



ANNUAL REPORT 2022-2023

Santa Maria Valley Economic Development Commission

Santa Maria Valley Visitors Bureau & Tourism Marketing District

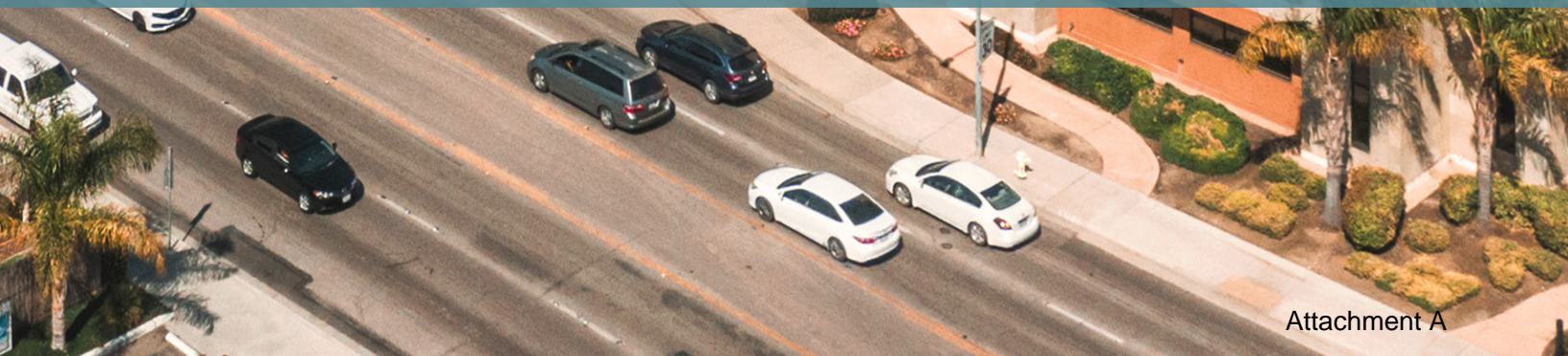


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MESSAGE

from the CEO

September 2023

Alice Patino, Mayor

Maribel Aguilera-Hernandez, Mayor Pro Tem

Mike Cordero, Council Member

Carlos Escobedo, Council Member

Gloria Soto, Council Member

On behalf of the Board, staff, and members of the Chamber, I am pleased to share with you the results of our efforts to promote tourism and economic development on behalf of the City and surrounding region. We are proud to work as partners with the City and others to advance economic vitality in our community.

This report focused on the work that the Chamber performed in these areas during the 2022-2023 fiscal year. We also try to provide some look ahead at the key areas of emphasis for the coming year.

As the community's lead economic development organization and destination management organization, the Chamber is committed to providing support for both existing and prospective businesses, ensuring that families and individuals looking for travel values choose our region, and in general providing leadership around efforts to raise the income and quality of life for those who live and work in our community.

As you review this annual report, we trust that you will be as proud as we are of the progress our community has made. We are also confident you'll join us in being optimistic about the prospects for even greater progress as we collectively continue to establish conditions that allow local businesses to be successful and our neighbors to thrive.

We look forward to continuing our collaboration with the City Council and staff and welcome your input and feedback as we work to increase our effectiveness and impact.

Sincerely,



Glenn Morris

President/CEO, Santa Maria Valley Chamber



ABOUT Economic Development Team

While many staff at the Chamber assist with various Economic Development-related activities, the individuals below play a direct role on the Chamber's Economic Development team:



Suzanne Singh
*Economic Development
Director*

Suzanne is the primary contact for the Economic Development Commission and oversees all partnerships & projects related to local economic development for the Santa Maria Valley.



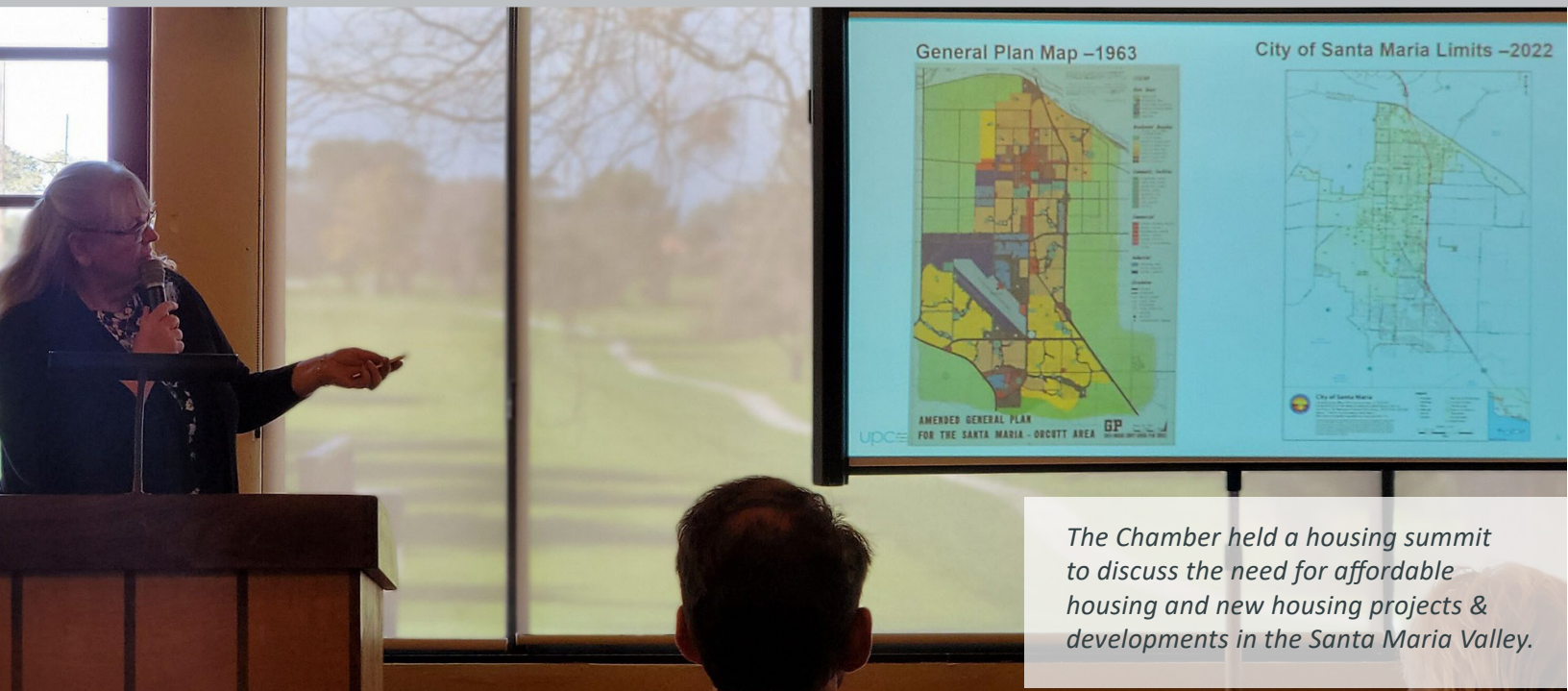
David Hernandez
*Hispanic Business Outreach &
Development Coordinator*

