seaside Planning Commission approved an application to relocate the chapel to 1945 Waring St. There are no further written records of how the chapel was relocated, although there are a few photos of construction work on the relocated chapel.

Documentation with the application from First Baptist Church to the U.S. Army for the chapel explicitly stated that they would “alter it that it would not have the appearance of being an Army Chapel erected off the reservation.” That’s why no one would recognize the church today as an Army chapel from World War II.

On Nov. 8, 1959, the First Baptist Church held a dedication service for the church building as a memorial



A postcard from the mid-1950s shows the Fort Ord South Chapel with World War II barracks located to the north of it.

to service personnel, as intended in the application. This was actually the building's second dedication as a church, with the first occurring

at Fort Ord on Oct. 12, 1941—less than two months before the attack on Pearl Harbor triggered United States entry into World War II. 🌿



The Fort Ord South Chapel was moved to its new location in Seaside.

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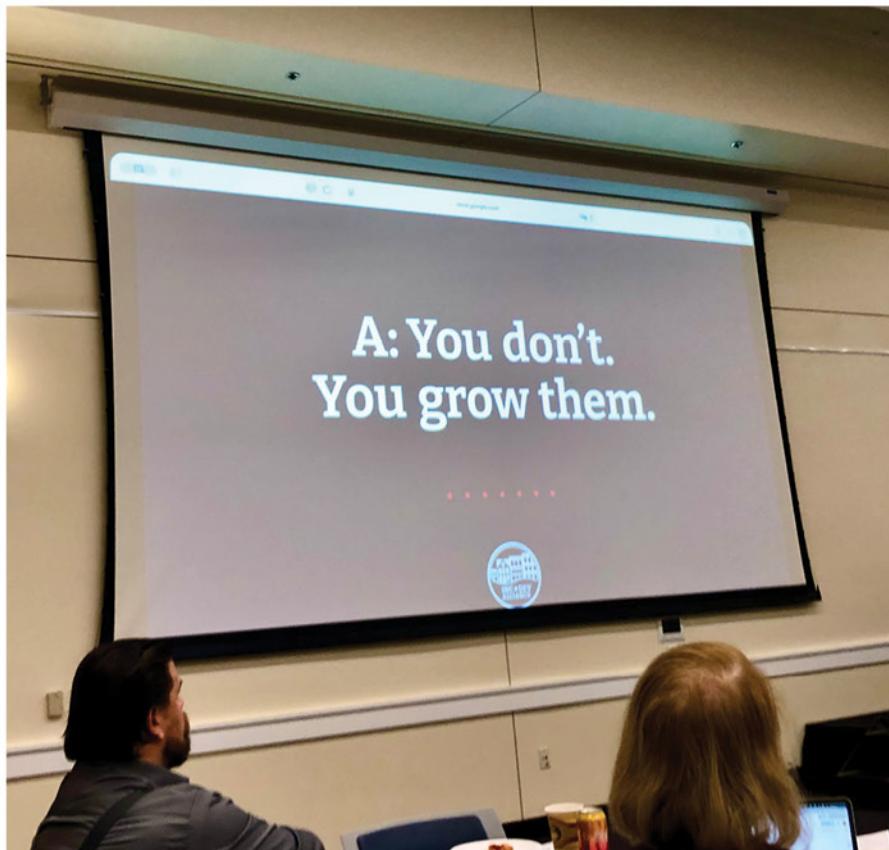
Two other groups supporting the event were the Center for Community Advocacy (CCA) and Communities Organized for Relational Power in Action (COPA). These groups tend to be more skeptical of purely market-based solutions to the housing shortage but are willing to work in coalitions with businesses to address social problems.

More than 100 people attended this summit. SPARC brought in compelling speakers from two 501(c)3 non-profit organizations: Strong Towns and Inc Dev Alliance.

Strong Towns (www.strongtowns.org) describes itself as “a member-powered movement for change.” They “tell stories and create resources that inspire people to take the future of their neighborhoods, towns and cities into their own hands.” Their mission is to see that “strong citizens are moving beyond the failing development approach toward one that creates stronger, more prosperous and more livable places from the bottom-up.”

Inc Dev Alliance (www.incrementaldevelopment.org) has a vision of “neighborhoods regenerated by small developers who care deeply about the places where they live and build” and a mission to work with an alliance that “helps local entrepreneurs and civic leaders strengthen their neighborhoods through small-scale real estate projects.”

While your Chamber may not be inclined toward condemning large-scale housing developments (as one of many potential solutions to our regional affordable housing shortage), the objectives of Strong Towns and Inc Dev Alliance are generally in agreement with your Chamber’s official vision of “a thriving, welcoming Salinas Valley where people, families and businesses succeed via economic growth and opportunity.”



The Problem

Speakers did not spend much time trying to prove there is an affordable housing shortage in Salinas and Monterey County. It was assumed attendees knew that. However, speakers explained how the history of federal (and state) government intervention in the housing market going back to the Great Depression and World War II set the stage for the affordable housing shortage of the mid-2020s.

In fact, origins of the country’s affordable housing shortage are the same as the country’s current problems in providing affordable health care. In the process of preserving and protecting Americans from economic contraction in the 1930s and totalitarian governments in the 1940s, the federal government intervened in major segments of the economy.

This allowed a decent quality of life for multiple generations of Americans in the 20th century. It also inadvertently undermined

opportunities for generations of Americans in the 21st century. Unprotected exposure to the free market can cause human misery, but using the government to distort market forces will inevitably cause another set of problems.

Outside of pursuing radical solutions, such as government appropriation of all private housing stock to convert into state housing and cooperative housing, what can Monterey County residents do to increase housing supply that’s affordable and available for ordinary people? It seems we are powerless — at the mercy of systems, institutions, and practices beyond our control.

We can certainly ask our elected officials (especially our local elected officials) to remove barriers and provide incentives for more housing development. We can plead with them to do the right thing and risk offending influential voting blocks that resist growth. But, we can also take matters into our own hands.

The American economic system

of housing construction and transactions is set up to favor major corporations that build large housing developments with standard sizes and features. In fact, some people in real estate would say that this kind of housing is what most Americans want. Large developers are supplying the housing products that consumers are demanding. By doing that, investors in housing development make a profit in a difficult business that incorporates a lot of risk.

Ultimately, however, this model for housing construction can be more of an “extractive” economic exercise rather than a “regenerative” economic exercise. While most executives for major development companies are probably sincere about providing large-scale housing as a common good, this model is more Wall Street than Bedford Falls Savings and Loan. Products are utilitarian, processes are analytical, and profits from housing sales are generally not invested or spent where the houses are built.

The Solution

Speakers at the conference proposed another solution: train and coach local people in their own communities to make an entry into building local housing for local people.

A person or group of persons can obtain a small parcel of vacant or underused land and obtain local funding. Working through the process, they can build a small single individualistic residential unit—perhaps an accessory dwelling unit (ADU), a backyard cottage, or a small starter home or bungalow. Then, they can build another small single individualistic residential unit.

Then, using their increasing experience, the person or group of persons can try building four residential units on a slightly larger plot of overlooked land. Or they can build a two-story or three-story building with three apartments. And so on toward “incremental development.”

Meanwhile, other people get excited about what they see in their neighborhood or community and then try it themselves.

Attendees of the event were told that “no one is coming to fill the gaps in our neighborhoods. We have to grow the capacity to create more real estate projects in local citizens.” Speakers offered to “train small business owners, neighborhood advocates, design/real estate professionals, builders and others to become small developers.”

To show the credibility and feasibility of their concepts, speakers showed many slides indicating how they help (and have helped) people to become incremental developers in other places. They also explained case studies of where their coaching had succeeded, while acknowledging that being an incremental developer is a challenging pursuit.

Audience Reaction

Many attendees were intrigued, but a bit skeptical. Most obviously, the speakers provided examples and case studies from states and cities where residents tend to be more open toward growth and development. There are exciting examples of success in incremental housing development in South Bend, Indiana and Little Rock, Arkansas and Kalamazoo, Michigan, and Chattanooga, Tennessee. But did the neighbors in these cities organize on NextDoor to try to stop it?

In coastal California, for every person who wants to build a cottage on an empty lot, there are a dozen neighbors who believe they’re entitled to have that lot destined for city ownership and

maintenance as a pocket park. They don’t want anything on that lot that could bring parking problems to their neighborhood, or attract criminals, or compromise their property values.

The California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and the many other state laws meant to protect the environment and quality of life provide an extra twist into housing construction in California, whether at large-scale or at small, incremental scale. Some would argue that the unspoken primary purpose of CEQA and other state laws for the people of California is to prevent housing development and population growth.

Outside of pursuing radical solutions, such as government appropriation of all private housing stock to convert into state housing and cooperative housing, what can Monterey County residents do to increase housing supply that’s affordable and available for ordinary people? It seems we are powerless.

It was also unclear if speakers were taking into account the harsh human reality that people have prejudices and can use the political and economic system to express

them. Nowadays, Californians are usually subtle about manipulating or exploiting housing policy to prevent people different from them from living near them. But astute observers of the housing market can identify plenty of examples, including in Monterey County.

Who Wants to Be a Developer? Maybe YOU?

Finally, people interested in becoming incremental developers need to address the challenges of actually moving forward to achieve this ambitious goal. Strong Town and Inc Dev Alliance speakers were inspiring and encouraging about the possibilities. But becoming an incremental developer requires a lot of training and counsel from coaches and mentors. It also requires a lot of time to pursue local strategies and build local relationships.

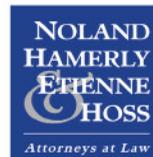
Truth be told, people who have the vision, desire, and ability to fill such a role are often already busy leaders in their businesses and in their communities. Many also manage significant responsibilities in their marriages and families. Who has time to become an incremental housing developer?

Nevertheless, perhaps YOU are

the person who will trigger an “ecosystem of incremental developers” in Salinas and Monterey County. Maybe you are ready to try building an accessory dwelling unit (ADU), a backyard cottage, or a small starter home or bungalow on a small land parcel that sits in your neighborhood, doing nothing but growing weeds that entangle trash.🌿

If you are that person, here are some options:

1. Contact your Chamber’s President & CEO Colleen Bailey for more information or to share your dream, at colleen@salinaschamber.com or at (831) 751-7725.
2. Contact Peter Kasavan, the President of SPARC (the Salinas Planning and Research Corporation), at pk@kasavanarch.com or at (831) 424-2232.
3. Go to the Strong Towns website and the Inc Dev website yourself to see what this entails: www.strongtowns.org and <https://www.incrementaldevelopment.org/>.
4. To sign up for news from Strong Towns, go to this website: <https://www.strongtowns.org/email>.
5. To sign up for news from Inc Dev Alliance, go to this website: <https://www.incrementaldevelopment.org/contact-us>.



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MEMBER NEWS

Noland, Hamerly, Etienne & Hoss Announces William H. Falor III Now a Shareholder

William Falor earned his J.D. degree from Santa Clara University School of Law, where he was senior research editor for the Santa Clara Law Review. His B.A. in Economics and English is from Boston College. Falor also earned a L.L.M in taxation from University of San Francisco School of Law. Since earning his J.D. in 2015, he has been an associate with leading firms in San Jose, Monterey, and San Francisco. He joined NHEH in 2023, focusing on his practice on business real estate and estate planning matters. A Monterey native, he graduated from all Saints' Day and Stevenson School, and resides in Carmel with his wife and two children. He is a member of Monterey Rotary Club and board president for Legal Services for Seniors.



