



# *Santa Maria Valley* **ECONOMIC IMPACT REPORT**

**October 2025 - March 2026**  
**Prepared for the City of Santa Maria**



## Introduction

The Santa Maria Valley Chamber is dedicated to fostering a thriving, inclusive, and resilient community. By leveraging strategic resources and strengthening local partnerships, we continue to promote economic vitality and create meaningful pathways to opportunity for every resident and business in our region.

From October 2025 to March 2026, our efforts have directly translated into measurable growth and community support. This report highlights our progress in enhancing the quality of life in the Santa Maria Valley through dedicated advocacy, workforce development, and business empowerment.

Aligned with our mission to support a vibrant and inclusive economy, the following achievements represent our impact over the last six months:

- **Economic Vitality & Growth:** We provided direct support to 11 potential new businesses and assisted 23 local enterprises with retention and expansion needs.
- **Inclusive Community Support:** Our Hispanic Business Group continues to thrive with 215 members, hosting major events like the Annual Posadas Mixer which drew 315 attendees.
- **Pathways to Opportunity:** We are investing in the future workforce through the NextGen CEO program, which has launched over 75 youth-led businesses to date. Additionally, our Teacher Tours connected over 80 educators with 13 local industries to align classroom learning with career readiness.
- **Resilient Infrastructure:** The Chamber is a key player in addressing essential needs, supporting housing projects that will bring 8,500 units to the region over the next 5-10 years.
- **Tourism & Economic Impact:** Strategic marketing efforts have maintained steady local revenue, with Transient Occupancy Tax (TOT) receipts totaling \$3,698,898.03 for 2025.

Through legislative events, business roundtables, and local government collaborations, the Chamber remains a cornerstone of civic engagement and economic leadership in Santa Maria Valley, striving to make the region a thriving place to live, work, and play.



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## Economic Development



At KIRK & SIMAS, we believe that being part of the Santa Maria Valley Chamber of Commerce is more than just a membership—it’s a partnership. The Chamber creates opportunities for connection, advocacy, and community building, all of which are essential to a thriving local economy. We appreciate being part of an organization that brings together businesses, leaders, and changemakers who are all working toward a stronger future for our region. Our membership reflects our commitment not only to business excellence but also to the growth and success of the Santa Maria Valley as a whole.

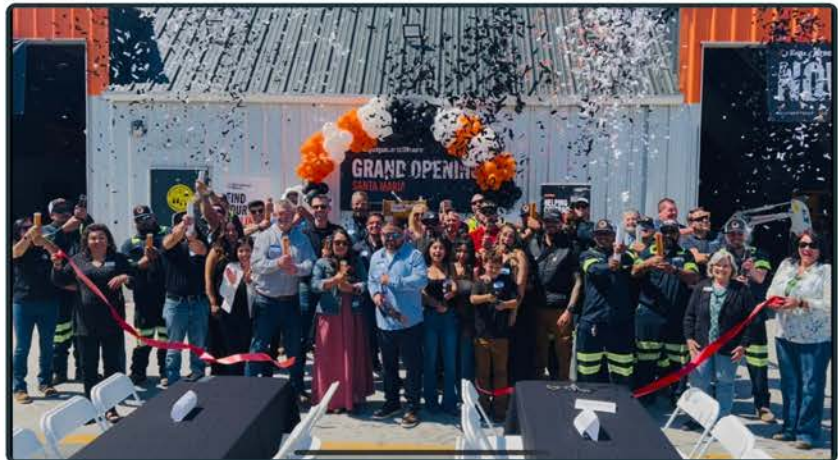
Joslynn Betty  
Office Manager, KIRK & SIMAS



## Business Attraction

The Chamber's Economic Development department provided direct support to 11 businesses thinking of starting a business or moving their business to Santa Maria. Examples of some of the business support provided are summarized below.

