



BUSINESS JOURNAL



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Part II of an Exclusive Two-Part Series

Twelve Stand-Alone Fort Ord Chapels Have Potential to Inspire Tourism

By Kevin Dayton, Government Affairs Liaison

This two-part series explains the 12 stand-alone Fort Ord chapels and reveals what happened to them. Part 1 last month (in the August issue) provided historical context and described the World War II chapels. Part 2 this month describes the Cold War chapels and clarifies questions about other chapels often associated with Fort Ord. It also suggests topics for undergraduate and graduate-level papers, theses, and dissertations. Finally, Part 2 considers an action plan for readers who believe these chapels offer a useful foundation to visit Fort Ord and understand its role in regional, national, and world history in the 20th Century.

History of the Four Cold War Chapels and Their Fates

Fort Ord remained a major Army base after World War II. On May 17, 1952, the Army dedicated Fort Ord



All four Cold War chapels still remain on Fort Ord as of the summer of 2025, although one is scheduled for demolition and another has been boarded up for years. Clockwise from top-left: Sixth Avenue Chapel, Bayview Chapel, Post Chapel, Durham Road Chapel.

as a permanent post, at a time during the Korean War when 30,000 troops were stationed there. Del E. Webb Construction Company had won a massive contract to convert the base into permanent facilities. Additional Fort Ord building complexes were constructed before and during

the Vietnam War and into the mid-1970s.

During this time, the Army built four permanent chapels in the Mid-Century Modern architectural style. All four still exist within the City of Seaside, although one is now scheduled

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From left to right: Councilwoman Margaret D'Arrigo, Chevron Representatives Chanel Jolly and Maureen Wruck, MCEI Representative Sara Gong, and Monterey County Sheriff Tina Nieto.

Salinas Valley Cities Seek Opportunities for Their Next Generations

Your Chamber Wants to Help

By Kevin Dayton, Government Affairs Liaison

Chamber leaders and members regularly notice that this organization's name is the "Salinas Valley Chamber of Commerce." It's not just for the City of Salinas.

As the most populous city in Monterey County (by far), the City of Salinas of course commands attention from your Chamber.

OPPORTUNITIES see page 8



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Halloween Comes Alive Through Some Affordable Alternatives and Thrifty Magic at Goodwill Central Coast

By Goodwill Central Coast Staff

For many Americans, Halloween has become one of the biggest celebrations of the year — and one of the most expensive. In 2024, the National Retail Federation reported that U.S. consumers spent more than \$12 billion on Halloween, with costumes alone accounting for nearly \$4 billion of that total. Many of those costumes are worn just once before being stashed away, discarded, or sent to landfills.

This year, Goodwill Central Coast is inviting Halloween lovers to begin rethinking early just how they plan to shop for the spooky season. Rather than splurging on pricey, one-off costumes from big-box retailers, Goodwill offers an affordable and sustainable alternative: upcycled, ready-to-wear costumes and accessories that let shoppers get creative while reducing waste.

Costume inspiration can already be found on the shelves, with Goodwill store associates serving as a kind of Halloween concierge, pointing you to the best ideas.

“We like to think of a Goodwill Central Coast store as a treasure trove for Halloween,” said Alan Martinson, VP of Retail and Marketing at Goodwill Central Coast. “You can find unique pieces, mix-and-match outfits, or even grab a full, ready-made costume — all while knowing your purchase supports local job training and career services programs in our community.”

The thrill of DIY and upcycling

Beyond saving money, building a costume from thrifted items adds an element of fun and originality to Halloween. Shoppers can turn a vintage dress into a 1920s flapper look,

transform a plaid shirt and boots into a classic cowboy outfit, or use secondhand formalwear to create a glamorous vampire or movie star costume. Accessories such as hats, wigs and jewelry — plentiful in Goodwill’s aisles — help complete any DIY transformation.

To spark inspiration, the nonprofit offers three creative costumes you can build from a single trip to one of Goodwill Central Coast’s 16 stores in Monterey, Santa Cruz and San Luis Obispo counties:

- ‘80s rock star: Look for leather jackets, ripped jeans, and bold accessories like studded belts or chunky jewelry. Add a colorful scarf or wig, and you’re ready to channel your inner glam rocker.
- Mad scientist: A white button-down shirt can double as a lab coat with rolled-up sleeves. Pair it with goggles, rubber gloves, and hair teased to perfection for a zany science-lab vibe. Carry a thrifted beaker or jar for extra flair.
- Classic film noir detective: Combine a trench coat, fedora, and slacks for a moody, cinematic look. Add a toy magnifying glass or thrifted briefcase to complete your sleuth-inspired costume.
- Rosie the Riveter: This costume is both recognizable and easy to assemble with Goodwill finds. You’ll need a denim shirt (commonly found at Goodwill), and a pair of dark wash jeans. Add a red bandana and some sturdy work boots or brown shoes.

Each look can be created for a fraction of retail store prices, while also supporting sustainability and keeping reusable items out of landfills. Tips for thrifting your costume

- Shop with an open mind: You



never know what you’ll find at Goodwill, so be flexible with your ideas.

- Start with one piece and build: If you find a statement piece, see how you can elaborate on it to create a costume.
- Think creatively: Don’t be afraid to repurpose items for uses other than their original intention.
- Mix and match: Combining pieces from different styles or eras can lead to unique and personalized costumes.

A season of spooky savings

As Halloween approaches, Goodwill Central Coast will stock its stores with themed costume racks, accessories, and décor to make shopping easy and inspiring. Whether customers are looking for something simple for a child’s school event, a statement costume for a party, or pieces to create an Instagram-worthy DIY look, Goodwill provides budget-friendly options for every age and style.

“Each costume you create tells a story,” Martinson added. “And there’s something special about knowing

yours won’t be exactly like anyone else’s.”

Besides finding one-of-a-kind pieces, thrifting your Halloween costume is smarter because you’ll save money, and avoid cheaply made, mass-produced costumes that contribute to waste and environmental harm.

Shop with purpose

Every purchase from Goodwill Central Coast helps fund local workforce development programs that serve people facing barriers to employment. Last year, the nonprofit helped more than 23,000 individuals across Santa Cruz, Monterey, and San Luis Obispo counties with job training, education, and career placement services.

This Halloween, shoppers can save money, show off their creativity, help the planet, and support their local community — all in a single trip to Goodwill.

For more information and to find your nearest Goodwill Central Coast location, visit <http://www.ccgoodwill.org/>. 🌱

Monterey County Agriculture and Its Influence on Housing

By Leonard Batti, SVCC Board Chair

Monterey County, particularly the Salinas Valley, stands as a critical pillar of California's, and indeed the nation's, agricultural output. Known as "America's Salad Bowl," the region produces a significant share of the country's lettuce, strawberries, broccoli, celery, and other fruits and vegetables. It is also a major producer of nursery plants and flowers, seed crops, livestock, and dairy. According to the 2024 Monterey County Crop and Livestock Report, the county's gross production value reached nearly \$5 billion, representing a 14.7% increase from 2023.

There is no denying that agriculture is the number one economic driver in Monterey County, particularly in the Salinas Valley. As agriculture goes, so goes much of the local economy, including housing. This makes it essential to examine current and future agricultural trends to anticipate how shifts in the industry may impact the housing market.

Agricultural Labor and Housing Pressures

Labor availability will remain one of the most pressing challenges for agriculture. Much of the nation's specialty and permanent crop regions rely heavily on H-2A visa workers, a federal program that allows agricultural employers



As agriculture goes, so goes much of the local economy, including housing. This makes it essential to examine current and future agricultural trends to anticipate how shifts in the industry may impact the housing market.

to hire temporary foreign workers when domestic labor is unavailable.

For example, Florida is the nation's largest user of the H-2A program, with approximately 50,000 certified positions annually, and some crop sectors report that nearly 100% of their workforce is filled through the program. Monterey County historically benefitted from a more stable resident workforce. However, over the past decade, labor availability has become less certain, forcing many growers to rely on H-2A to supplement their labor needs. Current

estimates suggest that 10–12% of Monterey County's agricultural workforce comes through H-2A, though this number fluctuates year to year.

A critical requirement of the H-2A program is that employers must provide housing for their temporary workforce. As a result, H-2A labor can be significantly more expensive than resident labor, some estimates suggest as much as 25% higher when accounting for housing, transportation, and compliance costs. This creates challenges for producers already under pressure to keep food prices affordable for consumers.

To meet these requirements, some agricultural companies and labor contractors have invested in converting

motels into worker housing or developing new "worker villages" to house both resident and temporary employees. Current estimates put company-owned or leased agricultural worker housing in Monterey County at over 5,000 beds.

Immigration Policy and Its Ripple Effects

Immigration policy plays a decisive role in shaping the agricultural labor force, housing demand, and the overall economy. Tighter border controls and increased deportations are likely to push growers toward even greater reliance on H-2A labor and the additional housing obligations that come with it.

At the same time, stricter immigration enforcement has made many documented and undocumented workers reluctant to go to work or even visit public spaces, which impacts not only the labor force but also local businesses. Unlike resident workers, H-2A employees generally do not bring their families, meaning their spending in the local economy is more limited. This reduced consumer activity has downstream impacts, one notable example being declining school enrollment in parts of the Salinas Valley.

Implications for Local Leadership

All of these factors, labor shortages, housing requirements, immigration policy, and economic ripple effects, must be part of the discussion when valley leaders consider long-term economic development. Agriculture remains the backbone of Monterey County, but its relationship to housing, education, and community well-being is multifaceted. Decisions made today will shape the valley's economic and social future for decades to come. 🌱

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CREATING A STRONG LOCAL ECONOMY • PROMOTING THE COMMUNITY • PROVIDING NETWORKING OPPORTUNITIES • POLITICAL ACTION • REPRESENTING THE INTERESTS OF BUSINESS WITH GOVERNMENT

for imminent demolition.

1. Post Chapel (Building P-4280)

Part of the Post Chapel Center, also known as Main Chapel and later known as the Ord Military Community Chapel.

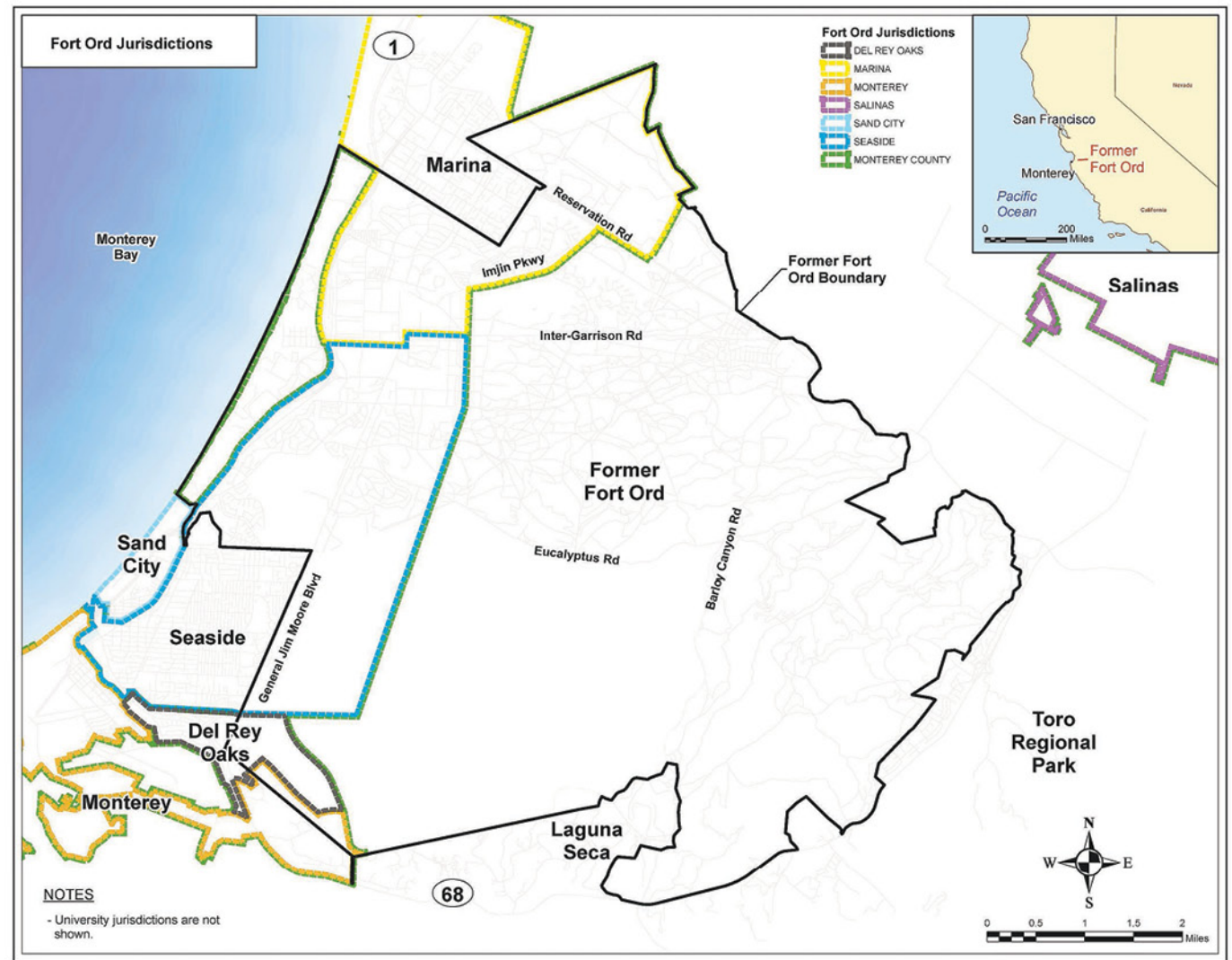
Current Location: 4280 General Jim Moore Blvd. (formerly North-South Road) in what is now the City of Seaside

In 1955, Congress approved spending for a new large Post Chapel. As part of a contract that included new housing and other structures, the Post Chapel was built in 1958 by Riverside-based Army Corps of Engineers contractor Sun Gold, Inc. and Inland Empire Builders, Inc. It was dedicated on July 8, 1958. Various sources claim it was the largest U.S. Army chapel at the time, with capacity of 700 people in the main sanctuary.

After Fort Ord closed in 1994, the Ord Military Community (a surviving remnant of Fort Ord) continued worship services and religious gatherings at the Post Chapel. The Army ended services at the chapel in 2018 and ended all religious meetings there in 2019. The Army also declared the chapel unavailable for lease.

At the time, there was public outcry about the fate of Post Chapel records and interior decorations and furniture, as well as concern that the Army would outright demolish it. The Army in 2019 moved the stained-glass windows to the U.S. Army Institute for Religious Leadership (USA-IRL) at Fort Jackson, South Carolina. The steeple was removed in 2020.

