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Salinas Valley CHAMBER OF COMMERCE
BUSINESS JOURNAL



More Than a Banner: Honoring Salinas' Hometown Heroes
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The community came together on Oct. 13 to celebrate the groundbreaking of the 925 Workforce Housing Project led by Compass Church Monterey County, along with Central Coast Engineering and SSB Construction, at 925 Padre Drive in Salinas.

Community Comes Together to Break Ground on the Compass Church 925 Workforce Housing Project

By Colleen Bailey, SVCC President/CEO

The high cost of housing has created divisions in Salinas and across California, a challenge that has been especially visible during this election season. That's why it was so refreshing to see the community come together on Tuesday, Oct. 13, to celebrate the groundbreaking of the 925 Workforce Housing Project led by Compass Church Monterey County.

925 WORKFORCE see page 5

Potential of Salinas Intermodal Transportation Center Provokes Conflicting Visions

By Kevin Dayton, Government Affairs Liaison



The Salinas Train Station.

In one sense, the people of Salinas and Monterey County should celebrate the current friction among various groups about the development future for the immediate neighborhood around the Salinas train station.

Things happen when people care enough to argue about it. Many Salinas residents would describe this area as "long-neglected."

It does not deserve to be neglected. In addition to its potential as an economic asset, the Salinas Intermodal Transportation Center is a historical and architectural asset.

MONTEREY COUNTY
RAIL EXTENSION

As stated on a historical marker about the Salinas Railway Station, "The train was important to Salinas and to agriculture. Steinbeck's characters arrive and leave at the Salinas train station. Molly Morgan arrives at the train depot before taking the bus to 'The Pastures of Heaven.' In 'East of Eden,' Adam's first load of iced lettuce leaves from this station. Carlos Bulosan mentions the Salinas freight yards in 'America Is in the Heart.' "

TRANSPORTATION see page 6

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Cristina Martinez, MD
Emergency Medicine Department Chair

WHEN TO SEEK URGENT CARE

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If you are having difficulty breathing, shortness of breath, an injury that threatens your life or limb, or signs of stroke or heart attack, call 911. Do not drive yourself to the Emergency Department.

Salinas Valley HEALTH

*To view a more complete list of symptoms for each situation, visit **SalinasValleyHealth.com** and search "When to go to the Emergency Department."*

The Creative Economy – Roadmap to a Greater Salinas Valley

By Leonard Batti, SVCC Board Chair

When we think about economic development, we typically think about new businesses, housing, infrastructure, and job creation. We are less likely to think about art, culture, entertainment, and creativity.

But increasingly, communities are discovering that these are not simply amenities that make a city a better place to live. They can also be powerful drivers of economic activity.

This is what author John Howkins described in 2001 as the "creative economy," the idea that imagination and creativity can drive economic growth, job creation, and social development.

The numbers are significant. According to the Aspen Institute, citing U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis data, arts and culture generated $1.17 trillion in economic value in 2023, representing 4.2% of U.S. GDP and supporting 5.4 million jobs.

Here in Salinas, we are beginning to see what the creative economy can look like at the local level.

We saw it recently with the month-long, city-led and Chamber-supported Alebrijes y Nahuales art exhibit. The exhibit came about after Mayor Dennis Donohue, Assistant City Manager Lisa Murphy, Chamber CEO Colleen Bailey, and others traveled to our sister city of Guanajuato, Mexico, to observe its Day of the Dead celebration.

The group returned with a vision to showcase the incredible arts and culture of Mexico while helping change the perception of Salinas



> Culture and entertainment don't just enrich a community. Done right, they bring people together, attract visitors, generate economic activity, and change the way people experience a city.'

from a place some are reluctant to visit into a community to be embraced and enjoyed. The exhibit brought people from throughout California to different parts of our city, providing an economic lift for local businesses in the process.

Another tangible example of our creative economy at work is the community's rescue of Maya Cinemas.

In September, Maya Cinemas announced that it was closing Salinas' only downtown movie theater after more than 20 years as a staple of the downtown economy. The announcement caught city leaders and the business community by surprise and left many asking a simple question: "Why didn't you come to us first?"

The mayor quickly brought together city staff, the Chamber, and local business leaders to develop a plan with Maya's ownership to address the factors that led to the closure and create a path toward sustainable profitability.

Importantly, this was accomplished without the use of taxpayer dollars. Local businesses committed to monthly purchases of movie passes that can be given to employees and local nonprofits, driving customers back to the theater while providing businesses with a way to recognize their employees and support underserved members of our community. The commitments also help stabilize Maya's revenues and provide cash flow that can be reinvested in the theater.

The partnership goes beyond movie tickets. Local businesses are working with Maya to explore additional uses for the theater, including corporate gatherings, seminars and forums, film festivals, and special screenings based on community interests.

The city, meanwhile, committed to following through on already budgeted and sorely needed improvements to the downtown parking garage, including better lighting, functioning pay stations, and increased security.

These two examples share an important lesson: culture and entertainment don't just enrich a community. Done right, they bring people together, attract visitors, generate economic activity, and change the way people experience a city.

ECONOMY see page 5

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Economy - from page 4

That brings us back to celebrating Salinas' culture and what could come next.

Building on the success of the Alebrijes exhibit, the city is now planning a 2027 Day of the Dead celebration inspired by celebrations in major Mexican cities. Through continued collaboration with artisans in our sister city, Salinas has an opportunity to do more than host another successful event. We have an opportunity to turn cultural exchange into lasting economic activity.

Imagine bringing Mexican artisans to Salinas to teach our youth the traditional skills behind the vibrant fabrics, clothing, art, and fashions of Mexico. Then take the idea one step further. Imagine a mixed-use arts and fashion district, perhaps helping transform a blighted area such as West Market Street near the Intermodal Transportation Center, where artists and newly trained artisans could live, create, display, and sell their work.

It is only one possibility. The larger opportunity is to begin looking at Salinas' arts, culture, entertainment, and heritage through the same economic development lens we apply to agriculture, housing, infrastructure, and other industries.

Salinas does not need to invent its culture. We already have it. We have the artists, traditions, diversity, businesses, and community institutions. What we need is the vision to connect those assets and create opportunities around them.

The Alebrijes exhibit showed us what can happen when we invite people into our community through art and culture. The effort to save Maya Cinemas showed us what can happen when city government and the business community respond together.

The creative economy isn't something Salinas needs to imagine. With the right public-private leadership, it is something that we will create.

925 Workforce - from page 1

Located at 925 Padre Drive, the project is phased to ultimately bring four homes within walking distance of both Compass Church's historic Padre Drive location and its newer campus on South Main Street. The project includes a duplex with two units and two accessory dwelling units (ADUs) on the newly donated land.

The convenient location will provide an attractive housing option for current and future employees of the church, helping address one of the biggest challenges facing local employers: finding talented people who can afford to live and work in the community.

Compass Church has experienced tremendous growth over the past decade. As event emcee Steve McShane noted, the church's historic location is the oldest church in the City of Salinas. One of the church elders, Don Tannahill, described the exponential growth of the church ministry.

Today, Compass also operates a modern campus on Main Street, complete with a range of amenities, as well as a campus in Marina. With this growth comes an increased need for staff to support the church's expanding ministries and services.

Like many local businesses and organizations, Compass faces the challenge of attracting talent to an area where the cost of living can be prohibitive. The 925 Workforce Housing Project will help the church recruit and retain the passionate, dedicated people needed to carry its mission forward.

Infill housing projects like this one are rare in Salinas. So, what made this project possible? A community willing to come together, each person contributing what they could to turn a shared vision into reality.

The story began with one of Pastor Todd Anderson's inspiring sermons, in which he challenged members of the congregation to look within their hearts and consider how they could make a difference in their community.

> The 925 Workforce Housing Project is about more than building a duplex. It's an example of what can happen when people come together around a common purpose, combining generosity, local expertise, and a commitment to community.'

One member took that message to heart. After discussing the idea with his wife, he decided to donate the property to the church so it could be used to build housing. That generous act sparked a broader movement, inspiring others in the congregation to step forward and contribute their time, talents, and resources to bring the project to life.

Local partnerships have also been essential to making the vision a reality. Central Coast Engineering designed the duplex, and SSB Construction, a local contractor, will bring the plans to life. At the groundbreaking, SSB Construction owner Steve Goldman shared that projects like this are among his favorites because they make a tangible difference in the local community.

The total estimated cost is $2.7 million. The church is planning a $2 million loan, along with $250,000 in subcontractor donations and $450,000 in family donations to complete the project.

The primary role of the homes is to serve full-time pastoral staff. If space allows, full-time support staff will be considered next, followed by other staff if available. This ensures that the greatest needs are prioritized while maintaining flexibility.

The homes will be owned and maintained by Compass Church. Staff will rent them at an affordable rate, but the property will remain a ministry asset that continues to serve future generations of staff.

The 925 Workforce Housing Project is about more than building a duplex. It's an example of what can happen when people come together around a common purpose, combining generosity, local expertise, and a commitment to community.

"This project comes thanks to a gift of property and many financial gifts from our church congregation to support the project," said Anderson, Lead Pastor at Compass Church. "At a time when housing affordability remains a significant challenge across California, this project offers a hopeful reminder that meaningful solutions can begin right here at home."

And the work isn't finished yet! If you would like to be part of this community effort, Anderson would love to hear from you.

"We welcome volunteers and material donations as this project is truly community-inspired, "said Anderson. "Contributions of time, talent and treasure are still needed, and there are opportunities for more people to help bring this vision to completion."

The goal is to return to 925 Padre Drive in just 16 months to celebrate the ribbon-cutting and welcome families into their new home. That's an ambitious timeline, but with a community united behind a common purpose, it may be more than a goal—it may be a miracle in the making.

Sometimes, all it takes is one person willing to answer a call to action to inspire an entire community. The 925 Workforce Housing Project is proof that when people come together, they can do more than build homes.

They can build hope, strengthen connections, and create a lasting impact for Salinas. If you would like to volunteer or be involved in the project, please contact Steve McShane at steve@mcshaneslandscape.com.

Transportation - from page 1

The Southern Pacific Rail Corporation began using the third and current Salinas train station building during World War II, a time of peak rail use in America. It was a project of the federal Works Progress Administration (WPA), a government program created to respond to the Great Depression. The building was designed in the Spanish Revival style with Art Deco influences. It's pleasing to the eye, both outside and inside.

For various reasons in the decades after World War II, the area around the train station declined into a neighborhood of blighted and vacant buildings, a strong presence of people living on the streets, and criminal activity. This was also a time when passenger rail travel went into decline. In the 1950s, Southern Pacific began a long slow process of selling its train stations.

It was inevitable that the Salinas station would be sold. After Southern Pacific merged with the Union Pacific Corporation in 1996, the Salinas Redevelopment Agency took the opportunity to purchase the Salinas train station and surrounding property from the railroad.



The First Mayor's House, part of Heritage Park.

Pursing a Vision for Economic Development and Convenient Transit Options

Initially, the City of Salinas did not spend any funds on comprehensive rehabilitation or renovation of the train station. The Salinas Redevelopment Agency and Amtrak would handle station maintenance as needed and often deferred repairs because of lack of funding.

But plans were in the works to implement a long-standing idea to extend commuter rail service from the San Francisco Bay Area beyond Gilroy to Monterey County and to convert the train station area to an intermodal transportation center.

Many kinds of transportation could converge in one central location for the convenience of the public. People could live within walking or biking distance of the transportation center and minimize their need to use personal passenger vehicles.