Business Type/Idea	Support Provided
Home based paint party concept	Advice on how to go about the request and what steps to take
Conversion of zoning for commercial/retail space	Advice on how to go about the request and what steps to take
Charter Tutor	Info on licensing
Transportation Business	General start up info
Sanitation Business	City Bus license/NAICS & SIC codes
Paint business	Business license information & process
Security company	Information on Gov contracting
Demolition company	Funding needs and general info
TBD	Business license help



## Business Retention & Assistance

The Chamber's Economic Development department provided business assistance services to 23 local businesses and residents. Some services provided are outlined below.

Business	Support Provided
Research for Hotel	Hotel inquiry ED Questions
Furniture store opening	Business supported; opening delayed due to external communication issues
Local Developer	Problems with pre fab home permitting with city
News station looking for a contact	Consultation provided; no additional support required or requested
Arrow Screw Products	Permitting inquiry
Furniture Land	Discussion regarding business & opening
Sanitation Business	City Bus license/NAICS & SIC codes
SM Tire	Base Access
Banking	Meeting of CEO
Resident	Info on HWL housing types
UPC	City General Plan
Resident	Heritage Walk Tile
Hotelier	Inspection difficulties
PT Business	Location needed
SB Humane Society	Location needed

The Santa Maria Valley Chamber of Commerce has been a great resource and advocate for our business. The folks within the Chamber promote businesses toward success and have an awesome business culture to work with. I recommend SMV Chamber of Commerce Memberships for businesses of any size. The networking is priceless and the Chambers involvement in the business and residential community is great!

Butch Lopez  
Treasurer / Project Manager, V. Lopez Jr. & Sons G.E.C., Inc.

## Providing Business Support

### Chamber Membership



Note: The Chamber has recently transitioned to a new member database and has cleaned up its data to accurately reflect membership numbers. Some fluctuation in membership numbers is due to this transition.

### Chamber Committees

Chamber committees engage community members to shape organizational focus and support while providing a forum to discuss and educate the public on critical regional issues. By bringing ideas and suggestions to the Board of Directors, these groups directly influence future projects and the economic vitality of the Santa Maria Valley. The Chamber has over 90 active committee members across its 6 committees:

- Ambassador Committee
- Business & Advocacy Roundtable
- Economic Development Commission
- Hispanic Business Alliance Advisory Committee
- Military Affairs Committee
- Santa Maria Valley Young Professionals Steering Committee



## Providing Business Support

### Networking Opportunities



# 2,300+

### Networking Event Participants

This includes the Chamber's weekly Build Your Business networking events, Chamber Mixers, and major events like the State of the City & Housing Summit.

### Major Events

The Chamber hosts a number of major community events throughout the year. Between October 2025 - March 2026, these included:

- State of the City (October 2025): This year's event focused on the future of Santa Maria, with updates from City leadership & department directors.
- Freedom Monument Ceremony (November 2025): An annual celebration honoring our local Veterans and their service to our country.
- Tourism Celebration (January 2026): The inaugural event celebrating achievements and the future of tourism in the Santa Maria Valley.
- State of Education (February 2026): This year's event focused on the future of Education. School Superintendents discussed safety, curriculum, growth and local needs for education.
- State of Vandenberg (March 2026): Leadership at Vandenberg Space Force Base provided an update on the past year, and planned future growth and activities at the Base.
- Tri-County Chamber Alliance Annual Meeting (March 2026): Leadership from San Luis Obispo, Santa Barbara, and Ventura counties met for an update on regional advocacy and policy.



## Providing Business Support

### Hispanic Business Support

The Chamber's Economic Development department helps support Hispanic business outreach efforts through the Hispanic Business Group, which organizes educational and networking events.



Major events & programming delivered to support Hispanic business growth included:

- Annual Posadas Mixer
- Monthly Grow Your Business Workshops: topics included the future of development in Santa Maria, and an intro to AI for small business.

The HBA developed and nurtured our community partnerships. In the last two quarters, while we saw minimal growth due to the committees decision to take a break during the months of January-March, event participation and outreach proved steady.

Business support has remained a focus of the HBA with over 13 individual consultations covering topics such as licensing, planning, start-ups. In addition to 8 business outreach visits with the goal of strengthening connections and promoting Chamber resources.