Montage Health Expands Urgent Care Services to Salinas

Montage Health is proud to announce the upcoming opening of another urgent care location at 1910 North Davis Road in Salinas, scheduled for fall 2026. The new location joins the successful urgent care practices in Marina, Monterey, and Carmel, which have served the community for the past five years. In 2024, the clinics in Marina, Monterey, and Carmel received more than 47,000 visits, with a growing number of patients traveling from Salinas to receive care. The new location will offer the community greater access to timely, convenient care—helping patients receive the right level of treatment without unnecessary visits to the emergency room. By expanding urgent care services, Montage Health continues its commitment to improving health outcomes and ensuring that individuals can access trusted care close to home, when they need it most. In conjunction with this expansion, all urgent care practices will now operate under the unified name Montage Urgent Care. This naming alignment reflects the trusted Montage Health brand and ensures clarity for patients seeking care. “We’re excited to bring our urgent care services closer to home for Salinas residents,” said Dr. Mark Carvalho, Chief Executive Officer of Montage Medical Group and President of MoGo Urgent Care. “This expansion and naming alignment are part of our ongoing commitment to meeting the needs of our community.”



MONTAGE
Health

LFC Announces New Co-Executive Directors to Empower the Community Through Technology

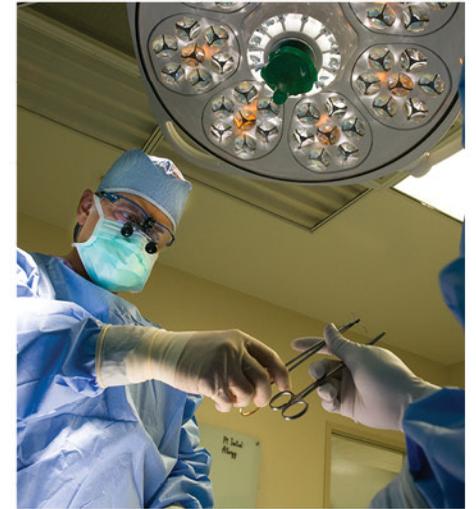
LFC (Loaves, Fishes and Computers) has promoted both Jacqueline Leon and Delia Leal to the position of Co-Executive Directors, in recognition of their exceptional contributions to the organization’s growth and operational success. Leon, who calls Monterey County home, has been with the organization since 2021. In addition to strong experience running LFC’s digital literacy programming, she leverages experience in marketing, photography, videography, editing, and media production to help LFC with its outreach and communications. The daughter of immigrant parents, Leon values hard work and giving back. She is honored to serve our community and notes, “Every day, I’m driven by the opportunity to help bridge the digital divide, empower families, and make technology more accessible to everyone. Being bilingual allows me to connect deeply with the people we serve and ensure that no one is left behind.” Leal, a Monterey County resident, joined LFC in 2024 as Director of Operations and now steps into the role of Co-Executive Director with deep commitment to her community. A first-generation immigrant, she brings curiosity, resilience, and over 30 years of IT and business experience, along with expertise in grants, budgets, partnerships, and team leadership. She shares, “I take this role with great responsibility—to strengthen systems and reshape how our agencies work together for lasting opportunity. I understand our community because I’m part of it, and I’m here to inspire us to build our best lives together.” Brooke Higgins, Chair of the Board of Directors states, “The Board is thrilled that Jacqueline and Delia are stepping into the roles of Co-Executive Directors. They know the organization deeply and represent meaningful connections to the customers we serve. The Board is confident in their leadership as we continue to offer both technological devices and digital literacy services to those in need.”





Natividad Receives Top National Recognition for Surgical Safety and Outcomes from American College of Surgeon

Natividad has earned national recognition from the American College of Surgeons (ACS) National Surgical Quality Improvement Program (NSQIP), a program that measures and improves surgical care quality, for its exceptional surgical outcomes in 2024. Natividad joins just 76 hospitals across the country that are honored for excellence in routine or high-risk procedures. Natividad is named on both the ACS NSQIP "All Cases" and "High Risk" Meritorious lists. In California, Natividad was one of seven hospitals recognized overall and one of four for both "High Risk" and "All Cases." "This latest recognition places Natividad among the nation's surgical leaders and highlights our ongoing commitment to set the standard for quality and safety in patient care," said Natividad CEO Dr. Chad Harris. As part of the ACS NSQIP, Natividad's dedicated surgical team earned this accolade by delivering outstanding patient care and safety. Their superior results in eight critical clinical areas included reduced mortality, fewer complications and improved recovery rates. "We are incredibly proud to receive this recognition from the American College of Surgeons," said Dr. Alexander Di Stante, Trauma Medical Director and Surgical Services Director. "This honor belongs to our entire surgical team, who work hard every day to give our patients exceptional care. Being recognized for excellent outcomes in both routine and high-risk surgeries shows that our commitment to patient safety is making a real difference." Of the 609 eligible ACS NSQIP hospitals, 76 achieved the "All Cases" or "High Risk" distinction based on an outstanding composite quality score in one or both categories. Each composite score was calculated using a formula that combined eight outcomes from the following clinical areas: mortality (death), unplanned intubation (unexpected need for a breathing tube), ventilator > 48 hours (required use of a mechanical breathing machine for over two days), renal failure (loss of kidney function), cardiac incidents (cardiac arrest, which is a sudden loss of heart function, and myocardial infarction, which is a heart attack), respiratory (pneumonia), SSI (surgical site infections, including superficial, deep incisional, and organ-space infections), and urinary tract infection (infection of the urinary system).



**LEGISLATIVE
AFFAIRS BREAKFAST**
◀ SAVE THE DATE ▶

Insights Shaping Our Community
February 27, 2026

Mark Your Calendars! What's Ahead in 2026

By Colleen Bailey, SVCC CEO/President

Our members consistently tell us how much they value Chamber events—and for good reason. Each gathering offers meaningful opportunities to connect, collaborate, and stay informed on the issues shaping our local business climate. In 2026, we are proud to present four signature events you won't want to miss.

We begin the year with the **Annual Legislative Breakfast** on **Feb. 27, from 7:30–9:30 a.m. at Hartnell College**. This popular event brings together business and community leaders with key elected and appointed officials from the federal, state, and local levels. This year we will enjoy a breakfast provided by one of Salinas' treasures — the Steinbeck House. Attendees gain timely insight into government policies, projects, and programs affecting their businesses and our broader community. In an era where uncertainty is the norm, this event is essential for anyone looking to stay informed and prepared.

Next is the **105th Annual Awards Luncheon**, held on **April 9 from 10:00 a.m.–1:00 p.m. at Sherwood Hall in Salinas that includes a tasty lunch provided by The Valley Restaurant**. As the Chamber's largest event—drawing more than 500 attendees—it is both a celebration and a can't-miss networking opportunity. In addition to honoring outstanding businesses and individuals, the luncheon serves as the Chamber's Annual Membership Meeting, offering members the chance to meet the Board of Directors and staff and hear directly about the Chamber's priorities and plans. Nominations for honorees for this event are currently open through Feb. 11th. Don't miss the opportunity to nominate your favorite business or business person for one of the



Annual Awards Luncheon



Legacy of Leadership



Salinas Valley Speaks



Attendees of the Annual Legislative Breakfast gain timely insight into government policies, projects, and programs affecting their businesses and our broader community. This event is essential for anyone looking to stay informed and prepared.



Legislative Breakfast

prestigious awards.

Back by popular demand, **Salinas Valley Speaks** returns this summer. This dynamic forum convenes regional leaders to foster collaboration, spotlight economic development efforts, and address the opportunities and challenges facing the Salinas Valley.



Annual Awards Luncheon

We will close the year by celebrating exceptional service and leadership at the **Legacy of Leadership Awards**

in the fall. This festive evening features a strolling dinner, wine tasting, and ample networking, while honoring four remarkable contributors to our community: **Young Professional of**

the Year, Non-Profit of the Year, Public Servant of the Year, and the Chamber's highest honor, the **Legacy Award**.

Sponsorship opportunities are available for all events and provide an excellent way to elevate your business profile while demonstrating your commitment to the local community. For more information, please contact the Chamber office at **(831) 751-7725**.

Nominations are Open for the Salinas Valley Chamber's 105th Annual Awards Luncheon

By SVCC Staff

The Salinas Valley Chamber of Commerce is thrilled to announce the eagerly awaited 105th Annual Awards Luncheon, an unparalleled celebration of achievement, business excellence, and community spirit. The event will take place on Thursday, April 9, 2026, from 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. at Sherwood Hall in Salinas.

The Annual Awards Luncheon draws more than 400 distinguished guests and serves as a unique opportunity to honor businesses and individuals who made remarkable contributions throughout 2025, helping shape the Salinas Valley's business and civic landscape.

"For 105 years, the Annual Awards Luncheon has celebrated the people and businesses that drive the Salinas Valley forward. This event reflects the innovation, leadership, and community pride that make our region thrive," said Chamber President & CEO Colleen Bailey.

In addition to recognizing excellence, the event is a premier networking affair, bringing together the full spectrum of the Salinas Valley business community. Attendees will have the chance to meet the 2026 Board of Directors, connect with fellow business leaders, and build meaningful relationships.

This year also marks the return of the highly anticipated Networking Power Hour, presented by Bay Federal Credit Union. Doors open at 10:00 a.m., allowing attendees to mix, mingle, and explore member booths in the lobby prior to the luncheon program.



For 105 years, the Annual Awards Luncheon has celebrated the people and businesses that drive the Salinas Valley forward. This event reflects the innovation, leadership, and community pride that make our region thrive."

Award Categories

Nominations are open for the following honors:

- Small Business of the Year
- Large Business of the Year
- Businesswoman of the Year
- Citizen of the Year
- Agricultural Leadership Award
- Spirit of the Community
- Ambassador of the Year

Member Milestone Recognition

The Chamber is also proud to recognize its dedicated members celebrating milestone anniversaries in 2025, honoring their long-standing commitment to the local Salinas Valley Business Community.

10-Year Members: American Takii Inc; Monterey Zoo & Vision Quest; C&N Tractors; Disaster Kleenup Specialists; GT Monterey dba Main Event Transportation; Monterey County Film Commission; La Plaza Bakery & Café; Alliant Insurance Services; Veterans Transition Center of Monterey County; A Tool Shed Equipment Rentals; Salinas Valley Ford Lincoln; Lowell

Luncheon see page 28



Salinas Valley
CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

**NOW ACCEPTING
AWARD NOMINATIONS**
NOMINATIONS DUE BY 5 PM, FEBRUARY 11TH

SCAN THE QR CODE FOR THE NOMINATION FORM

Award Nominations
Small Business of the Year
Large Business of the Year
Citizen of the Year
Spirit of the Community
Businesswoman of the Year
Agricultural Leadership

bit.ly/105thAAL



**ANNUAL
AWARDS**
LUNCHEON



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

FEBRUARY 2026

By Kevin Dayton, Government Affairs Liaison

Your Salinas Valley Chamber of Commerce Government Relations Committee had 19 members at its meeting on Wednesday, Jan. 14 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 The Government Relations Committee discussed Trump Administration proposals that would expand off-shore oil and gas drilling, including off the California coast. The committee decided to monitor developments.