In the early 2020s, the Army announced plans to convert the chapel into a Presidio of Monterey Fire Department (POMFD) facility for the Ord Military Community, as the City of Seaside planned to demolish the existing POMFD fire station at 4400 General Jim Moore Blvd. to make way for the future Campus Town



Boundaries of the former Fort Ord in relation to local government jurisdictions, from a map on the U.S. Army Fort Ord Cleanup website.

development. However, in 2024, the City of Seaside amended its agreement with the Campus Town developer, thus allowing the City of Seaside to retain ownership of the fire station leased by the POMFD. The City of Seaside suggested that the Army could offer use of the chapel for a "cultural museum and arts center." As of today, the Post Chapel remains boarded up.

2. Sixth Avenue Chapel (Building P-3701)

Also known as the 3rd Brigade Chapel or 9th Regimental Chapel.

Current Location: 5270 Sixth Ave., in what is now the City of Seaside, on Cal State University Monterey Bay campus

In addition to providing funding

to build the Post Chapel, Congress provided funding in 1955 to build the first of what was originally planned as two new regimental chapels. The Sixth Avenue Chapel was designed for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers by John Carl Warnecke, who designed numerous prominent Modernist buildings that remain landmarks in the United States today. Chapels with this design are still extant at other bases, and the Durham Road Chapel (described below) has this design.

The Sixth Avenue Chapel was built in 1958 and often identified as the Third Brigade Chapel. After decommissioning with a service on July 9, 1993, it was converted into a building for California State University Monterey Bay. Originally called the

Teledramatic Arts and Technology Building, the chapel building is now called the Cinematic Arts and Technology Building (Building 27). The steeple was removed in 2002.

3. Durham Road Chapel (Building P-4483)

Also known as Durham Chapel and the Aviation Brigade Chapel.

Current Location: 2699 Colonel Durham St., in what is now the City of Seaside

Built in 1970 as part of a base expansion complex of 27 buildings, this chapel served Headquarters Command / Combat Development Command. Its design is the same as the Sixth Avenue Chapel, although photos show a round window on the Sixth Avenue Chapel steeple

and a rectangular window on the Durham Road Chapel steeple. (Both steeples have been removed.) A decommissioning service for the chapel occurred on June 8, 1993. It was transferred to the City of Seaside as part of a public benefit conveyance.

In 1999, the Christian Memorial Community Tabernacle Church began using the chapel. In 2018, after seven years of trying to get the church to vacate, the City of Seaside sued the church to force it to leave. The city contended the church never had a lease to use the chapel and never paid the city to use it. After reaching a settlement agreement with the city, the church moved out by the end of 2018.

The chapel has been vacant and boarded up since then. During COVID-19 public health orders in 2020 and 2021, the Seaside City Council allowed people living in vehicles to park overnight in the chapel parking lot. A staff report to the Seaside City Council, dated Sept. 17, 2020, reported 32 vehicles using the lot.

On July 17, 2025, the City of Seaside awarded a bid for demolition of some Fort Ord structures, including the Durham Road Chapel, to prepare for the Campus Town development. During his presentation to the City Council, the Public Works Director observed that “staff has trouble securing” the chapel, with “many break-ins over time.” As typical with Fort Ord structures, demolition includes lead and asbestos abatement.

4. Bayview Chapel (Building P-4426)

Also known as the Bay View Chapel, the 2nd Brigade Chapel, and the 9th Regiment Chapel.

Current Location: 3220 Sixth Ave., in what is now the City of Seaside, on Cal State University Monterey Bay campus

Opened in November 1977, the Bayview Chapel was the last of the 12 stand-alone chapels built at Fort



Saint James Christian Methodist Episcopal (CME) Church at 285 Calle Cabu in Salinas is indeed a World War II U.S. Army chapel, but it was relocated from the Salinas Army Air Base, not Fort Ord.

Ord. Photos of the chapel when it was operational appear to show bells in the tower.

On July 29, 1986, a dedication service was held at this chapel for a stained-glass window relocated from South Korea. It depicts an American soldier kneeling in prayer facing the Imjin River and surrounding mountains. This window was originally installed in 1953 during the Korean War in the South Post Chapel of Camp Casey, at what is now U.S. Army Garrison (USAG) Yongsan-Casey near the Korean Demilitarized Zone (DMZ). The U.S. Army 7th Infantry Division was at Camp Casey during the Korean War. In 1974, it reactivated at Fort Ord. When the Army scheduled the South Post Chapel for demolition and replacement in the mid-1980s, the window was shipped to Fort Ord and repaired, framed, and installed by volunteers.

A decommissioning service for this chapel was held on June 16, 1993. It was used in 1995 to host larger Cal State University Monterey Bay university meetings and then

was converted into the university’s Music Hall (Building 30). Further research would be needed to determine the fate of the stained-glass window and tower bells.

Other Chapels Often Associated (Rightly or Wrongly) With Fort Ord

Stockade/Confinement: Two chapels were in the Main Stockade Building (Building P-4953). One was on the first floor in the building built in 1953 that replaced the original 1941 stockade. It was described in a newsletter of the contractor Del E. Webb Construction Company as “attractive in its simplicity, featuring artistic wood paneling.” A Stockade Annex Chapel was later built on the second floor of an additional wing. Listings for religious services in the 1970s identified a Stockade chapel as “Confinement.”

Health Care Facilities: There was a chapel in the old Army Hospital (Ward D-14) and then in the Silas B. Hayes Army Community Hospital (Building P-4385), opened in 1971. The Alcohol and Drug Abuse Division Building (Building T-3051)

reportedly also had a chapel.

1st Brigade Chapel: It appears that Building P-4438 on the south-east corner of Durham Road and Sixth Street may have been used as the 1st Brigade Chapel in early 1960s. This was no longer the case a few years later. When Fort Ord closed, the building was described as a “Battalion Headquarters Building.” The building has been demolished.

Young Nak Presbyterian Church of Monterey: This church operates at 235 10th St., in the City of Marina, next to the former Tenth Street Chapel. It does not occupy a former Fort Ord chapel. Rather, the church entered into an agreement with the City of Marina in 1999 to reuse abandoned Fort Ord properties on Eighth Street and Second Avenue, including a General Instruction Building (Building T-2233) for reuse as a chapel and a Calibration Facility (Building T-2217) for reuse as an educational building. The church made an agreement with the City of Marina in 2003 to purchase empty land at 235 Tenth St., and move those two buildings to that location. In 2005, the Fort Ord Reuse Authority (FORA) transferred the property to the City of Marina. The church was then able to obtain the parcel and move the two buildings.

Presidio of Monterey Chapel: The Army Presidio of Monterey is located about nine miles south of Fort Ord in the City of Monterey. It has a non-denominational chapel (Building 325, at 324 Stilwell Road) built at the same time (1941, just before World War II) in the same Series 700-1800 design as the Fort Ord chapels. Minor exterior changes have apparently been made to the chapel, such as new windows above the front entrance. That chapel is used today. It also has an annex (Building 325) used for religious purposes.

St. James CME (Christian Methodist Episcopal) Church in Salinas: Located at 285 Calle Cebu

in Salinas, this is indeed a former World War II Army chapel with the same design as the Fort Ord chapels. However, it does not originate at Fort Ord.

This chapel was built at the Salinas Army Air Base and dedicated on April 2, 1944. In 1947, after World War II ended, the War Assets Administration declared this chapel to be surplus (along with the entire base, which is now Salinas Municipal Airport). Choosing among many proposals to buy the chapel, the Army Chief of Chaplains determined based on need to sell the chapel to St. James CME in Salinas for \$2,900. (It was built at a cost of \$18,633). The church pastor, Rev. J. E. Young, announced that St. James CME was about to lose its church location and it would move the chapel to land it had purchased on Calle Cebu.

Santa Rita Chapel in Salinas:

Although it may resemble a World War II Army chapel (or even an old schoolhouse), the Santa Rita Chapel on 2215 North Main St. in Salinas (north of the Northridge Mall) was not moved to its location from Fort Ord or any other Army base. Also known as Church of Our Lady of Guadalupe, it appears to have been built and dedicated as a Roman Catholic church in 1911. The Diocese of Monterey still owns it.

Acknowledgements

Special thanks to Marshall A. Yokell, Archivist of the Command History Office of the Defense Language Institute Foreign Language Center (DLIFLC) of the Presidio of Monterey, for providing guidance on key documents related to Fort Ord chapels.

For Students: Potential Topics for Papers, Theses, and Dissertations

1. What reasons were offered publicly and internally within the military and Roosevelt Administration to build chapels for World War II and the Cold War? Is there evidence that

these chapels were meant to reassure the public — especially parents — that America's young men would not go astray from God while in military service?

2. Did these chapels have meaning for the average Fort Ord soldier? Did this meaning change for soldiers over time, from 1941 to base closure in 1994? Were sermons at chapels oriented toward a universal audience (with topics such as "the power of positive thinking") or were the chapels evangelical and oriented toward creedal, doctrinal ideas of salvation and morality? Were any soldiers deeply influenced by chaplains assigned to these churches? What are their stories? What did non-religious soldiers think about chapels on the base?
3. Does First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt deserve major credit for inspiring the construction of these chapels, or is that a modern historical misinterpretation? What role did she play in the design and order of World War II military bases?
4. Can a list be compiled (based on substantiated records) of all couples married at the Fort Ord chapels? Under what circumstances did these marriages occur? Similarly, can a list be compiled of all individuals who

underwent religious ceremonies (baptism, Bar/Bat Mitzvah, etc.) at the chapels? Would such a list be a valuable resource for those couples and individuals who are still living — and their descendants?

5. Based on symbolism, function, aesthetics, architectural interest, and general community interest, the Fort Ord chapels seem to be special and significant. But many were left empty and allowed to deteriorate after Fort Ord closed. What were the reasons for that? And more generally, why was it concluded during the closure process that so few Fort Ord buildings (including the chapels) would have any historic interest or value?
6. In 1947, the Army declared unused World War II chapels as surplus and sold them at relatively low cost to churches that needed buildings. (St. James CME Church in Salinas is an example.) From 1994 to today, there were surely local churches that would have eagerly sought opportunities to lease Fort Ord chapels or move them to another location nearby. (In fact, it appears a church may have simply moved into one of the chapels after it was vacant for five years.) Why didn't community leaders and the Army pursue such a reuse plan?

7. Why are paper and electronic materials about the Fort Ord chapels so often incomplete, inconsistent, and inaccurate? Would Army records from paper boxes stored away in warehouses reveal complete stories about these chapels? (Chaplain records and recollections may be the best sources for such a project.) Would it be feasible to obtain, consolidate, and catalogue historical material about the chapels, perhaps in conjunction with a larger project for Fort Ord historic material as a whole?
8. When considering the function of Fort Ord in its time and the occasional tragic and unsettling incidents that occurred at the base over half a century, some people question why any of it should be preserved as a historical site. Has enough time passed for a balanced, thoughtful historical perspective on Fort Ord?

Action Plan for Tourism Based on the Fort Ord Chapels

Please contact Kevin Dayton at (831) 869-6592 or at kevin@salinaschamber.com to do the following:

1. Provide additional or corrected information about these 12 chapels that the public may find interesting and useful.
2. Get involved in an action plan to develop a chapel-based tour itinerary and install wayfinding and accurate interpretative signs at the chapel sites.
3. Get involved in an action plan for historical preservation of the remaining chapels that aren't already in advanced decay.
4. Get involved with an action plan for preserving documents about the chapels and making those documents accessible and understandable for the public.
5. Provide ideas on funding sources to implement action plans related to Fort Ord tourism. 🌱



Locations of the four Cold War chapels at the former Fort Ord.

OPPORTUNITIES - from page 1

And the substantial economic ties of the Salinas Valley with the Monterey Peninsula and the North County unincorporated communities (Prunedale, Castroville, and Moss Landing) are obvious.

However, your Chamber has a special focus on representing interests of businesses, nonprofits, and other entities that operate in the 45 miles of the Salinas Valley south of Salinas to King City. In fact, your Chamber keeps an eye on local affairs even beyond King City, to the San Ardo oil fields and the Nacimiento and San Antonio reservoirs at the border with San Luis Obispo County, 80 miles south of Salinas.

Serving the South Valley

Chamber board member Colby Pereira, the Chief Operating Officer of Braga Fresh Family Farms, has urged Chamber board members to pay close attention to the affairs of the South County cities of Gonzales, Soledad, Greenfield, and King City (as well as unincorporated communities such as Chualar, San Lucas, and San Ardo). As the 2023 Government Relations Committee chair, she ensured the Business Journal included regular articles about business-related public policy issues in the South Valley. She also



From left to right: District 3 County Supervisor Chris Lopez, Soledad Mayor Anna Velazquez, Salinas Mayor Dennis Donohue, SVCC CEO Colleen Bailey, Gonzales Mayor Jose Rios, Greenfield Mayor Bob White, and King City Mayor Mike LeBarre.

pushed for more Chamber events for South Valley businesses, such as ribbon-cuttings and open houses.

But the board's most ambitious goal for the South Valley during the past few years has been to hold a major economic development event, and even to make it a permanent signature event for the Chamber. Ideally, the mayors of the five Salinas Valley cities and the county supervisor for the South Valley cities would gather at one place for a panel discussion about South Valley plans for economic development, quality job creation, housing supply, and quality of life. No one could remember when these five

city mayors and county supervisor had ever come together for an event dedicated to these topics.

The event has now happened! Your Chamber's first annual "Salinas Valley Speaks" event was held on Thursday, Aug. 7 at the Braga Barn, just north of Soledad city limits. The Braga Barn was described at the event as "a real-life museum that speaks to the roots of the Salinas Valley." But while the barn evoked the Salinas Valley of the past, the panel and the audience was there to discuss the Salinas Valley of the future.

'Salinas Valley Speaks' Reveals Common Themes of Opportunity and Challenge

Some organizers of this event had assumed that representatives of the cities and county would convey a competitive approach to economic development. This was not the case at all.

First, all panelists seemed to agree that the future of the Salinas Valley should be and must be agriculture. No one suggested that the Salinas Valley needs to shift its economic focus from agriculture to distribution/logistics warehouses or to utility-scale solar facilities. This transformation has occurred in other agricultural areas of California such as the Inland Empire and parts of the San Joaquin Valley.

A notable theme of the panel was the importance of families: ensuring that the Salinas Valley offers jobs that can support families, housing that ordinary families can afford, and a quality of life that ensures safety and stability for families. This focus was an interesting contrast to public policy dialogue in other parts of Monterey County, where families with children are not as prevalent.