## Tourism

### Transient Occupancy Tax Data: Monthly Comparison

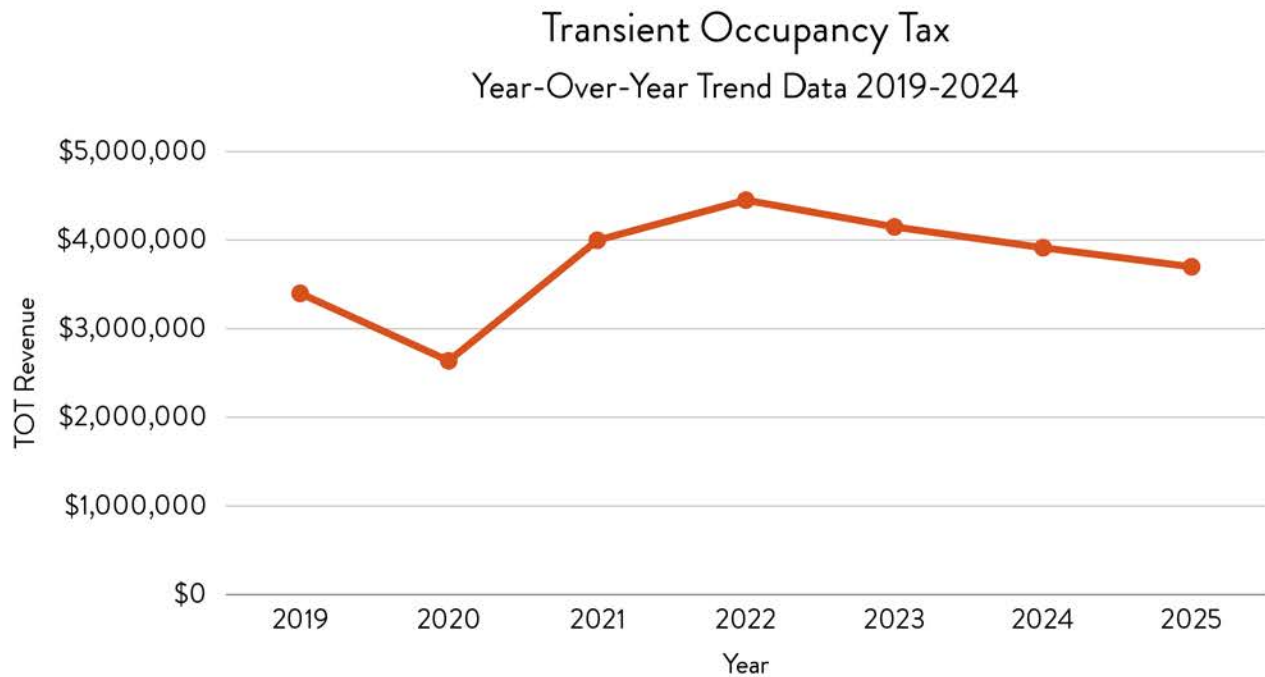
The monthly data highlights the seasonality of our tourism sector and the immediate impact of local investments. Early 2026 data shows promising growth, with February 2026 (\$218,456) already outperforming both 2024 and 2025 for the same month. This steady performance reflects the success of targeted visitor campaigns and the influx of travelers attracted to the region's unique amenities.

#### Transient Occupancy Tax (TOT) 2024 v 2025 v 2026



Month	2025 Monthly Totals	2024 Monthly Totals	2026 Monthly Totals
January	\$205,657	\$199,345	\$204,594
February	\$203,468	\$210,286	\$218,456
March	\$282,109	\$275,837	
April	\$258,990	\$277,268	
May	\$302,702	\$315,838	
June	\$416,673	\$496,629	
July	\$350,359	\$453,920	
August	\$351,666	\$363,851	
September	\$421,315	\$456,660	
October	\$297,810	\$287,080	
November	\$232,106	\$256,688	
December	\$337,061	\$320,938	

**Transient Occupancy Tax Data: Year-Over-Year Trends (2019–2025)**



The annual Transient Occupancy Tax (TOT) data highlights the Santa Maria Valley’s strong recovery from a 2020 pandemic low to a record peak in 2022. While recent years show a normalization of revenue, the sector remains in a stabilization phase with totals exceeding pre-pandemic 2019 levels. This long-term resilience, supported by ongoing property reinvestments and remodeling, underscores the region’s enduring appeal as a travel destination despite broader economic headwinds.