2 The committee acknowledged four housing summits held in Monterey County in the second half of 2025. They expressed a continued commitment for significantly increasing the number of residential units in the City of Salinas and in Monterey County that are affordable for ordinary people.

The proposed revisions of the Economic Development Element of the City of Salinas General Plan, the proposed comprehensive update of the City of Salinas zoning code, and the completion and implementation of the Visión Salinas 2040 General Plan Update will be essential for increasing opportunities for housing construction on small infill parcels.

It was noted that the City of Salinas was the first in Monterey County among the 12 city

governments and county government to get approval from the California Department of Housing and Community Development for its 6th Cycle Housing Element (2023-2031). The Chamber expects the City of Salinas to remain a regional leader on implementing policies to increase housing supply.

3 The committee discussed re-viving the Chamber's currently moribund Business Development Committee or establishing a new Permitting Streamlining Committee to provide the City of Salinas with suggestions to improve the responsiveness and efficiency of its Permit Center. Regrettably, regular anecdotes from businesses and individuals about poor customer service are being reported again to the Chamber after a few years of apparently improved performance. The Chamber has been convening committees for more than 20 years to seek changes in the culture and operations of the Permit Center, and the Business Journal has published many articles about it. There are people who claim that the permitting process in the City of Salinas is the biggest obstacle to economic development in the city.

4 Fees for rental registration in the City of Salinas have gone down a little. A few rental property owners have reported difficulties in their requests to exceed city limits on rent increases; however, the committee was not provided with

any documentation about these problems.

5 The City of Salinas Measure G Oversight Committee meets on Thursday, Jan. 14. Among the items on the meeting agenda is an update from city staff on voter polling and community outreach.

6 Committee members reported that journalists had contacted them regarding public uncertainty about how the City of Salinas is preparing the community for the start of operations of the Amazon Distribution Center in South Salinas. One person has been contacted by three different news organizations. Reasons for this sudden interest are unknown. Some committee members speculated that someone not associated with the Chamber may be trying to stir up news media coverage. It was noted that the City of Salinas has not been open and transparent about what they plan to do, and this provokes complaints from residents and negative publicity.

7 The committee discussed which public policy issues should be prioritized when the Board of Directors meets for its strategic planning session on Feb. 7. Infrastructure needs will be a priority in 2026, particularly expansion and improvement of the Salinas Industrial Wastewater Treatment and Conveyance System.



8 The Government Affairs Liaison asked if committee members had heard any rumors about proposed data centers in the Salinas Valley. He recommended they remain vigilant about negotiations that may be occurring outside of public knowledge. Some residents assert that data centers would not be a positive addition to the region. Elected officials, community and business groups (including the Chamber), and the public need to review any data center proposals that emerge.

9 The Salinas Valley Chamber of Commerce Annual Legislative Affairs Breakfast offers an excellent opportunity to connect community leaders and business professionals with key elected and appointed public officials. Attendees hear about the latest government policies, projects, and programs affecting their businesses and the broader community. Committee members were reminded to reserve a spot on their planning calendars for the 4th Annual Legislative Affairs Breakfast, scheduled for Feb. 27, 2026 from 7:30 to 9:30 a.m. at Hartnell College. 🌱

Salinas Valley Chamber Welcomes Three New Board Members in 2026



JUAN GONZALEZ

Juan Carlos Gonzalez is a new resident of Salinas and serves as the Dean of Career Technical Education and Workforce Development at Hartnell College. In this role, he provides strategic leadership for Career Technical Education (CTE) programs, workforce initiatives, and grant-funded projects designed to enhance student success and align education with regional workforce needs.

Gonzalez oversees Strong Workforce Program (SWP) local and regional funding, Perkins grant initiatives, Credit for Prior Learning (CPL), Non-credit programming, adult education, and supports Ag Learning to Lead and USDA grant-funded programs, as well as apprenticeships, internships, and other work-based learning opportunities.

Throughout his career, Gonzalez has developed innovative workforce programs and partnerships that connect students to meaningful careers. He collaborates closely with regional businesses, K-12 programs, community organizations, and industry groups to ensure educational programs meet workforce demands while fostering pathways for student success.

He is actively engaged in local, regional and statewide workforce and educational initiatives. He serves on the Grower-Shipper Foundation Board of Directors, is a member of the Bay Area Community Colleges Consortium (BACCC), and the Salinas Valley Adult Education Consortium (SVAEC), and represents the San Francisco/Bay Area Region as Regional Vice President on the California Community Colleges Association for Occupational Education (CCCAOE) Board of Directors.

He holds an MBA and a B.A. in Criminology and Justice Studies from California State University San Marcos. Known for his collaborative leadership, strategic vision, and dedication to workforce innovation, Gonzalez is committed to advancing student achievement, workforce readiness, and regional economic development throughout California.



LIZ HALL

Born and raised in Birmingham, Alabama, Liz Hall moved to Monterey in 2017 after graduating from Auburn University. Hall has had a passion for the environment for as long as she can remember, often spending more time outside than in. This love led her to earn a degree in wildlife ecology and management and to begin a career in environmental education.

In 2020, she found herself seeking a new challenge in an industry that still allowed her to work within the environmental stewardship realm. She began her career with WM working with businesses and schools on increasing their diversion and ensuring compliance with state laws.

In January 2022, she assumed the role of Public Sector Manager, managing the franchise agreements between WM and Monterey County and King City, respectively. Her current role allows her to foster relationships internally and externally to ensure the needs of the community are met. Hall is a professional ring master, with a true passion for people and the environment. She is a member of the King City Chamber, Monterey County Business Council and Leadership Monterey County 2025 cohort, and a commissioner for Monterey County Fish and Game.

Outside of work she enjoys cooking, hiking, true crime, and cheering on the Auburn Tigers. She is married to her college sweetheart, Joseph, and is mom to a spoiled dog, Lilly.



CHRIS STEINBRUNER

Chris Steinbruner is an incoming director of the Salinas Valley Chamber of Commerce, having previously served on the Chamber's board for more than 10 years, including as Chair in 2005.

Born and raised in Salinas, Steinbruner has deep roots in Monterey County. Both sides of his family immigrated to the area around the turn of the 20th century and were closely connected to the agricultural industry as farmers, dairymen, and dairy producers.

Steinbruner is a graduate of Salinas High School and Santa Clara University. After completing his education, he returned to Monterey County to begin his career as a certified public accountant, becoming a partner in his firm in 2001. Throughout his career, he has focused on serving families and small- and mid-sized businesses, while remaining actively involved in local economic development and business advocacy, including representing the Chamber during the drafting of the County's 2000 General Plan.

He has served in leadership and board roles with numerous nonprofit and civic organizations, including the Jaycees, SPCA of Monterey County, National Steinbeck Center, Youth Orchestra Salinas, Coastal Kids Home Care, Carmel Valley Manor, Thrive Innovation Center, and the International School of Monterey. He is also active with the Salinas Valley Leadership Group, the Monterey County Business Council, and the Monterey County Sheriff's Advisory Council.

He and his wife, Leah, married in 2004 and raised their two children in Salinas — Lily, an accounting student at San Diego State University, and Cooper, a senior at Palma High School. In their spare time, they enjoy spending time in Arroyo Seco, traveling, and gardening.

The First Monterey County Jurisdiction to Obtain State Approval for Its Plan for Housing: City of Salinas

by Kevin Dayton, Government Affairs Liaison

Regular readers of the Business Journal already know the state has a law (specifically, California Government Code Sections 65580 - 65589) that requires all cities and counties to prepare a "Housing Element" of its General Plan.

Within a regional context, cities and counties must be "designating and maintaining a supply of land and adequate sites suitable, feasible, and available for the development of housing sufficient to meet the locality's housing need for all income levels."

California local governments have been required to update their Housing Elements six times since the original law was enacted in 1969. After a local government completes a revision, the California Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD) reviews it to determine if it complies with the law and serves as a legitimate effort to prepare for future housing. In some communities, public opposition to new housing can influence the content of Housing Element revisions to make them ineffective in practice.

Within the jurisdiction of the Association of Monterey Bay Area Governments (AMBAG), cities and counties were supposed to complete their current sixth revision for 2023-2031 by Dec. 15, 2023. It wasn't a surprise to housing observers and advocates when Salinas was the first of the 13 Monterey County jurisdictions (12 incorporated cities and the county for unincorporated areas) to obtain final state approval for its Housing Elements.

Housing Plan see page 17

County of Monterey Builders Remedy Active Applications as of January 20, 2026

Number of Units	Project Address	Description
200	711 VIEJO RD, CARMEL, CA 93923 (Assessor's Parcel Number 103-011-015-000)	Construction of a 330,000 square foot apartment building with 200 units, 40 of which are low income, a variance to maximum allowable height, development on slopes in excess of 25%, and removal of protected trees.
160	967 SALINAS RD, ROYAL OAKS, CA 95076 (Assessor's Parcel Numbers 117-072-006-000, 117-072-008-000, 117-072-011-000, 117-072-012-000 & 117-072-013-000)	Demolition of existing clubhouse and construction of approximately 33,250 square foot two-story clubhouse and relocation of golf maintenance building (approximately 9,875 square feet) on "OR" district land, new uses including Vesting Tentative Map for subdivision of approximately 14.2 acres of HDR district land for 160 residential units (approximately 1,845 square feet per unit) in 1, 2, and 3 story structures; 88 approximately 710 square foot visitor-serving cabins and 58 Recreational Vehicle spaces, an approximately 3,955 square foot welcome center, and an approximately 900 square foot comfort station on "OR" district land; an approximately 8,030 square foot sundries market, an approximately 1,570 square foot coffee shop and an approximately 2,570 square foot sales center/tavern on "CGC" district land, and trail, frisbee golf and open air pavilion on "RC" district land; project includes new water system plant on "OR" district land.
120	711 VIEJO RD, CARMEL, CA 93923 (Assessor's Parcel Number 103-011-015-000)	Construction of a 275,000 square foot apartment building consisting of 96 market rate units and 24 low income units, a variance to maximum allowable height, development on slopes in excess of 25%, and removal of protected trees.
100	TO BE ASSIGNED (Assessor's Parcel Numbers 009-061-013-000, 009-061-014-000, 009-061-015-000, 009-061-016-000, 009-061-019-000, 009-061-020-000, 009-061-021-000, and 009-061-022-000)	Subdivision of four lots containing 4.15 acres into 56 lots, construction of nine residential structures containing 100 units, 20 of which will be affordable housing units, removal of native trees, and rezoning properties from Low-Density Residential to High-Density Residential.
75	711 VIEJO RD, CARMEL, CA 93923 (Assessor's Parcel Number 103-011-015-000)	Subdivide a 4.7 acre lot into 75 lots, construction of 75 single family dwellings, 15 of which would be low income units, development on slopes in excess of 25%, and removal of protected trees.
34	3705 RIO RD, CARMEL, CA 93923 (Assessor's Parcel Numbers 009-562-002-000, 009-562-015-000, and 009-562-016-000)	Subdivide a 3.77 acre property into 34 lots, construction of 34 multi-family residential units, five of which will be inclusionary housing units, and removal of more than three protected trees.
24	10196 OAKWOOD CIR, CARMEL, CA 93923 (Assessor's Parcel Number 416-542-011-000)	Construction of a eight story apartment building consisting of 24 low income units, removal of more than three protected trees; and development on slopes in excess of 25%.
16	TO BE ASSIGNED (Assessor's Parcel Number 237-068-003-000)	Subdivide a 0.34 acre lot into 16 lots, construction of 16 townhomes (two 3-story 8 unit buildings), 4 of which will be very low income units.
3	10196 OAKWOOD CIR, CARMEL, CA 93923 (Assessor's Parcel Number 416-542-011-000)	Construction of 9,793 square foot single family dwelling with attached 972 square foot garage and 2,891 square feet of covered patios & decks, attached 1,860 square foot accessory dwelling unit, attached 503 square foot affordable junior accessory dwelling unit, and associated site improvements including removal of five Coast Live Oak trees, development on slopes in excess of 25%, and reduction of required front, side and rear setbacks from 5 feet to 0 feet without seeking a Variance.
732	Total Proposed Units in Unincorporated County of Monterey Under Builders Remedy	