As an extension of their concern for families, all panelists lamented the continuous departure of ambitious young people from the Salinas Valley, never to return. As the Mayor of Salinas said, "we export vegetables...and too many of our kids."

Many young people in the Salinas Valley are taking their studies seriously at their local K-12 schools and at Hartnell Community College campuses in Salinas, Soledad, and King City. (The "Salinas Valley Promise" program has been a major success for increasing enrollment and retention at Hartnell College.) They're also serious about their families, jobs, and community involvement while they obtain this education. Then, with this strong foundation for life success, they permanently leave the beautiful Salinas Valley for somewhere else.

These young people perceive, with some validity, that their hometowns have limited employment



Rod Braga of Braga Fresh greets District 3 County Supervisor Chris Lopez, moderator of the Salinas Valley Speaks Mayors Panel.

options, a dearth of quality entertainment and retail, and significant obstacles to buy their own homes and raise their own families. They know that private and public investment goes elsewhere (such as the San Francisco Bay Area), where people have money, influence, and access to lifestyles associated with material success and prosperity. Meanwhile, their Salinas Valley hometowns struggle to obtain enough money to maintain their wastewater infrastructure and hire enough police and fire personnel.

How do Salinas Valley communities overcome the loss of these ambitious young people? Panelists talked about their efforts to bring more economic development, retail, and housing to their cities. Here are some highlights, for each city, in alphabetical order:

- The City of Gonzales is eagerly awaiting construction of its community center complex, filling a vacuum in the city's cohesion and culture. It is developing an industrial wastewater treatment system that recycles water for irrigation. City leaders are also looking forward to expansion of housing into areas outside of the city, but their vision has been delayed by environmental objections.
- The City of Greenfield has been outperforming other Monterey County cities in achieving their Regional Housing Needs Allocation (RHNA) goals. However, the city council was recently forced to impose a moratorium on new housing because of the limited capacity of its wastewater treatment plant. Greenfield has also dealt with environmental objections to growth.
- The City of King (King City) is seeking to "maintain a small-town quality of life with big town amenities." This includes keeping their high school as a central focal point and community gathering place in the

city. Although King City is "the last city on the road," they have been able to attract housing by streamlining permits, limiting fees, and maintaining good relationships with developers willing to build there.

- The City of Salinas is looking at expanding its tax base with new hotels and promotion of its new soccer complex as a destination for soccer tournaments of organized leagues. It has permitted one very large Amazon distribution center as a major supplement to its existing tax revenue. It continues to pursue a vision of serving as a world innovation hub for technological advances related to agriculture ("ag tech"). The Future Growth Area (north of Boronda Road) is ready for major housing development. Improvement of wastewater infrastructure is a significant challenge.
- The City of Soledad has attracted Monterey County's first Dutch Bros drive-through coffee shop and a Panda Express.

They have creative plans for a "container village" made up of shipping containers reused as a vibrant retail and entertainment district. They also have an arrangement with Soledad Unified School District for school district workforce housing. Soledad has experienced some significant housing development but faces environmental challenges to future growth.

On a regional basis, Salinas Valley cities see the potential for economic development based on the following: reliable passenger rail service; high-speed internet access through underground fiber cables (implemented through the South Salinas Valley Broadband Authority); technology in agriculture (ag tech); and tourism based on wineries, the Pinnacles National Monument, and Arroyo Seco. In addition, Hartnell Community College now has satellite campuses that offer classes without the need for residents to make a 30-mile or 40-mile drive or bus trip to Salinas.

More could be said about the

potential for future economic development in the Salinas Valley and the obstacles to making it happen, but time was limited.

Plans for the Next 'Salinas Valley Speaks'

Attendees had outstanding reviews about the substance of the event, the networking opportunities before and after the panel discussion, and the compelling location at the Braga Barn. Regrettably, dozens of people who wanted to attend had to be turned down after the number of registrants quickly reached event location capacity. The Chamber will need to consider how a South Valley location in 2026 for Salinas Valley Speaks could accommodate all interested Chamber members and guests. Let us know if you have any ideas.

The Chamber wants to thank all of the speakers, and especially Supervisor Lopez for his leadership role in the event, and its sponsors which included Wescom, Chevron, and our presenting sponsor, Braga Fresh. 🌿



Full house at the Salinas Valley Speaks Mixer Social — guests networked and enjoyed hors d'oeuvres in the Braga Barn.



Alvarado on Main Evolves into Alvarado Street Brewery Taproom

Back in March, you may have noticed a few changes at Alvarado Street's Oldtown Salinas location — formerly known as “Alvarado on Main.” Today, the company officially introducing the newly rebranded restaurant as Alvarado Street Brewery Taproom: a fresh, laid-back evolution of the space that puts beer front and center while doubling down on being a welcoming hub for the local community. And is now back open on Tuesdays. The decision to evolve came from thoughtful guest feedback. While Alvarado on Main was recognized for its Art Deco charm and curated beer selection, some guests perceived it as more of a special-occasion spot rather than an everyday go-to. With this transition, the Taproom offers a casual, comfortable atmosphere perfect for frequent visits — whether it's for a round of beers, some great food, or a night out.

The name Alvarado Street Brewery Taproom makes its purpose clear — this is a place for beer lovers to enjoy Alvarado's craft beers in a laid-back, social setting. With 48 taps pouring everything from signature West Coast IPAs and crisp lagers to fruited sours and bold stouts, the Taproom is a showcase of Alvarado's creativity, paired with fresh, familiar pub fare.

As part of the rebrand, the menu has undergone a refresh, shifting away from traditional entrées to focus on Alvarado's strengths: smash burgers, naturally leavened sourdough pizza, and shareable appetizers. Highlights include:

- **Six smashburgers & sandwiches**, including the Classic Smash, with grilled and pressed chuck patties, melted American cheese, and tangy malt vinegar aioli, and the Fuego Smash, which turns up the heat with Fresno chiles, bacon, habanero jack cheese, and spicy aioli.

- **Five hand-tossed sourdough pizzas**, including the Carnitas Pizza, topped with crispy carnitas, roasted pasilla peppers, avocado, lime, and queso fresco.

- **A revamped taco lineup**, featuring options like crispy carnitas and marinated artichoke, served on fresh corn tortillas with house-made salsa verde.

- Five shareable appetizers, including fan-favorites like the Buffalo-Piri Wings and the 'Everything' Pretzels with Beer Cheese.

- **New desserts**, featuring the stout brownie made with our Best Part of Waking Up coffee stout and house-made churros.

The Alvarado team has also prioritized making the menu more accessible, aiming to provide great value while maintaining the high-quality, from-scratch cooking guests expect. Most items have seen lower pricing, reinforcing the Taproom as a spot for regular visits rather than just special occasions.

Beyond the rebrand and menu shift, the Taproom has introduced several key enhancements to guest experience:

- **New Brewery-Inspired Art & Signage** — Large art collages featuring Alvarado's beer photography — often showcased on social media — now line the dining space, reinforcing the brewery's identity. Additionally, new exterior blade signage with the Alvarado Street Brewery Taproom logo now welcomes guests for the first time.

- **Streamlined, Personal Service** — Recognizing the importance of great hospitality, the Taproom is augmenting QR code ordering with full table service for all meal periods. Guests who prefer QR ordering can still do so, but servers equipped with handheld point-of-sale devices will now be available to provide faster, more personalized service.

“We believe in beer as a social thread that brings people together and that beer is an affordable luxury by default,” says J.C. Hill, Owner & Brewmaster of Alvarado Street Brewery. “We want a restaurant space and menu that complement this truth—one that offers great food great beer, and great value at a time when people need it most.” This shift toward a more casual, inviting Taproom is about deepening connections with the Salinas community. By offering a menu that is fun, fresh, and shareable, alongside an ever-evolving lineup of world-class craft beer, the Taproom is set to become a true staple in Oldtown Salinas — a place that welcomes everyone. The Taproom is now open Tuesday through Sunday, and guests are invited to experience the new menu, refreshed atmosphere, and enhanced service firsthand. Whether it's a \$5 happy hour beer, a casual burger-and-pint night, or just a place to gather with friends over great food and drinks, the Taproom is ready to welcome all.



Hartnell College Receives National Recognition in 2025 Carnegie Classifications for Student Access and Earnings

Hartnell College has been named an Opportunity College and University (OCU) in the 2025 Carnegie Classifications, recognizing institutions that provide broad student access and measurable earnings outcomes following graduation. Hartnell is one of 60 community colleges in the United States — and one of two in California — to receive the OCU designation in the new Student Access and Earnings Classification, developed by the American Council on Education and the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching.

In total, 479 institutions received the OCU designation across all sectors of higher education. The Student Access and Earnings Classification evaluates institutions based on the percentage of students who receive Pell Grants, the proportion of students from underrepresented racial and ethnic backgrounds, and post-attendance earnings eight years after enrollment. The classification is contextualized using local economic and demographic data to reflect regional equity and workforce outcomes.

“This classification affirms Hartnell's institutional mission to expand educational opportunity and support student achievement,” said Michael Gutierrez, superintendent/president of Hartnell College. “We remain focused on advancing economic mobility for our students and the communities we serve.”

Classifications were announced in Washington, D.C. as part of a broader national release. According to the Carnegie Foundation, Opportunity Colleges and Universities demonstrate both higher access and higher earnings potential, serving as models for institutional effectiveness in addressing socioeconomic disparities through education.

In addition to its OCU designation, Hartnell College received the 2025 Institutional Classification of Mixed Associate Medium, a grouping that includes 265 institutions nationwide, representing 7 percent of all colleges and universities in the Institutional Classification.

“Being named an Opportunity College affirms what drives our work at Hartnell: the belief that education transforms lives, both for our students and their families,” said Gayle Pitman, vice president of institutional equity, effectiveness, and success. “We are committed to expanding opportunity in ways that disrupt cycles of poverty and close gaps in education and income across generations.” The Carnegie Classification system is maintained by the American Council on Education in collaboration with the Carnegie Foundation. It has served as the leading framework for describing institutional diversity in U.S. higher education since 1973 and is updated every three years.





The Siembra Latinos Fund Announces Third Annual Alfred Diaz-infante Award Recipient: María Elena Manzo

The Siembra Latinos Fund of the Community Foundation for Monterey County (CFMC) is proud to announce that María Elena Manzo, Founder and Executive Director of Mujeres en Acción, is the recipient of the third annual Alfred Diaz-Infante Award. The award was established in 2023 to honor the late Alfred Diaz-Infante, a beloved community leader and nonprofit executive who championed partnerships to uplift the Latino community in Monterey County. Manzo has dedicated her life to advancing economic self-sufficiency and leadership development for Latina and Indigenous women in Monterey and Santa Cruz Counties. Through her leadership of Mujeres en Acción, she has created a trusted space where women build skills, confidence and collective power to transform their lives and their communities. Arriving in Monterey County as a farmworker in 1974, Manzo has spent more than 30 years committed to social justice, civic engagement and economic empowerment. She has been instrumental in creating pathways to healthcare access, workforce advocacy and leadership development, impacting thousands of families across the Central Coast. During the COVID-19 pandemic, Manzo co-led COPAs (Communities Organized for Relational Power in Action), regional response and directed Mujeres en Acción's local outreach, conducting thousands of calls, identifying urgent needs and advocating for public health solutions. Her leadership contributed to the creation of the VIDA Project, a community health worker initiative in partnership with COPA and the CFMC. She also co-led the organizing strategy behind Esperanza Care, which has provided healthcare access to over 4,500 undocumented immigrants since 2017. Most recently, she helped expand Mujeres en Acción's role as a workforce intermediary, working with Joby Aviation to secure public funding after the company committed to creating 400 local jobs in Monterey County. In 2023, Manzo had the opportunity to share her work with the late Pope Francis, who commended her efforts and told her, "Where women are, things work better." A strategist and respected community leader, Manzo continues to open doors and create lasting change for women and families across the Central Coast. "To receive the Alfred Diaz-Infante Award is a tremendous honor. Alfred's life was defined by service and opportunity for those often overlooked. I am humbled to be recognized in his memory and to continue building a stronger, more equitable community," said Manzo. "We are thrilled to recognize María Elena for her unwavering commitment to uplifting Latina and Indigenous women and families in our region. She embodies the spirit of leadership and community service that Alfred exemplified," said Cecilia Romero, CFMC Vice President of Philanthropic Services. "Honoring María Elena continues our commitment to celebrating those who drive positive change," added Louie Diaz-Infante, Alfred's brother and Siembra Latinos Fund Advisory Council Chair. The award will be presented at the 8th Annual Siembra Latinos Celebration on Saturday, Sept. 20, 2025, from 4-6:30 p.m. at the CR Winery in the Santa Lucia Highlands in Soledad.



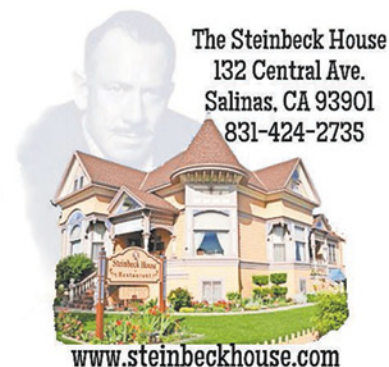
Bay Federal Welcomes Back Financial Leader Ray Diep as Assistant Vice President of Finance

Bay Federal Credit Union is proud to announce the return of Ray Diep as Assistant Vice President of Finance. A seasoned financial professional with deep institutional knowledge and a longstanding commitment to the credit union mission, Diep rejoins the organization after a three-year tenure at another financial institution. Diep originally began his career at Bay Federal in 2011 and held several integral positions during his tenure through 2022, including Finance Manager and Treasury Manager. In his new role, he will oversee financial operations and strategy with a focus on long-term sustainability and community impact. Diep holds a Bachelor of Science degree with a double major in Finance and Economics from Santa Clara University. His academic foundation and years of hands-on financial leadership equip him with the expertise to navigate the evolving financial landscape while supporting Bay Federal's continued growth. "I'm excited to be rejoining Bay Federal Credit Union and grateful for the opportunity to return, reconnect, and contribute once again to a team and mission I truly believe in," said Diep. Outside of his professional responsibilities, Diep enjoys traveling and exploring the outdoors with his spouse and three children. Whether it's discovering new destinations or biking on local trails, he values quality time spent in nature with family. "We are thrilled to welcome Ray back to Bay Federal," said Carrie Birkhofer, Bay Federal President and CEO. "His dedication, leadership, and familiarity with our values make him a tremendous asset to our team."