From 1996 to 1998, the City of Salinas commissioned studies to determine potential development options at the Salinas Intermodal Transportation Center (ITC). Preliminary construction work at the site was completed in 1999 for bus layover bays, surface parking, and site landscaping and lighting.

In 2005, the Transportation Agency for Monterey County (TAMC) approved a long-term Monterey County Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) that identified a commuter rail extension to Salinas as part of its planned new passenger rail services. This became the Rail to Monterey County project.

Following the Great Recession and its negative impacts on the local economy and government from 2008-2012, the City of Salinas began earnest efforts to transform the area into the Salinas Intermodal Transportation Center.

The series of projects that followed were meant to enhance a positive image of the City of Salinas, improve rail infrastructure to better connect Salinas with the Silicon Valley and the San Francisco Bay Area, and promote new business opportunities in Downtown Salinas (and perhaps even in the adjacent Chinatown or the Alisal).

In 2011, the City of Salinas obtained a federal grant for construction work to rehabilitate and restore the Salinas Freight Depot building. After this project was completed in 2013, the Freight Depot became a temporary Amtrak location while the train station itself was rehabilitated.

The city's Founder's Day Celebration on March 7, 2015, was located at the Salinas Intermodal Transportation Center and celebrated a rededication of the rehabilitated train station.

In 2015, the Salinas City Council approved the Salinas Downtown Vibrancy Plan. This plan describes a conceptual vision for the Intermodal Transportation Center (ITC) as a

> "Part of the plan for the Intermodal Transportation Center is to consolidate all modes of transportation — rail, Amtrak, MST bus, rideshare services, bicycle, and pedestrian — into one central location.'

central location where people can live and work without the need for personal passenger vehicles:

"This site...has a huge potential for transit-oriented development and new connections with the rest of the City...The ITC will serve as a hub for intercity bus and rail (commuter rail and the Bay area and local buses). Much of the land area will be used to provide parking needed for the commuter rail passengers (a total of 780 parking spaces).

"However, this site also provides opportunities for mixed-use, residential or hotel development that is extremely close to transit. The parking lots located between Market Street, Lincoln Avenue, North Main Street and the rail tracks also provide potential opportunities for mixed-use development."

A 2017 agreement among the City of Salinas, TAMC and the Monterey-Salinas Transit District (MST) established the roles, responsibilities and the disposition of properties at the ITC.

Terms and conditions of the agreement included TAMC acquisition and transfer of parcels on West Market Street, Station Place, Lincoln Avenue, and Palmetto Street to the City of Salinas. Many of these parcels were transferred in 2022.

Starting Construction Related to the Rail to Monterey County Concept

Following the demolition of blighted buildings at the Salinas

Intermodal Transportation Center, TAMC and the City of Salinas held an event there on Aug. 9, 2018, to commemorate the start of the "Kick Start" project, the first phase of the Monterey County Rail Extension project.

Subsequently, construction proceeded for station access, circulation, and parking lot improvements under Package 1 of the Kick Start project. An event to commemorate project completion was held on Jan. 15, 2021.

Property acquisition is still necessary to begin Package 2 of the Kick Start program, which includes construction of train layover facility located west of the ITC. (Package 3 is construction at the Gilroy station.)

Meanwhile, in 2019 the City of Salinas issued a Request for Qualifications (RFQ) for Salinas Lincoln Avenue Corridor Development. One of the responses to the RFQ included development at the ITC of two multi-story mixed-use buildings and a parking garage. This effort did not move forward, but it showed that developers would potentially be interested in building around the train station.

Part of the plan for the ITC is to consolidate all modes of transportation — rail, Amtrak, MST bus, rideshare services, bicycle, and pedestrian — into one central location. MST is pursuing a plan to move the Salinas Transit Center from its current location on Soledad Street to the ITC.

In addition, MST is planning for an East Alisal Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) project that would allow quick, unimpeded bus service from the Alisal/East Salinas and North Salinas to the ITC. The East Alisal bus line is the most used traditional route in the MST system.

Aligning the Economic and Transit Vision with the Historic Vision

What's happening to the historic aspect of the buildings at the ITC? In 2021, a group of community leaders interested in preserving and promoting the historic buildings at the site proposed the establishment of an official city "Heritage Park" that would include the following properties: the Southern Pacific Freight Building (now the home of the California Welcome Center), the Granary, the Southern Pacific Depot (train station for Amtrak), the Steaming Ahead Railroad Exhibit, the Salinas Valley Railroad Museum, and the First Mayor's House.

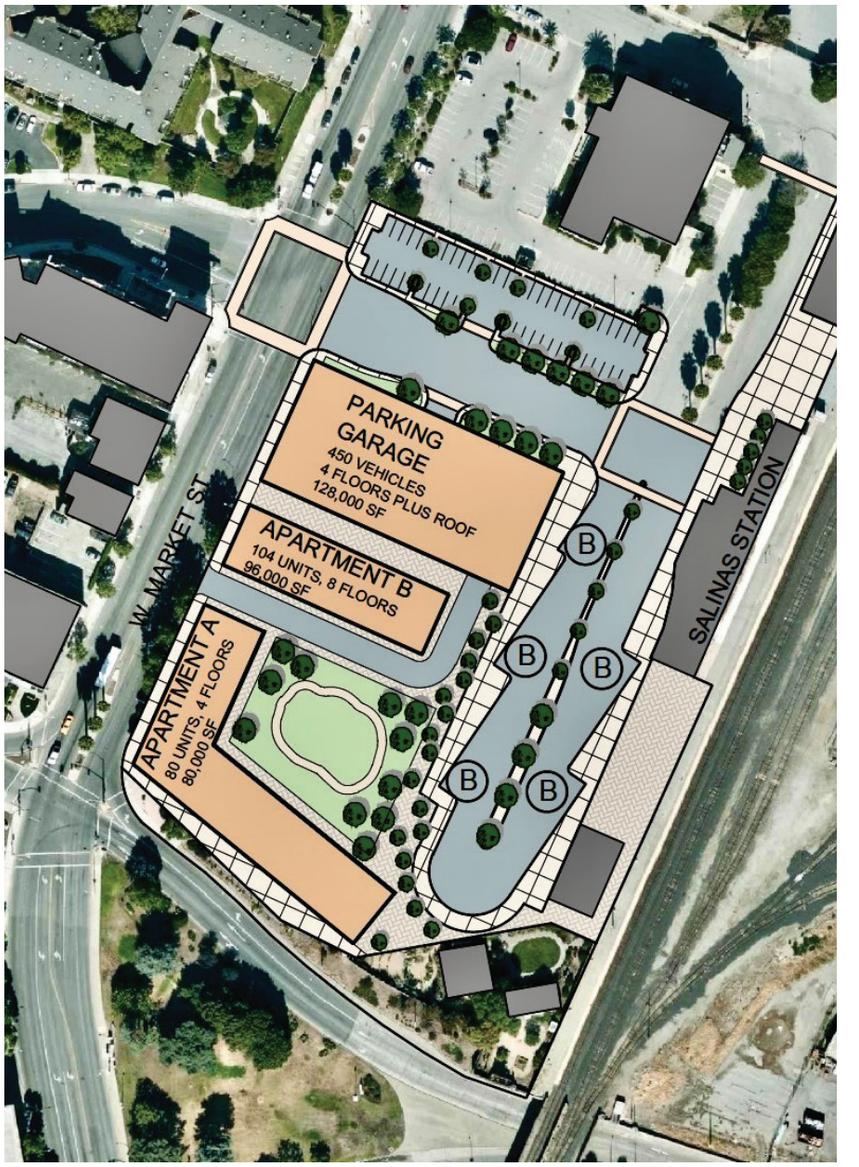
In recent months, the organization supporting Heritage Park has expressed concerns about the potential relocation of the MST Transit Center on Soledad Street to the City of Salinas-owned parking lot at the Intermodal Transportation Center, where the buildings are located that would comprise Heritage Park.

This group asserts that a proposed parking garage associated with the transit center may become a physical and psychological obstruction between Heritage Park and Downtown. Presumably, the same concerns about MST structures blocking Heritage Park would also apply to any proposed mixed-used developments at the parking lot.

Arguments are also made that relocating the MST transit center doesn't make sense because riders will be uncomfortable about crossing busy Market Street to get to their workforces or residences in Downtown.

Finally, there are valid concerns that people congregate around MST transit centers who engage in anti-social behavior, which could discourage people from visiting Heritage Park.

Your Chamber sees potential solutions and compromises that can avoid this dispute between parties who want to promote transit and transit-oriented development and parties who see the Heritage Park historic buildings as a driver of tourism and an important way to preserve the history of the area.



A response to a City of Salinas solicitation for Lincoln Street Corridor proposals included this idea for mixed-use multi-unit density housing at the ITC parking lot, with a garage fulfilling parking needs.

For example, your Chamber's Government Affairs Liaison has long suggested that an elegantly designed pedestrian/bicycle bridge over Market Street between Downtown and the Intermodal Transportation Center would greatly facilitate movement of commuters and travelers and contribute to vibrancy and vitality for Downtown and the entire city.

Too often, disputes over land use and development result in nothing happening in the end. And while some people like the idea of nothing ever happening or changing in their community, your Chamber is instead pursuing its official vision of "a thriving, welcoming Salinas Valley where people, families and businesses succeed via economic growth and opportunity." Empty parking lots don't contribute to this vision.

The First Authoritative List of Roundabouts and Traffic Circles in Monterey County

By Kevin Dayton, Government Affairs Liaison



Roundabouts of the upcoming Bardin Road Safe Routes to School Improvements Project in Salinas.

Occasionally Chamber members ask if there is an authoritative list (or any list) of roundabouts and traffic circles in Monterey County that are completed, under construction, planned, or proposed.

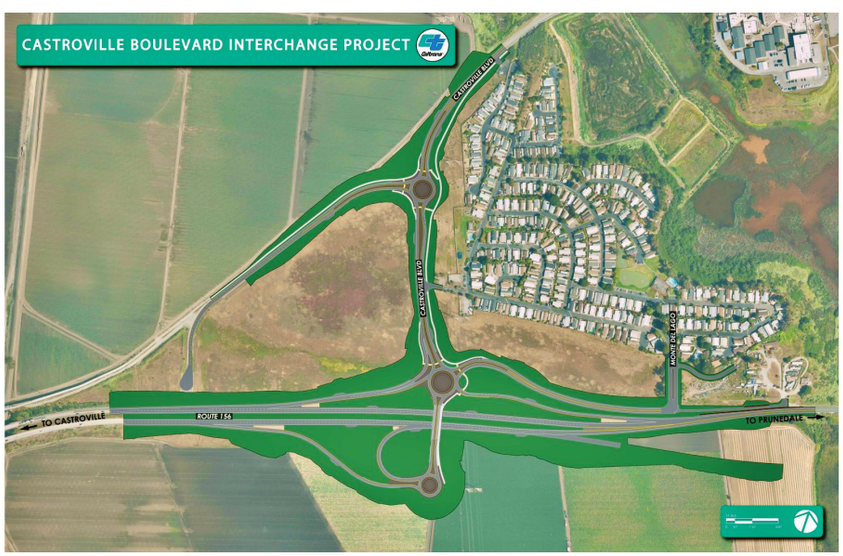
We received a burst of such requests after the publication of the January 2026 Business Journal, which included the article "Traffic Roundabouts: Driving in Circles in Salinas."

Seeing a public demand, your Chamber decided to obtain and publish such a list. But as it turns out, we're creating the list as well as publishing it.