City of Salinas
Adopted 2023-2031 Housing Element

Released November 28, 2023
Adopted December 5, 2023

City of Salinas
Community Development Department
65 W. Alisal
Salinas, CA 93901
(831) 758-7206



The first Sixth Cycle Housing Element from Monterey County approved by the State of California.

Approval Dates for Sixth Cycle (2023-2031) Housing Elements of Monterey County Jurisdictions

Jurisdiction	Approval Letter Date
City of Salinas	February 8, 2024
City of Seaside	March 27, 2024
City of Marina	April 11, 2024
City of Carmel	April 25, 2024
City of Sand City	July 2, 2024
City of Soledad	August 23, 2024
City of Monterey	October 4, 2024
City of King (King City)	February 19, 2025
City of Greenfield	August 11, 2025
City of Del Rey Oaks	August 26, 2025
City of Gonzales	September 22, 2025

The State of California has not yet approved Sixth Cycle Housing Elements for two Monterey County jurisdictions:

City of Pacific Grove - the city council adopted its latest revision for submission to the state at a December 17, 2025 special meeting.

County of Monterey - the Board of Supervisors received an update on the latest revision at its October 28, 2025 meeting. In the meantime, developers have submitted nine currently-active proposals for housing construction under the state's "builders-remedy" law that circumvents local provisions that can impede approval of housing projects.



CHAMBER NEW MEMBER PROFILES

Travels with Paul

Travels with Paul leads small-group trips worldwide, emphasizing fun, cultural discovery, and lasting friendships. Company founder Paul Farmer has coordinated journeys to iconic destinations across the globe since 2013. Three trips are planned for 2026: a Rhine River cruise in May, Egypt in June, and Ireland in October. The Egypt journey arrives at a historic moment, welcoming travelers just as the long-anticipated Grand Egyptian Museum opens its doors. *Learn more at www.TravelsWithPaul.net, paul@travelswithpaul.net, (831) 288-1750.*



Coastal Pipeline Inc.

At Coastal Pipeline Inc., their mission is to deliver exceptional underground utility, excavating, and paving solutions that support the growth and resilience of our communities. They are committed to innovation, safety, and integrity in every project, from residential developments to complex commercial and municipal infrastructure. Guided by a legacy of hard work and trust, they strive to build long-term relationships with their clients and partners, ensuring every installation, repair, and site improvement meets the highest standards of quality and compliance. Every project they complete is a reflection of their dedication to precision, professionalism, and sustainable infrastructure development. *coastalpipelineinc.com, alejandro@contactcpi.com, (831) 402-5014.*



Rayne Technology Solutions

Rayne Technology Solutions has been serving the Monterey Bay area since 2008, providing IT Support such as technical helpdesk support, computer support and consulting to small and medium-sized businesses. Their experience has allowed them to build and develop the infrastructure needed to keep their prices affordable and their clients up and running. It's always been their goal to provide enterprise-level IT practices and solutions to the small business sector, with small business prices. *raynetech.com, tech@raynetech.com.*



Mathnasium of Salinas

The Mathnasium Method™ is a proprietary teaching approach that combines personalized learning plans with mental, verbal, visual, tactile, and written techniques to build math knowledge level by level. This method ensures that each student receives tailored instruction that meets their unique needs and learning styles. Their dedicated and specially trained math tutors offer personalized face-to-face instruction in a supportive and engaging environment. They work with students of all skill levels, both in-center and online, to help them achieve math mastery. Each Mathnasium student receives a personalized learning plan that considers their current skill level, knowledge gaps, and academic goals. Combined with their teaching approach, the plan is designed to help the student truly understand, master, and enjoy math. *Mathnasium.com, salinas@mathnasium.com*



Sound Design A/V Contractors

Sound Design is a licensed, bonded and insured, California Contractor (Ca Lic#667282). They specialize in bringing integrated premium products for installation and service into your Monterey County home and/or business. No longer are they just a sound company. They have evolved along with the industry to bring digital system integration to a newer and higher performance level as your go-to smart home automation company. Sound Design can complete anything, ranging from remodeling home systems to custom home-theater installations to commercial AV and automation installations. Additionally, they are able to service smart home solutions. For whatever project management wishes you have, they have the experience and tools to fulfill them. *sounddesignav.com, greatservice@sounddesignav.com*



It wasn't a surprise to housing observers and advocates when Salinas was the first of the 13 Monterey County jurisdictions (12 incorporated cities and the county for unincorporated areas) to obtain final state approval for its Housing Elements.

Housing Plan - from page 16

For years, the City of Salinas and its Community Development Department have led Monterey County for advancing housing policies that allow for "housing sufficient to meet the locality's housing need for all income levels."

In the past 10 years, city officials have proactively promoted new ordinances to encourage housing production and have been

influential on the Monterey Bay Economic Partnership (MBEP) Housing Advisory Committee.

The city's dedication to promote housing that's affordable to ordinary households continues. For example, the City of Salinas is now engaged in a comprehensive Zoning Code Update (ZCU) in conjunction with the development and implementation of the Visión

Housing Plan see page 29

Mystery Solved: Who Planted the Massive Eucalyptus Grove in North County, and When?

By Kevin Dayton, Government Affairs Liaison



The eucalyptus grove near Aromas is clearly visible from the air as a dark green rectangle.

The January 2025 issue of the Business Journal included an article “Eucalyptus Trees Are Getting Cut Back” that explained efforts of the County of Monterey (under the leadership of Supervisor Glenn Church) and Caltrans to remove blue gum eucalyptus trees in North Monterey County.

These trees were first imported in significant numbers from Australia to California in the 1870s as a potential source of quick-growing wood—and quick-growing profits. During the next 50 years, there were successive waves of eucalyptus plantings in the state as investors and entrepreneurs touted their commercial potential as wood supply for various purposes.

In the end, these trees were not a practical solution for anything. While many Californians enjoy these trees for their beauty and scent, they burn intensely in

wildfires, displace native plants, and fall easily in winter storms.

It is expensive to remove a mature eucalyptus tree: Monterey County reports an average cost of about \$5,000 per tree, but costs can apparently run as high as \$15,000 per tree for difficult jobs. Their flammability, instability, and removal cost is a public policy problem for much of Monterey County and for California.

Cutting Back a High-Profile Local Eucalyptus Grove

In December 2022, a tree fell onto Highway 101 from the dense eucalyptus grove that the highway bisects near the border of Monterey County and San Benito County. Two people were killed and several injured from the

resulting motor vehicle accidents.

This incident spurred Caltrans to remove about 228 eucalyptus trees from its highway easement through the grove. In late 2024, Community Tree Service of Pajaro completed a \$2.6 million contract to remove the trees and plant

native vegetation. Many Northern California residents were disappointed that this historic and

beautiful indicator of entrance into our region (a “portal into Vacationland”) had been thinned out.

What few motorists realize is that the portion of this grove visible from Highway 101 is a very small part of a massive 500-acre rectangular grove. Caltrans documents written for environmental review and other purposes did not

[These trees were first imported in significant numbers from Australia to California in the 1870s as a potential source of quick-growing wood—and quick-growing profits.](#)

explain the origin of the grove. Nor did the regional news media. Extensive web searches failed to reveal any information about this massive tree-planting project, which presumably would have happened sometime between 1870 and 1930.

But now, your Chamber of Commerce can report the origin of this eucalyptus grove.

Stumbling on Critical Clues Through...Networking

At the Monterey Bay Economic Partnership (MBEP) holiday party on Dec. 11, 2025, your Chamber’s Government Affairs Liaison was talking with Keith Rootsart, the founder and chief spokesperson for the Giant Kelp Restoration organization. Rootsart lives near the North County eucalyptus grove and mentioned he owns a book that names the people who planted the grove. He later emailed a scan of the pages.

The book was "AROMASTORY: The Overlooked History of an Underdog Town," written and self-published in 2022 by Tina Baine, a newspaper writer affiliated with the Pajaro Valley Historical Association. Concerning Aromas, an unincorporated community in North Monterey County, Baine reported that "its history has never been fully explored until now." Perhaps this explains why the origin of the grove has been elusive.

Pages 87 to 90 of this book describes the excitement in Aromas in February 1910 about the \$100,000 (or \$125,000) sale of the 3,440-acre Mexican land grant of Rancho Las Armitas y Agua Caliente by the original Anzar family owners. It also identifies some of the individuals involved with the subsequent eucalyptus planting operation. These were enough clues to find a couple dozen newspaper articles from 1909 to 1915 that reveal the origins of the eucalyptus grove.

Reportedly the Anzar family had been unable to make its mortgage payments to the Pajaro Valley Savings & Loan Society and therefore authorized the bank to sell the land when foreclosure was imminent. It appears that negotiations for a sale had been ongoing in San Francisco in June 1909. There was a subsequent lawsuit, with jury trials, over who was entitled to the \$4,500 commission for this sale — the bank or the real estate agent who had been working on a direct transaction between the Anzar family and the buyer.

Buy Your Eucalyptus Bonds, Now!

The buyer was an investment syndicate, H.W. Bennett & Co., with a mailing address of 15 Broad St. in New York City. A representative of this syndicate, Charles H. Lehman, had been corresponding in 1909 with City of Los Angeles water works engineer William Mulholland about the "possibilities

WE CONTROL AND OFFER:

An Exceptional Issue of First Mortgage 5% Improvement Gold Bonds

(Denomination \$1,000 each, carrying \$1,000 in stock) of **THE FORESTRY CORPORATION** Payable in Ten Annual Payments of \$100.00 each

Metropolitan Trust Company of New YorkTrustee
The Travelers Insurance Co. of Hartford, Conn.Insurers
Security Transfer & Registrar Company, N. Y.Transfer Agents
Metropolitan Audit Company, New YorkAuditors
Leveritt, Cook & Nathan, New YorkCounsel

THE BONDS OFFERED HEREWITH are the most attractive issue which we have known in over 15 years' active experience in handling developing enterprises and underwritings, during which time we have sold over \$14,000,000 in securities.