The Steinbeck House Welcomes Michelle Fabian as First Administrative House Manager

The Steinbeck House has announced the appointment of Michelle Fabian as its first Administrative Manager, marking a new chapter in the continued preservation and celebration of John Steinbeck's legacy. In this newly created role, Fabian will oversee the daily operations of the historic house's restaurant, and gift shop/bookstore. She will be instrumental in ensuring exceptional customer service, maintaining smooth operational efficiency, and leading the volunteer program — a cornerstone of the house's community spirit. Fabian brings a wealth of experience and leadership to the Steinbeck House. A graduate of California State University Monterey Bay, and San Jose State University, she has served since 2018 as the Executive Director of the American Heritage Museum in Palo Alto, California. In addition to her administrative expertise, she is a passionate educator and currently serves as an adjunct professor of History at Monterey Peninsula College. As Administrative House Manager, Fabian will also help spearhead grant writing and fundraising initiatives, vital to sustaining the legacy and mission of the Steinbeck House for future generations. "I am honored to join the Steinbeck House team and look forward to working closely with community members and local organizations," said Fabian. "Together, we will continue to preserve and share the remarkable history of John Steinbeck's birthplace." The Salinas Valley Guild welcomes Fabian with great enthusiasm and invites the community to join them in celebrating this exciting new era.



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The Cooperation of Church and State

By Pastor T.K. Anderson, Compass Church

What a summer it's been in Salinas and throughout Monterey County. From Celebrate

America, where thousands gathered to honor our veterans and enjoy a night of unity, to Wheels & Wonder for our kids, to delivering 3,500 backpacks to students across our local schools, your generosity shined.

Thank you to city partners, business sponsors, and the hundreds of volunteers who rolled up their sleeves to bless our community. As we turn toward a beautiful fall, Compass Church will keep serving families through mentoring, food support, and free community events.

Some have asked, in light of recent conversations, "What about the separation of church and state?" Many people think that phrase is in the Constitution or Bill of Rights, but in truth, it's not. However, it is a fair question, and it deserves a clear, calm answer.

First, what is it? The phrase comes from an 1802 letter Thomas Jefferson wrote to the Danbury Baptist Association. He pictured a "wall of separation" to ensure the government would neither establish a national church nor control a person's conscience (Footnote 1).

In our Constitution, that vision appears in two twin protections: the Establishment Clause (government may not establish religion) and the Free Exercise Clause (government may not prohibit the



practice of faith) (2). These clauses safeguard both the independence of churches and the liberty of every citizen.

Second, what does it mean in practice? Over the years, courts have affirmed that people of faith don't lose their rights when they step into the public square, and that the government can partner with religious organizations on neutral, community-serving programs... so long as participation is open to all and no one is coerced to worship.

For example, the Supreme Court protected equal access to public benefits for a church-run preschool's playground resurfacing program, emphasizing that faith-based groups cannot be disqualified simply because they are religious. (3)

The Court has also upheld historic practices like opening civic

meetings with volunteer chaplain prayers when no one is pressured to participate. (4) And it has recognized that a public-school employee's brief, personal prayer, off duty and without coercion, falls under free speech and free exercise protections. (5)

So how do churches and civil government find common ground for the common good? By keeping partnerships simple and purposes sincere: serve people, honor conscience, and be transparent. When a city invites nonprofits (secular and faith-based alike) to help with food security, youth mentoring, disaster relief, or community celebrations, it strengthens the social fabric without endorsing anyone's theology. That's not the state running the church or the church running the state; that's neighbors working together under the same Constitution.

At Compass Church, we don't attach strings to kindness. You don't have to believe what we believe to receive help or enjoy an event. We serve because Jesus taught us to love our neighbors. And strong families, safe neighborhoods, and flourishing schools are goals we all share.

This fall, we invite you to join us, in conversation and service. If you have questions, let's talk. If you want to volunteer, we'll put a shovel, a backpack, or a broom in your hands. Monterey County is home, and when we work together, everyone wins. 🌱



AMBASSADOR SPOTLIGHT BRAD AND LAURIE MARTIN

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

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

The publication was rebranded in 2023 to "Greet Hwy 68 Loop." Brad and Laurie are in the process of starting a non-profit organization, On Our Own Feet, a housing community for adults on the autism spectrum to live independently.

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

Footnotes:

1. Thomas Jefferson, "Letter to the Danbury Baptist Association," January 1, 1802. Library of Congress.
2. U.S. Constitution, Amendment I (Establishment Clause & Free Exercise Clause). National Archives, "The Bill of Rights: A Transcription."
3. Trinity Lutheran Church of Columbia, Inc. v. Comer, 582 U.S. (2017), No. 15-577 (opinion of the Court, June 26, 2017).
4. Town of Greece v. Galloway, 572 U.S. 565 (2014), No. 12-696 (opinion of the Court, May 5, 2014).
5. Kennedy v. Bremerton School District, 597 U.S. (2022), No. 21-418 (opinion of the Court, June 27, 2022).

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The Blues are Back!

By **Esmeralda Owen**, California International Airshow

The United States Navy Blue Angels and the USAF F-16 Viper Demo Team will headline the 44th annual California International Airshow, Oct. 4-5, 2025, at the Salinas Municipal Airport.

The U.S. Navy Blue Angels will highlight this year's airshow, flying six FA/18 Super Hornets, showcasing the precision of the United States Navy. In addition, for the first time in over 10 years, the USAF F-16 Viper Demo team will thrill airshow fans. Plus, in 2025, the Salinas Airshow is honoring Everett Alvarez, a local hero and Navy POW. Saturday, Oct. 4 will be dedicated to his courage.

The Salinas Airshow will also feature "world-renowned" airshow performers like Vicky Benzing flying her Vintage Boeing Stearman, plus for the first time at Salinas Airshow, she will fly her beautiful and historic "Plum Crazy" P-51 aircraft.

High Energy Aerobatics will be performed by the Folds of Honor Biplane, flown by Ed Hamill, and an Extra 330SX flown by Bob Freeman. And back by popular demand, Smoke N Thunder JetTruck1 — a '57 Chevy pickup with a jet engine capable of reaching speeds well over 350 mph.

Spend the day at the airshow and tour some amazing military statics, including the largest Air Force Transport aircraft like the

C-5M Super Galaxy and the C-17 Globemaster III. There will be several exhibits and food booths on the field. For youth and adults, the STEM Zone, educational exhibits from NASA, the Naval Postgraduate School, Hartnell College, Monterey Peninsula College, and the well-equipped Kids' Zone, will educate and delight.

Kick off Airshow weekend with the Airshow's award-winning Maverick's Lounge on Friday Night, Oct. 3. This is an extraordinary culinary event featuring Baker's Bacon, wine, spirit, and brew tastings, featuring the best chefs, restaurants, and catering establishments in the tri-county area. At Maverick's Lounge, you will also enjoy a twilight air show and end the night with a fireworks extravaganza and dancing under the stars.

The Salinas Airshow is an all-volunteer non-profit organization that has donated nearly \$9 million to local charities and service groups since its inception in 1981.

Gates open at 9 a.m. both Saturday and Sunday, and the flying starts at 11 a.m. at Salinas Municipal Airport. New this year! The airshow will offer new options for seating. Go to www.salinairshow.com to get your tickets and to stay informed. 🌿

Esmeralda Owen is on the Board of Directors of the California International Airshow.



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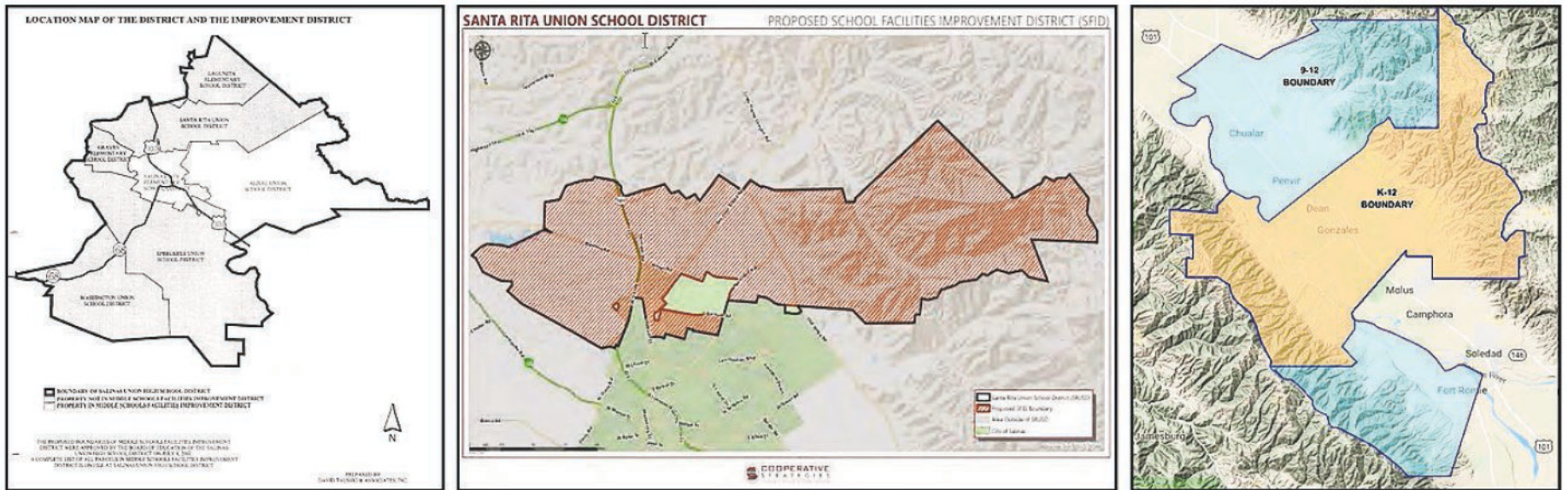
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Boundaries of the three School Facilities Improvement Districts (SFIDs) in Monterey County.

Explaining the Tax Mistake of the Monterey County Auditor-Controller's Office Affecting Gonzales Unified School District Property Owners

By Kevin Dayton, Government Affairs Liaison

If you own commercial or residential property in the City of Gonzales or in the surrounding unincorporated areas, you've been paying an incorrect property tax rate for four years. In fact, you should have received a notice in the mail "to inform you that an administrative error occurred at the Office of the Auditor-Controller in applying the tax rate to real property within the Gonzales Unified School District (GUSD)."

Depending on where your property is located, you have been either overcharged or undercharged. How did this happen?

Apparently the Monterey County Auditor-Controller's Office failed to distinguish the different geographical jurisdictions for two bond measures. One bond measure applies to the Gonzales Unified School District as a whole. The second bond measure applies to a

separate smaller "School Facilities Improvement District" (SFID) embedded in the larger Gonzales Unified School District.

Truth is, hardly anyone in the general public is familiar with School Facilities Improvement Districts, also known as SFIDs. But it's the job of the Auditor-Controller's Office to know. In fact, the office had already made an error in 2022 on property taxes related to another SFID, meaning in three years it has made property tax mistakes for two of the three existing SFIDs in Monterey County.

What Is a School Facilities Improvement District (SFID)?

The Leroy Greene School Facilities Act of 1998 (Senate Bill 50) included provisions (incorporated into California Education Code Section 15300) that allow

educational districts to establish a smaller district within a larger district for purposes of taxation to fund construction projects. Property owners within the SFID may vote on bond measures to tax themselves to fund construction projects in their immediate local interest, such as new schools to accommodate new development.

By establishing SFIDs in areas where new residential developments are planned, K-12 school and community college districts avoid the challenge of convincing residents of older areas of the district to vote for taxes to pay for school construction where new residents live. It's a clever solution to a political problem.

In Monterey County, School Facilities Improvement Districts (SFIDs) have been established in three school districts. In 2002, the board of the Salinas Union

High School District established a Middle Schools Improvement District, and voters in the SFID then approved Measure M to borrow \$37 million. In 2022, the board of the Santa Rita Union Elementary School District established School Facilities Improvement District No. 2022-1, and voters in the SFID then approved Measure R to borrow \$24.9 million.

In Gonzales Unified School District, the board established School Facilities Improvement District No. 1 in 2000, to fund elementary school construction in the area of the Gonzales Unified School District that is not covered by the Chualar Union School District or the Mission Union Elementary School District. Voters in the SFID then approved Measure G to borrow \$6.5 million. In 2020, the board placed Measure

J on the ballot for that existing SFID to borrow another \$24.5 million. But it also placed Measure K on the ballot for the entire district to borrow \$37 million — the first bond measure in recent history proposed for the entire school district. Voters approved both bond measures.

It should be noted that Chualar Union Elementary School District voters approved a \$1.9 million bond measure (Measure K) in 2001 identified as “Chualar Union School Facilities Improvement District Bond” on annual Secured Roll Debt Service Tax Rates produced by the Auditor-Controller’s Office. But official statements prepared in 2001 and 2004 for bond issues (sales) authorized by Measure K do not indicate this bond measure applies to a School Facilities Improvement District authorized under California Education Code Section 15300.

Property Tax Errors Are Made and Overlooked for Years

Distinguishing among these three ballot measures at Gonzales Unified School District requires careful diligence, but something went wrong in the Monterey County Auditor-Controller’s Office. The property taxes for the 2000 and 2020 bond measures in the SFID were calculated properly for properties within the SFID jurisdiction, but the tax calculated for the 2020 bond measure covering all of the district (Measure K) was only done for properties within the SFID, rather than the entire district. As a result, property owners in the SFID were overtaxed for four fiscal years (Fiscal Year 2021-22 through 2024-25) while owners of property in the district outside of the SFID were undertaxed for those four fiscal years.

The mistake was discovered this year. The Monterey County Treasurer-Tax Collector’s office has now issued property tax bills to parcel owners in the Gonzales Unified School District (outside of the SFID) that charge an additional tax totaling \$1,828,347.26. Meanwhile, property

owners in the SFID are getting a total refund of \$485,889.88.

Response of Public Officials to Discovery of the Mistake

Monterey County officials spent an intense week figuring out what happened and determine how to fix the mistake. The County of Monterey issued a press release after the Board of Supervisors took action to fix the mistake at their June 24, 2025 meeting.

Property owners in the Gonzales Unified School District received a letter with their tax bills explaining the error and the resulting refund or additional charge (which is NOT regarded as a delinquent payment). Also, under state law, taxpayers who cannot pay the additional charge may be eligible to participate in a payment plan option with the Monterey County Treasurer-Tax Collector’s Office to pay the additional tax in a period up to four years, without interest charges or fees.

The Monterey County Auditor-Controller’s Office website has posted information and answers for the public concerning frequently-asked questions (FAQs) about the bond measure tax rate correction: see <https://www.countyofmonterey.gov/government/departments-a-h/auditor-controller/property-tax/gonzales-unified-school-district-measure-k-faq>.

To get answers and assistance related to the tax correction, call (831) 755-5001. To get answers and assistance related to due dates and payment options, call (831) 755-5057.