David assists with local business assistance specifically for the Hispanic Business Committee in the Santa Maria Valley.



Molly Schiff
*Director of Member &
Community Engagement*

Molly oversees the local workforce development and education programs and partnerships with community stakeholders related to these programs.



The Chamber held a housing summit to discuss the need for affordable housing and new housing projects & developments in the Santa Maria Valley.

The Economic Development Commission, made up of approximately 30 local industry and city leaders, provides guidance to the Chamber’s development and implementation of Economic Development strategies and action plans.

The Commission receives quarterly updates on key economic indicators and activity; identifies opportunities for, and barriers to, economic growth in the community; and helps to identify key initiatives to be undertaken by the Chamber.

Commission Members:

- Sam Cohen, Santa Ynez Band of Chumash Indians; EconAlliance
- Dave Cross, Fletcher Cross Associates
- Cara Crye, Farm Supply Company
- Eric Daniels, PG&E
- Mark Fugate, Charter Brokerage
- Angelica Gutierrez, L & G Farms
- Andrew Hackleman, City of Santa Maria
- Rob Himoto, Santa Maria Valley Railroad
- Sofia Lariz, Emerald Broadcasting
- Vince Lopez, V Lopez Jr. and Sons
- Ben Marsalek, CalPortland
- Steve McCarty, McCarty Davis CRE
- Chuen Ng, City of Santa Maria
- Ben Oakley, Western States Petroleum Associates
- Martin Pehl, Santa Maria Public Airport
- Matt Richardson, Marian Regional Medical Center
- Jerry Schmidt, Pacifica CRE
- Tim Seifert, Highcraft Builders
- Janet Silveria, Community Bank of Santa Maria
- Laurie Tamura, Urban Planning Concepts
- Brett Vernon, The Vernon Group
- Kevin Walthers, Allan Hancock College
- Ted Wendel, AT Still University
- Jeff Wilson, County of Santa Barbara
- Brooks Wise, Pacific Premier Bank



Gina's Piece of Cake celebrates the opening of their second location in Orcutt.

KEY Metrics

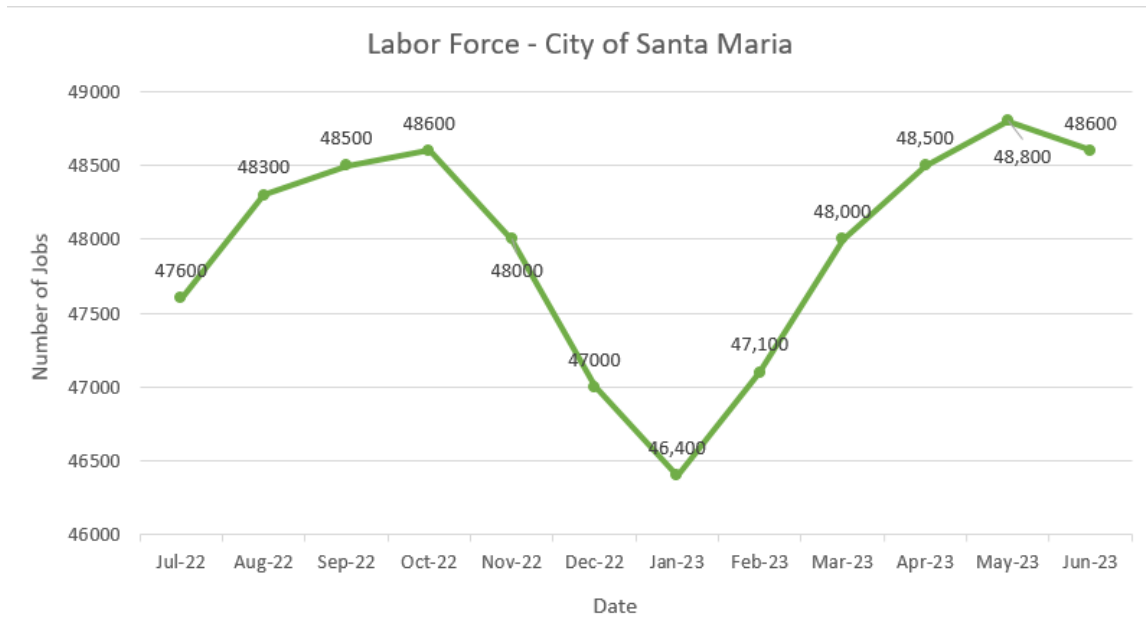
While there are many potential metrics and data points that could indicate the health of the local economy, the Chamber has chosen five key metrics that we believe provide a high-level view of economic activity. This report provides some initial snapshots of these data points; in future reports we anticipate being able to provide more context in the form of trends and potentially benchmarks against comparable communities.