Year	Revenue
2019	\$3,399,366.19
2020	\$2,637,798.63
2021	\$3,997,711.59
2022	\$4,451,484.51
2023	\$4,149,018.50
2024	\$3,914,334.53
2025	\$3,698,898.03

## Tourism

### Trade Shows & Industry Partner Events

Since October, the Visitor's Bureau has participated in the following events and shows with the goal of bringing awareness to the Santa Maria Valley as a destination:

- CalTravel Summit 2025, October 6-8, 2025
- SLO CAL Summit, November 13, 2025
- Central Coast Tourism Council Fall Forum, November 17 - 19, 2025
- Seasonal Spectacular December 16-17, 2025
- 2026 Outlook Forum - March 10-12, 2026
- Los Angeles Travel & Adventure Show, March 7-8, 2026
- Bay Area Travel & Adventure Show, March 21-22, 2026



### Print & Media Impact



**1,430+**

Wine guides, Visitor guides, and maps distributed to local hotels, businesses and through Certified Folder Display placements



**211,147+**  
Website Visits

**4,400+**  
Website Hotel Referrals

### Familiarization (FAM) Tours & Media



We hosted 4 FAM tours from October - March, including:

- Bev Mast
  - Writer from Huntington Beach Living Magazine
- Steve Lyons
  - Freelance travel journalist for Pod Well Traveled, Yahoo Entertainment, Yahoo Life, and more.
- Jared Dillingham
  - Travel writer and journalist based in Phoenix, AZ. Featured on CBS5 and 3TV in Phoenix, as well as in online and print publications such as Canvas Rebel, Voyage Journey, Bold Joinery, and many more.
- Nora Tarte
  - Reporter and travel writer for 7x7 magazine, Nora Tarte, was a FAM we hosted on March 28-29. She focused on a writing assignment specifically to promote Old Town Orcutt.

## Visitors Bureau

### Restaurant Month

- Campaign Impact: Supported 11 local restaurants (Jan 16 – Feb 13), successfully driving off-season foot traffic through specialized menus and exclusive offers.
- Engagement: Digital marketing efforts reached 12,077 potential diners on Facebook and Instagram, resulting in 27,848 total views, primarily among the 35–44 age demographic.
- Local Success: Partners reported immediate community impact, with Straw Hat Pizza seeing over 100 participants in the first week alone.
- Support Provided: The Visitor Bureau provided all participants with promotional materials, including posters and table tents, and managed a strategy that included a Santa Maria Sun ad, a dedicated landing page, e-newsletter features, and collaboration posts/ reels on both Facebook and Instagram via @santamariavalley.



### Craft Cocktail Contest

- Program Overview: This month-long "tasting tour" in March collaborated with local breweries, tasting rooms, and restaurants to highlight the region's mixology scene.
- Winners:
  - People's Choice: Costa de Oro Winery ("Rosa de la Costa")
  - Judges' Choice: The Range Kitchen & Bar ("Coco Loco")
- Marketing Reach: Boosted social media ad for the contest launch reached 4,674 accounts and generated 8,058 views.
- Merchant Support: The Visitor Bureau provided all participants with professional photography sessions, promotional materials, including posters and table tents, and managed a strategy that included a dedicated landing page, e-newsletter features, and collaboration posts/ reels on both Facebook and Instagram via @santamariavalleychamber.