Questions will be especially complicated for people who bought or sold parcels in the Gonzales Unified School District from 2021 to 2025. County staff is ready to provide personal assistance to such parties to determine their refund or charge. Taxes on the corrected bills for these properties will be pro-rated between the previous property owner(s) and the new owner.

Concern About Other Mistakes and Future Mistakes

At the June 24 Board of Supervisors meeting, the elected Monterey County Treasurer-Tax Collector declared that “my office is taking all necessary steps” to make sure this kind of mistake doesn’t happen again when calculating property taxes for bond measures. “We have already double-checked and tripled-checked” our records, she said. But the Board of Supervisors remained concerned.

“I don’t know how often this happens,” Supervisor Glenn Church said. No



Roles of Three County Offices

Note the different roles of the three county offices involved with property taxes: the **Treasurer-Tax Collector** bills taxpayers and collects taxes; the **Assessor/Recorder-County Clerk** identifies taxable property, determines ownership, establishes exemptions; and the **Auditor-Controller** calculates the tax rates. The Monterey County Board of Supervisors adopt the rates each year with a vote.

one offered an answer at the meeting, but your Chamber researched past mistakes and provides an answer below.

Supervisor Luis Alejo predicted a lot of angry taxpayers would be asking how this mistake could happen. Supervisor Kate Daniels wanted assurances that a live person would answer the phone when taxpayers called with questions or problems. Supervisor Chris Lopez noted that some residents of his district, especially those who live in Chualar, may find the unexpected additional tax to

be a burden.

Supervisor Wendy Root Askew asked the Board of Supervisors to require county staff to conduct an external audit of tax rate calculations for all bonds and parcel taxes in the county. This directive was added to the board’s resolution approving the corrected tax rates for Gonzales Unified School District.

What Wasn’t Said at the Meeting

Not mentioned during the discussion at the Board of Supervisors was the Auditor-Controller’s Office’s mistake in 2022 involving another School Facilities Improvement District. The Auditor-

Controller’s Office had correctly calculated the tax rate for Fiscal Year 2022-2023 for the bond measure that voters had approved in 2002 for the Salinas Union High School Middle School Improvement District. The Board of Supervisors adopted that annual rate on Sept. 13, 2022 along with the other annual tax rates for Monterey County educational and special districts.

But as indicated in a staff report to the Board of Supervisors at its Jan. 31, 2023 meeting, “a subsequent clerical error occurred within the ACO (Auditor-Controller’s Office), and the district’s tax rate was inadvertently omitted from being populated on the Property Tax bills.” The proposed solution from the Auditor-Controller’s Office was to adjust the rate for that fiscal year to zero, because “related debt service payment is not due until next fiscal year.”

The Board of Supervisors approved that proposal as an item on the meeting agenda consent calendar, without board discussion or any public comments. While the obscure item may have attracted board interest at an

ordinary, uneventful meeting, the board at this particular meeting was focused on Pajaro River and Salinas River flooding and the emergency flood control response and related infrastructure construction.

Offices of the Auditor-Controller in other California counties have made recent mistakes with bond measure property taxes. For example, in Fiscal Year 2024-2025 the Los Angeles County Auditor-Controller's Office neglected to implement language that exempts senior citizens from the property tax for Measure R, a bond measure approved by voters in 2008 for the Santa Monica-Malibu Unified School District.

In Fiscal Year 2022-2023 the Yolo County Auditor-Controller's Office did not calculate a property tax rate for Measure Q, a bond measure approved by voters in 2004 for the Washington Unified School District, because they mistakenly thought debt service for Measure Q had been fully repaid.

So mistakes are apparently rare but do happen in California. The Monterey County Auditor-Controller's Office has made two mistakes in the past three years related to property taxes for School Facilities Improvement Districts. An external audit and double checks and triple checks should prevent mistakes from happening again. 🌿

An Introduction to Private Credit

By Ryan Hastie, Hastie Financial Group

Following the significant volatility seen in 2022 and its aftermath, investors looked outside of the normal asset classes of stocks and bonds to boost returns and provide diversification for their portfolios.

One asset class, private credit, has gained notable momentum in recent years. According to Cambridge Associates, the private credit asset class — an alternative to traditional lending — has experienced rapid growth, accounting for \$1.6 trillion today across a wide range of risk and return profiles. Some analysts expect private credit to increase to \$2.6 trillion by 2029. The rise of private credit reflects a broader shift in global finance, from centralized banking to decentralized, flexible capital solutions.

State Street Investment management defines private credit as privately negotiated loans between a borrower and a non-bank lender. Private credit enables borrowers to access capital with customized financing details they may not be able to secure from traditional lenders like banks. It's also given investors another avenue to access income-generating investments within the fixed income portion of their portfolio — and is now seen as a viable alternative to traditional fixed income, especially in a low-interest rate environment.

Borrowers seeking funding via private credit may not have easy access to traditional bank lending and/or the ability to sell corporate bonds. Borrowers that don't have an extensive credit history or have limited access to bank financing and debt markets, such as startups and small to medium-sized companies, can turn to private credit for funding.

Other reasons borrowers turn to private credit include flexibility for borrowers and lenders, ability to avoid equity financing, access to

specialized lending, and less regulatory oversight.

For investors, private credit may provide an opportunity for higher yields, improve downside protection, and diversify beyond traditional public fixed-income investments. As with any investment, there are benefits and risks, with private credit being no different. Benefits of private credit include higher yields than public debt, illiquidity premium (compensates for illiquidity risk), floating rate (which may protect against interest rate risk), portfolio diversification, and potential downside protection (private loans are secured by collateral that may help limit downside risk in the event of default).

Risks of private credit versus traditional fixed income investing include credit risk (present in all fixed income investment), market and cyclical risk, less transparency than public markets, private credit funds are often illiquid (funds typically offer quarterly redemption opportunities versus daily liquidity), and the potential of regulatory changes.

With respect to illiquidity, some private credit investments are structured as interval funds, meaning they allow investors to purchase shares daily but only redeem them at set intervals (typically quarterly). However, these redemption periods are limited; investors are not guaranteed to have their redemption request fulfilled in its entirety, especially during periods of market volatility.

Please reach out to your financial professional to further discuss private credit to determine if it is appropriate for your investment portfolio and fits within your risk tolerance and financial goals. 🌿

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.



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A PROFILE IN LEADERSHIP

Salinas' Returning Mayor with a Vision for the Future

By Colleen Bailey, SVCC CEO

When Dennis Donohue stepped back into the mayor's office in Salinas, it wasn't his first time taking the helm. His re-election marked the return of a leader deeply familiar with the city's challenges and opportunities — and one who has already left an indelible mark on its trajectory.

Serving as mayor from 2006 to 2012, Donohue led during a period of economic instability, high crime rates, and strained public resources. His creativity, soaring vision, and devotion to the community left Salinas in a much better place due to his leadership. Now, over a decade later, he's back, committed to guiding Salinas through a new era of growth, innovation, and community revitalization.

A Mayor Seasoned by History

During his first tenure, Donohue navigated a city teetering on financial collapse. In 2006, Salinas faced soaring housing costs, rising crime, and a diminishing tax base. With Measure V funds, the city leadership helped stabilize the general fund and restore essential services. As a relentless advocate for public safety, he co-founded the Community Alliance for Safety and Police (CASP), bringing innovative policing strategies to the forefront — an initiative that still thrives today.

Beyond safety, he championed education and access to resources. His expansion of library services ensured that every public-school student in Salinas received a library card, a move that strengthened community literacy and engagement. He also foresaw the importance of economic diversification, and the exiting possibilities around Ag Tech. His vision inspired the first regional



Donohue's collaborative spirit became a hallmark of his leadership, fostering a network of engaged stakeholders committed to Salinas' long-term success.'



Salinas Mayor Dennis Donohue, now serving his second stint as mayor. He first served as mayor from 2006 to 2012.

Ag Tech convening to capitalize on the city's agricultural heritage and its proximity to Silicon Valley. Ultimately this vision caught hold and led to the establishment of the Western Growers Center for Innovation and Technology in downtown Salinas, and attracted Forbes, who chose Salinas as its home to the Ag Tech Summit, putting the city on the global Ag Tech map.

Resilience in Recession

The economic recession of his third term tested Donohue's leadership. Despite limited resources, he forged strong partnerships with nonprofits and corporate leaders like Taylor Farms, whose investments provided vital support to the community. This collaborative spirit became a hallmark

of his leadership, fostering a network of engaged stakeholders committed to Salinas' long-term success. These partners continue their work today and are responsible for much of the transformation that we have all witnessed in Salinas.

Returning with a Renewed Mission

Today, Donohue's approach is both seasoned and ambitious. His second act as mayor is grounded in four strategic pillars:

Diversification of Business

Donohue envisions Salinas as the world's epicenter for agricultural innovation. Building on his experience as Director of the Western Growers Center for Innovation & Technology, he's working to support cutting-edge ventures that are investing in Salinas, from Reservoir Farms to high-profile employers like Amazon and Archer Aviation. With Assistant City Manager Lisa Murphy prioritizing economic development, the city is actively branding itself as the "it" city for business growth.

Public Safety

Safety remains central to his agenda. Recognizing the current shortage of police officers, Donohue supports a comprehensive 10-year outlook and five-year implementation plan to ensure Salinas has the personnel, technology, and equipment needed for its growing population.

Infrastructure and Resources

The city faces a \$1 billion backlog in capital projects, from roads and sidewalks to fire station upgrades and wastewater improvements. Donohue advocates for transparency

about costs and funding strategies, including renewing Measure G and expanding public-private partnerships. He also warns of environmental threats, such as saltwater intrusion that jeopardizes agriculture.

Governance Reform

For Salinas to attract investment and achieve long-term stability, Donohue believes in modernizing its governance model. He suggests lengthening the mayoral term beyond two years to encourage strategic decision-making and enhance accountability. Better utilization of city commissions is also high on his list.

A Team Builder at Heart

Donohue likens city leadership to building a winning sports team — it takes time, trust, and a shared vision. He has confidence in City Manager Rene Mendez and the leadership team's ability to deliver lasting results. His style is collaborative, pragmatic, and deeply service-oriented, focused on creating an environment where all residents have access to good jobs, quality housing, and the opportunity to raise their families in Salinas.

Looking Ahead

Donohue's return is more than a political comeback; it's a continuation of unfinished work. His blend of historical insight, deep community ties, and forward-thinking vision positions him uniquely to guide Salinas through its next chapter. In his words, the goal is simple yet profound:

A city where every resident has the opportunity to thrive, where innovation meets tradition, and where teamwork turns aspirations into reality. 🌱



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

SEPTEMBER 2025

By Kevin Dayton, Government Affairs Liaison

Your Salinas Valley Chamber of Commerce Government Relations Committee had 24 members at its meeting on Wednesday, Aug. 13, as it continues to pursue your Chamber's official vision of "a thriving, welcoming Salinas Valley where people, families and businesses succeed via economic growth and opportunity." Here's what they discussed:

1 Committee members declared the "Salinas Valley Speaks" event on Aug. 7 as a success. (See the article "Salinas Valley Cities Seek Opportunities for Their Next Generations: Your Chamber Wants to Help" in this issue of the Business Journal.)

Chamber leaders will discuss making this an annual "signature event" and consider how to increase capacity next year to accommodate all people who want to attend.

2 During committee review of the previous meeting, a representative of Bright Beginnings Monterey County Early Childhood Development Initiative clarified they are not alone but participating in a regional coalition, funded by Uplift Central Coast, in a project to address early childhood education needs in the six-county Central Coast region. Locally, there's interest in examining the status of childcare facility regulations in cities and counties, particularly

implementation of a 2019 state law (Senate Bill 234) that prohibits municipalities from restricting the use of home childcare facilities in residential zones. Committee members praised the Marina City Council for fully implementing this law in its zoning code. Bright Beginnings Monterey County is seeking funding for a review of the status of these regulations at the other 11 Monterey County cities and at the county. Contact Sonja Koehler through the website www.brightbeginningsmc.org for more information.

3 The Salinas City Clerk was expected to release findings by Aug. 15 of the Monterey County Elections Office review of signature validity on a petition for a referendum on four ordinances regarding landlord-tenant relations (including rent stabilization, aka rent control). The Salinas City Council enacted the ordinances in 2023 and 2024 and then repealed them in 2025.

4 Committee members discussed the looming tripling of City of Salinas sewer rates for residential and commercial customers. On Sept. 23, the Salinas City Council will hold a hearing and then vote on imposing the new residential and commercial rates. Rate increases will become effective on Oct. 1, 2025, with additional annual incremental increases imposed on July 1 each year through 2029.

The Chamber has not taken a position on this rate increase. Obviously, the debt service needs to be repaid. In addition, the city has identified a legitimate need to fund capital improvements to the municipal wastewater system (estimated in a study to cost \$114.8 million).

Nevertheless, committee members noted how the process leading to this rate increase may reveal internal management problems within some departments in the City of Salinas.

Committee members expressed disapproval with how the city neglected to propose increasing rates until it collected so little revenue that it violated the terms of its sewer revenue bonds.

At the April 22 city council meeting, city staff cited staff turnover as a reason for the city's non-compliance with requirements associated with debt service on its sewer revenue bonds. Reportedly previous city officials were hesitant to increase sewer rates in the years following the COVID public health orders. (The Monterey One Water regional wastewater treatment and recycling agency did not have the same compunction — the board of directors of that agency approved a big sewer rate increase in 2021.)



To complicate matters, the city's process to seek a rate increase was delayed for an additional four months, and at additional cost. According to a June 17, 2025 staff report to the city council, "Following the City Council's action (on April 22, 2025) and distribution of the Proposition 218 Hearing Notices, during our review of the materials inaccuracies in some of the rates and rate categories were identified."

The city's notice mailed to ratepayers informing them about the increase includes a table with columns showing future sewer service rates for various categories of ratepayers; however, the table does not include a column showing current rates. (The current "per equivalent dwelling unit [EDU]" rate for residential customers is referenced on a different page in the notice.) Some Chamber members believe the city could have been more transparent by including a column



showing current rates for each category of business. This would have allowed ratepayers to make an easy comparison of current rates versus future rates. (Other municipalities include a column of current rates in their rate tables included in notices to ratepayers.)

5 There are no new developments concerning oversight or renewal of the City of Salinas Measure G sales tax, which is scheduled to expire in 2030. The committee continues to assume that the city council will put permanent renewal of the sales tax on the ballot in 2026. The Chamber continues to extend its offer to be a leader on the campaign for Measure G renewal, provided that businesses — and voters — can be confident that the city is managing and spending the sales tax revenue as voters intended when they approved Measure G in 2014.