The Transportation Agency for Monterey County (TAMC) is involved with many roundabout projects in cooperation with the county's 12 cities and the county itself (which administers unincorporated areas such as Carmel Valley, Castroville, and Prunedale).

In 2016, TAMC obtained a Regional Intersection Control Evaluation that considered advantages of roundabouts or other alternative control devices at traditional signalized intersections with a high collision rate.

TAMC has been the lead agency behind some of the county's most prominent roundabouts, including those on Imjin Parkway in Marina and the Holman Highway



Three roundabouts at the planned State Route 156 / Castroville Boulevard Interchange Project.



Promotional material from the Transportation Agency for Monterey County (TAMC) for the ribbon cutting on Oct. 12, 2017 of the completed Holman Highway 68 Roundabout Project.



The City of Marina is obviously enthusiastic about roundabouts.

roundabout off of Highway 1 in Monterey.

However, TAMC does not maintain a comprehensive database of roundabouts. They could only offer to check the completeness of a list created by the Chamber.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) was surprisingly useless for the Chamber in creating a list. When asked to list all roundabouts and traffic circles built or planned in Monterey County, AI could only list the most prominent projects that received significant news media attention. A request for AI to examine road maps of Monterey County and identify all the probable roundabouts and traffic circles also failed to yield a comprehensive list.

So, your Chamber's Government Affairs Liaison was forced to use the eyes and the brain to create this first list of roundabouts and traffic circles in Monterey County.

> Seeing a public demand for a list of roundabouts and traffic circles, your Chamber decided to obtain and publish such a list. But as it turns out, we're creating the list as well as publishing it.

If you know of any roundabouts or traffic circles that aren't included on this list, please alert President & CEO Colleen Bailey at (831) 751-7725 or at colleen@SalinasChamber.com so the list can become 100-percent accurate.

ROUNDABOUT CHARTS see page 19

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MEMBER NEWS

Church Brothers Farms Reimagines Conventional Salad Category with New Three-tier Assortment



Church Brothers Farms, a vertically integrated fresh produce grower and shipper, announced a new conventional salad blend lineup organized into three distinct, shopper-friendly categories: Toppers, Tender & Sweet, and Crisp Classics. The new architecture spans 12 varieties and is designed to make it easier for shoppers to find the right product for every meal occasion while giving retailers a cleaner, more intuitive assortment to merchandise.

Toppers are built for adding crunch, color and texture, including finishing touches for tacos, grain and protein bowls, sandwiches or salads. Tender & Sweet features softer greens with broad appeal for salads, wraps and everyday meal prep. Crisp Classics delivers the familiar romaine and lettuce blends shoppers already know and trust, serving as a reliable foundation for a wide range of meals.

"Our goal was to rethink the conventional salad blend category through the eyes of the shopper," said Tracy Carranza, VP of Retail Sales at Church Brothers Farms. "We saw an opportunity to simplify a lineup that can sometimes feel overwhelming at shelf. Rather than asking shoppers to navigate a large assortment of similar products, this new structure clearly communicates what each group brings to the meal and how it can be used."

The launch is paired with a packaging system that clearly differentiates each category at shelf while maintaining a cohesive Church Brothers Farms brand identity.

"We wanted the packaging to tell a clean and simple story," said Jon Gutierrez, Senior Brand Manager at Church Brothers Farms. "Each category is clearly identified, so shoppers can scan the case and immediately understand what they're looking at without having to read every label. It's a small design choice, but it makes a big difference in how quickly someone can find what they need."

The new conventional salad lineup made its debut at the IFPA's Global Produce & Floral Show in Orlando, Florida on Oct. 15-16.

Palma Schools' New Edward M. Dowd Sports Performance Center Currently Under Construction, Scheduled to Open March 2027



The Edward M. Dowd Foundation has awarded a significant grant to Palma School to support the development of a new sports performance center on the school's Salinas campus. The grant from the Foundation builds upon Dowd's long-standing support of Palma School. The Edward M. Dowd Sports Performance Center will be a 10,000-square-foot facility serving all 664 Palma students, staff, and 26 co-educational varsity sports that train year-round. There are 3,850 square feet of this building dedicated to a training facility, which will include state-of-the-art weight, cardio, and body mobility systems large enough to serve 70-80 student-athletes at one time. This building will also house a full-time strength and conditioning coach to work with student/athletes throughout the day.

Two additional offices are designated for coaches and an operations manager, who oversees the sports performance building, the fields, and the rest of the campus. The facility includes restrooms for students and the public, along with two locker rooms that can hold 100 athletes at a time for field sports.

"The new center will significantly enhance Palma's sports facilities, providing students with improved spaces for training, competition, and team activities," said Palma's President Chris Dalman. "The project builds upon Palma's long tradition of athletic excellence and will provide an important resource for the school's growing student population."

The $5.5 million grant builds upon the Foundation's longstanding support of Palma School. Dowd's connection to Palma continued throughout his life. The Foundation has previously supported significant improvements to Palma's sports facilities, including the renovation of the school's gym, which was named the Edward M. Dowd Gymnasium. The new sports performance center represents another important chapter in that legacy.

The significant investment reflects the Foundation's commitment to supporting opportunities for young people throughout the communities connected to Dowd's life and legacy.

"Throughout his life, Ed never forgot where he came from, and he believed in the importance of giving back and creating opportunities for the next generation," said the Foundation's President and CEO, Jim Dowd. "This capital grant is an opportunity to honor his legacy by investing in Palma students and creating facilities that will benefit generations of young people."

Community Foundation for Monterey County Announces Next President/CEO – Gina Dalma

The Community Foundation for Monterey County (CFMC) announced its next President/CEO, Gina Dalma. "The Community Foundation for Monterey County has completed a national search and selected a new leader who is exceptionally well-qualified, deeply aligned with our mission and committed to engaging authentically with our communities," said Board Chair Elsa Mendoza Jimenez. "Gina brings extensive experience in nonprofit executive leadership and is passionate about this work. Her depth of knowledge and expertise will continue to elevate and grow the impact of the CFMC."

Dalma, who will be relocating to Monterey County from the Bay Area, will step into the role on Nov. 9, 2026. Dalma is a philanthropic executive with more than 20 years experience working at the intersection of strategic philanthropy, public policy and donor development to bring about systems change.

Most recently, she served as Chief Development Officer for the Global Fund for a New Economy, where she spearheaded donor engagement, organizing and fundraising strategies to mobilize capital for global economic inclusion, equity and sustainability.

Prior to that, she served nearly 16 years at the Silicon Valley Community Foundation in a variety of roles, most recently as Executive Vice President of Community Action, Policy and Strategy, leading the foundation's impact and grantmaking work.

Montage Health Celebrates Arrival of Next-generation Da Vinci 5 Surgical Systems


Manuel Ortega Photography

Montage Health leaders, physicians, donors, and community partners gathered on Sept. 24 to celebrate the arrival of three new da Vinci 5 surgical systems at Community Hospital of the Monterey Peninsula, marking a significant investment in advanced surgical care and the continued growth of the largest robot-assisted surgery program on California's Central Coast.

The ribbon-cutting ceremony celebrated the installation of the next-generation robotic platforms, made possible by generous community support through Montage Health Foundation, and highlighted the organization's commitment to expanding access to innovative, minimally invasive surgical care close to home.

"We're celebrating an important step forward in surgical care at Montage Health," said Mike McDermott, MD, president and CEO of Montage Health. "We're increasing our capacity, investing in our surgical teams, and continuing to build the kind of care our community should be able to receive close to home."

Community Hospital replaced two da Vinci Xi surgical systems with the three da Vinci 5 systems, increasing surgical capacity and providing surgeons with enhanced tools for complex procedures across multiple specialties, including thoracic, gynecology, urology, general surgery, and bariatric surgery.

Montage Health's program is the only one on California's Central Coast offering robot-assisted thoracic surgery. The da Vinci 5 platform builds on previous robotic technology with more than 150 design enhancements, including improved surgeon ergonomics, enhanced 3D imaging, expanded computing power, advanced data capabilities, and force feedback technology that allows surgeons to sense subtle pressure and tension on tissue during procedures.

"What I love about robot-assisted surgery is how much it expands what I'm able to see and do," says Harsha Mittakanti, MD, a Montage Medical Group urologist and Montage Health's medical director of robot-assisted surgery. "That level of visualization and control gives me an extra layer of support during complex procedures. When robot-assisted surgery is the right approach for a patient and we see an excellent outcome, that's very rewarding."

Robot-assisted surgery allows surgeons to perform many procedures through smaller incisions than traditional open surgery. For patients, this can mean less pain and scarring, reduced blood loss, lower risk of infection, and faster recovery.

The da Vinci 5 systems are part of Montage Health's continued investment in advanced robot-assisted surgery and other minimally invasive treatments. Along with the new surgical platforms, Montage Health recently introduced high-intensity focused ultrasound (HIFU) for certain patients with localized prostate cancer. HIFU uses precisely targeted ultrasound energy to destroy cancerous tissue without incisions, expanding treatment options while minimizing recovery time.

Looking ahead, Montage Health plans to add the Ion robot-assisted bronchoscopy system in spring 2027. Ion is designed to help physicians navigate to difficult-to-reach areas of the lung, supporting earlier diagnosis of lung cancer. Together, da Vinci 5, HIFU, and Ion represent a growing suite of technologies that give physicians more options to tailor care to each patient's needs while expanding access to advanced treatment close to home.

Noland Hamerly Etienne & Hoss Welcomes Attorney Melinda M. Vanderburg



Melinda Vanderburg has joined the Business & Transactions practice group at NHEH, focused on contracts, transactions, and general business representation. Vanderburg has several years of experience with a multi-national San Francisco law firm. She earned her J.D. and an L.L.M. from Duke University School of Law. She serves on the Board of nonprofit Leadership Edge, Inc. Throughout her life, she has lived in Canada, the U.S., and the Middle East. Melinda now lives in Monterey with her husband and children and is based primarily in the NHEH Monterey office.

Anne Secker of Noland Hamerly Etienne & Hoss Honored by County Bar Association for Lifetime Achievement



Anne Secker has been selected for this year's Justice Nat Agliano Lifetime Achievement Award by the Monterey County Bar Association. Since first starting as an attorney and joining NHEH in 1980, Secker has consistently demonstrated a high level of expertise and inspiring leadership. She has long been active in community service, in recent years most notably on behalf of Hartnell College Foundation and Elkhorn Slough Foundation. Over the years, numerous other organizations have benefited from her volunteer service and leadership. The award will be presented in early November at MCBA's annual Fall gathering.

The Importance of Staying Invested During Times of Market Volatility

By Bill Hastie, Hastie Financial Group



Market volatility can wreak havoc on an investor's emotions. The past several years have been no exception, notably the first quarter of 2020 (the beginning of the COVID pandemic) and 2022 have been two of the more tumultuous times in the investment markets' history.

Oftentimes, investors are faced with a difficult decision — when the markets are volatile, do I keep my money invested or do I leave the market and come back when things get better?

An area of finance that is becoming more prominent is behavioral finance, which is the study of the effects of psychology on investors and financial markets. Behavioral finance suggests that we are inherently bad investors, prone to basing decisions on emotions rather than evidence or facts.

An area of finance that is becoming more prominent is behavioral finance, which is the study of the effects of psychology on investors and financial markets. Behavioral finance suggests that we are inherently bad investors, prone to basing decisions on emotions rather than evidence or facts.'