The five metrics chosen as indicators of local economic vitality include:

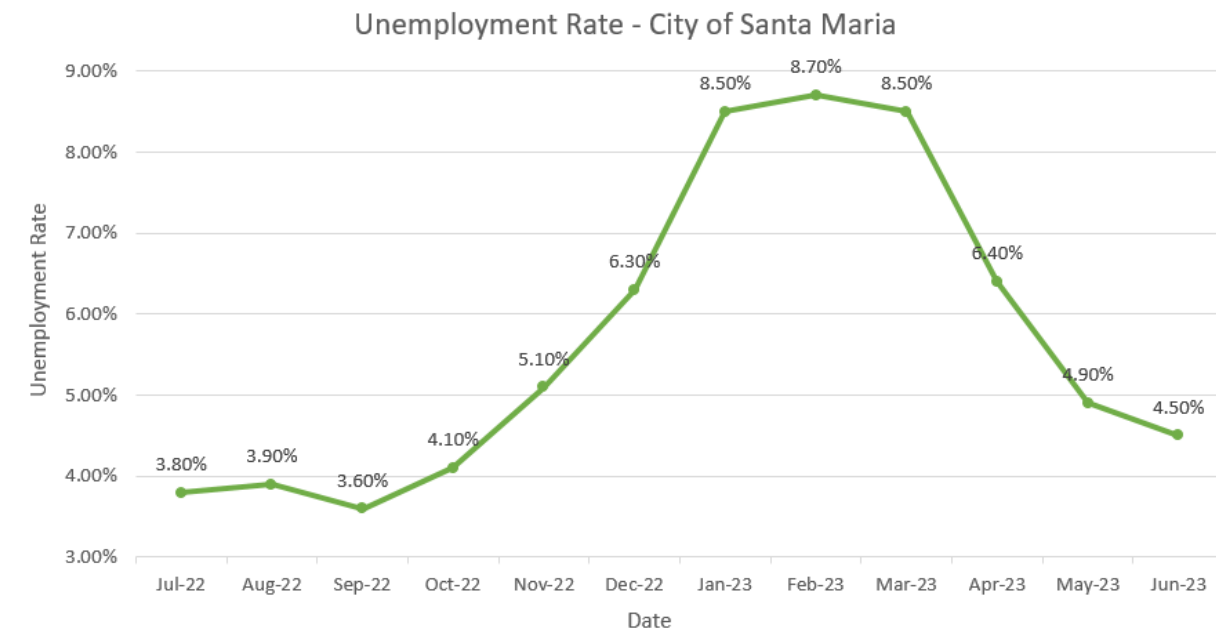
- Employment: Total jobs and Unemployment Rate
- Housing: Median Home Prices
- Investment: Building & Construction Valuations
- Business Growth & Potential: Business Licenses and Vacancy Rates
- Retail Activity: Sales Taxes per capita

Employment

From July 2022 - June 2023, the City of Santa Maria saw a growth of 1,000 jobs.

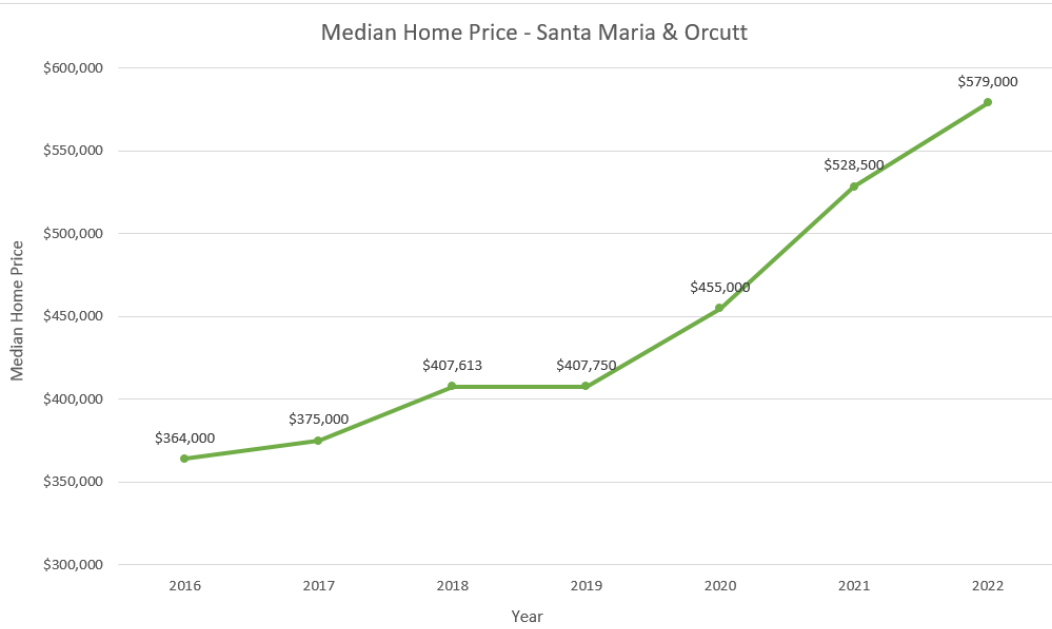


Source: California Employment Development Department (<https://labormarketinfo.edd.ca.gov/>)