6 There are no new developments concerning potential City of Salinas responses to traffic congestion and diminished highway safety that may result from operations of the Amazon fulfillment center, now under construction in South Salinas. It was reported to the committee that businesses located in the industrial area near the fulfillment center are frustrated by lack of information about how the city will prepare to handle the additional truck traffic. Also, businesses and residents located along the U.S. 101 South of Salinas Safety Corridor remain concerned about a further increase in serious accidents once Amazon trucks start entering and exiting Highway 101 at the left-lane Abbott Street on-ramps and off-ramps and at the Airport Boulevard on-ramps and off-ramps.

The Chamber wants the City of Salinas to work with transportation agencies such as Caltrans, the Transportation Agency for Monterey County (TAMC), and Monterey-Salinas Transit (MST) to develop and implement solutions. Also, the Chamber is willing to play a role in convening City of Salinas officials, Amazon representatives, transportation agencies, and interested private parties to maximize the community benefits of the fulfillment center while minimizing the negative impacts.

7 The Chamber has received many positive comments about the article in the August 2025 Business Journal entitled “Into the Ditch — Agricultural and Urban Drainage from the Lower Salinas Valley Contributes to Regional Water Solutions.” The Chamber will continue to publish articles in the Business Journal that explain complicated Monterey County water and wastewater systems in a way that ordinary people can understand.

8 As the City of Salinas continues to revise the Economic Development Element of its General Plan, the Chamber is working with the Salinas Planning and Research Corporation (SPARC) to help bring various interest groups together with their perspectives on the plan. Proposed revisions from SPARC for the Economic Development Element were submitted to the city in mid-July, and the revisions included new sections developed by the Chamber related to water and wastewater. Assistant City Manager Lisa Murphy is the city’s coordinator for the Economic Development Element revisions, and the city is hiring a Deputy Director of

Economic Development to work under her.

9 The County of Monterey has developed an advanced online platform for the public to comment on the upcoming draft of the Monterey County Community Climate Action Plan. The public will be able to make comments within the document itself. It will be released in September.

10 The committee recommended to the Chamber Board of Directors that it support California Senate Bill 473, which would require the California Public Utilities Commission (PUC) to ensure that its rate setting (done every three years for private investor-owned water utilities) does not result in these utilities collecting more or less than what is approved by the PUC as a result of overestimates or underestimates of water demand.

11 The committee reviewed a table, prepared by the Government Affairs Liaison at the request of the committee, that lists all recommendations for budget savings (and revenue generation) in the 2010 Avery Report, the 2018 Salinas Plan, and the 2023 Salinas Plan Refresh. It was noted that the Chamber could focus on high-impact, difficult fiscal issues such as terms and conditions in collective bargaining agreements with city public employee unions, or it could focus on a few smaller fiscal issues with less controversy and greater chances of success, such as eliminating the annual operational deficit for Sherwood Hall.

The Chamber’s President & CEO is involved with discussions about the future of Sherwood Hall. She is also part of a city Parks & Rec Coalition, as authorized by

the Chamber Board of Directors. The committee directed the Government Affairs Liaison to be the contact person for any Chamber member interested in deep analysis and advocacy for any specific budget reform in these plans. Contact Kevin Dayton at kevin@salinaschamber.com if you are interested.

12 The committee reviewed the Governor’s list of new changes to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and discussed how these changes may hinder efforts to abuse CEQA as a strategy to stop construction of new housing. California Assembly Speaker Robert Rivas says he is optimistic that the changes will allow the construction of additional farmworker housing in Monterey County. Some committee members were skeptical. Even the many law firms specializing in land use that are analyzing the changes in CEQA law are uncertain what will happen in practice.

It was noted that different parties object to environmental review for different reasons, and often the real motivation of the party claiming to care about the environment isn’t related to environmental protection at all. Some organizations and law firms use CEQA as a tool to obtain something of economic value from developers, whether it be a monetary payoff or a concession to labor unions. In addition, the practice of the state legislature and governor selectively picking and choosing projects or types of projects for CEQA relief can be based on favoritism. What is needed is comprehensive reform of the law as a whole to stop the abuses against any parties seeking approval for any projects. 🌱

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Learn About Our Farming

By **Norm Groot**, Executive Director, Monterey County Farm Bureau

For those consumers who are not aware of life on the farm in Monterey County, the use of crop-protection tools (pesticides and herbicides) along with fertilizers might be a bit confusing or even concerning. But for our Monterey County farmers who grow our fresh food products, these tools are essential to raising healthy, abundant, and marketable crops while caring for the land that sustains year-after-year production.

Let's dive into why farmers utilize crop-protection tools and fertilizer inputs, and how these play an important part of feeding a growing population, both across our nation and around the world. Farmers are growing these crops using the most ethically, safe, regulated, and sustainable practices to protect our environment and our soil resources.

Protecting our crops is also protecting our nation's food supply. Similarly to how weeds can choke out the best of backyard gardens, they tend to overrun our agricultural fields also, robbing soil of nutrients and moisture from the crop. Herbicides allow farmers to protect their fresh food crops from these invasive weeds that would otherwise reduce product quality and

yields per acre. Similarly, insecticides protect crops from unwanted and destructive pests that can eat, infect, or damage the crop to the point where it cannot be harvested for market.

Without crop-protection tools, a CropLife report estimates that crop yields would decrease by 30% to 40% globally due to pests and diseases ("How Insecticides Are Shaping the Future of Agriculture," CropLife, www.croplife.com). Crop-protection tools help farmers to reduce the food production losses in the field by yielding more food per acre, thus using less acreage to grow fresh food crops. Beyond improving yields, crop protection tools help reduce labor and fuel consumption per acre, simply by reducing the number of passes through a field by tractor or farmworker ("Why Farmers Use Pesticides and Herbicides," Nebraska Corn Board, www.nebraskacorn.gov).

California has the most extensive regulatory structure of any state related to the use of crop-protection tools; modern crop-protection products go through extensive scientific testing before certified for field use ("Health and Environmental Effects of Pesticides," National Library of



Medicine, www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov). These modern chemistries are friendlier to the environment and wildlife, replacing older chemistries that were harsher to both.

All growing crops need a fertilizer boost; as crops grow, they pull nutrients like nitrogen, phosphorus, potassium, and some heavy metals from the soil. These are essential for crop health just like vitamins are important to the human body. Soils alone cannot replace these nutrients quickly to support healthy plant growth, so farmers must supplement their soils with fertilizer to replenish what a crop takes up while growing ("Organic vs. Synthetic Fertilizers," EOS Data Analytics,

www.eos.com). This is the simple agronomics of producing a healthy food crop.

There are two types of fertilizers available to farms:

- Synthetic fertilizers that are made in a laboratory that offer quick and targeted nutrients to growing plants (commonly known as conventional farming).
- Organic fertilizers that come from natural sources such as compost and manure, both acting more slowly in soils (commonly known as organic farming, which requires a certification process).

While organic fertilizers are the choice of some farms, these are

typically less efficient and more expensive as a crop input. Both conventional and organic farming have a place in today's food production system and retail supply chain markets.

Farmers aim to strike a balance when utilizing crop-protection tools and fertilizers. First and foremost, these tools are expensive to apply to growing crops; the bottom line is impacted with each application. Farmers aim to optimize production practices that limit the use of these inputs and their costs. The balance comes when growing to meet the demand of the marketplace is also protecting the natural resources for future crop production as the generations progress. Farmers are indeed the environmentalists when balancing

their working lands and producing a crop yield for market. If the soil suffers, so does future production, and a farmer's livelihood.

Investing in soil health, irrigation efficiency, crop rotation, conservation tillage, and new practices and technology is not just good environmental stewardship, but an investment in good business.

Farms need to stay financially viable and yield a return on their investment in each year's crop production; this provides the capital to invest in new equipment, technology, and practices.

The consumer needs to understand that crop protection tools and fertilizers are not a shortcut to a healthy yield; these are the tools to a complex, thoughtful, and intense approach to modern farming in

'For our Monterey County farmers who grow our fresh food products, crop-protection tools are essential to raising healthy, abundant, and marketable crops while caring for the land that sustains year-after-year production.'



Monterey County. Farmers live on their land, care deeply for that land as prior generations have demonstrated, and that land feeds us all. The testimony is found in the success of our farms over the past 160 years here in Monterey County.

Norm Groot has served as the Executive Director of Monterey

County Farm Bureau since 2010. Since 1917, the Farm Bureau strives to improve the ability of those engaged in production agriculture to provide a reliable supply of food and fiber through responsible stewardship of our local resources. Norm can be reached at norm@montereycfb.com. 🌿

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Photo by Juan Avila Photography



Salinas River Diversion Facility-Rubber Dam.

When Water Becomes Too Expensive

By Norm Groot, Executive Director, Monterey County Farm Bureau

As we all manage the implementation of our Groundwater Management Sustainability Plans in the next 15 years, there will be some hard choices that communities will need to make. Most of these will include financing various water supply solutions, such as resource projects, land fallowing and repurposing, and even water allocations. Those communities who rely exclusively on groundwater will have the hardest decisions to make.

With our state's human right to water, there are more discussions on how our stretched-thin supply can continue to manage a growing state population base and continue producing food products that feed our hungry nation. Yes, many are moving out of California due to any number of issues, including the high cost of living, but there is still incremental population growth in many regions.

This brings to light that our water delivery systems to larger municipal areas are many decades old and often demand exceeds capacity. What was planned in an era when California encompassed half our current population base now comes under scrutiny as we wrestle with how to get more water for housing development, industrial and manufacturing expansion, and let's not forget, farming. Aging infrastructure is something that almost all our

communities are challenged with.

Now we are experiencing a rush to claim all "rights" to recycled or reclaimed water supplies. No longer is it possible to dump this effluent in the ocean as having no value; it is smarter to sell this reclaimed water to end users such as municipalities, constructed wetland and groundwater recharge projects. This newfound value in reclaimed water has turned the wastewater paradigm on its end.

As we are seeing here in the Salinas Valley — the Salad Bowl of the World— our wastewater effluent is coming under more demand than ever. Back in the late-1990s, a project was built to provide reclaimed water to 12,000 acres of farmland, primarily for two reasons: first, to relieve existing groundwater pumping in the coastal zone, and second, to take the wastewater from communities that didn't want to deal with it or couldn't process it for another use.

It was, in short, a wastewater nuisance, and agriculture stepped up and said, "we'll take your wastewater, build the processing plant and then make productive use of it on our farmlands." This was the

'With everyone searching for any and all water resources to satisfy our sustainability plan requirements, the use of reclaimed water will become a targeted opportunity for both municipalities, developers, water purveyors and even groundwater recharge projects.'

first-of-its-kind reclaimed water project that was approved for fresh food product production.

Fast-forward 20 years and that wastewater is now under increasing demand to supply shortfalls in domestic water supplies in an area of Monterey County that has steadfastly refused to solve their own water supply issues, even under a California State Water Resources

Control Board order. Big dollar investments are going into increasing wastewater processing capacity, as well pipelines, to supply an area encompassing 100,000 residents. Most of the source wastewater

for this reclaimed drinking water supply is coming from interruptible flows that question the ability to manage consistent supply; thus, the human right to water will trump over other uses when those interruptions occur.

What this may ultimately cause is a significant increase in the costs of reclaimed water that farmers are entitled to utilize in their own delivery project; probably more costly than what can be sustained financially for even high-value crops. This then begs the question of how

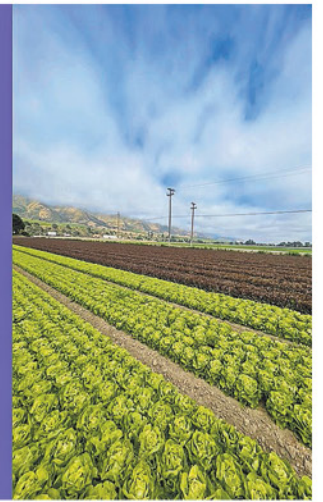
the impact to an already functioning project can be displaced by the newer demands for constant supply?

With everyone searching for any and all water resources to satisfy our sustainability plan requirements, the use of reclaimed water will become a targeted opportunity for both municipalities, developers, water purveyors and even groundwater recharge projects. The retail price of this reclaimed water will probably go higher than the actual cost of processing and delivery, in essence becoming a bidding war for who can pay the most for this new resource.

As the price of all water resources moves to overly high values impacting the financial stability of most farming operations, crop market pricing will not be able to support these additional costs. Farmers cannot compete in a bidding war and remain financially viable.

SGMA (sustainable groundwater management) presents us all with interesting challenges, but the most imperative is how much the solutions will end up costing our local communities. We cannot allow our agricultural producers to be priced out of the marketplace by the staggering costs of water in a changing environment of groundwater equity.

The next 15 years will be telling as plans solidify and hard choices are made. And communities must find ways to pay for the resource projects and their economic impacts. 🌱





RIBBON CUTTINGS & CHAMBER EVENTS

by Chamber Staff



Monterey County Vintners

& Growers Association and Chamber Mixer

In partnership with the Monterey County Vintners & Growers Association, the Chamber hosted a mixer at the California Welcome Center – Salinas, featuring local restaurants and exceptional wines. Special thanks to Wrath Wines, Scheid Family Wines, McIntyre Family Wines, Silvestri Vineyards, Odonata Wines, Rustique Wines, Deli-Cafe 3 Hermanos, Salad Shoppe, Carlito's Crispn Chicken & Bar, and Andres Benito-Yanez, pianist and entertainment sponsor.



Grand Opening of Ensen Community Park

Brings Long-Awaited Green Space to Salinas Families

The six-acre neighborhood park is the first phase of a visionary plan to transform 73 acres at Carr Lake into a vibrant public green space. With its playground, sports courts, skate park, picnic tables, dog play areas, and walking paths, the neighborhood park will serve as a recreational haven for thousands of nearby families. Photo by P.C. Bradley Dunbaugh.



Introducing The Taproom — Same Spot, New Menu, and New Vibe

Alvarado Street Brewery celebrated its new look and cuisine for the Alvarado Street Brewery Taproom with a lively ribbon cutting, unveiling a fresh layout and menu featuring pizzas, smash burgers, and desserts. Guests enjoyed all-day happy hour discounts, early access to new beer releases, and live music from local bands.



30 Years with Acme Plumbing

Acme Plumbing marked 30 years of trusted service with a ribbon-cutting event hosted in partnership with the Salinas Valley Chamber and BNI Central Coast Connection. Guests celebrated the family-owned business with live music, small bites, and networking with Chamber and BNI members.



Salinas Valley Speaks

Presented by Braga Fresh, this regional event at the historic Braga Barn brought together elected officials, community leaders, and business professionals from across the Salinas Valley. Mayors shared their cities' histories, challenges, upcoming initiatives, and future-forward visions.