But investors can overcome their tendency of make emotional decisions by understanding why they are making the decisions they are making, and making corrections accordingly.

It is important to note that these emotions are real and can cause significant stress to investors. Rather than labeling them as "incorrect," it is important to control them. Emotions are not a sound basis for one's investment strategy and research continues to show that active investors (i.e., attempting to time the market) underperform the market in the long run.

Research from Bloomberg and the Wells Fargo Investment Institute suggests that missing a handful of the best days in the market over long periods of time can drastically reduce the average annual return an investor could gain by holding onto their investments during selloffs (market declines).

Their research suggests that over the past 30 years, missing the market's best 20 days took the average annual return from 7.8 percent per year to 3.2 percent. Over the same period, an investor missing the best 40 days drops the average annual return to 0.3 percent and missing the best 50 days results in a -0.99 percent average annual return. Their research shows that investments, particularly stocks, accumulated most of their gains over the span of a few trading days.

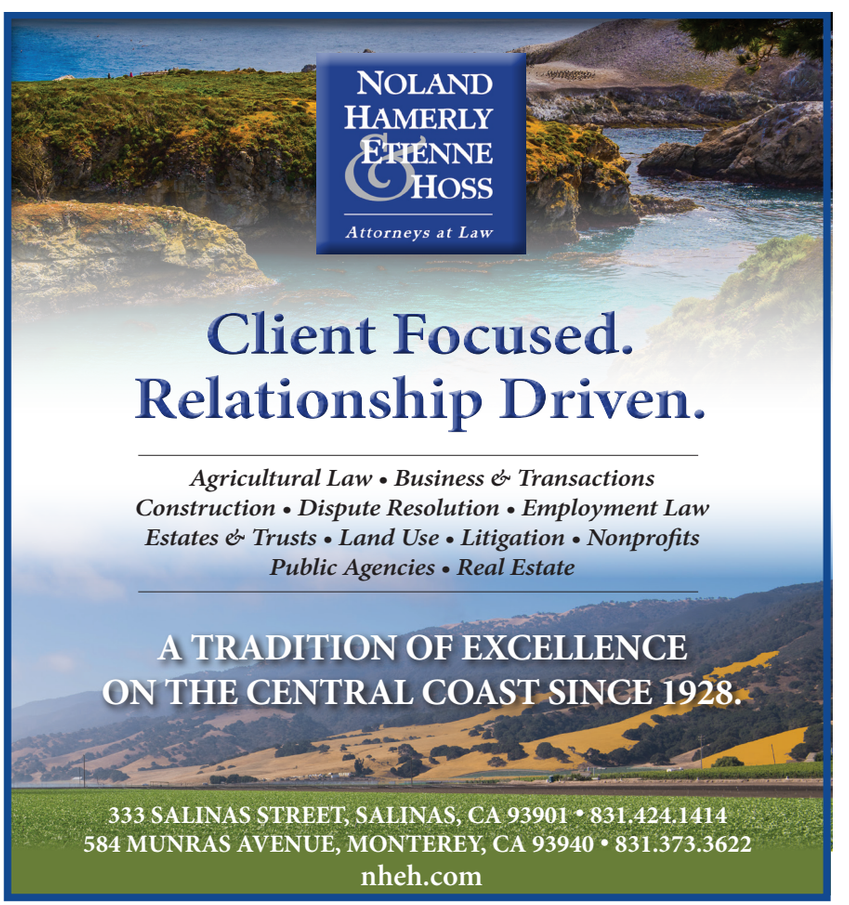
Why is this important? Investors are ever aware of the effects of market downturns. The past few years have been very trying for investors and have caused significant stress and anxiety about their investments.

Despite the volatility, the market has recovered following every minor or major market decline — including the Great Depression, the Global Financial Crisis of 2007-2009, and the COVID pandemic of 2020. 2022 is the most recent example of a devastating year for the markets, but as has always been the case, the market will recover in time. However, the time between market decline and recovery can be difficult and almost unbearable at times.

This year has been full of things that can unnerve even the most experienced investor — re-emergence of inflation, geopolitical unrest in the Middle East, rising interest rates, and fuel prices to name a few. But in spite of it all, the investment markets have performed reasonably well this year.

To help alleviate the pain associated with market volatility, investors can benefit from seeking the advice of a financial professional. Doing so will allow them to better understand the current/forecasted economic landscape, it's effect on their investment portfolio, and their short- and long-term options to ensure they are able to meet their financial goals.

Bill Hastie, MBA, CFP®, CIMA®, AIFA®, is a Financial Advisor and Managing Partner with locally owned Hastie Financial Group and can be contacted at william.hastie@hastiefg.com.



More Than a Banner: Honoring Salinas' Hometown Heroes

As Veterans Day Approaches, Salinas Hometown Heroes Celebrates Five Years of Honoring Military Service and Preserving the Stories Behind the Names

By Salinas Hometown Heroes Banner Program

Every banner hanging along the streets of Salinas tells a story. A story of service, sacrifice, family, and a connection to our community. Behind each photograph is a veteran or active-duty service member who has answered the call to serve our country.

For five years, the Salinas Hometown Heroes Banner Program has helped bring these stories to life, transforming our city streets into a tribute to the men and women who have served in the United States Armed Forces.

What began as an effort to recognize local military heroes has grown into a community tradition. Since its inception, the program has honored more than 500 service members, representing different generations, military branches, and eras of service. Some served during World War I, World War II, Korea, or Vietnam. Others served in more recent conflicts or continue to wear the uniform today.

While their experiences may be different, they share a connection to Salinas and a commitment to something greater than themselves.

For families, seeing a loved one's photograph displayed in their hometown carries special meaning. For some, it is an opportunity to celebrate someone still serving. For others, it is a way to remember a parent, grandparent, spouse, or loved one who has passed away. Each banner becomes a reminder that their service has not been forgotten.

One of the program's most meaningful efforts took place in 2025, when Salinas Hometown Heroes commemorated the 80th anniversary of the end of World War II by honoring 105 local men of Company C, 194th Tank Battalion.



Banners for U.S. Army veterans Alfred Sanches Baguio and Adolfo Artaleo on display on Main Street, Salinas.



Banner for U.S. Army veteran Franklin Williams displayed on a lamppost on Main Street.

Of those 105 men who left to serve, only 47 returned home. Their banners helped bring an important piece of Salinas history back into public view and introduced a new generation to their extraordinary sacrifices.

The program is about more than recognizing military service. It is also about preserving local history, connecting generations, and giving families a place to share stories that might otherwise be lost.

The Salinas Hometown Heroes Banner Program is made possible entirely through donations, fundraising efforts, and the dedication of a volunteer-led committee. Banners are provided at no cost to veterans and their families because we believe every service member deserves to be recognized and honored for their service. Thanks to the generosity of local businesses, donors, community partners, and volunteers, we can continue honoring our hometown heroes and making this program accessible to everyone.

> "The Salinas Hometown Heroes Banner Program is about more than recognizing military service. It is also about preserving local history, connecting generations, and giving families a place to share stories that might otherwise be lost.'

As we observe Veterans Day this November, the banners once again line our streets, offering a visible reminder of the service and sacrifices made by our neighbors, friends, and family members.

Veterans Day is an opportunity not only to thank those who served, but also to listen to their stories, learn from their experiences, and ensure their contributions are remembered.

As Salinas Hometown Heroes looks toward its next five years, the mission remains the same: to honor our hometown heroes, preserve their legacies, and remind future generations that behind every banner is a person, a family, and a story worth telling.

Because every hero has a story, and every story deserves to be remembered.

To learn more about the Salinas Hometown Heroes Banner Program or submit an application for the 2027 banner season, visit the program's website, www.salinashometownheroes.org.

CHAMBER NEW MEMBER PROFILES

Otto Construction

The Otto Way, according to Otto Construction, "Is more than how we build, it is how we lead, collaborate, and serve. We believe exceptional projects are the result of strong partnerships, transparent communication, skilled craftsmanship, and an unwavering commitment to safety, quality, and sustainability. Every decision we make is guided by a desire to create lasting value for our clients, our employees, our trade partners, and the communities where we build. Our culture is built on three enduring values that have defined Otto Construction since 1947: Honesty, integrity, and compassion for others. These principles shape every relationship, every project, and every interaction, ensuring we not only deliver exceptional facilities, but also earn the trust of those we build for. This is The Otto Way."
Ottoconstruction.com, Since1947@ottoconstruction.com, (831) 657-9805.

BroadbandOne

Growth shouldn't have to wait for fiber construction. Whether opening a new business location, developing a multifamily property, expanding enterprise operations, or extending your network into new markets, BroadbandOne helps organizations move forward with high-performance licensed fixed wireless solutions built for speed, resiliency, and long-term scalability. BroadbandOne's enterprise network helps businesses deploy fiber-like connectivity in days instead of months while enabling carriers, managed service providers, and wholesale partners to accelerate fiber extension, reach new customers, and expand service offerings without the cost and delays of building new infrastructure.
Broadbandone.com, NOC@broadbandone.com, (855) 221-7877.

Golden 1 Credit Union

Golden 1 Credit Union, is committed to living and sharing the credit union difference throughout the Golden State. Since Day 1, their members and communities have been at the heart of everything they do. What began in 1933 grows stronger every year and they take great pride in serving those who have grown with them. Golden 1 is an inclusive and caring partner and leader that works to better the financial well-being of all Californians to create a healthier future. BroadbandOne passionately supports educational attainment, access to career pathways, and youth/young adult entrepreneurship.
Golden1.com/our-community/our commitment, chpaul@golden1.com, (877) 465-3361.

Rossi Bros. Tire and Auto Service

At Rossi Bros. Tire & Auto Service, customer satisfaction is their main priority. Owners Michael and Dominic are dedicated to providing the finest products and highest level of friendly service to their valued customers. Drivers from Salinas, Hollister, King City, and surrounding areas, bring their vehicles into their tire and auto service centers because they know Rossi Bros. will treat them like family and care for their vehicles as if they were their own. Need tires? Consider Rossi Bros Tire & Auto Service your one-stop shop. They pride ourselves on maintaining a competitively priced line of new tires from Michelin®, BFGoodrich®, and other top brands. If you're looking for tires for your car, truck, minivan, or SUV, but aren't sure what size you need, try their Tire Size Finder or give your nearest location a call and their friendly and knowledgeable staff can offer you suggestions. Their expert tire technicians also perform necessary tire services like computer spin balancing, flat-tire repairs, and tire rotations to save you money and keep your vehicle performing as it should through all types of weather. They also sell tires for large trucks, farm vehicles, agricultural equipment, and RVs, and provide priority mobile service (tires only) to their many commercial accounts.
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RIBBON CUTTINGS & CHAMBER EVENTS

by Chamber Staff



Grand Opening and Ribbon Cutting of Read to Me Project

With over 70 in attendance, Read to Me Project celebrated the opening of its new Downtown Salinas office with a special ribbon-cutting event. Community members gathered to celebrate RtMP's continued commitment to empowering children and families through literacy, while enjoying sweet treats and raffle prizes. The new space marks an exciting step forward as RtMP continues serving classrooms and families throughout Monterey County and will act as a meeting place for program coordinators and a resource hub for family literacy.



Alvarez Technology Group 25th Anniversary Celebration

We were thrilled to host a joint ribbon cutting with the Monterey Peninsula Chamber and gathered to celebrate a major milestone with Alvarez Technology Group as they marked 25 years of business excellence! Local business leaders, community partners, and clients came together for a festive open house and ribbon cutting. Guests enjoyed refreshments, toured ATG's Salinas office, and met their expert team. Since 2001, ATG has been a cornerstone of technology support in our region—providing reliable IT services, robust cybersecurity, and trusted guidance to help local businesses thrive.