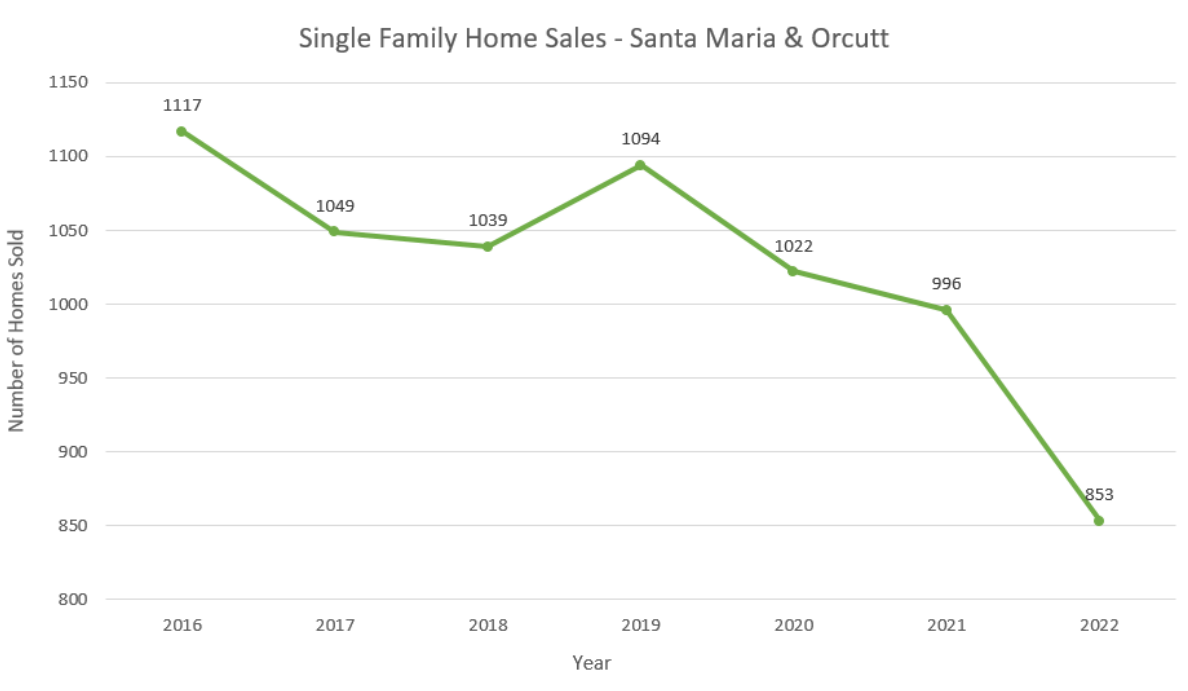
Source: California Employment Development Department (<https://labormarketinfo.edd.ca.gov/>)

Housing



Data Source: Central Coast Regional MLS

Data compiled by McCarty Davis Commercial Real Estate



Data Source: Central Coast Regional MLS

Data compiled by McCarty Davis Commercial Real Estate

Investment

Building & Construction Valuations (July 2022 – June 2023, City of Santa Maria)

Property Type	Number of Projects	Total Valuation of Projects
Non-Residential	12	\$13,408,957.00
Additions/Alterations (Non-Residential)	352	\$23,926,616.00