Ribbon Cutting with the Flying Artichoke Restaurant

The community celebrated the newly remodeled patio with the Flying Artichoke Restaurant at the Salinas Municipal Airport with appetizers, drinks, and music. The Flying Artichoke's unique setting offers a front-row view of the airfield — perfect for mingling and enjoying a local favorite.



Lunch and Learn with TPO 'The HR Experts' — Personality Clashes. Are They on the Rise? It's Not Your Imagination!

Michaëlle Stanford, PHRca, M.A., Senior HR Consultant/HR Strategy & Training Specialist, led an engaging session on workplace personality clashes, exploring top causes of conflict and strategies to diagnose and address challenges across different workstyles.

CEQA Reform — New Laws Eliminate Environmental Review of Certain Projects

By Jeff Tuttle, Noland, Hamerly, Etienne & Hoss

Recent changes to California's environmental laws make it easier for developers to build housing projects. Two new laws effective June 20, 2025, roll back some of the requirements imposed by the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA).

CEQA requires government agencies to review the environmental effects of certain projects and withhold approval of those projects if significant environmental effects are not mitigated. The law was intended to prevent significant, avoidable environmental damage caused by construction and other activities. Legislators have started to rethink how far its requirements should reach due to concerns about how it may be contributing to California's housing crisis. This article outlines some of the changes implemented by the new laws:

AB 130-Multifamily Infill Housing Developments

Assembly Bill 130, passed June 30, 2025, no longer requires qualifying multifamily "infill" housing developments to undergo CEQA's environmental review process. To qualify for the exemption, a development project site must:

- not exceed 20 acres in size;
- be located either within the boundaries of an incorporated municipality or within an urban area, as defined by the U.S. Census Bureau;
- either have been previously developed with an urban use or be located around parcels that



are developed with urban uses;

Additionally, the project must also be consistent with the applicable general plan and comply with local zoning laws, as well as any applicable local coastal program.

The new law also contains provisions to protect historic sites and the interests of local Native American tribes. To qualify for the exemption, a project must not require the demolition of a historic structure that was placed on a national, state, or local historical register before the date a preliminary application was submitted for the project. Additionally, if there is a California Native American tribe that is affiliated with the project site, the local government must give that tribe notice of the potentially exempt project and allow it an opportunity to consult on the proposed project, its location, and the project's potential effects on tribal cultural resources. A tribe wishing to give its input must notify the local government within 60 days of receiving such notice.

SB 131 — Employee Housing

Among other things, Senate Bill 131 exempts from CEQA specified new agricultural employee housing projects and projects consisting exclusively of the repair or maintenance of an existing farmworker housing project. The law previously exempted projects consisting of the construction of residential housing for agricultural employees if certain requirements were met. Those provisions still exist, but SB 131

provides an additional exemption for projects that meet the requirements of the old statute and also either receive specified public funding or are owned or operated and funded by a public or nonprofit entity. The new law also provides that CEQA categorically does not apply to projects consisting exclusively of the repair or maintenance of an existing farmworker housing project, regardless of whether it satisfies the requirements that were previously in place.

Additionally, SB 131 will simplify and expediate the CEQA review process for certain housing projects that do not meet all the requirements to qualify for an exemption. If a proposed project would otherwise be exempt from CEQA pursuant to a specified exemption, but for a single condition, the new law provides that CEQA review will be limited to the effects upon the environment that are caused solely by that single condition. This will speed up the review process for such projects because rather than requiring an extensive review of the entire project, CEQA will only apply to a single part of the project.

Varying Opinions on the New Laws

Sentiment regarding the changes implemented by AB 130 and SB 131 is mixed. Proponents argue that the exemptions will encourage developers to create more housing projects to help solve California's housing crisis. Those who support this view believe a streamlined permitting process, shorter construction timelines, and lower risk of litigation will spur housing development. Additionally, proponents say that environmental concerns associated with these

projects, such as noise and air pollution, are overblown because other regulations and ordinances are already in place to protect against those things.

Detractors of these new laws are skeptical about whether CEQA was really to blame for California's housing crisis in the first place. They identify other factors, such as high rates of unemployment and the ever-increasing cost of living, as more significant contributors to the housing problems facing California. Other critics of these new CEQA exemptions question how in-fill developments will manage to provide parking for new residents in already densely populated cities like San Francisco. Finally, environmental groups lament the possibility that rolling back CEQA requirements could harm sensitive ecosystems and make it too easy for developers to engage in activities that will pollute the environment.

Only time will tell what effect the new changes actually have on the environment and California's housing market. As developers navigate the new laws and the courts delineate the finer points of what projects qualify for the exemptions, we will all have a clearer picture of how beneficial the new legislation will be for the state. 🌱

Jeff Tuttle is a summer law clerk with Noland, Hamerly, Etienne & Hoss. He is currently pursuing his Juris Doctor at Santa Clara University. Prior to law school, Jeff worked for five years as a legal assistant in NHEH's litigation department. He has assisted as a volunteer at California Rodeo Salinas. Born and raised in Salinas, Jeff has close ties to the Salinas Valley and looks forward to returning to practice law here. This article is intended to address topics of general interest and should not be construed as legal advice. © 2025 Noland, Hamerly, Etienne & Hoss.

A Stroll Through our Economic Development Element of the Salinas General Plan 'Sports Capital of the Central Coast'

Peter Kasavan, Kasavan Architects

It was an early August weekend when the Salinas Regional Soccer Complex came alive with competition.

Over three days and two nights, 128 teams with 2,184 registered players came to Salinas to compete in the Alianza Cup tournament. This highly anticipated tournament was sponsored by Alianza de Futbol, who chose Salinas as just one of eight facilities in the country for its 2025 tour.

Developed and operated by the Salinas Regional Sports Authority (SRSA), the soccer complex is an incredible example of how community-led planning and engagement unified the community and soccer supporters behind a vision for a vibrant new sports facility. A facility that not only provides a structured and safe place to play soccer, but also provides significant social, health and economic development benefits as well.

The origin story for this facility reaches back to 2007 with the founding of the Salinas Planning And Research Corporation (SPARC) and charter board members Alfred Diaz-Infante, Vice President and Warren Wayland, Treasurer. They saw a great unmet need for soccer assets and an opportunity to address this need on vacant county-owned land north of Carr Lake along Constitution Boulevard. SPARC took on this major project under their leadership. Committees were formed and an ambitious outreach program developed to promote this vision and enroll the community in the long hard task of realizing this dream.

Many soccer organizations and their supporters had been continuously competing for limited field

time. They saw the value of an enlarged soccer complex to meet the chronic need for fields in Salinas for youth and adult soccer players. Even though it was a huge project, coaches, parents and players unified around this vision and joined the cause, adding their powerful voices to this vision.

This effort became a mission for the community who were motivated in part by the belief that this project could literally save lives if we could get our kids, "off the streets and onto the grass."

After many months of planning and community outreach it was time to appear before the Monterey County Board of Supervisors to ask for rights to this property and permission to develop and operate a soccer complex. Just before the Supervisor's meeting, certain senior County staff employees raised the concern that this property was too valuable to the County to approve for a community developed soccer complex. Fortunately, the Supervisors did not agree and supported the community vision. Youth soccer players dressed in team uniforms with their coaches, parents and families attended the Supervisor's meeting along with project leaders and supporters. This visible community advocacy assured success in securing the rights to this property. However, it was far from a done-deal as the challenges that lie ahead were to prove monumental and complex.

During this period it became clear that developing and operating sports assets was outside of SPARC's mission so working with committee leaders we spun off another non-profit called the Salinas Regional

Sports Authority (SRSA) seeding their board with Diaz Infante and Wayland in leadership roles. It is important to note that SRSA's mission doesn't end with soccer but includes development and operation of baseball, volleyball, track and field and other sports assets.

The new SRSA leadership under President Kurt Gollnick, VP Catherine Kobrinsky Evans, and the board directors, have exhibited tremendous leadership, persistence, and creativity to overcome so many obstacles to bring this monumental task to completion and bestow this stellar gift to the people of Salinas and the region.

The substantial return on investment created by SRSA is captured by General Manager Jonathon De Anda, who said, "The Salinas Regional Soccer Complex shows what's possible when a community invests in sports infrastructure. The Alianza Cup brought over 125 teams to Salinas in one weekend, filling our hotels, our restaurants, and our shops, while putting our city on the map as a premier sports destination on the Central Coast."

Salinas City Manager Ray Corpuz was impressed by the effective community engagement and outreach led by SPARC on the soccer complex and asked us to lead a similar community outreach effort to develop an Economic Development Element for the Salinas General Plan. (EDE). That was a very successful effort, and the EDE went on to win three planning awards, including two statewide awards.

The experience with SRSA illustrated that in addition to the social and health benefits, sport assets can be an important economic

ALIANZA CUP TOURNAMENT AT THE SALINAS REGIONAL SOCCER COMPLEX

Dates: Held Aug. 8 – 10

Teams: 128 from throughout California and multiple out-of-state

Players: 2,184

Total attendees: 27,484

Professional Scouts: 12 including San Jose Earthquakes, Pachuca, Club America, Nashville SC, Sacramento Republic, UC Berkeley, US Soccer

Economic impact: TBD. Preliminary estimate is hundreds of thousands of dollars in lodging, retail, food, etc.

development strategy. Inspired by the success of the soccer complex, we included specific Policies and Actions in the EDE to pursue this economic development which was unanimously approved by the Salinas City Council. For example: **"Policy ED-LU-1.4** – Create and implement a vision and plan and encourage development for the Carr Lake area ... as the **"Sports Capital of the Central Coast"** ...a recreational/sports/cultural/commercial "centerpiece" for the community that unites and connects all segments of Salinas to the east, north, downtown, and south with a "park centered" design.

Focus on development of retail, **additional sports complexes**, [hospitality] and development of joint-use agreements for use of schools and the **Constitution Boulevard regional soccer complex** as sports venues, ... while maintaining Carr Lake's function as a reclamation/flood control facility." (Emphasis added.)

We know what the people want. They want the soccer complex to be the first of many jewels in a long necklace of sports assets which will earn Salinas the title "Sports Capital of the Central Coast." 🌿



UPCOMING EVENTS

- **Lunch Connect at The Steinbeck House**

Wednesday, Sept. 3, 12:00 - 1:30 p.m., 132 Central Ave., Salinas

Join us on Wednesday, Sept. 3, 2025 from 12:00 – 1:30 p.m. at The Steinbeck House for our bi-monthly Chamber Lunch Connect—a great opportunity to meet fellow Chamber members, network in a relaxed setting, and enjoy a delicious meal. \$25 pre-registration / \$30 walk-ins. To view menu options and to register for the event, please visit salinaschamber.com.

- **Chamber Member Orientation**

Thursday, Sept. 4, 12:00 - 1:00 p.m., 119 East Alisal St., Salinas

Join us for an informational orientation with the Salinas Valley Chamber of Commerce's Membership Director, Gabriel Lopez. We welcome new and prospective members to learn more about member benefits and how the Chamber can help you meet and surpass your marketing goals. Lunch will be provided. If you have any questions, please contact Lopez at Gabe@salinaschamber.com or call 831-751-7725. Join us in-person at the Chamber Office or via Zoom.

- **Grand Opening of Cre's BBQ and Soul Food**

Saturday, Sept. 6, 2025, 1:00 - 5:00 p.m., 1655 El Dorado Drive, Salinas

Join Cre's BBQ and Soul Food for the exciting grand opening of their brand-new food trailer! Celebrate with delicious food, music, and fun activities for the whole family. The event will feature a ribbon cutting by the Salinas Valley Chamber of Commerce, a raffle, and a jump house for the kids. The event is from 1:00-5:00 p.m., with the ribbon cutting from 1:00-2:00 p.m.

- **Lunch and Learn with Granite Construction: Salinas Hot Plant Tour**

Tuesday, Sept. 9, 12:00 - 1:00 p.m., 721 Work St., Salinas

Join Granite to learn about how asphalt is made and becomes the impressive material that we all drive on every day. Attendees will see an overview of the operations of Granite's Salinas Hot Plant, followed by a guided walking tour of the facility, showcasing the fascinating world of road and asphalt production. Lunch will be provided. Wearing closed-toe walking shoes is required for this event (no sandals/open-toe shoes permitted). PPE will be provided for attendees who do not have their own set. Granite is one of the largest diversified construction and construction materials companies in the United States, as well as a full-suite provider in the transportation, water infrastructure, and mineral exploration markets. Granite is also an industry leader in safety and an award-winning firm in quality and sustainability.

- **The Club at Crazy Horse Ranch Celebrates 100 Years**

Friday, Sept. 12, 5:00 - 6:30 p.m., 475 San Juan Grade Road, Salinas

For over a century, The Club at Crazy Horse Ranch has brought together families, farmers, business leaders, and friends from across the Salinas Valley. Now, it's time to celebrate the history they've built—and the future they're creating. Join them for an unforgettable evening as they honor "100 Years & Counting" at one of Salinas' most-beloved institutions. The evening schedule includes a welcome reception with local wine and beer tastings, the National Anthem, remarks, and a ribbon cutting with the Salinas Valley Chamber of Commerce.

- **ARCpoint Labs of Salinas Joint Chamber Mixer**

Tuesday, Sept. 16, 5:00 - 7:00 p.m., 635 Sanborn Place, Suite 24, Salinas

ARCpoint Labs of Salinas invites you to an exciting Joint Mixer in partnership with the Salinas Valley Chamber of Commerce and the Monterey Peninsula Chamber of Commerce. Come connect with fellow professionals and community leaders while you: sip local

wines; savor delicious small bites; and learn more about our wellness and employer testing services. Plus — don't miss the live trivia showdown: "The Lab Report: Test Your Wits!" Win prizes throughout the evening in this fun and fast-paced contest hosted by the ARCpoint team. Whether you're there to network, explore health services, or just to enjoy a great evening — this event is one you won't want to miss!

- **Lunch and Learn with Salinas Valley Health — Expanding Access to Care: Primary & Urgent Medical Services for Our Community**

Tuesday, Sept. 23, 12:00 – 1:00 p.m., location TBA

Join Salinas Valley Health for an engaging presentation featuring expert physician Orlando Rodriguez, MD, Chief Medical Officer, on how Salinas Valley Health is expanding access to high-quality primary and urgent care for our community. Learn about: Salinas Valley Health specialty clinics, PrimeCare medical clinics, extended hours, Telehealth services, Doctors On Duty urgent care locations, and retail pharmacy. Location TBA.