Grand Opening and Ribbon Cutting of Valenza Health

Community members and guests gathered to welcome Valenza Health to Salinas and experience their personalized, patient-centered approach to wellness firsthand. Guests enjoyed an exciting evening filled with delicious hors d'oeuvres, refreshing drinks, music, a photo booth, and raffle prizes. The highlight of the event was the ribbon-cutting ceremony, marking a new chapter of compassionate care for our community. Attendees met the dedicated Valenza Health provider team and learn more about their individualized services—including hormone health, weight management, ongoing support, nutritional guidance, and health education.



925 Workforce Housing Project Groundbreaking Ceremony

From vision to reality: The Salinas Valley Chamber was proud to partner on the groundbreaking of the 925 Workforce Housing Project at 925 Padre Drive in Salinas. The project will create four homes—a duplex and two ADUs—for Compass Church employees, helping address local workforce housing needs. Thanks to a generous land donation, church contributions, and partnerships, this exciting project is becoming a reality!







75 Years of Impact

Salinas Valley Chamber of Commerce Foundation Celebrates Landmark 75th Annual Children's Shopping Tour set to take place December 12, 2026 at Northridge Mall

How it got Started

1951

Did You Know? The Children's Shopping Tour was originally brought to life by the Salinas Jaycees and made into an annual event in 1951. Local business leaders stepped up so that children in the Salinas Valley felt valued and warm during the winter. Over seven decades, as the Jaycees transitioned into today's Salinas Valley Chamber of Commerce Foundation, that joy of giving became a 75-year tradition passed down through generations of local volunteers and donors. Here's to the local leaders before us for paving the way and to the next generations who continue to be impacted!

Donations were solicited door-to-door on Solicitation Day and also through community contributions. In those days, about 20 children went shopping with a $35 spending limit.


Directors of Salinas Jaycees

Jaycee Idea Originated In St. Louis

Children's Yule Shopping Tour to Be Annual Project

THE JUNIOR CHAMBER OF COMMERCE chooses the COMINOS HOTEL For Their Weekly Meetings Because of Its • SPACIOUS BANQUET ROOMS • COURTEOUS SERVICE • FINE FOOD

We Salute for Its Outstanding COMMUNITY SERVICE John Struve, Member Struve & Laporte Funeral Home

WE SALUTE The Salinas Junior Chamber of Commerce One of our leading civic groups for the advancement of Salinas. CONGRATULATIONS! California Welding Gasses

DRIVE A BARGAIN BUY NOW SALINAS AUTO MART

We are proud of our association with this fine organization SALINAS TALLOW CO.

75th Annual Children's Shopping Tour

Salinas Valley CHAMBER OF COMMERCE FOUNDATION

Our Core Purpose

Why is Matters

Children receive warm clothing and essentials, not just as gifts but as a reminder that their community cares.

75 Years of Dignity & Care: A flagship annual initiative that has delivered essential clothing, footwear, and warm coats to thousands of underprivileged children in Salinas over the years.

Community-Led Impact: Partnering directly with local elementary school districts and educators who identify students facing acute hardship, ensuring support reaches those who need it most.

Life Skills & Mentorship: Pairs elementary students with volunteers and adult guides to navigate store aisles, teach budgeting and bargain shopping, and fulfill essential student community service hours.

100% Local Capital Retention: Unlike national charities where funds leave the region, 100% of CST gift card funding is spent inside Salinas storefronts. Spending generates local sales tax revenue that funds essential municipal services and supports retail jobs right here in Salinas.

Retail Merchant Partnerships: Participating storefronts collaborate with CST by offering special promotional pricing, extending discount codes, and stretching every donor dollar further to maximize clothes purchased per child.

$125
Per Child for clothes and shoes

200+
Children Shopping Goal of 400

300+
Volunteers / Chaperones



Get Involved

Volunteer

Community members are needed as shopping chaperones and event support (check-in, tag cutting, staging). Register individually or a group of employees as chaperones or event-day support. It's an unforgettable holiday experience. Learn more at SalinasChamber.com

Donate

We invite you to be part of this impactful tradition by making a charitable donation. Checks can be mailed to:
Salinas Area Chamber of Commerce Foundation
119 E. Alisal St., Salinas, CA 93901

The Foundation is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, and your gift is tax-deductible. Tax ID: 77-0071744

MERSHOPS NORTHRIDGE MALL

Harden Foundation

ALCO WATER SERVICE

You've Got to Be Kidding Me!

When Did Showing Up and Getting the Job Done Become Negotiable?

By Michaelle Stanford, TPO The HR Experts



If you've managed people for any length of time, you've probably had that thought. Maybe someone questioned why they need to be on time. Or why a deadline matters. Or why they need approval before working overtime.

Employees want to be heard, and that's a good thing. Their ideas can improve how work gets done. A manager who listens can learn something, build trust and make better decisions. But listening doesn't make every decision negotiable.

Picture this: You tell an employee a project needs to be finished by Friday. They think Monday would be better. Friday comes and goes. You follow up, then follow up again. Suddenly, you're spending more time discussing whether the deadline was fair than getting the work back on track.

Or two coworkers are frustrated with each other. Instead of talking it through or asking for help, they talk to everyone except each other. Other people get pulled in, and before long, a problem between two coworkers is affecting the whole team.

The concerns behind these conversations may be legitimate. Managers need to hear them. They also need to help employees address disagreements constructively and be clear when a decision has been made.

That's the tricky part. When do you ask for input? When do you explain your reasoning? And when do you simply say, "I hear you. This is still the expectation"?

Leadership hasn't changed, but the conversation has. Good leadership still calls for clear communication, consistency and follow-through. The challenge is navigating the conversations around those basics.

You can welcome ideas and still make the call. You can take a concern seriously while addressing disruptive behavior. You can hold someone accountable without turning every correction into a showdown.

The goal isn't to get everyone to agree with every decision. It's to make sure people know what's expected, where they have a voice and how to work through disagreements when they arise.

Sound familiar? Join TPO the HR Experts for our 23rd Annual Employment Law & Leadership Conference. After Littler's employment law update on the changes employers need to know for 2027, we'll tackle the real situations behind those "You've Got to Be Kidding Me!" moments. We'll talk about how to listen, set limits, address team friction and follow through when employees push back on things you never expected to have to explain.

Michaelle Stanford, PHRca, is a Senior Consultant and Training & Strategy Specialist for TPO the HR Experts.



Roundabouts - from page 9

Year of Completion	Jurisdiction	Intersection or Intersection Set	Notes
Pending	City of King	Three roundabouts on Broadway Street at the intersections of Franciscan Way, Canal Street, and Mildred Avenue	Part of San Antonio Drive Path and Safe Routes to Schools Improvements Project
Pending	City of King	U.S. Highway 101/Broadway Street at San Antonio Drive	California Transportation Commission approved time extension to August 22, 2027 for use of federal Regional Surface Transportation Program (RSTP) funds for this project, as distributed through TAMC.
2013	City of Marina	Two roundabouts on Reservation Road between Del Monte Avenue and Beach Road, at these intersecting streets going from north to south: Seaside Court/Seaside Circle and Lake Drive	
2017	City of Marina	Del Monte Boulevard and Beach Road	On June 6, 2026, the Marina City Council approved a bid solicitation for the Del Monte Boulevard and Beach Road Intersection Improvements Project. The city's Public Works Director reported that northbound traffic was going too fast into the roundabout. Improvements include change the striping for people going northbound and merge the lanes sooner. Vegetation will be planted in the center of the roundabout so that vehicle drivers entering the roundabout cannot see traffic on the other side and will be forced to slow down.
2017	City of Marina	Inter-Garrison Road and 8th Avenue	Near California State University, Monterey Bay (Cal State Monterey Bay) campus.
2025	City of Marina	Four roundabouts on Imjin Parkway between California Avenue and Reservation Road, at these intersecting streets going from west to east: Imjin Road, Marina Heights Drive, Abrams Drive, and Preston Drive	Perhaps the most prominent roundabout project in Monterey County has been the Imjin Parkway Widening & Roundabout Project, under which four roundabouts were built along this major thoroughfare between the Salinas Valley and the Monterey Peninsula.
2025	City of Marina	Beach Road and De Forest Road	This is meant to help traffic flow to and from Marina Station, a new housing development on the northeastern side of the city.
2025	City of Marina	Two roundabouts on Crescent Avenue at the intersections of Sirena Del Mar Road and Costa Del Mar Road	
2026	City of Marina	8th/9th Street roundabout near the Major General William H. Gourley VA-DoD Outpatient Clinic	Built by Dunes developer Marina Community Partners/Shea Homes. Center island will receive new landscaping and artwork related to Fort Ord.
Pending	City of Marina	Del Monte Boulevard and Reservation Road (one of seven proposed for Reservation Road)	Marina City Council approved roundabout on June 16, 2026 and a bid solicitation for the construction project on October 6, 2026. California Transportation Commission approved time extension to August 22, 2027 for use of federal Regional Surface Transportation Program (RSTP) funds for this project, as distributed through TAMC. Associated with the city's Downtown Vitalization Specific Plan.
Pending	City of Marina	Two roundabouts on Del Monte Boulevard, at the intersection of streets designated for now as Street M and Street BE.	These will be at entrances to the Marina Station Development Project Subdivision. The developer designed these roundabouts (instead of an all-way stop) at the city's request.
Pending	City of Marina	Seven Roundabouts on Reservation Road, at these intersecting streets going from west to east: Del Monte Boulevard (listed above), Vista Del Camino Road, Seacrest Avenue, Marina Square shopping center, De Forest Road, Crescent Avenue, and California Avenue.	Proposed to Marina City Council at their June 16, 2026 meeting as the Reservation Road Corridor Study.
Pending	City of Marina	Three roundabouts on Del Monte Boulevard, at these intersecting streets going from north to south: Palm Avenue, Reindollar Avenue, and Patton Parkway.	