THE FORESTRY CORPORATION is founded upon a national security, a continuous supply of Hardwood Timber, the market price of which is high and constantly increasing.

THE LUMBER BUSINESS has probably made more fortunes and equaled more than any other, and these fortunes have mainly come from the increase in the value of the standing timber.

TIMBER INVESTMENT should therefore appeal to the conservative investor whether he be a lumberman or not.

THE INDENTNESS the Corporation incurs in issuing its Bonds is for a purpose which multiplies its assets many times during the development period, and the more back the enterprises are experienced in development projects and are capable of carrying out the enterprise.

WE HAVE THOROUGHLY INVESTIGATED the Lands and Plans of this FORESTRY CORPORATION and have verified the statements made in their PROPOSAL, which are also substantiated by the following Government Official bulletins:

United States Department of Agriculture, Bulletin, No. 15, 19, 114, California State Board of Forestry, Bulletin, No. 2 and Forestry Society of California, Bulletin, Nos. 3, 4, 5, 6, 7.

WE OFFER THESE BONDS AT PAR, \$1,000 PAYABLE \$100 ANNUALLY each Bond carrying \$1,000 of stock, with policy of insurance of The Travelers Insurance Company of Hartford, Conn., protecting the investor.

WE ARE WELL SATISFIED that the Corporation will be able to retire its Bonds on or before the first interest date, and we believe that therefore the net earnings of the Corporation should justify a distribution of at least 100 per cent. (100 per cent) annual dividends upon the stock.

Note—These installment payment bonds, with stock bonus, open a new field whereby the small investor can invest his surplus on identically the same basis as the banker or capitalist.

THE WANING HARDWOOD SUPPLY.
 United States Forest Service Circular, No. 114, estimates the complete exhaustion of the standing Hardwood supply in the United States within 15 years:

"OF THE FOUR GREAT HARDWOOD REGIONS, the Old Yellow States have been almost completely timbered up." Agricultural, States, and the Lake States and the Lower Mississippi Valley are rapidly following their example.

"WITHOUT HARDWOOD for Building purposes, for Railroad Ties and Cars, for the manufacture of Furniture, Cooperage, Agricultural Implements, Vehicles and the many other uses to which it is put, we should be in a sad straits indeed."

"A GENERAL FAILURE IN CROPS may affect industrial conditions for a few years. A FAILURE IN THE HARDWOOD SUPPLY would be a blight upon our industries through more than a generation." (Page No. 13 Circular No. 114)

"OVER ONE BILLION DOLLARS are invested in Manufacturing industries, employing hundreds of thousands of men, dependent upon a continuous supply of HARDWOOD for their very existence."

THE REMEDY.
THE UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT in Bulletin No. 15, Department of Agriculture, Forest Service, says:

"ALL AVAILABLE TIMBER will soon be cut, and there is no known species EXCEPT THE EUCALYPTUS that can take its place and supply the increasing demand for HARDWOOD." (Page No. 13)

"THE EUCALYPTUS IS, WITHOUT DOUBT, the fastest growing Tree in the World and serves most useful purposes than the Trees of any other species."

"TREES OF THIS SPECIES in California, 15 years old, are as large as Oak Trees, whose rings show them to be 200 to 350 years old."

"THE MATURED WOOD IS HARD, TOUGH and DURABLE, remaining in this respect the wood of American Oaks and Hickories, and furnishes timber adapted to a great variety of uses."

"IT FITS INTO the construction of Buildings, Ships, Bridges, Railroad Cars, Piers, Telegraph Lines, Poles, Trestles, Agricultural Implements, Furniture, Barrels and a great variety of minor uses." (Bulletin No. 15, United States Forest Service.)

IMPOSSIBILITY OF OVERPRODUCTION.
 If every available acre of Land in California were planted to Eucalyptus, the product would not supply any one of the important industries dependent upon Hardwood. Every foot of Hardwood that can be produced will find a ready market at constantly enhancing prices.

THE VALUE OF EUCALYPTUS ACRES.
 From measurements made throughout the entire State of California by the State Forester and compiled by the FORESTRY SOCIETY OF CALIFORNIA, in Bulletin No. 5, we find:

"Average planted to Eucalyptus Trees under average conditions may be expected to produce 100,000 Board Feet per acre of 10 Year Old Trees." Lumbermen concede that a price of \$25 per thousand feet is fair.

"The grower, who, by proper planting and care, produces 100,000 Board Feet of Timber in Ten Years' time, can safely expect a net return of \$2,500 per acre. This may be accepted as the standard of stumpage value per acre of First Class Eucalyptus of merchantable size, ten years old."

CONTINUOUS INCOME ASSURED.
"EUCALYPTUS PLANTATIONS may be depended upon to provide CONTINUOUS INCOME for many generations."

"When cut down, Eucalyptus sheds up above that will reach a height of 75 to 100 ft. in six to eight years. The cutting may BE REPEATED EVERY TWO YEARS for an indefinite period." (Bulletin No. 14, Page 13)

THE FORESTRY CORPORATION is organized under the Laws of the State of Maine with a capital stock of \$100,000, represented by 1000 shares of a Par Value of \$100 each.

IT OWNS 1800 acres of land in California, in a district where every condition of soil and climate is most favorable to the rapid growth and development of the Eucalyptus Hardwood Tree.

In order to develop its properties in accordance with the most advanced methods used in scientific forestry, by planting its lands to the fastest growing and most valuable varieties of Eucalyptus Hardwood Trees and to provide suitable bulldozers, tools, supplies, logging and milling equipment, as and when necessary.

THE CORPORATION HAS AUTHORIZED the sale of \$300,000 FIRST MORTGAGE FIVE PER CENT 20-YEAR IMPROVEMENT GOLD BONDS in denominations of \$100 each, payable in equal annual installments of \$30 each year.

INSURANCE PROTECTION:
 The insurable purchaser of the Bonds offered is protected throughout the entire installment period and guaranteed against loss, in the event of death, by THE TRAVELERS INSURANCE COMPANY of Hartford, Conn., one of the largest and most conservative of all Life Insurance Companies.

THIS INSURANCE GUARANTEES the return of all money paid in by the investor in the event of his death and also guarantees the delivery to his estate of the Bonds and Stock subscribed for, full paid, without any further cost.

THUS EVERY ADVANTAGE OFFERED by an ENDOWMENT insurance policy is present in this investment, with possibilities of far greater returns.

THE METROPOLITAN TRUST COMPANY, TRUSTEE.
 The Corporation has arranged with the METROPOLITAN TRUST COMPANY of New York, one of the strongest in America with assets of over \$33,000,000, to act as Trustee both for the Corporation and the Investors, to hold by Mortgage all property and assets of the Corporation to counteract all contracts, to certify to the deposit of the Bonds and Stock in escrow, to certify to the deposit of the insurance policies and to distribute the proceeds of such policies in accordance with the terms of the subscription contract.

AUDITING AND INSPECTION.
 A RESPONSIBLE AUDIT COMPANY of New York will supervise and audit the accounts of the Corporation, and statements of such audits will be mailed to all investors at stated intervals.

THE SECURITY TRANSFER & REGISTRAR COMPANY of New York, will have entire charge of the Transfer and Registration of the shares of stock of the Corporation.

AN INSPECTOR, selected annually by the investors from amongst their number, will visit and inspect the plantations of the Corporation and an official report of such inspection will be mailed each investor.

THE LANDS OWNED BY THE CORPORATION have been selected with a full knowledge of all requirements after careful investigation covering the entire country. They combine every element of climate, rainfall, soil, transportation and proximity to market which with proper management will insure the essential necessary to Success.

See report of LEONARD COATES, Leading Nurseryman and Expert on Eucalyptus.
 See report of California State Forester.

TRIED AND PROVEN MANAGEMENT. The Forestry Corporation is organized and directed by men of financial standing and experience, who, for the past 14 years, have been associated in large and successful tree-planting enterprises along the lines of the proposal herein and are especially well qualified to bring this enterprise to successful fruition.

ALL DEVELOPMENT OPERATIONS are under the direct supervision of Mr. A. B. Luther, Resident Director, who is especially well fitted for this work, he having supervised some of the largest and most successful tree-planting operations in the World.

THE MANAGING DIRECTORS have made a thorough study of Eucalyptus and have stated in this connection every Eucalyptus Plantation and Nursery of use in California, Mexico and the South.

UNITED STATES FOREST SERVICE REGULATIONS will be enforced on the lands of the Corporation. The United States Forest Service, Bureau of Cooperation and the California State Forester have each detailed assistants from their departments to visit the plantations of the Corporation and confer with the Resident Director and supervisor as to the most advanced and approved planting methods.

THE BONDS.
 The 20-Year 5 Per Cent Improvement Gold Bonds of THE FORESTRY CORPORATION are FIRST MORTGAGE BONDS (secured by all of the property and assets of the Corporation), with semi-annual coupons bearing interest from March 1st, 1920, and are subject to retirement on any interest date.

BASED UPON GOVERNMENT AND CALIFORNIA STATE STATISTICS AND REPORTS, the income from the first cutting of but 25 per cent of the acreage when ten years old should be sufficient to retire all the Bonds on or before the first interest date, as follows:

Value: 1000 acres ten-year old Eucalyptus at \$2500 per acre.....	\$2,500,000
Total Bond Issue.....	400,000
FIRST YEAR'S INCOME FROM 200 ACRES—	
Averaging \$2500 per acre net.....	\$500,000
Available for redemption of Bonds.....	\$400,000
For surplus.....	\$100,000

SECOND AND SUCCEEDING YEARS' INCOME—
 From 100 acres cut yearly, averaging \$2500 per acre net..... \$400,000
 Available for dividends on stock 100 per cent..... 400,000
 These 100 per cent dividends should continue indefinitely as the Eucalyptus Trees continually reproduce itself from the stump after cutting and reaches merchantable yield approximately every seven years.

MILLS AND MARKETING.
 The Corporation proposes to do its own Lumbering, Milling and Marketing. This investor should receive even larger profits, as the statements herein are based upon present stumpage values only. (Bulletin No. 5, Forestry Society of California.)

WE HAVE BEEN FAMILIAR WITH THE PLANS of THE FORESTRY CORPORATION from the inception of the enterprise and have carefully verified all statements of profits, yield, etc. In addition, the United States Government and other authoritative reports issued pertaining to Eucalyptus planting and the Hardwood industry, cover the subject thoroughly.

WE THEREFORE RECOMMEND THESE BONDS, believing that they offer an exceptional opportunity for profitable and conservative investment with an assurance of large and continuous returns. EARLY have we had an opportunity of handling an attractive investment offering, where the possibilities of profit appear so large and the SECURITY SO ABSOLUTE.

THE FORESTRY CORPORATION

536 First National Bank Building. Sunset Phone 5563
LONG BEACH, CAL.

Advertisement for The Forestry Corporation eucalyptus bonds that ran in the Long Beach Telegram newspaper in May and June, 1910. (Source: University of California, Riverside Center for Bibliographical Studies and Research California Digital Newspaper Collection at <https://cdnc.ucr.edu/>.)

of the Eucalyptus in California." They found their possibilities in Aromas.