Total permits issued (Residential and Non-Residential): 2,391

Source: City of Santa Maria

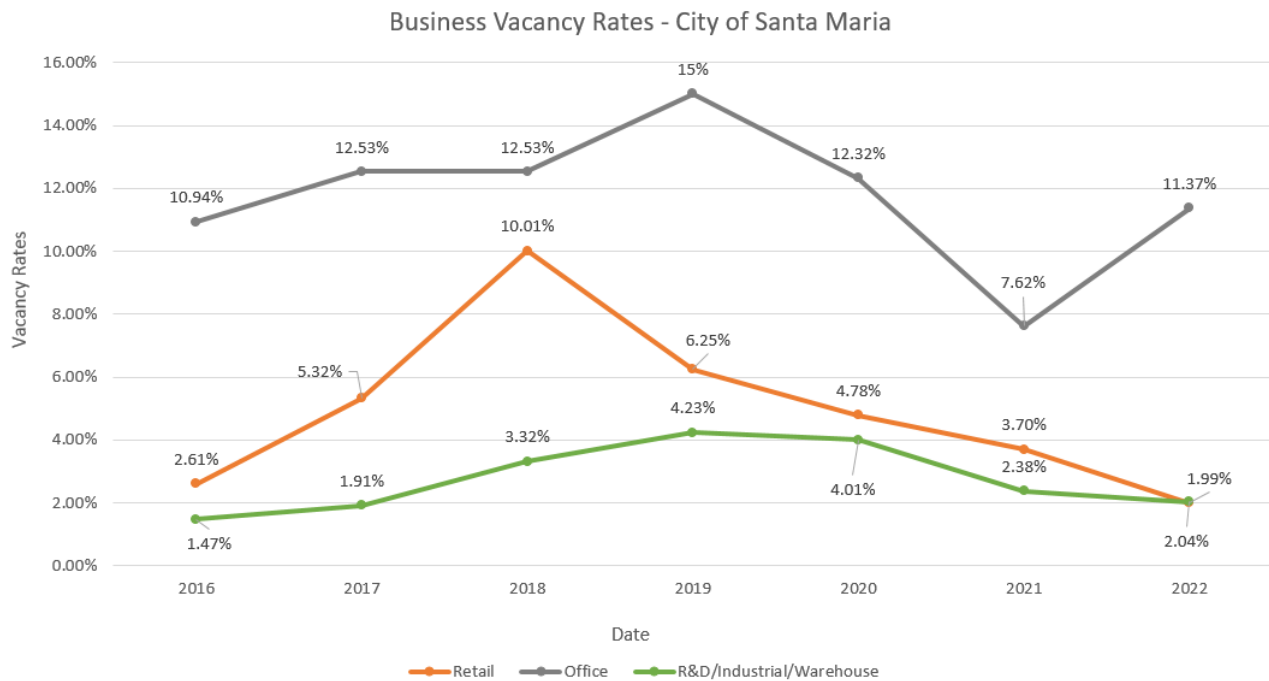
Business Growth & Potential

Business Licenses (within the City of Santa Maria) July 2022- June 2023

- New: 793
- Renewed: 4848

Source: City of Santa Maria

Business Vacancy Rates



Source: McCarty Davis

Retail Sales

Sales tax per capita based on sales tax received July 1, 2022 - June 30, 2023 are as follows:

Tax Type	Sales Tax	Per Capita
General Fund	31,824,994	290.7
Measure U	26,461,516	241.71
TOTAL	58,286,510	532.41

Source: City of Santa Maria



The Hispanic Business Group held a series of mixers to provide networking opportunities and business resources to the community.

CATALYZING Economic Growth

The Chamber's Economic Development team provides assistance to the business community on a variety of issues. From those looking to start a business in the community to those needing workforce labor or looking to expand, the Chamber's economic development work connects business professionals to the resources they need to be successful. Additionally, the Chamber works with community partners to bring new developments to the Santa Maria Valley. This year, the Chamber has made an intentional effort on outreach to the Hispanic business community with the created of the Hispanic Business Group.

"As a new women-owned company in Santa Maria, the Santa Maria Valley Chamber has been extremely valuable to my business. I have relied on their guidance, resourcefulness, and reliable connections. They always bring solutions and options to grow my business. The Chamber has been an important partner in my business growth, and I firmly believe that their support will help my business thrive."

- Petra Hernandez, Owner, 805 Solar Clean

In addition to these community vitality indicators, the Chamber also tracks several activity indicators to ensure that we are being effective in attracting and supporting businesses in our community. For the period covered by this report, those metrics showed the following activity levels:

236 Businesses Assisted

The Chamber's Economic Development team regularly assists businesses in making needed connections, understanding regulatory or licensing procedures, researching needed data, or engaging with the proper partner or resource. Of the 92 businesses assisted in this six-month period, we're pleased that about one-third were inquiries related to potential new business start-ups.



210 Community Outreach & Site Visits

The Chamber's Economic Development team connected with local businesses and community organizations through outreach efforts including 150+ local businesses and community efforts through outreach efforts including canvassing shopping centers including La Joya Plaza Shopping Center, Stowell Shopping Center Plaza, La Brea Shopping Plaza, West Main St. Businesses and others. The EDC has also had a presence at community events including Downtown Fridays, the CET Job Fair, and the Santa Maria Fairpark Farmers Market.

21 Business Attraction Leads

New business leads come through our partnership with the Governor's Office of Business (Go-BIZ) and from direct contacts with potential business operators or their representatives. While not all leads turn into actual new businesses, each provide us with the opportunity to share our community's assets with prospects and learn more about what businesses are looking for in communities. Potential new businesses that engaged with the Chamber's Economic Development team in the past six months included:

- Packing House
- Electric Bus manufacturer
- Semi-conductor manufacturer
- Electrolyzer manufacturing company
- Preisker Storage
- Westgate Village commercial
- Betteravia Plaza commercial
- Caring Hands Veterinary Clinic
- Behavioral Health facility
- Elements commercial
- Nothing Bundt Cake
- Guitar City
- Firehouse Subs
- Korean restaurant
- Coffee house
- Entertainment/drinking facility
- Ice Cream Mobile facility
- We Work concept
- Public Market
- Mobile Appliance Repair business
- Mobile Magnetic Massage

9 Expansion Projects

In addition to working with businesses looking to join our community newly, the Chamber's Economic Development team also provides support to existing businesses looking to expand by growing their current facilities or add additional sites. Expansion projects that the Chamber engaged with during the past six months included:

- Holiday Inn
- VTC Enterprises – new vocational training building
- Dutch Bros (2nd location)
- MAXCO
- A Street Deli
- Windset Farms
- Starbucks
- Bonita Packing
- Home Motors

19 Housing Projects

Housing availability continues to be a significant constraint on economic growth for our region. The Chamber was proud to work with development teams proposing a wide range of housing products as new additions to our community. Projects worked on during the past six months included:

- Westgate Village- 126 units
- Blosser Ranch- 1,380 units
- Betteravia Plaza- 443 units
- Celebration- 56 homes, 33 senior, 7,000 sq ft community center
- Barcellus Senior Apartments- 80 units
- Elements- 164 apartments
- Northman- 63 single family homes
- Solomon Hills- 4,000 homes 'Planned community" south of Orcutt in process for county approval
- Downtown Revitalization Project- approximately 700 units
- Cook Apts- 104 units
- Heritage Lofts- 102 studio apts
- Santa Maria Studios- 160 senior apts
- Avante Apts- 80 units
- Skylight homes- 49 homes
- Paradiso 90 duplexes- 150 senior apts
- Gateway Apts- 30
- Las Brisas- 340 apts, 103 townhomes
- Centennial Square- 184 affordable units
- Centennial Gardens- 169 affordable units



Elements Housing Project



Heritage Lofts



HISPANIC Business Outreach

The Chamber has made an intentional effort to increase outreach and support to the Hispanic Business Committee. These efforts have included adding a “Hispanic Business Outreach & Development Coordinator” to the Chamber team and the creation of the Hispanic Business Group.

The mission of the Santa Maria Valley Hispanic Business Group is to strengthen local business through fostering community engagement, providing business resources and tools, and supporting youth education. This Hispanic Business Group currently has over 40 active members, and a committee who meets monthly to plan networking events and discuss strategies to better engage with the local Hispanic Business community.

The Hispanic Business Group has held three mixer events, and plans to continue these outreach efforts and also focus on Hispanic business support and youth education in the coming fiscal year. The group has also started a monthly “Grow Your Business” event as another way to provide networking opportunities and increase awareness around resources available for local businesses.

“The SMV Chamber supported me before I even became a member. I used to work in a local sign shop and I decided to start my own business. Now I have two years in the market and being part of the chamber has helped me a lot with introducing myself to other business owners and making those connections.”

-Luis Arroyo, Aplicca Brand Partners

PROMOTING Local Businesses

Monthly Featured Businesses Program

The Chamber has continued its partnership with the City of Santa Maria on the Monthly Featured Businesses program.

This year, we have been highlighting long-standing local businesses, and businesses in the healthcare industry. In addition to being recognized during City Council meetings, the Chamber highlights these businesses on its various communication platforms, and the City publishes a press release each month.



Local Business Spotlight Video Series

The Chamber continues its partnership with the Santa Maria Times on the “Local Business Spotlight” video series highlighting different businesses in Santa Maria. Videos are shared by the Chamber, and the Santa Maria Times publishes an article, podcast and video from the business interview.

Videos produced the first half of this fiscal year have received over 700 views on the Chamber’s YouTube channel. Businesses also get exposure through the Santa Maria Times, who publishes the video, and article on the business and a podcast version of the content each month.



COMMUNITY Partnerships

Local Community Partners

The Chamber partners with a wide range of community stakeholders to maximize the impact of our work. Some of these partners include:

- Allan Hancock College
- SCORE
- Santa Barbara County Education Office
- Santa Maria Public Airport District
- Small Business Development Center

Regional Collaboration

The Chamber further extends our impact by participating and leading a number of regional economic development and advocacy organizations. Key among these groups are:

- CalChamber Local Chamber Coalition (legislative/policy advocacy)
- California Hispanic Chamber of Commerce (business services)
- Central Coast Coalition of Chambers (business support coordination)
- EconAlliance (economic development advocacy)
- Partners in Education (workforce development)
- REACH Economic Action Coalition (economic development)
- Tri-County Chamber Alliance (legislative advocacy)
- Workforce Development Board of Santa Barbara County (workforce development)



“The Santa Maria Chamber of Commerce has been an excellent partner with Vandenberg Space Force Base’s (VSFB) Space Launch Delta 30 through our Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for development of a Space Industry Expansion Master Plan with the Regional Economic Action Coalition (REACH). The Chamber has been instrumental in the coordination of communication between VSFB and local businesses identifying solutions for the needs of our base personnel and their families.”

- Thomas E. Stevens, NH-04, USSF, Executive Director, Space Launch Delta 30, Vandenberg SFB



STRENGTHENING Workforce Development

Junior CEO

Junior CEO is an 8-week program that teaches 6th grade students the fundamentals of starting their own business. At the end of the program, participants get to launch their business and sell their products to the public. This year's program (Fall 2022 & Spring 2023 Sessions) has a combined total of:

- 113 student participants
- 30 businesses opened on business launch day

Most profitable businesses:

- Caylee Suarez - Caylee's Candles: \$2,429
- Brenden LeRoy - B's Berry Dips: \$1065

Junior CEO will resume in September 2023. A "Junior CEO Alumni Group" has been added to the program to provide additional support to those looking to continue their business after the program ends. This will launch in the Fall of 2023.

Additional information is available at www.santamaria.com/education-workforce/junior-ceo



Leadership Santa Maria Valley

Leadership Santa Maria Valley is an 11 month program designed to foster and create future community leaders. The program allows participants to increase their understanding of local issues, challenges and solutions while expanding their personal and professional networks and refining their leadership skills. Each Class gives back to the community with their own unique Legacy Project.

Founded in 1995, Leadership Santa Maria Valley has over 330 graduates serving on boards of local organizations and in a variety of leadership roles within government, service, non-profit and business sectors today.

16 individuals kicked off the 2023 Leadership Class in August with their weekend-long retreat at the newly rebuilt Rancho Allegre near Lake Cachuma.