Year of Completion	Jurisdiction	Intersection or Intersection Set	Notes
Pending	City of Marina	California Avenue and Reindollar Avenue	Marina City Council approved a contract on October 6, 2026 with a civil and traffic engineering consulting firm to determine if the intersection of Reindollar Avenue and California Avenue is suitable for a traffic circle or mini-roundabout. Significant traffic backups are occurring at this intersection. A full-size single-lane roundabout could be evaluated in the future as an option, but the City of Marina would prefer to minimize the need for acquisition of privately-owned land.
Proposed/Speculative	City of Marina	Reservation Road and Salinas Avenue	The concept was discussed at a September 2, 2020 public forum about Salinas Avenue improvements.
Proposed/Speculative	City of Marina	Reservation Road and Cardoza Avenue	In design in 2017.
Proposed/Speculative	City of Marina	Dual Roundabouts at California Avenue and Fremont Avenue	
Proposed/Speculative	City of Marina	Imjin Road and 8th Street	
2017	City of Monterey	Holman Highway (Highway 68), Highway 1 southbound off-ramp and on-ramp, and 17 Mile Drive	
Under Construction	City of Monterey	Garden Road and Olmstead Road	Part of a new roadway system to support the Monterey Regional Airport replacement passenger terminal, which is part of the MRY Metamorphosis Safety Enhancement Program.
Canceled	City of Monterey	Madison Street, Herrmann Drive, and Larkin Street	In response to neighborhood objections, the Monterey City Council on July 7, 2026 debated a motion to reconsider award of a contract for construction of the Madison/Herrmann/Larkin Intersection Safety Improvement Project near Monterey High School. The project featured a "quick build" traffic circle. The motion, which would have stopped the project, failed on a 2-2 vote. On August 4, the Monterey City Council voted 3-2 to cancel the project.
On Occasion	City of Monterey	Various small traffic circles designed for traffic calming in neighborhoods such as Del Monte Grove–Laguna Grande and Villa Del Monte.	
Pending	City of Pacific Grove	Cedar Street, Sunset Avenue, and Congress Avenue	Five-Way Intersection
2015	City of Salinas	East Alisal Street and Skyway Boulevard	On June 30, 2026, the Salinas City Council approved a contract with Farallon Design, Inc. for design and installation of the Skyway Boulevard Roundabout Monument. The monument will "create a highly visible and culturally resonant sculptural group that reflects the identity, diversity, and vibrancy of the Alisal community."
2017	City of Salinas	East Alisal Street and Sconberg Parkway	The City of Salinas and County of Monterey jointly funded construction of this roundabout, as it is located at the City-County limits and extends about 200 feet into unincorporated Monterey County.
2022	City of Salinas	East Alisal Street and Bardin Road	Part of the Bardin Road Safe Routes to School Improvements Project
Under Construction	City of Salinas	Four roundabouts on East Boronda Road, at these intersecting streets going from west to east: McKinnon Street, El Dorado Drive, Natividad Road, and Independence Boulevard.	Part of the Boronda Congestion Relief Project
On Occasion	City of Salinas	Various small traffic circles, such as the one at the intersection of Coventry Street and Danbury Street, completed in 2026 as part of the Coventry Street Neighborhood Traffic Calming Project.	
Pending	City of Salinas	East Boronda Road and Hemingway Drive	Private developer will build it.
Pending	City of Salinas	Harden Parkway and McKinnon Street	Part of the Harden Parkway Path & Safe Routes to Schools Project

Year of Completion	Jurisdiction	Intersection or Intersection Set	Notes
Pending	City of Salinas	Three roundabouts on Williams Road, at these intersecting streets going from west to east: East Alisal Street/John Street, East Market Street, and Freedom Parkway	Part of Williams Road Safe Street Corridor Project
Under Construction	City of Sand City	Playa Avenue and California Avenue and the Highway 1 southbound ramp area	Allows buses coming off the dedicated multi-mile transit busway (running parallel to Highway 1 along the old rail line) to transition, exit safely, and merge into regular traffic, alongside general traffic improvements. Part of the MST (Monterey-Salinas Transit) SURF! Busway and Bus Rapid Transit Project.
2008	City of Seaside	Two roundabouts at the Seaside Auto Mall: intersection of Auto Center Parkway and Echo Avenue and intersection of Auto Center Parkway, Heitzinger Plaza, Calaveras Street, and Clementina Avenue.	
Pending	City of Seaside	Seven roundabouts on Broadway Avenue between Fremont Boulevard and General Jim Moore Boulevard in City of Seaside, at these intersecting streets going from west to east: Terrace Street, San Lucas Street, Noche Buena Street, Flores Street, Yosemite Street, Ancon Street, and Mescal Street.	Part of Broadway Avenue Complete Streets Corridor Improvements Project.
2021	City of Soledad	East Street and Metz Road	First roundabout in South County.
Pending	County of Monterey, Castroville	Three roundabouts in close proximity at the intersection of State Route 156 and Castroville Boulevard	Part of the State Route 156 / Castroville Boulevard Interchange Project.
2026	County of Monterey, Carmel Valley	Carmel Valley Road and Laureles Grade	Recommended in a 2018 Carmel Valley Road Corridor Study produced for the County of Monterey.
Proposed/Speculative	County of Monterey, Carmel Valley	Carmel Valley Road and Brookdale Drive	Developer of ONE Carmel (formerly called September Ranch) had proposed a roundabout as a more expensive alternative to a traffic signal at this intersection, and this proposal was discussed by the County of Monterey Carmel Valley Road Traffic Committee.
Proposed/Speculative	County of Monterey, Carmel Valley	Carmel Valley Road and Valley Greens Drive	As reported to the the Carmel Valley Road Advisory Committee at its October 5, 2023 meeting, the 2018 Carmel Valley Road Corridor Study suggested a round-about at the intersection.
Pending	County of Monterey, Prunedale	Prunedale Roundabout Project: Castroville Boulevard and San Miguel Canyon Road	Draft Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Declaration (IS/MND) approved on June 18, 2025.
Pending	County of Monterey, Route 68 Corridor	As many as nine roundabouts, at the following intersections with Highway 68 from west (City of Monterey) to east (City of Salinas): Josselyn Canyon Road, Olmsted Road, State Route 218 / Canyon del Rey Boulevard, Ragsdale Drive, York Road, Pasadera Drive, Laureles Grade, Corral de Tierra Road, and San Benancio Road.	Proposed as part of the Scenic Route 68 Corridor Project. TAMC and Caltrans personnel remain convinced after additional studies that Phase I of the roundabout project (Laureles Grade, Corral De Tierra Road, and San Benancio Road) will improve safety and traffic operations along the corridor, but public opposition to the roundabouts also continues.

For more information: www.salinaschamber.com

Salinas Valley CHAMBER OF COMMERCE BUSINESS JOURNAL

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

NOVEMBER 2026

By Kevin Dayton, Government Affairs Liaison

Your Salinas Valley Chamber of Commerce Government Relations Committee had 27 members at its meeting on Wednesday, Oct. 14 as it continues to pursue your Chamber's official vision of "a thriving, welcoming Salinas Valley where people, families and businesses succeed via economic growth and opportunity." Here's what they discussed:

1 The City of Salinas has hired an experienced and prominent local consultant to work with developers in the city's approval process for large, complex projects with sizable potential benefit for the city. This does not mean that other permit applicants are less important. It helps ensure that major developers do not give up on Salinas and go to other local jurisdictions to pursue desirable projects that result in economic growth, quality job creation, and new housing supply.

2 It was reported, but not confirmed, that the City of Salinas has hired a new Chief of Planning. The city was advertising for a "collaborative, creative, and emotionally intelligent leader" who would "have the ability to engage and affect action and response as well as manage sensitive situations effectively."

3 The campaign to support Measure G (renewal of the 2014 Measure G sales tax in the City of Salinas) has a campaign budget with planned expenditures.

4 Some Chamber members were invited on a job site tour of the Amazon distribution center now under construction. The opening is now tentatively planned for the third week of April 2027. Meanwhile, the City of Salinas is planning to move forward with Abbott Street road repairs, with sewer work happening this winter and perhaps paving happening in the following winter.

5 Representatives of the Chamber and the City of Salinas are attending a Massachusetts Impact Days Conference, sponsored by the Impact Finance Center, on Nov. 10–11, 2026, near Boston, Mass. This conference is an opportunity for the delegation to learn more about ways to finance projects using local investment capital.

6 Compass Church and the Salinas Valley Chamber of Commerce sponsored a groundbreaking ceremony on Oct. 13 for a workforce housing project for church employees, located on a vacant lot at 925 Padre Drive in Salinas. It's located within walking distance of the church. The new building will be a duplex with two units and with two planned Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs). It was designed by the local company Central Coast Engineering and will be built by the local company SSB Construction in a construction schedule of 16 months.

7 It was noted by committee members that Proposition 1 on the Nov. 3, 2026 ballot would authorize the State of California to borrow $11.25 billion for housing purposes by selling bonds to investors. Of this amount, $10 billion in principal plus the interest would be paid back from the state's general budget fund, while $1.25 billion would be repaid through veterans' payments on their home loans.

8 It was noted by committee members that Proposition 37 on the Nov. 3, 2026 ballot would authorize a state agency to borrow up to $25 billion by selling revenue bonds to investors and use the proceeds to create a down payment assistance program called the "middle-class homeownership loan." Each loan would cover up to 17 percent of the home price. (Homebuyers would need to provide a down payment of at least 3 percent of the home price.) Homeowners' monthly payments on their loan would be designed to repay the bonds over time and cover the program's administrative costs. The state would be required to keep interest costs for homebuyers as low as possible.

9 The Monterey County Board of Supervisors may soon approve the county's housing element for the 6th Cycle (2023-2031). The deadline in state law for the county to submit a credible housing element was Dec. 15, 2023. Developers have been applying for approval of housing in unincorporated areas of the county under the state's punitive "builder's remedy" provision that allows applicants to bypass some of the more onerous permitting conditions for approval of proposed projects.

10 MBEP (Monterey Bay Economic Partnership) has teamed up with the United Way Monterey County Financial Empowerment Center to help residents save for home ownership, work to ensure there is sufficient housing inventory to actually

have houses to buy, and provide local residents with direct and immediate access to opportunities to purchase houses in their own communities.

11 A committee member reported a personal practice of renting a house to teachers near their workplace at low rates. This has helped two of the teachers to save enough money to make a down payment on a home purchase. Two more teachers are now going to live there under the same arrangement. We can make a difference as individuals with conscious choices.

12 The Central Coast Child Care Facilities Action Network has begun a nine-month series of workshops on land use policy and childcare, with the goal of reducing regulatory barriers, increasing the speed of permitting, and establishing more childcare facilities associated with housing across the region. There are four Monterey County residents participating in these workshops.

13 The committee discussed conflicting plans for the use of the parking lot at the Salinas Intermodal Transportation Center (ITC). Supporters of the "Heritage Park" concept to create and maintain a city park encompassing historical buildings at the ITC object to a proposal from Monterey-Salinas Transit (MST) to move its Salinas Transit Center from Soledad Street to the ITC parking lot. Heritage Park leaders feel that local government officials have not been responsive to their concerns.

The committee agreed to have presentations at its Nov. 5 meeting from Heritage Park representatives and MST representatives.

Thanksgiving and Giving Back in Salinas

Dr. T.K. Anderson, Senior Pastor, Compass Church



There's something wonderful about a Thanksgiving table. Someone brings the turkey. Someone brings the pie. And someone brings that mysterious casserole that has appeared every November since the Nixon administration. Nobody knows exactly what's in it, but we'd miss it if it disappeared.

What makes the table special, of course, is the people gathered around it. Thanksgiving gives us permission to slow down, look across the room, and remember how much we have received.

Here in the Salinas Valley, gratitude comes with a particularly beautiful backdrop. We live among fields that feed people far beyond our county. Yet even in a place known for abundance, neighbors carry burdens we cannot see. Thanksgiving invites us to notice them.

At Compass Church, that invitation is shaping some exciting work.

Last month, we celebrated the groundbreaking for our 925 Workforce Housing Project at 925 Padre Drive. This project will provide housing for church staff, helping people who serve our community make their homes here. Central Coast Engineering designed the project, and SSB Construction is building it. I am grateful that local expertise is helping bring this vision to life.

Housing is deeply personal. Behind every conversation about availability and cost is someone wondering whether they can afford to stay in the community they love. A home means a place to rest, raise children, and welcome friends around a table. We are thankful for the opportunity to help meet that need by providing housing for our team.

We are also caring for a place that has welcomed generations... our Padre sanctuary.

Our historical sanctuary is 75 years old, and we want its traditional beauty to shine for years to come. The remodel includes restoring the pews, updating flooring, painting, and making safety improvements while preserving the familiar character people cherish.