- **Signs by Van and Chamber Mixer**

Thursday, Sept. 25, 5:00 - 7:00 p.m., 16130 Highway 156, Salinas

Join us for an unforgettable evening at Signs by Van, proudly named the Salinas Valley Chamber's 2024 Small Business of the Year! Now it's their turn to host — and they're doing it in true Signs by Van style. Enjoy a complimentary barbecue dinner, local wine tasting from Joyce Wines, and craft beer by Alvarado Street Brewery while exploring the one-of-a-kind facility where creativity meets craftsmanship. You'll get a behind-the-scenes look at the art of custom sign-making and experience firsthand what sets them apart. Live demonstrations, and a chance to win a very special prize awaits. Whether you're a longtime Chamber member or new to the community, this is the perfect opportunity to network, celebrate local success, and get inspired.

- **Legacy of Leadership Gala**

Friday, Oct. 10, 5:30 - 7:30 p.m., 150 Main St., Suite 116, Salinas

Save the date for the Chamber's most popular Fall event — the Legacy of Leadership Gala! The event is set to take place on Friday, Oct. 10, 2025, from 5:30 – 7:30 p.m. at the Taylor Building/Portobello's Courtyard in Salinas. Tickets can be purchased at \$80 for members and \$95 for non-members.

- **Salinas Valley Chamber of Commerce Foundation's 74th Children's Shopping Tour**

Saturday, Dec. 13, 7:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m., 796 Northridge Mall, Salinas

The Salinas Valley Chamber of Commerce Foundation invites you to be part of a heart-warming event that brings joy, smiles, and warmth to the holiday season — the Children's Shopping Tour. All generous individuals are invited to participate, donate, and volunteer to make this special day possible. We need dedicated volunteers on Saturday, Dec. 13. There's a role for everyone — help with set-up, check-in, distributing gift cards, cutting merchandise tags, take-down, or sign up as a chaperone to enjoy a fun-filled day of shopping with the children. Witness the joy as they pick out their own clothing, create lasting memories, and experience the magic of the season. To ensure the safety of the children involved, if one is 18 years or older, they must be pre-screened through our background check process and fingerprinted, prior to the event to participate.

RSVP at salinaschamber.com

The ‘One Big Beautiful Bill Act’ Brings Changes to Tip and Overtime Rules

By Bradley J. Levang, Fenton & Keller

The “One Big Beautiful Bill Act” (“OBBBA”), signed into law on July 4, 2025, contains numerous provisions. However, two that have garnered a lot of attention relate

to taxes on tips and overtime compensation. Contrary to general first impressions, the OBBBA does not outright eliminate all taxes on tips and overtime compensation; nor does it eliminate payroll taxes.

Instead, the new law allows eligible individuals to deduct certain tips and overtime premium compensation. These new provisions apply to eligible tips and overtime earned in tax years from 2025 through 2028.

The OBBBA introduces a new tax deduction for “qualified tips.” This provision allows eligible workers, both employees and non-employees, to deduct up to \$25,000 annually from their income subject to federal income tax. “Qualified tips” are those which are paid in cash, charged, or shared as part of a tip-sharing arrangement. The deduction is not applicable to mandatory service charges.

Eligibility for the deduction is limited to individuals who earn \$150,000 or less annually, or joint earners with a combined income of \$300,000 or less. For those who exceed these income thresholds, the deduction phases out at a rate of \$100 for every \$1,000 earned over the limit.

Notably, the OBBBA applies only to tips earned in “traditionally and customarily tipped industries.” This likely means jobs in the hospitality



industry, such as restaurants and hotels, but may also apply to other areas such as barber shops and hair salons. Workers in industries such as accounting, healthcare, law, and financial services are likely ineligible for this deduction. To minimize confusion and address questions about “traditionally and customarily tipped industries,” the Treasury department is expected to release a list of qualifying jobs by October 2025.

Employers in “traditionally and customarily tipped industries” must stay alert for updates from the Treasury Department and the IRS regarding potential changes to tax forms, tip reporting procedures, and revised withholding procedures. Businesses should work with their legal, payroll, and tax professionals to ensure they’re in compliance with the OBBBA’s provisions and are implementing these changes correctly.

Another much-discussed aspect of the OBBBA is its provisions regarding overtime pay. The new law allows eligible employees to deduct the premium portion of their federal-based overtime earnings from their federal taxable income.

Non-exempt employees who work overtime hours in 2025 through 2028 will be able to deduct up to \$12,500 (\$25,000 for joint filers) of their “qualified overtime compensation” from their taxable income, reducing the overall amount subject to federal income tax for those tax years. The OBBBA also requires that taxpayers include their social security number on their tax return to make use of this new overtime

deduction, as well as the tip deduction.

The OBBBA defines “qualified overtime compensation” as overtime compensation paid to an individual required under the federal Fair Labor Standards Act (“FLSA”) that is in excess of the regular rate at which the individual is employed. In other words, only the overtime premium for overtime required by federal law qualifies for the deduction.

As the law is written, it would seem that the deduction does not apply to overtime premiums that are not “required” by the FLSA, such as those pursuant to a collective bargaining agreement or based on state law. This definition creates challenges and confusion for both employers and employees because California’s overtime law is more expansive than the overtime law under the FLSA. As such, this new law does not apply to the overtime provisions under California’s state law, which differs somewhat from the FLSA, such as providing overtime for hours worked in excess of eight hours in one day.

To qualify, individual earners must make \$150,000 or less annually, while joint filers can earn up to \$300,000 without losing the benefit. The deduction begins to phase out for individuals earning above these thresholds, with \$100 reduced for every \$1,000 earned above the limit.

Although the OBBBA allows for the exclusion of overtime earnings from taxable income, it is important to note that overtime pay is still subject to withholding requirements. Employers must continue

to report overtime pay as part of regular payroll processing, ensuring that the correct amount of federal taxes is withheld. This deduction has no effect on Social Security and Medicare taxes.

The OBBBA includes a “transition rule” for reporting overtime hours, allowing employers to approximate the amount of overtime pay subject to tax using a method that will be clarified by the Treasury Department later this year.

The OBBBA’s new overtime provisions may result in employers having to modify their payroll systems and reporting procedures. For example, employers may need to track the required federal overtime and overtime under California law to satisfy various reporting requirements. As such, businesses should regularly monitor and stay informed about updates from the IRS and Treasury department.

For example, the OBBBA requires the IRS to update the applicable income tax withholding procedures and tax forms, such as the W-2 and 1099; and directs the treasury secretary to issue guidance on deterring abuse of the deduction. In addition, employers should be prepared to address employee questions about these new changes. Employers are encouraged to consult with their legal, payroll, and tax experts to ensure compliance with the OBBBA’s provisions regarding overtime compensation. ✍️

Bradley J. Levang is an associate attorney with Monterey law firm Fenton & Keller whose practice focuses on employment law litigation and counseling, and general civil and business litigation. This article is intended to address topics of general interest and should not be construed as legal advice.



NON-PROFIT EVENTS

The Magnetic Stage — A Transformational Journey Through Music and Consciousness — The Raven Drum Foundation

Sept. 25, 6:00 p.m., Monte Verde Street Between 8th and 9th avenues, The Golden Bough Theatre, Carmel
Join the Raven Drum Foundation for a live multi-sensory concert experience with Lauren Monroe to benefit First Responder Resiliency with special guest, legendary drummer Rick Allen and a capella sensations Motion. Backed by her powerhouse band — featuring Def Leppard drummer Allen, Music Director/Guitarist Joshua Ray Gooch (Shania Twain, Ringo Starr), and a lineup of world-class players who've worked with artists like Bruce Springsteen, The Tedeschi Trucks Band, Rae, and James Durbin — Monroe brings her vision to life on stage. The result is a visceral, dynamic performance that moves audiences both emotionally and physically. Doors open at 6 p.m. Tickets are \$150 and include a post-show Meet-and-Greet with Raven Drum co-founders Allen and Monroe, musical artists and Susan Farren from First Responders Resiliency, Inc. The Magnetic Stage by Lauren Monroe is a powerful fusion of Ambient, Americana and Percussive Rock music, with transformational narratives guiding audiences to awakening their highest potential of soul, spirit and mind. Monroe has released several acclaimed albums, including "Under the Wolf Moon," "Messages from Aphrodite," and "Oneness Chant" (with over 3 million Spotify plays). Her upcoming 2025 release, "Magnetic," fuses percussion, spoken word, healing frequencies, and contemporary songwriting — the foundation for her groundbreaking live experience, The Magnetic Stage. Funds raised from the Magnetic Stage concert support Raven Drum Foundation's efforts to provide life-saving support at no cost to those who serve our communities. Monroe and Allen are the co-founders of the Raven Drum Foundation, a non-profit organization designed to empower veterans, first responders, and their families through trauma-informed, mind-body healing.

Touch-A-Truck Salinas

Sept. 7, 12-4 p.m., Salinas Rodeo Grounds, Salinas
Get ready to rev-up your engines and mark your calendars because Touch-A-Truck Salinas is coming this fall. Calling all children and the young at heart to join in for a day filled with excitement as you climb on, explore, and learn all about an array of fascinating trucks — from cement mixers to delivery trucks, garbage trucks, and more! All proceeds benefit Coastal Kids Home Care — California's only nonprofit pediatric home health care agency for kids with cancer and other serious-illness. Touch-A-Truck 2025 is presented by Don Chapin Company.

Jacob's Heart Golf Tournament

Sept. 12, 11:00 a.m. – 9:00 p.m., Seascope Golf Club, Aptos
Registration is now open for the 2025 Jacob's Heart Golf Tournament. The Jacob's Heart Golf Tournament is approaching quickly. It will be a beautiful day spent on the green with the community, all in support of local children and their families battling pediatric cancer. Join in for some great golf, delicious food, games, and so much more. Buy tickets at: <https://www.jacobsheart.org/golf>.

#LiveforRoss Annual BBQ Fundraiser

Sept. 13, 1:00 – 5:00 p.m., 3424 Gloria Road, Gonzalez – Swiss Rifle Range
The family and friends of Ross Tarp Braasch invite the community to attend the #LiveForRoss BBQ Fundraiser on Saturday, Sept.13, from 1 to 5 p.m. at the Monterey County Swiss Rifle Club, located at 34241 Gloria Road, Gonzales. This special event will raise funds to support the #LiveForRoss Fund, a cause dedicated to promoting safety awareness and vocational education. Attendees will enjoy a fun-filled afternoon that includes:

- A delicious steak entrée with sides
- Wine and beer tasting
- Games and live music
- A no-host bar, dessert auction, and live auction

Tickets are \$50 and available for presale on Eventbrite. All proceeds directly support the #LiveForRoss mission. The fund operates as a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization; all donations are tax-deductible. Tickets available at: <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/liveforross-bbq-fundraiser-tickets-1360816592059>.

68th Monterey Jazz Festival

Sept. 26-28, Monterey County Fair and Event Center, Monterey
The Monterey Jazz Festival, the world's longest continuously running jazz festival, has announced its lineup for the 68th incarnation, which happens Sept. 26-28 at the Monterey County Fair and Event Center in Monterey. There are 79 shows on five stages. Ticket packages are on sale now. The 2025 lineup features such luminaries as Latin jazz legend Pete Escovedo featuring Juan and Peter Michael Escovedo; Ledisi; Delfeayo Marsalis & The Uptown Jazz Orchestra; MJF68 Jazz Legends Gala honoree Christian McBride & Ursa Major; Gregory Porter; Dianne Reeves; Trombone Shorty & Orleans Avenue; Cory Wong, and many more. Details at montereyjazz.org.

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

Salinas Valley Chamber of Commerce Announces 2025 Legacy of Leadership Gala Honorees

The Salinas Valley Chamber of Commerce is proud to announce the distinguished honorees for its 2025 Legacy of Leadership Gala: Community Impact Awards, taking place Friday, Oct. 10, 2025, from 5:30–7:30 p.m. at Portobello's on Main Courtyard in Salinas.

This year's honorees exemplify exceptional service, dedication, and leadership within our community:

- Legacy Award: Secretary Leon E. Panetta
- Public Servant of the Year: Sgt. Gerardo Magana
- Non-Profit of the Year: Meals on Wheels of the Salinas Valley, Inc.

• Young Professional of the Year: Jonathan De Anda
From respected community pillars to rising leaders, these individuals and organizations embody the very best of our region's commitment to positive change.

The Legacy of Leadership Gala brings together prominent leaders and local businesses to honor and celebrate those making a lasting impact in Monterey County. The evening will feature a strolling gala experience, complete with an inspiring program, exceptional local wines, gourmet hors d'oeuvres, and meaningful networking opportunities.

Tickets are available at SalinasChamber.com for \$80 (members) and \$95 (non-members). Sponsorship opportunities are also available for the event. For more information, contact the Chamber office at (831) 751-7725 or email Membership@salinaschamber.com.

The Salinas Valley Chamber of Commerce is an association of more than 650 businesses and organizations, representing thousands of local employees and stakeholders. The Chamber is dedicated to creating a strong local economy, promoting the community, providing networking opportunities, representing the interests of business with government, and taking political action. To learn more, visit www.SalinasChamber.com or call (831) 751-7725.



Salinas Valley
CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

Legacy of Leadership Gala

CONGRATULATIONS TO THIS YEAR'S HONOREES

LEGACY AWARD: SECRETARY LEON E. PANETTA

PUBLIC SERVANT OF THE YEAR: SERGEANT GERARDO MAGANA

NON-PROFIT OF THE YEAR: MEALS ON WHEELS OF THE SALINAS VALLEY, INC.

YOUNG PROFESSIONAL OF THE YEAR: JONATHAN DE ANDA

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 10, 2025

Purchase Tickets at SalinasChamber.com



QUALITY HEALTHCARE
DELIVERED LOCALLY
FOR EVERYONE

Thinking about changing your healthcare plan?

If you are considering a change in insurance coverage, make sure you are fully informed about costs, trade-offs and limitations.

- Some plans restrict access to physicians, limiting which providers will be covered on your plan.
- Some plans restrict which hospitals you can visit, impacting how far you may have to travel.
- Some plans may limit access to emergency care, urgent care and maternity services.



Our team at Salinas Valley Health provides exceptional and compassionate healthcare. Our multifaceted healthcare system includes more than 300 board-certified physicians with expertise in a broad range of specialties. With a network of 46 locations in the tri-county area, our patients have access to emergency care, acute care, routine services, imaging and specialty care right here close to home.

Salinas Valley Health accepts:

Aetna
 Anthem Blue Cross
 Aspire
 Blue Shield of California
 Central California Alliance for Health
 Cigna
 Coastal Health Administrators
 Community Health Plan
 First Health
 Health Net
 Health Smart/InterPlan:
 Humana Choice Care
 MultiPlan
 Pacific Health Alliance
 Private Healthcare Systems, Inc.
 Three Rivers Provider Network
 TriCare
 TriWest
 UnitedHealthcare



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