This syndicate would plant eucalyptus trees on Anzar Ranch under the name "The Forestry Corporation." They also planned to build a sawmill to produce lumber from the harvested trees. Local news media celebrated the prospects for local economic growth and job creation.

In June 1910, the California State Forester toured Anzar Ranch with A.B. Luther of The Forestry Corporation. The state official declared the operation "first class." According to a Santa Cruz Morning Sentinel article, the local eucalyptus groves shown by Mr. Luther "interested the State forester profoundly, and he unqualifiedly testifies to the excellence of this section for the commercial planting of this valuable tree."

At the same time, The Forestry Corporation was running

newspaper advertisements in Southern California to sell "an exceptional issue" of private improvement bonds to fund eucalyptus cultivation and harvesting in California. The advertisement included language touting the value of eucalyptus acreage, the impossibility of overproduction, and assured continuous income.

Planting Eucalyptus Trees That Aren't Harvested 110 Years Later

Oak trees were removed from the land, and over the next five years the eucalyptus trees were planted. The superintendent hired by the Forestry Corporation for the work was J.H.B. (John Humphrey Blakey) Pilkington, who previously had been the original superintendent of the first state park in California, now known as Big Basin Redwoods State Park (in Santa Cruz County). Holding that position from 1903 to 1907, Pilkington

is regarded as the first California state park warden.

In July 1915, the San Jose Mercury Herald reported that J.H.B. Pilkington had completed the final spring planting of 150,000 trees at the Anzar Ranch, for a project total of 600,000 trees on 500 acres.

Presumably some of those 600,000 trees are still standing in 2026. A few county-owned public roads in the area cut through the dense grove or run alongside it. Some farming operations, mining activity, and a solar farm have also cut into it.

Records of what happened in the end to The Forestry Corporation and its investors have not been discovered as of yet. The grove was eventually purchased by Graniterock, which in 1900 had established the adjacent granite quarry (now known as the A.R. Wilson Quarry). Graniterock still owns the eucalyptus grove today. 🌿

Salinas Valley Chamber of Commerce to Host 4th Annual Legislative Affairs Breakfast

By SVCC Staff

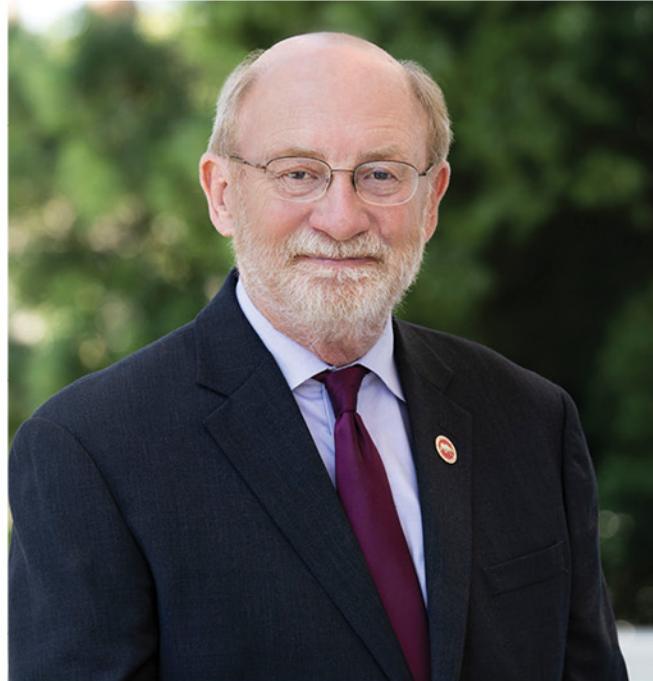
The Salinas Valley Chamber of Commerce is pleased to announce its 4th Annual Legislative Affairs Breakfast in partnership with Hartnell College. This signature event convenes business leaders, community stakeholders, and local, state, and federal officials to discuss issues shaping the Salinas Valley.

The breakfast, catered by The Steinbeck House, will take place on Friday, Feb. 27, 2026, from 7:30 to 9:30 a.m. at Hartnell College in Salinas.

This year's program will feature key updates on government policies, projects, and initiatives impacting the regional business climate and community. Featured speakers include U.S. Rep. Zoe Lofgren of California's 18th Congressional District, State Sen. John Laird of Senate District 17, Dr. Deneen Guss, Monterey County Superintendent of Schools, Mayor Dennis Donohue of City of Salinas, and other distinguished elected and appointed officials.

Participants will hear directly from policymakers on priorities affecting the Salinas Valley while also engaging in valuable networking with business and community leaders from across the region. Key discussion topics include infrastructure, immigration, federal and state budgets, public-private partnerships, and other issues central to economic growth and community development.

"As policies continue to evolve, it's critical that our business community remains informed and engaged," said Colleen Bailey, President and CEO of the Salinas Valley Chamber of Commerce.



State Sen. John Laird



U.S. Rep. Zoe Lofgren (Photo by Brian Thorpe)



Dr. Deneen Guss, Monterey County Superintendent of Schools



Salinas Mayor Dennis Donohue.

“This event creates space to understand challenges, share perspectives, and build relationships that move the Salinas Valley forward.”

Tickets are \$55 for Chamber members and \$65 for non-members. Advance registration is required to attend the event, and sponsorship opportunities are available.

To purchase tickets or learn more about sponsorship opportunities, please contact the Salinas Valley Chamber of Commerce at (831) 751-7725 or visit SalinasChamber.com.

The Salinas Valley Chamber of Commerce looks forward to welcoming attendees to this impactful event and fostering meaningful dialogue that helps shape the future of our community. 🌱



As policies continue to evolve, it's critical that our business community remains informed and engaged. This event creates space to understand challenges, share perspectives, and build relationships that move the Salinas Valley forward.'

— Colleen Bailey, President/CEO, Salinas Valley Chamber of Commerce

Roth IRA Benefits and Pitfalls

By **Ryan Hastie**, Hastie Financial Group

The Roth IRA has become one of the more popular retirement savings tools available to investors, championed for its tax advantages and long-term flexibility. While it can be a powerful tool to build wealth, it is not without drawbacks. Understanding both sides can help investors decide whether a Roth IRA should be included in their financial strategy.

The defining advantage of a Roth IRA is its tax structure. Contributions are made with after-tax dollars, meaning qualified distributions (59½ and account open for at least 5 years) are completely tax-free — contributions and investment growth. This can be especially valuable for young workers, long-term investors, or



The defining advantage of a Roth IRA is its tax structure. Contributions are made with after-tax dollars, meaning qualified distributions are completely tax-free — contributions and investment growth.

anyone expecting to be in a higher tax bracket later in life.

Unlike traditional IRAs and 401(k)s, Roth IRAs are not subject to required minimum distributions (RMDs) for the original account owner. This allows the account to continue compound growth for as long as desired. For retirees who do not need access to funds immediately (RMD or other need), this feature offers great flexibility and can be beneficial for estate planning purposes.

One caveat to distributions — all contributions, not investment growth, can be withdrawn at any

time, for any reason, tax- and penalty-free. This liquidity makes Roth IRAs more flexible than many other retirement savings vehicles and can serve as an emergency fallback, if needed.

Like most things in life, despite the numerous benefits, Roth IRAs do have some drawbacks. One of the biggest constraints is the annual contribution limit, which applies to both traditional and Roth IRAs. For 2026, the total amount that investors can contribute to *all* IRAs (traditional and Roth combined) is \$7,500, with an extra \$1,100 catch-up contribution for those age 50 and older for a total of \$8,600.

Even in recent years with higher limits, Roth IRAs allow significantly less annual investment than 401(k)s or other employer-sponsored plans. For individuals aiming to aggressively save for retirement, this cap may feel restrictive.

Another drawback of Roth IRAs affects high-income earners; eligibility to contribute to a Roth IRA is based on income. Although there are phaseout ranges based on filing status and income, investors are precluded from contributing to a Roth IRA if their income exceeds \$168,000 (single) or \$252,000 (married filing jointly).

Although contributions can be withdrawn anytime, earnings cannot. Accessing growth before age 59½ and before meeting the five-year rule can trigger taxes and penalties. If not understood properly, these rules can lead to unintended tax liabilities.

A Roth IRA offers exceptional long-term benefits: tax-free withdrawals, investment flexibility, and no RMDs. However, contribution limits, income restrictions, and complex withdrawal rules mean it may not be ideal for everyone. The best choice depends on your current tax situation, projected future income, and long-term financial goals. However, for many investors a Roth IRA remains one of the most powerful retirement savings tools available. 🌱

Ryan Hastie, CFP®, AIF®, CPFA®, is a Partner and Investment Advisor with locally owned Hastie Financial Group and can be contacted at ryan.hastie@hastiefg.com.



Getty Images



Rolling Up His Sleeves and Getting to Work: A Profile of Nathan Kieu, Salinas' New Deputy Director of Economic Development

By Colleen Bailey, CEO/President SVCC

Much of what you need to know about Nathan Kieu, and why he is a strong fit for Salinas, can be found in his life story and the way he approaches his work: grounded, practical, and focused on building systems that last.

Nathan comes from a family of refugees from Vietnam who were forced to rebuild their lives in a newly adopted home in the United States. Like many families in Salinas, his arrived ready to work but faced real barriers along the way. Over time, Nathan learned that access to effective public institutions can make the difference between simply getting by and building stability across generations.

Service has long been a family value. Nathan was inspired toward public service by his uncle, the first Vietnamese-American to achieve the rank of two-star general in the U.S. Army. Later in life, Nathan also learned that his grandfather had served as a public-sector policy maker involved in economic development in Vietnam. That discovery shaped his growing interest in how policy, institutions, and investment influence opportunity.

Following 9/11, Nathan served for nearly a decade as a non-commissioned officer in the United States Air Force and the California Air National Guard. His service took him around the world and reinforced the importance of infrastructure,



Nathan Kieu, Salinas' new Deputy Director of Economic Development.

coordination, and economic stability in shaping resilient communities.

After four years working in the private sector as a financial planner, Nathan returned to public service during the COVID-19 pandemic, joining the City of Los Angeles. There, he helped coordinate the South LA Community Safety Initiative, a multi-agency effort that contributed to a 25-percent reduction in gang-related deaths.

He later served as an Economic Development Fellow with the City

of Long Beach, an experience that clarified his professional focus on economic development and the role cities play in creating the conditions for long-term growth.

Over the last five years, Nathan continued to build that expertise in Santa Cruz County. He first served with the City of Santa Cruz as an Economic Development Coordinator and most recently with the County as Business Services Manager. In those roles, he expanded his scope to include regional business engagement, workforce partnerships, and cross-jurisdictional coordination.

Coming to Salinas represents a natural next step in that trajectory. Nathan was drawn to the city's strong sense of community, work

ethic, and cultural identity, and to the opportunity to contribute to a place where economic development, coordination, and trust-building matter deeply. He sees in Salinas many of the same qualities that shaped his own upbringing in Santa Ana, with diverse and hardworking communities striving to build better futures.