## Workforce Development

### Teacher Tours

The Teacher Tours program is done in partnership with the Santa Barbara County Education Office Career Technical Education (CTE) programs. The Teacher Tours program aims to:

- Build relationships between local industry leaders and teachers.
- Educate teachers on local industry best practices and what local business leaders are looking for in employees.
- Generate interest for businesses to participate in additional workforce development programs, including hosting student interns and teacher externships.



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Businesses Visited



80+

CTE Teacher Participants

### Santa Maria Valley Young Professionals

The Santa Maria Valley Young Professionals is a Chamber-led economic initiative launched in January 2026. Guided by a committee of emerging leaders from across the Santa Maria Valley, the group is committed to creating a space where young professionals can network, build relationships, and engage with local industries. It also provides opportunities to learn from and connect with established leaders who are making an impact in the community.

The group meets on the last Thursday of every month and is currently developing a mentorship program that will connect young professionals with experienced mentors to support their personal and professional growth.

### NextGen CEO

NextGen CEO is an 8 week program that teaches 6th grade students how to start their own business. At the end of the program, students get to open their business to the public. Since the program started, 200+ kids have participated, 75+ businesses launched.

In December 2025 we hosted the NextGen CEO Graduation signifying the completion of the fall cohort. The NextGen CEO Launch Day was also held in December in partnership with the Boys & Girls Club of Mid Central Coast.



### Leadership Santa Maria Valley

Leadership Santa Maria Valley is an 11 month program designed to foster and create future community leaders. over 400 individuals have graduated since the program began in 1995.

The Class of 2026 has 20 participants and their legacy project is to beautify Arellanes Junior High with a mural. The class has been working on gaining donations to fund the project.



## Workforce Development

### Workforce Development Board

The Chamber has a strong partnership with the Santa Barbara County Workforce Development Board and runs a number of initiatives in partnership with the organization:

#### Business Tours

The Chamber hosts monthly business tours for WDB program operators and community leaders to understand jobs available and skills needed in our community. Recent tours include Avid Water and Flying Goat Cellars.



#### Grow Your Business

The Chamber continues to promote opportunities for businesses to receive upskilling for employees, on the job training, or paid work experience through the “Grow Your Business” program. Additional information is available at [santamaria.com/workforce](http://santamaria.com/workforce).

#### workSBC

workSBC aims to improve student and jobseeker outcomes in Santa Barbara County by cultivating clear career pathways and strengthening connections between employers, educators, and wraparound service providers. The Chamber continues to work with WDB, SBCEO, and our industry partners on developing a strategic plan for this initiative. Recent work has included holding a number of convenings to shape this work and finalizing the steering committee, who will help guide the completion of the strategic plan and digital platform development.



### Partners in Education

The Chamber continues to support Partners in Education’s student internship program by providing leads on potential intern hosts. Additionally, the Chamber was an active participant in the latest career coaching cohort and provided support with student mock interviews.



## Advocacy

The Chamber advocates for the community by aligning with its mission to champion local industries and its public policy platform to advance the region's economic vitality. By maintaining close connections with local government and regional partners, the Chamber ensures that the Santa Maria Valley remains a priority in critical policy discussions and infrastructure decisions. Some of the support we've provided the community the past 6 months is outlined below.

Project	Support Provided
Modular home development support	Connection with city for alignment
Blosser Ranch	Starting to grade and work through city negotiations
Diablo Canyon Power Plant	Letter of Support
Simas Park FY 2027	Letter of Support
SMPD TRIC & Drone	Letter of Support
WDB EDD Regional	Coordination Letter
AB 1534	Letter of Support
HR 1163	Letter of Support
AB 1776	Letter of Opposition
SB 1123	Letter of Opposition
California Math Curriculum	Advocacy Letter
USMCA Trade Agreement as part of a U.S. Chamber coalition	Letter of Support

The Chamber has been a key player in supporting housing projects that will result in 8,500 units over the next 5-10 years. Their collaboration with Vandenberg Space Force Base and Allan Hancock College to find housing solutions is a testament to their proactive approach to addressing housing needs. The work of the Chamber in the area of providing access to affordable housing has helped us overcome a significant issue in the development of ATSU in Santa Maria.