Additional information on this program can be found at www.santamaria.com/education-workforce/leadership-santa-maria-valley/



“I wanted to participate in LSMV to make connections with other leaders in the community as well as learn more about what our community has to offer. It’s important for the community to offer this program because it allows for individuals to grow within the community and become a part of something larger. I would encourage others to apply for the program because it has really helped me grow professionally as well as personally. I have made some great connections and made wonderful friends. Also it is an opportunity to give back to the community as well.”

- Kelli Padilla, LSMV Class of 2023



Santa Maria 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.

Teacher tours are day-long, career pathway-specific tours that provide CTE teachers the opportunity to connect with local businesses and better understand local workforce needs, so they can bring that information back to the classroom and best prepare students for jobs in our Santa Maria Valley community.

The Teacher Tours program launched in October 2022 and did 6 tours throughout the school year. 7 tours are planned for the 2023-24 school year, along with two “teacher tour mixer” events to provide additional networking opportunities between teachers and business leaders.

“Witnessing the enthusiastic curiosity and passion for learning displayed by the participating educators has been truly inspiring. Collaborating with these dedicated teachers has reinforced my belief in the commitment of our educators and the transformative power of education. I am honored to have played a part in this program and look forward to seeing the positive impact it will undoubtedly have on students and the education landscape as a whole.

- Jeffrey M. Marecic, Chief Information Officer, City of Santa Maria,

“How to Start Your Business” Courses

The Chamber has partnered with Allan Hancock College to teach a series of “How to Start Your Business” courses. These non-credit courses were bilingual (English and Spanish) and intended to help entrepreneurs get answers to questions they have about starting their own business, including the processes, how to set up the business, how to obtain a business license, other paperwork needed, etc.

4 courses were taught with a total of 220 in attendance. Future classes will be a series of 5 topics taught twice each for a 4-5 month series course.

Additional Programming

The Chamber is involved in additional programming supporting developing our future workforce, including:

- Paid Student Internship Program
- FBLA (Future Business Leaders of America) Speaker Series

Additional information is available at www.santamaria.com/education-workforce/



Community partners including the high school CTE program and Partners in Education spoke at the Chamber’s “State of Education” event about the importance of business involvement in workforce development.



WHAT'S Next

- AHC Business start-up course expanded with 5 topic classes/utilizing business experts
- Added Grow Your Business (Learning component/networking/business spotlight) within the Hispanic Business Group
- Work closely with the downtown community on business outreach and new development in the pipeline
- Continue providing assistance & resources to our business community
- Further work with SMX on their plan update and promoting of the airport area as the next job center for employment
- Continue to outreach to potential businesses as a potential 1st, 2nd or headquarter location
- Continue to support Regional efforts of coordination and marketing of the region

ABOUT

Santa Maria Valley Visitors Bureau & Tourism Marketing District

The Santa Maria Valley Chamber's Tourism team, which includes both the Visitors Bureau and the Tourism Marketing District, provides leadership in the community around two key roles.

First, the Visitors Bureau actively promotes events that occur in our community which generate economic activity both by attracting out-of-town guests and by including local residents. As an adjunct to this mission, the Visitors Bureau serves as the administrator for the Tourism Marketing District, which concentrates on out-of-market marketing targeting more specifically increased overnight visitations.

Secondly, the Visitors Bureau works to ensure visitors to our community are welcomed, provided with direction and connections, and leave having experienced the best possible hospitality during their stay, resulting in strong referrals and repeat visits.



Jennifer Harrison
Tourism Director

Jennifer plays a key role in the overall tourism marketing efforts and provides leadership and oversight within the Santa Maria Valley Chamber & Visitors Bureau and Tourism Marketing District.



Taz Dougherty
Tourism Coordinator

Taz works with the local hospitality industry to ensure programs and initiatives are well facilitated and implemented. Also, attends industry trade shows and networking events to foster positive relationships with community peers.



Cheryl Cuming
Tourism Marketing District

Cheryl works as a liaison between the TMD advisory committee, marketing agency and the Chamber tourism team.



Santa Maria Tourism Marketing District

The Santa Maria Tourism Marketing District (TMD) provides dedicated funding for tourism promotion without new local taxes or direct government spending. Under California law, TMD's are non-profit organizations formed by area businesses in partnership with local government. Funds are generated through assessments on participating businesses and are then used to promote the destination to visitors.

Tourism Marketing District Members:

Advisory Committee:

- Chair: Cherag Patel, Hampton Inn
- Past Chair: Ryan Swack, Historic Santa Maria Inn
- JP Patel, Fairfield and Candlewood Suites
- Jerry Patel, Economy Inn
- Ketan Panchal, Laura Lodge
- Seth Foster, Holiday Inn
- Gilda Cordova, Radisson

Chamber Representatives:

- Emily Kitts, Board Liaison
- Glenn Morris, President & CEO
- Jennifer Harrison, Director VCB
- Taz Dougherty, Tourism Coordinator
- Cheryl Cuming, Administrator TMD

City Staff:

- Mark van de Kamp, Public Information Manager



KEY Metrics

The Chamber has identified a set of key metrics that we believe provide a high-level view of tourism/hospitality activity. This report provides some initial snapshots of these data points; in future reports we anticipate being able to provide more context in the form of trends and potentially benchmarks against comparable communities. The metrics chosen as indicators of local tourism vitality include:

- Lodging Industry Trends. While tourism's economic benefits to the community go beyond the lodging component, Transient Occupancy Tax collections, along with Average Daily Rate, Occupancy Rate, and Room Revenue metrics provide a high-level indication of the strength of this economic sector.
- Additionally, the Chamber's Tourism team has identified the following strategic metrics to measure the effectiveness of our marketing and sales efforts. Specifically, we are now tracking Public Relations/Media Stories, Web/Social Media Engagement, and Large Group/Event RFPs.