Salinas was also appealing because of the opportunity to work with City Manager Rene Mendez, whom Nathan had crossed paths with professionally during his time in Santa Cruz. He has great

respect for Rene's leadership style and for the City's decision to elevate economic development as a major priority within the City Manager's Office.

Nathan has already begun work on projects involving business engagement, real estate and development coordination, contracts, and interdepartmental initiatives. While he has a structured 100-day plan in place, he emphasizes that early success begins with listening. That includes meeting people, understanding existing efforts, and identifying bottlenecks that

create uncertainty for residents and businesses.

Once that foundation is established, Nathan plans to bring forward a focused

strategy that prioritizes actions the City can realistically execute and sustain. Early areas of exploration may include improving the business experience, supporting downtown vitality, and evaluating tools that responsibly attract and retain investment.

The Salinas Chamber of Commerce has welcomed the City's renewed focus on economic development and looks forward to working with Nathan as the City continues to build a more coordinated, resilient local economy. 🌱

Nathan was drawn to the city's strong sense of community, work ethic, and cultural identity, and to the opportunity to contribute to a place where economic development, coordination, and trust-building matter deeply.

When Leadership Chooses Unity

By Pastor T.K. Anderson, Compass Church

January reminded us of something powerful about the Salinas Valley. When we choose unity over noise, purpose over posturing, and service over self-interest, our community is at its best.

Recently, we had the honor of hosting the Mayor's Prayer Breakfast. It was a meaningful moment where civic leaders, business owners, educators, faith leaders, and community servants gathered not to debate or divide, but to listen, reflect, and seek wisdom for the responsibility we all share in shaping the future of our city.

What stood out most was not a single speech or moment. It was the posture of the room. People



from different backgrounds, perspectives, and beliefs sat side by side with a shared understanding that leadership is a trust and community flourishes when humility leads the way. In a time

when voices of agitation often try to pull us apart, this gathering quietly but clearly reminded us that unity is still possible and still powerful.

John Maxwell often says, "Everything rises and falls on leadership." That truth was on full display. Leadership is not about position or platform. It is about influence, and influence begins with character. When leaders come together with a genuine desire to serve rather than be seen, the

entire community benefits. The Prayer Breakfast reflected that kind of leadership. It was thoughtful, grounded, and forward-looking.

We are all aware that division sells headlines. Conflict gets clicks. But it does not build cities. It does not strengthen families. And it does not create lasting economic or social health. The Salinas Valley has always been strongest when people of good will refuse to let the loudest or angriest voices set the tone. We are better than that, and January proved it.

Moments like these do not solve every challenge we face, but they

do something just as important. They reset our compass. They remind us why collaboration matters, why mutual respect is essential, and why a shared vision for the common good must always outweigh personal agendas.

As we move into February, my hope is that the spirit of that morning continues to ripple outward

into boardrooms, classrooms, city offices, neighborhoods, and workplaces across our valley. Progress does not happen overnight, but it always begins

when leaders choose to listen, serve, and stand together.

The Salinas Valley's story is still being written. Let us make sure it is a story marked by courage, cooperation, and a commitment to lifting one another up, no matter how loud the noise around us becomes. ✍️

In a time when voices of agitation often try to pull us apart, this gathering quietly but clearly reminded us that unity is still possible and still powerful.

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Goodwill Central Coast Invites the Community to Celebrate Love, Friendship and Self-Care by Shopping, Donating and Giving Back This February

By Goodwill Central Coast Staff

This February, Goodwill Central Coast is inviting the community to celebrate love in its most meaningful form — through generosity, connection, and purposeful action that strengthens the local workforce.

From Galentine's gatherings and Valentine's gifting to self-care and community giving, Goodwill Central Coast is encouraging residents to shop, donate, and participate in donation drives that directly support job training and employment opportunities across the region.

February is a powerful month for giving. Post-holiday cleanouts, early tax season, and renewed focus on intention make it an ideal time to donate gently used items and shop with purpose. Every donation and every purchase at Goodwill Central Coast helps fund workforce development programs that empower individuals to build stable, independent futures.

Galentine's Day: Shop Together, Give Together

Galentine's Day has become a celebration of friendship and shared experiences. Goodwill Central Coast stores and outlet locations offer a unique way for friends to shop together — discovering jewelry, accessories, vintage finds, and one-of-a-kind treasures while supporting



a mission that creates local jobs.

Outlet stores, with their iconic bins and ever-changing inventory, offer a treasure-hunt experience that encourages sustainable shopping, reuse, and affordability — all while fueling job training and employment programs.

Valentine's Day: Gifts That Give Back

This Valentine's Day, Goodwill Central Coast invites shoppers to choose gifts with impact. From timeless jewelry and home décor to unexpected vintage finds, every purchase helps fund career coaching, skills training, and placement services for individuals facing barriers to employment.

Shopping at Goodwill turns Valentine's spending into an act of community care — one that supports people, not just products.

Love Yourself: Give with Intention

Self-care can also mean caring for your community. Donating to Goodwill Central Coast is a simple yet powerful way to practice intentional living. Clothing, household items, furniture, and accessories donated in February help fuel upcoming workforce training programs and spring employment initiatives.

Donation centers, outlet locations, and community donation drives all play a vital role in keeping usable goods in circulation while creating opportunities for individuals seeking employment.

Donation Drives That Create Opportunity

Throughout February, Goodwill Central Coast encourages individuals, families, businesses, and friend

groups to host or participate in donation drives. These collective efforts help generate the resources needed to expand job training, career development, and employment services throughout the year.

Every bag dropped off, every box donated, and every bin filled contributes to a larger system that transforms generosity into opportunity.

From Donation to Impact

Donations collected at Goodwill

Central Coast are sorted, processed, and prepared locally before being sold in retail stores and outlet locations. Revenue generated stays in the community and directly funds:

Job training and certification programs Career coaching and placement services Employment opportunities within Goodwill operations

This system allows Goodwill Central Coast to serve as both a sustainability leader and one of the region's largest employers.

This February, Goodwill Central Coast invites the community to celebrate love in ways that last — by shopping, donating, visiting outlet bins, and supporting donation drives that create real change.

For store locations, outlet hours, donation center information, and details on hosting a donation drive, visit ccgoodwill.org.

STOPPING THE FLU BEGINS WITH YOU

Protect yourself and your loved ones.
Get your flu shot.



Salinas Valley Health Board Member Isaura Arreguin receiving a free flu shot at Taylor Farms Family Health & Wellness Center ten-year anniversary celebration in Gonzales on October 25, 2025.



QUALITY HEALTHCARE
DELIVERED LOCALLY
FOR EVERYONE



“ I am honored to serve on the Board of Directors for this outstanding healthcare organization. Salinas Valley Health delivers exceptional resources across our entire region, focused on enhancing the health and well-being of all.”

- Isaura Arreguin
Salinas Valley Health Board of Directors

*Questions about vaccines?
Talk with your doctor or
healthcare provider,
or scan the QR code.*



SalinasValleyHealth.com





Salinas Valley
CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

Member Referral Program

Know a business, nonprofit, or entrepreneur that would benefit from being part of the Chamber?

When you refer a business, you both benefit. The more you refer, the more visibility, perks, and recognition your business receives

How It Works:

- ✓ **Identify a Referral** – Think of a business that could gain from Chamber membership.
- ✓ **Send Us Their Info** – Email their contact details to our Membership Director.
- ✓ **We'll Make the Connection** – Our team will reach out, mentioning your business as the referring member.
- ✓ **They Join** – Once they've joined and paid their first-year dues, your rewards begin!

Referral Rewards:

Referrals Joined	Your Reward
1 Referral	Complimentary admission to a Signature Event (Gala/ Legislative Breakfast / or Awards Luncheon)
2 Referral	Opportunity to run two Member Message Advertisements (\$300 value)
3 Referral	\$50 membership Renewal Credit, 1 Member Message Ad and a social media spotlight
4 Referral	Full page ad or advertorial in the Salinas Valley Business Journal publication (\$926 value)

READY TO REFER?

Contact Gabe Lopez 831-809-9988 | Gabe@SalinasChamber.com



Support our Chamber Members

Thank you, to our February renewing Members. Please help keep the Salinas Valley strong by doing business with companies that support the Chamber.

Member Name	Member Since	Member Name	Member Since
Pacific Gas & Electric Company	1928	Condor Security of America Inc	2018
Mission Linen Supply	1959	Blue Zones Project Monterey County	2019
Carlton's Fire Extinguisher Sales	1967	Comcast Corporation	2019
One Workplace Monterey Bay	1979	Luttrell Staffing Group	2020
Sun Street Centers	1979	Kasavan Construction	2021
MBS Business Systems	1982	Kleinfeldt Family BBQ/T&A Cafe, Home of Kleinfeldt Family BBQ	2021
MP Express Printing	1990	Nepenthe/Phoenix Corporation	2021
Ausonio Inc	1997	Rossi Bros. Tire & Auto Service	2021
Vistra Moss Landing Power Plant and Energy Storage Facility	1999	Bankers Casino	2022
Steinbeck Lodge	2000	Monterey County Fair & Event Center	2022
Special Events	2003	Monterey County Supervisor, District 3 - Chris Lopez	2022
Jacob's Heart Children's Cancer Support Services	2005	Partnership for Children	2022
The Yanks Air Museum Foundation	2007	Signs by Van	2022
Wheeler's Flooring	2008	T-Mobile	2022
Agricultural Services Certified Organic	2010	American Promotional Events, INC- West dba TNT	2023
California Women for Agriculture	2010	Fireworks	
The Worthington Law Centre	2011	Mercado-Kramer LLP	2023
Baratto, Sullivan & Co. Insurance	2012	The Whisky Club-TWC11	2023
Scudder Roofing	2012	First American Title	2024
Embassy Suites Monterey Bay - Seaside	2013	K&D Landscaping, Inc.	2024
WM – Carmel Marina Corporation	2013	Milla Legal Document Services	2024
36 North Property Management	2014	Diamond Financial Group, Inc.	2025
MY Cars- MY Chevrolet	2014	Futuro, LLC	2025
RDO Equipment Co.	2014	Habitat for Humanity Monterey Bay	2025
C & N Tractors	2015	Panda Express (Nestles Rd & Los Coches Rd)	2025
Monterey Zoo & Vision Quest	2015	Ricky Cabrera & Sons	2025
Big Sur Land Trust *10 Years*	2016	Roto Rooter	2025
Chamber Discoveries *10 Years*	2016	Thryve	2025
Steinbruner Hill CPAs *10 Years*	2016		

A SPECIAL THANKS TO OUR VISIONARY AND STAKEHOLDER MEMBERS





UPCOMING EVENTS

- **Chamber Lunch & Learn with Read to Me Project**

Tuesday, Feb. 10, 2026, 12:00– 1:00 p.m., 119, E. Alisal St., Salinas

Join us for a Lunch and Learn with Read to Me Project. Read to Me Project helps children achieve a lifetime of literacy through knowledge, vocabulary, confidence, and comprehension skills. Guided by our vision of children leading with literacy, they partner with schools, families, and communities to build early literacy foundations that last a lifetime. By empowering students to read aloud to younger children, they inspire leadership, connection, and a love of learning that strengthens families and transforms futures. Lunch will be provided. Virtual options are available. For more information, contact the Chamber office at (831) 751-7725. salinaschamber.com.