Ted Wendel, PHD,  
Senior Vice President, University Strategic Initiatives, A.T. Still University

## Community Involvement

### Local Meetings & Events

The Chamber's Economic Development department stays actively involved in the community to build relationships and understand the needs of local businesses and the community. The below lists outline some of our recent community involvement.

#### Economic & Community Development

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- City Council - Businesses of the Quarter & Chamber 6 month update presentations
- Tourism Collaboration Meeting (quarterly)
- Meeting with Supervisor Gregg Hart
- Santa Maria Airport Ribbon Cutting & Inaugural Flight to Phoenix
- SMX Board of Directors meeting
- City Council meeting
- Impact Fee meeting
- Ecosystem Mapping Workforce Convening
- REACH Practitioners Network
- Industry Tour at Hardy Diagnostics
- Santa Barbara Foundation Community Info Session
- Civics Bee presentation at St. Louis de Montfort
- Teacher Tour - Digital Futures (Community Bank of Santa Maria, Space Information Labs, SMPD)
- City & Chamber Executive meeting (monthly)
- Community Development Meeting (monthly)
- WACE Annual Conference
- Career Coaching with Partners in Education - Defining Core Values
- 2026 State of Education
- REACH Workforce Partner Strategy Session - Regional Talent Pathways
- America 250 committee meetings
- Teacher Tour at VSFB
- Business Tour at Flying Goat Cellars
- Business Tour at Avid Water
- BBQ Fest meeting
- Outlook Forum Conference
- 64th Annual Square Dance convention (welcoming remarks)
- West Coast Kustoms car show planning meeting
- TMD meeting – history, marketing strategy

#### Business Support

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- Chamber Executive Committee Meetings
- Chamber Board Meetings
- LSMV Board Meetings
- American GI Forum Education Foundation Business visit
- Partners in Education Board Meetings
- Western Association of Chamber Executives Board Meeting
- Western Association of Chamber Executives Emerging Leaders Council
- Santa Barbara County Workforce Development Board - Board Meeting
- Santa Barbara County Workforce Development Board - Adult & Special Projects Committee Meeting
- LSMV Lunch & Learn Alumni Event with City of Santa Maria Community Development Director Chenin Dow
- BYB weekly networking meetings
- Santa Maria Town center discussion
- Local developer – development discussion
- United Way Board Meetings
- Leadership Santa Maria Valley strategic planning session
- Business Advocacy Roundtable strategy meeting
- Economic Development Commission planning meeting
- Housing Summit Planning meeting
- Economic Forecast planning meeting
- Tri County Chamber Board meeting
- Tri County Chamber event planning meeting
- REACH Practitioner Meeting
- REACH Council Meetings (2)

## Community Involvement

### Community Events

- Veterans Day Ceremony at the Freedom Monument
- State of the City
- Chamber Mixer at First United Methodist Church
- Homewood Suites Grand Opening
- Chamber Mixer with Natural History Museum
- Central Coast Airfest
- Rotary Christmas Parade
- Hispanic Business Alliance Posadas Mixer
- NextGen CEO Alumni Holiday Popup
- NextGen CEO Business Launch Day
- Nextgen CEO Graduation
- CASA Easter Egg Hunt
- Santa Maria Valley Tourism Celebration
- Santa Maria Valley Young Professionals Group Kickoff Event
- Leadership Santa Maria Valley Lunch & Learn
- Jim Glines Sign dedication
- EconAlliance Future Forum dinner
- Santa Maria Valley Young Professionals Meetup
- State of Vandenberg
- Chamber Mixer - Boys & Girls Clubs of Mid Central Coast



The Santa Maria Valley Chamber of Commerce stands out because they lead with purpose, and they take on projects with great thought and intention. I also appreciate seeing the work they're doing to deepen connections across the entire community, whether it's with local leaders, government, businesses large and small, or non-profits. Their impact can be felt across so many sectors.

Emily Kitts,  
Owner, Naughty Oak Brewing Company



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