If those pews could talk, imagine the stories. Weddings. Baptisms. Quiet prayers whispered through tears. Hymns sung by people who needed the words more than anyone knew. Some buildings hold more than furniture. They hold memories of God's faithfulness.

We want to honor the past and restore for the future. I am deeply thankful for everyone whose generosity is helping us care for this special sanctuary and prepare it to welcome another generation.

And as November gives way to December, our attention turns to our upcoming Toy Drive.

For a parent trying to stretch a paycheck, Christmas can bring anxiety alongside anticipation. A gift for a child can lift some of that burden and offer a simple, tangible reminder that someone cares.

I invite our Chamber friends and local businesses to consider joining us. Perhaps your workplace could gather toys together, or your family could make giving part of its Christmas tradition. Think of the joy a child will feel because you remembered them as you made your own holiday plans.

Psalm 107:1 says, "Oh give thanks to the LORD, for He is good, for His steadfast love endures forever!"

That promise holds even when this season is difficult. If your Thanksgiving includes an empty chair, a financial worry, or an unanswered prayer, God's goodness has not expired. His faithful love can sustain you through what you cannot yet understand.

This month, take time to name your blessings. Tell someone you appreciate them. Then consider how you might share what you have received with a neighbor who needs encouragement. A grateful heart often finds its fullest expression in a generous act.

Thank you to our Chamber members who invest their time and resources in making this community a better home.

From our Compass Church family to yours,

HAPPY THANKSGIVING

With gratitude,
Dr. T.K. Anderson
Senior Pastor, Compass Church

It Took 20 Years, But the City of Gonzales May Soon Have New Housing

By Kevin Dayton, Government Affairs Liaison

On Sept. 28, 2026, the seven-member board of the Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO) of Monterey County voted 6-0 to annex 768 acres of land within its sphere of influence in the Salinas Valley for the proposed Vista Lucia housing development.

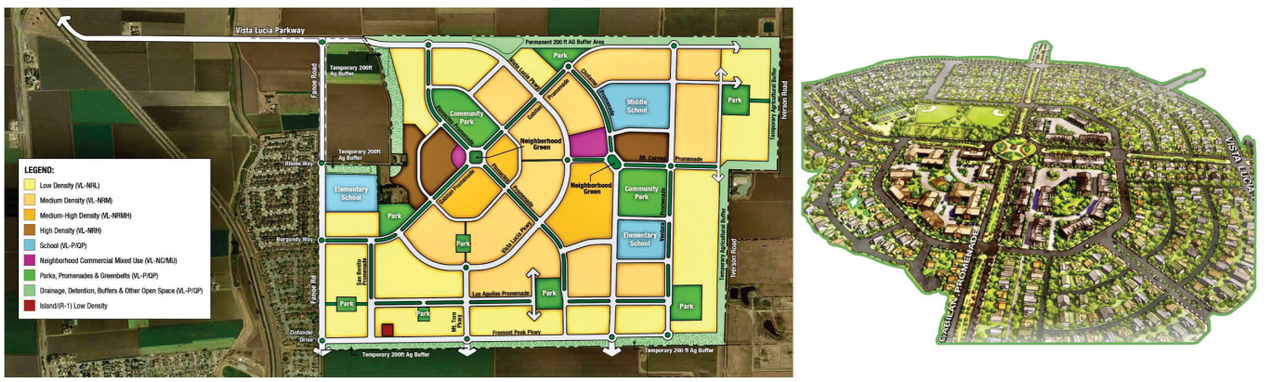
The motion to approve was made by County Supervisor Chris Lopez and was seconded by Salinas Mayor Dennis Donohue. Both the public representative and his alternate on the LAFCO board had to recuse themselves from the vote because of possible conflicts of interest, thus explaining why the vote was 6-0 rather than 7-0.

After more than 20 years, the City of Gonzales appears to be finally free of outsiders influencing its plans for Vista Lucia. This land annexation by the city could lead to future development of up to 3,498 residential units, 96,000 square feet of commercial development, 79 acres of parks, and three school sites, with land reserved as agricultural buffer zones.

The developer of Vista Lucia has a memorandum of understanding with CHISPA (Community Housing Improvement Systems and Planning Association, Inc.) for affordable housing construction in the first phase of development.

Gonzales Mayor Jose Rios spoke at the meeting in support of the city's request to annex the land. He said he was "here for the next generation." He noted that his daughter graduated from Gonzales High School in 2005, and since then 2,730 additional students have graduated from Gonzales High School.

In that time period of more than 20 years, not one single-family housing unit has been built in Gonzales. All of the new housing has been Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs).



The Pembrook Development website (pembrookdevelopment.com) depicts what Vista Lucia may look like at final buildout.



A depiction of Vista Lucia from the website of the City of Gonzales.

During the public comment period, I informed the LAFCO board that all 20 new housing units that received permits from the City of Gonzales in the current 6th Housing Element Cycle (2023-2031) were ADUs and classified as market-rate housing. Nothing at all had been permitted that would be legally regarded as housing available below the market rate.

In fact, generally nothing had been built at all. Toward a total housing goal in the 6th Cycle of 1,266 new housing units, the City of Gonzales had awarded permits for 1.6 percent of that goal as of the end of 2025.

Almost everyone who spoke in person and virtually at the meeting supported the annexation. However, there was one prominent and influential opponent: LandWatch Monterey County. An electronic bulletin transmitted by them after the vote declared that "LAFCO Rubber-Stamps Vista Lucia."

LandWatch contends that the Salinas Valley Basin needs to be considered as an entire basin, and therefore groundwater is not truly available for use by new residents and businesses. However, on a local level, it's projected that the use of annexed land for structures rather than agriculture will actually result in a net reduction in water consumption.

> "This land annexation by the city could lead to future development of up to 3,498 residential units, 96,000 square feet of commercial development, 79 acres of parks, and three school sites, with land reserved as agricultural buffer zones.'

LandWatch also contended that despite the developer's agreement with CHISPA to build affordable housing, there was no guarantee that any of the single-family houses built in Vista Lucia would ever be affordable for people who live and work there.

However, no developer came forward at the LAFCO board meeting with an alternative plan to build 100-percent affordable high-density housing complexes on vacant lots in the urban core of Gonzales.

Recession or litigation could derail this project. But for now, it looks like the City of Gonzales may become a place where more ordinary people can buy a home.

From Emerging Voices to Lifelong Pioneers: Highlights from the 2026 Legacy of Leadership Awards

By SVCC Staff

The Salinas Valley Chamber of Commerce hosted its 16th Annual Legacy of Leadership event, presented by Taylor Farms, at Portobello's on Main Courtyard in Salinas. The sold-out gathering brought together over 250 community leaders and business professionals from across Monterey County for an unforgettable evening.

The strolling event began with a vibrant social hour featuring gourmet hors d'oeuvres alongside exquisite wines from Silvestri Vineyards and Scheid Family Wines. Following the reception, CSUMB student Barbra Ann Wagner delivered a powerful performance of the National Anthem. The program that followed inspired attendees with heartfelt speeches from both rising leaders and longstanding community pillars among this year's honorees.

Young Professional of the Year honoree Celia Garcia, Marketing Manager of Mershops Northridge Mall, shared her journey of being born in Mexico City and raised in Texas, but also traveling through multiple countries, where early exposure to diverse cultures, communities, and educational environments shaped her outlook.

In 2020, Celia moved to Monterey County in pursuit of new experiences, personal growth, and professional opportunities. She highlighted how warmly the local community embraced her and emphasized the vital importance of platforms like the Junior Chamber of Commerce for young professionals to network and grow. Celia has transformed Mershops Northridge Mall into a vibrant community hub, drawing 10 million annual visitors, marking a significant milestone for a 50-year-old mall.



Guests mingle during the outdoor social hour at Portobello's on Main, enjoying hors d'oeuvres alongside wine pairings from Silvestri Vineyards and Scheid Family Wines.



Young Professional of the Year honoree Celia Garcia shares remarks on her journey and the importance of networking and building community connections.



(From left to right) Marisa Hernandez (office of State Sen. John Laird), Hartnell College Superintendent/President Michael Gutierrez, CSUMB President Dr. Carlos Vargas, and Ligia Gutierrez.



Legacy Award Honoree, Harry Wardwell, photographed with SVCC CEO Colleen Bailey and Board Chair Leonard Batti.

The **Nonprofit of the Year Award** was presented to the Arts Council for Monterey County (Arts4MC). Board Chair Christopher Long accepted the award on behalf of the organization. Arts4MC has helped turn the local community into a public gallery space and established First Friday Salinas as a premier regional event. In his remarks, Long highlighted the vital role of the creative economy and expressed deep gratitude for art being recognized as an essential pillar of the community.

Public Servant of the Year honoree Dr. Deneen Guss, Monterey County Superintendent of Schools, has dedicated four decades to education—spending over 27 years serving students in Monterey County to ensure they possess the skills needed for future career opportunities. While she will be dearly missed as Superintendent, her beautiful grandchildren in attendance served as a reminder of



Team members from Nonprofit of the Year honoree, Arts Council for Monterey County, gather for a group photo while celebrating with official commendations presented by federal, state, and local representatives.



Legacy Award honoree Harry Wardwell is pictured with members of the California International Airshow Board and leadership team.

well-deserved retirement ahead. Dr. Guss expressed immense gratitude, emphasizing that every achievement was made possible through a strong team effort as well as the support of her family.

The evening concluded with the presentation of the **Legacy Award** to Harry Wardwell for his decades of transformative leadership in Salinas. Reflecting on his early business career, Harry went into business with his father in early 1970s at Del Monte and Northridge Centers at Wardwell's Magnavox.

Throughout a distinguished career in business and banking, Harry has served in key leadership roles across the region. He also served 28 years as Executive Director of the California International Airshow, helping raise over $9 million for local charities while building one of North America's premier airshows. Harry shared inspiring words on staying the course, emphasizing the importance of perseverance and resilience when weathering life's challenges.

As the evening drew to a close, the shared energy among the 250-plus guests was undeniable. Beyond celebrating past achievements, the gathering served as a reminder that strong leadership is a continuous relay—passed from seasoned visionaries to rising champions who keep the Salinas Valley thriving. Thank you to all the sponsors and volunteers who made this event possible.



Diamond Sponsor and owner of Mag One Media, Alex Garcia, stands ready to manage audio-visual support and event production with his team.



(From left to right) Representatives from sponsor West Coast Community Bank: Oscar Avalos, Michelle Navarro, Manny Escarcega, Rich Aiello, Niraj Maharaj, and Bill Hernandez.



Sponsors Raymond and Catherine Costa of The Costa Family McDonald's Restaurants enjoy networking with their team during the social hour reception.



Monterey County Superintendent of Schools Dr. Deneen Guss, joined by her family and grandchildren, was recognized as Public Servant of the Year for over four decades of dedication to education and community impact.

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UPCOMING EVENTS —

- **Grand Opening and Ribbon Cutting of Youth Recovery Connections**
  Thursday, Nov. 5, 5:00-6:30 p.m., 111 East Alisal St., Salinas
  Join us for Youth Recovery Connections' (YRC) grand opening and ribbon cutting of their Salinas Office. YRC is a community-based nonprofit dedicated to supporting youth, adults, and families impacted by substance use, mental health challenges, and justice system involvement. YRC provides compassionate support, guidance, coaching, and care management to individuals, groups, and families facing difficult times, including barriers to care, financial or housing issues, and the need for local resources. Their space and staff are safe, supportive, and free of judgment, ensuring that everyone feels empowered to speak up for their needs.