- **4th Annual SVCC Legislative Affairs Breakfast**

Friday, Feb. 27, 2026, 7:30 - 9:30 a.m., 411 Central Ave., Salinas

SVCC's 4th Annual Legislative Affairs Breakfast, in partnership with Hartnell College, connects community leaders and business professionals with key elected and appointed public officials from the federal to the local level. Hear about the latest government policies, projects, and programs affecting your business and community. Ticket sales are in high demand, and seats will be limited for this event. Tickets can be purchased at salinaschamber.com. Partnership opportunities are also available. For inquiries, contact the Chamber office at (831) 751-7725.

- **Ribbon Cutting with Chispa Housing**

Friday, March 6, 2026, 12:00 – 1:00 p.m., 295 Main St., Salinas

You're invited to join the Chamber and CHISPA (Community Housing Improvement Systems and Planning Association, Inc.), the largest private nonprofit housing developer based in Monterey County, as they celebrate the acquisition of a historic downtown Salinas property with a ribbon cutting ceremony. Located at 295 Main St., Salinas, the century-old building—originally constructed in 1926—is part of Salinas' early 20th-century commercial history and has been documented through the City of Salinas historic resources survey. Located in the heart of downtown, the property has long contributed to the civic and economic life of Main Street. Today, the building hosts CHISPA's main administrative offices, serving as the operational hub for the organization's affordable housing development, property management, and resident services that support more than 1,500 housing units and community developments across the Central Coast, reinforcing its long-term commitment to downtown Salinas and the communities it serves. Guests are invited to enjoy light refreshments, hear remarks about the acquisition, and learn more about the key partners who helped make this milestone possible.

- **Chamber Lunch & Learn with RVS Technology Group**

Tuesday, March 17, 2026, 12:00– 1:00 p.m., 119, E. Alisal St., Salinas

Feeling lucky? Join us for a Lunch and Learn as RVS Technology Group hosts an exclusive Lunch & Learn at the Salinas Valley Chamber of Commerce. This one is not your average midday meeting. Join us to meet the Women of IT from RVS Technology Group, enjoy lunch on us, and walk away with real, practical insights that help protect your business, reduce downtime, and strengthen your technology foundation. And because it *is* St. Patrick's Day there will be RVS swag giveaways, Lucky shamrock cookies, and a few fun surprises you'll want to be there for. This is a limited-space, in-person session designed for local business leaders who want clarity—not jargon—around IT, cybersecurity, and proactive systems.

- **Milla Legal Document Services 10-Year Anniversary Mixer**

Thursday, March 19, 2026, 5:00 – 7:00 p.m., 90 W. Alisal St. Salinas

Join us for a 10-Year Anniversary Chamber Mixer with Milla Legal Document Services, co-hosted with TMD Creative. Enjoy refreshments, drink, and connect with chamber members in a relaxed and welcoming environment. Milla Legal Document Services specializes in providing self-help services to the public, offering expert assistance in various legal matters. Their services include: living wills and trusts, trust amendments, deed preparation, name changes, divorce, family law cases, and more. To learn more about the event, visit salinaschamber.com.

- **Salinas Valley Chamber's 105th Annual Awards Luncheon**

Thursday, April 9, 2026, 10:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m., Sherwood Hall, Salinas

The Salinas Valley Chamber of Commerce is thrilled to host the 105th Annual Awards Luncheon. This premier event is a vibrant celebration of achievement, business excellence, member milestones, and community spirit, drawing over 400 influential business leaders and community members from across the Salinas Valley. As the largest networking event in Monterey County, it's an unparalleled opportunity to connect, collaborate, and celebrate local success stories. To learn more about the event, visit salinaschamber.com.

RSVP at salinaschamber.com

LUNCHEON - from page 13

Farms; Holaday Seed Company; California Strawberry Commission; Housing Resource Center of Monterey County; Johnson Electronics; Diane Ausonio; Active Seniors, Inc.; and Stifel, Nicolaus & Company, Inc.

25-Year Members: Backus

Properties; Monterey Credit Union; The Costa Family McDonald's Restaurants; Republic Services
50-Year Members: California Rodeo Salinas; Ingraham & Associates CPAs

We extend our sincere gratitude for their unwavering partnership with the Salinas Valley Chamber of Commerce throughout the years!

Tickets & Participation

Various participation opportunities are available, including member booths, individual tickets (member: \$80 /non-member: \$95), and marketing opportunities through sponsorships. Tickets can be purchased until Friday, April 3, 2026, at SalinasChamber.com, or until tickets are sold out.

Don't miss this premier celebration of success, community, and collaboration and be a part of the Salinas Valley Chamber of Commerce's largest annual event.

For more information, please contact President & CEO Colleen Bailey at Colleen@salinaschamber.com or call (831) 751-7725. 🌱

AMBASSADOR SPOTLIGHT JASON AVALOS

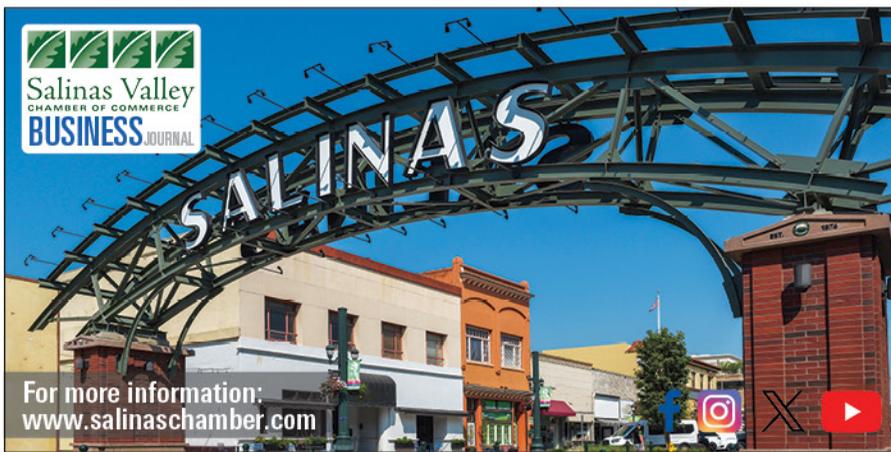


Jason Avalos is a proud alumnus of California State University Monterey Bay, where he earned his degree in Business Administration with a concentration in Marketing, and previously attended Cabrillo College. Growing up locally shaped his perspective and instilled a strong appreciation for community, 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 within 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 within 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.



Housing Plan - from page 17

Salinas 2040 General Plan Update.
This code revision will help the

development of new housing by providing the public and staff with a code that is easier to read and understand. 🌱

Local Credits

The City of Salinas Sixth Cycle Housing Element includes a page to recognize these individuals for their work within the city government on preparing the 918-page document:

- Lisa Brinton, Community Development Director
- Megan Hunter, Former Community Development Director
- Rod Powell, Assistant Community Development Director
- Grant Leonard, Planning Manager, Advanced Planning and Project Implementation Division
- Jonathan Moore, Senior Planner, Advanced Planning and Project Implementation Division
- Monica Gurmilan, Senior Planner, Advanced Planning and Project Implementation Division
- Francisco Brambila, Acting Planning Manager, Housing Division
- Kayshla Lopez, Homeless Services Manager, Housing Division
- Luis Ochoa, Sr., Community Development Analyst, Housing Division
- Cristina Gonzalez, Community Development Analyst, Housing Division
- Beatriz Trujillo, Community Development Analyst, Housing Division
- Hilda Peralta, Community Development Analyst, Housing Division
- David Vigil, Housing Production Coordinator VISTA, Housing Division



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- ✓ Direct-mailed to 650+ businesses
- ✓ On the Chamber website (4,000+ monthly visitors)
- ✓ In e-newsletters to 3,800+ business contacts with a 46% open rate.



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NON-PROFIT EVENTS

Intellectual Property Basics for Small Businesses – Women’s Business Center

Feb. 5, 11:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m., Zoom

Learn about protecting your business’s most valuable assets — your brand, creative work, and inventions. Attorney Cynthia Replogle breaks down the essentials of trademarks, copyrights, and patents in clear, practical terms.

- What is intellectual property?
- Why is it important to protect your intellectual property?
- How can you take steps to protect it?

Register here: <https://mcscorp.ecenterdirect.com/events/3006>.

17th Annual Crab and Pasta Feed – Notre Dame High School

Feb. 7, 5:30 – 7:30 p.m., 455 Palma Drive, Salinas – Notre Dame Gym

Tickets for the 17th Annual Notre Dame Crab & Pasta Feed—the school’s largest and most anticipated fundraiser—are now on sale. This wonderful event will take place on Saturday, Feb. 7, 2026, and promises an evening filled with great food, community, and fun. Your participation directly supports the students and the continued success of Notre Dame High School.

Souper Bowl Saturday – Community Human Services

Feb. 7, 11:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m., 600 E. Franklin St., Monterey

Enjoy world-famous clam chowder from Old Fisherman’s Grotto and The Fish Hopper while supporting Shuman HeartHouse and Casa de Noche Buena. Souper Bowl Saturday, is Saturday, Feb. 7, 2026, at Shuman Heart House in Monterey. Brought to you by Gathering For Women and Community Human Services. Takeout meal includes 16 oz. clam chowder, sourdough bread, packaged salad and dessert. Cost is \$40 per meal. Select pick-up window between 11 a.m. - 5 p.m. Drive-through pick-up at Shuman HeartHouse on Feb. 7. Enter at 300 E. Franklin St. and exit on Anthony.

16th Annual Culinary Roundup – Rancho Cielo High School

Feb. 22, 4:00 – 8:00 p.m., 2 Portola Plaza, Monterey – Portola Hotel and Spa

An exclusive evening of delicious culinary delights by top local chefs and the finest of Monterey County’s wine and beer. The event also provides a unique opportunity to meet Drummond Culinary Academy students and see them in action. The evening has a Western flair, with a strolling-dinner atmosphere. New this year, guests will enjoy expanded auction space hosted at the Monterey Conference Center.

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

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CELEBRATING HEART MONTH

RICHARD GERBER, MD
Cardiology



For more information visit
SalinasValleyHealth.com/heartmonth





Saturday, February 21, 2026 SALINAS ELKS LODGE, 614 Airport Blvd.

Businesswoman

Mun Yi

Introduced by Gloria de la Rosa

Education

Superintendent Monica Anzo

Introduced by Guadalupe G. Barrera

Business

La Plaza Bakery and Café

Introduced by Julio Gil

Alisal Entrepreneur

Yong Soo Oh

Introduced by Mayor Dennis Donohue

National Little League

Marisela Perez

Introduced by Alicia Fletcher

Humanitarian Award

Alisal Rotary

Introduced by Ricky Cabrera

Police Activities League (PAL)

Officer Danny Garcia

Introduced by Dr. Rolando Cabrera

Lifetime Achievement Award

Roberto Del Real

Introduced by Maria Orozco

Community Spirit

Adan Gomez Family

Introduced by Orlando Osornio