- **Salinas Valley Chamber of Commerce Foundation Fundraiser for the Children's Shopping Tour**
  Thursday, Nov. 12, 9:00 a.m.–11:00 p.m., 900 Northridge Mall, Salinas
  Raising Cane's will be supporting the 2026 Children's Shopping Tour on Thursday, Nov. 12, from 9:00 a.m.–11:00 p.m. When you grab lunch or dinner and mention the 2026 Chamber Foundation's Children's Shopping Tour Fundraiser at the register or drive-thru, 15 percent of net sales will be donated to support this special community tradition. Bring a friend, grab a meal, and help support local children while connecting with fellow Chamber members!

- **Chamber Member Orientation**
  Tuesday, Nov. 17, 12:00– 1:00 p.m., 119 East Alisal St., Salinas
  Join us for our Quarterly Member Orientation, an informational session led by our Membership Director, Gabe Lopez. New and prospective members will gain a broad overview of how to get involved and explore the many ways to promote their business through the Chamber. Current members are encouraged to attend for a helpful refresher on benefits. Lunch will be provided for those in person. Zoom option available. If you have any questions, please contact our Membership Director at (831) 751-7725.

- **75th Children's Shopping Tour**
  Saturday, Dec. 12, 2026, 7:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m., Northridge Mall, Salinas
  The Salinas Valley Chamber of Commerce Foundation is proud to present the 75th Children's Shopping Tour, which will take place on Saturday, Dec. 12, 2026, from 7:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. at Northridge Mall. Each year, local schools and teachers nominate children, based on need, to participate in this special event. On Shopping Tour Day, each child is paired with a volunteer chaperone and receives a gift card to shop for essential clothing. Generous retailers at Northridge Mall offer exclusive discounts, maximizing the impact of each donation. There are opportunities available to support the event for everyone! You can volunteer at one of the many stations, such as set-up, check-in, distributing gift cards, cutting merchandise tags, take-down, or you can sign up to be a chaperone and spend a fun-filled day of shopping with the children. Witness the smiles and joy of children as they pick out their own clothing, create a lasting impact, and make memories! View detailed instructions at SalinasChamber.com.

RSVP at salinaschamber.com

Holiday Festivities: Considerations for Company Celebrations

By Alyssa Carbonel Matsuhara, Fenton & Keller



As the year winds down and the holiday season approaches, many companies host companywide celebrations for employees or choose to give holiday bonuses. Employers should keep various factors in mind when planning end-of-year festivities and bonuses to ensure compliance with federal and California law.

Attendance at any end-of-year celebrations should be voluntary. Making attendance voluntary at these gatherings respects individual preferences and helps avoid potential legal issues related to California's wage-and-hour laws.

For example, making attendance mandatory at a holiday party would be considered hours worked under California law since the employee is subject to the control of the employer. Mandatory attendance would therefore require that the employee be compensated for that time.

Allowing employees to opt into a celebration also ensures that personal preferences are respected. For instance, some employees may have reservations about attending events associated with specific holidays or where alcohol is served.

Mandatory attendance not only goes against these preferences but can also expose employers to additional liabilities for any injuries that may occur during the event. For similar reasons, consider making gift exchanges voluntary.

Additionally, despite the more relaxed atmosphere of a holiday party, it is important to remember that all company policies, including anti-harassment and code of conduct guidelines, remain in effect. Attendees should adhere to these policies.

For example, decorations and gifts should avoid anything that would violate these policies such as items that are offensive or sexually suggestive. Employers play a vital role in setting the tone by reminding employees of these policies before the event and reiterating them during any gift exchange announcements.

In the event of a complaint of harassment or violation of the code of conduct, prompt and thorough investigation followed by appropriate remedial action is necessary.

Employers also have a responsibility to provide a safe environment. While employers commonly opt to serve alcohol at holiday parties, it is important to maintain a balance and ensure responsible consumption for the safety of all attendees.

In certain circumstances, employers may be held liable for the actions of their employees even after the employees leave the holiday party, such as with alcohol-involved auto accidents. To mitigate risks, employers can consider measures such as distributing drink tickets, setting a cut-off time for alcohol service, and making food and water readily available to lessen the impact of alcohol. Employers may also consider covering the costs of transportation home, such as through a ride-share account.

And, to foster inclusivity and prevent anyone from feeling excluded or discriminated against, employers should avoid centering the party theme around a specific holiday or religion. Federal and California law protect employees from experiencing discrimination or harassment based on their sincerely held religious beliefs. To avoid these issues, employers should implement a neutral theme to create a welcoming atmosphere for all employees.



> Despite the more relaxed atmosphere of a holiday party, it is important to remember that all company policies, including anti-harassment and code of conduct guidelines, remain in effect. Attendees should adhere to these policies.

In addition to seasonal celebrations, employers may choose to give end-of-year bonuses. Generally, there are two types of bonuses: non-discretionary and discretionary bonuses.

A non-discretionary bonus is generally a required payment where an employer promises to pay a bonus in return for a specific result, such as exceeding a quota. A discretionary bonus, on the other hand, is a form of gratuity where there is no promise for their payment.

Holiday bonuses are a common type of discretionary bonus as they are based on no objective criteria and are not routine. Employers should be careful to distinguish these discretionary bonuses from non-discretionary bonuses, which must be included in the regular rate of pay for the purpose of overtime calculations for nonexempt employees.

Because of the legal implications, employers should be careful in distinguishing that the end-of-year bonus or gift is discretionary.

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


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NON-PROFIT EVENTS

First Friday Salinas — Arts Council for Monterey County

Nov. 6, 5:00 – 8:00 p.m., Downtown Salinas

First Friday Salinas is a monthly tradition designed to transform Downtown into a consistent, positive space for community and culture to thrive. Come and enjoy an evening of local art, live entertainment, delicious food, and shops open late. Bring your friends and family to Salinas City Center and discover something new every First Friday of the month — you won't want to miss it!

Salinas Red Kettle Kickoff — Salvation Army

Nov. 20, 12:00 p.m., 81 Coral De Tierra, Salinas — Corral de Tierra Country Club

Join The Salvation Army Salinas Corps as we kick off the holiday season. Be in the room for inspiring stories of hope, meaningful connections, and an opportunity to help ensure local families have access to food, support, and the dignity they deserve during the holidays and all-year long. Your presence matters. Your partnership changes lives. Funds raised support holiday assistance and help sustain programs that provide meals, youth services, senior activities, and emergency resources for neighbors in need in the Salinas Valley all year long. Let's spread hope and dignity and make sure no family in Salinas is forgotten this holiday season.

Cancer Support Group Women helping Women — Salinas Valley Health

Nov. 3, 1:00 – 2:30 p.m., 501 E. Romie Lane, Suite C, Salinas

Susan Bacon Cancer Resource Center

This support groups is for women diagnosed with cancer who are looking for a safe space to receive support, share information, and connect with other women going through the same experience. Participating in a cancer support group can help you increase your awareness, process your experience and emotions associated with your cancer diagnosis and offer coping skills.

40th Annual Share Your Holiday — KSBW

Dec. 11, Central Coast

On Friday, Dec. 11, KSBW 8 and The Salvation Army will hold the 40th annual Share Your Holiday, collecting donations for families across the Central Coast who need holiday assistance. The Salvation Army's Salinas Corps opened registration this week for people seeking assistance. Applications will be accepted until available spots fill. Call (831) 443-9655 to get a registration code. The Monterey Peninsula Corps plans to accept applications Oct. 27-30. People seeking assistance in other areas can contact their local corps for information about registration:

- Santa Cruz Corps: (831) 426-8365
- Watsonville Corps: (831) 724-3922
- Hollister Corps: (831) 636-9832
- Salinas Corps: (831) 443-9655
- Monterey Peninsula Corps: (831) 899-4911

Donations to KSBW's Share Your Holiday stay on the Central Coast and help local families. More information about donation locations and ways to give will be announced in November.

Bach's Christmas Oratorio —I Cantori di Carmel

Dec. 20, 3:00 p.m., 726 S. Main St., Salinas,

Salinas High School Performing Arts Center

Christmas gets a glorious musical welcome with Bach's Christmas Oratorio featuring I Cantori di Carmel. I Cantori's chorus, orchestra and soloists come together for music that bursts out of the gate and never stops celebrating, with brilliant choruses, soaring arias and some of the most exhilarating writing Bach ever put on the page. If Handel's Messiah is part of your holiday season, come discover another masterpiece that deserves to be heard. And come early. Music historian and tenor David Gordon begins his pre-concert lecture one hour before each performance, with stories and musical insights to take you inside Bach's remarkable score. Four performances in Carmel, Santa Cruz and Salinas. Come celebrate Christmas with Bach.

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



AMBASSADOR SPOTLIGHT MAGGIE RODRIGUEZ

Born and raised in Watsonville, Maggie Rodriguez has called Salinas home for the past 20 years. With 10 years of experience in sales, she serves as an Account Executive at Entravision, where she is passionate about helping local businesses grow and achieve success. Maggie enjoys building relationships with local businesses and contributing to the continued growth and vitality of the community. Outside of work, she enjoys hiking, exercising, exploring new restaurants, and attending concerts. She looks forward to connecting and collaborating with fellow Chamber members to help foster a thriving local economy.

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HR/LEGAL Q&A

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MONTHLY UPDATE | NOVEMBER

A Season of Local Flavor

As the cooler days of November arrive in the Salinas Valley, the Downtown Salinas Farmers Market continues to bring fresh flavors, seasonal favorites, and community connections to the heart of downtown. Fall is the perfect time to explore the market, discover locally grown ingredients, and support the farmers and small businesses that make our region special.

From crisp apples and hearty winter squash to fresh leafy greens and locally made goods, the market offers a variety of seasonal products to enjoy. Whether preparing a comforting homemade meal, gathering with family and friends, or trying something new, visitors can find plenty of inspiration among the market's diverse vendors.

Every visit to the market is an opportunity to support local growers, artisans, and entrepreneurs who contribute to the Salinas Valley's economy. By choosing to shop locally, community members help strengthen local businesses, celebrate the region's agricultural heritage, and keep downtown a vibrant place to gather.

EST 2000
FARMERS' MARKET
DOWNTOWN SALINAS



Fresh This Month

NOVEMBER PRODUCE & RECIPE

November brings cooler temperatures and an abundance of seasonal flavors to the Downtown Salinas Farmers Market. As fall settles into the Salinas Valley, shoppers can look for fresh, locally grown favorites such as broccoli, cauliflower, Brussel sprouts, carrots, celery, lettuce, kale, spinach, winter squash, apples and pears. With the season bringing more opportunities to gather around the table, it's the perfect time to explore the market for fresh ingredients that can turn everyday meals into something special.

Try This: Creamy Butternut Squash Soup

Warm up this fall with a comforting bowl of homemade butternut squash soup featuring fresh, seasonal ingredients from the Downtown Salinas Farmers Market. Start by peeling and chopping a medium butternut squash, two carrots, and one onion into small pieces. Toss with olive oil, salt, pepper, and a sprinkle of thyme, then roast at 400°F for 25–30 minutes, or until tender. Transfer the roasted vegetables to a pot with three cups of vegetable broth and simmer for 10 minutes. Blend until smooth and creamy, adding a splash of heavy cream or coconut milk for extra richness. Finish with freshly cracked pepper and a sprinkle of herbs. Serve alongside warm bread for a delicious, satisfying meal that brings the comforting flavors of the fall season to your table.



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