Public Relations/Media Stories

The Santa Maria Valley was featured in over 2,200 regional and national stories throughout the fiscal year. With 35 stories placed and 9 FAMS, we were able to achieve \$1.62 million in publicity value.

Web/Social Media Engagement

We posted 1,205 posts and are currently at 18,500 followers across all of our social media channels. This is a 30% increase in total number of posts and a 26% increase in total followers. Between the months of July 2022 and June 2023 we had 45,000 total engagements, which is an increase of 75%

Large Group/Event Sales

The Visitors Bureau partnered with consultant Whereabout to research and develop a report, which will detail the current state of events & festivals in Santa Maria Valley and identify key strategic opportunities. We spent some time reviewing all data related to current and past events in Santa Maria Valley. The purpose of this review was not to compile a complete catalog of Santa Maria events, but rather to begin to ascertain patterns in what events have been most successful and why. We gathered existing event & festival ideas so that they can be vetted through this process. We compiled a scan of regional events & festivals so as not to duplicate events that take place in neighboring communities.

We held three workshops consisting of city leaders, event organizers and local stakeholders to develop an event scoring mechanism. Additionally, using the scoring tool we worked to discover the types of events and festival opportunities beneficial to the community. The events will then be compiled into a developed plan to target similar events that have the possibility to significantly impact overnight stays city-wide.

TOT/TMD Assessments

The data below shows the growth in assessments versus the prior year.

Specific metrics on visitor activities and the reach and impact of our marketing campaigns are detailed later in this document. We are pleased to report that the key metrics which we use to measure the return on investment of our programs were up year over year.

Transient Occupancy Tax (TOT)

Fiscal year comparisons for FY23 (July - June), FY22, and FY21

FY23	FY22	FY21	FY23 v FY22	FY23 v FY21
\$4,340,132	\$4,373,219	\$3,214,260	-0.76%	35%

Hotel Occupancy, ADR, and Hotel Revenue Trends

YTD Comparisons as of June 30, 2023 vs 2022

MARKET	Occupancy	ADR	Room Revenue	Rooms Sold
Santa Maria	-5.10%	0.50%	-4.70%	-5.10%
SB/Goleta/Carpinteria	-5.70%	-7.70%	-11.20%	-3.80%
SLO (City)	0	1.40%	1.20%	-0.10%
SLO County North	-1.20%	3.80%	2.50%	-1.20%
SLO County 5 Cities	-6.50%	-6%	-12.20%	-6.50%
SY Valley	-4.80%	8.80%	6.70%	-2.00%
Salinas	-2.80%	2.20%	-2.20%	-4.30%
California	0.90%	4.90%	6.70%	1.70%

SUPPORTING The Hospitality Industry

Hospitality Internship Program

As hotels continue to experience hiring challenges in a post COVID environment the Visitors Bureau sought out Professor David Jones, Ph.D. and Professor specializing in the development of innovative hospitality and tourism internship solutions based in curriculum and coaching. Professor Jones, retired and recently relocated to the Santa Maria area, is now offering to share his decades-long experience through structured systems with oversight on both interns and current hotel and hospitality leadership. Streamlining a workforce pipeline between Allan Hancock College and Cal Poly, this pilot program is intended to create long-term solutions around the need for students to enter the industry in leadership capacities versus entry-level positions.

Public Art Initiative

In partnership with the City of Santa Maria Recreation and Parks Department, and non-profit partner PLAY, Inc. the Tourism Marketing District and Visitors Bureau contributed a significant amount of funding to create, purchase, construct, install additional public art throughout the city, and use the public art pieces as a marketing tool to increase cultural tourism in Santa Maria Valley. The five-year annual contribution will continue to build on existing city art initiatives while creating new opportunities. Current projects include building murals and utility box art.

Local Event Support

Rather than trying to organize a year's worth of events ourselves, the Visitors Bureau supports event organizers by providing support in several areas. Through the Special Projects Grant program we offer financial support as well as complimentary services ranging from welcome bags, social media, event calendar listings, assistance with hotel room blocks, site selection, and media support to mention a few. Some of the noteworthy events supported this year included:

- AIDS Life Cycle
- AirFest
- Annual All Ford Car Show
- Santa Barbara County Fair
- Santa Maria Strawberry Festival
- Elks Rodeo
- Elks Parade
- West Coast Kustoms Crusin' Nationals
- Santa Maria Discovery Museum Kite Festival
- Santa Maria BBQ Festival
- West Coast College & University Wine Festival
- Disc Golf Santa Maria Open
- Welcome to the 805 Summer Classic

New events that received grants this year were: AIDS Life Cycle, West Coast College & University Wine Festival, and Welcome to the 805 Summer Classic.



Santa Maria Valley Wine Trolley

The Wine Trolley began as a collaboration between City of Santa Maria's Transit Division and the Visitors Bureau in 2016 as a pilot program. We saw the program return in 2022 after a few years of non-operation due to the pandemic.

Initially the 2022 trolley season was scheduled through October 16, 2022, however due to a bump in ridership, the service was extended to include weekends through the 2022 Thanksgiving weekend, ending with 770 Unique Riders and a total ridership of over 2,500.

With the increased popularity of the Wine Trolley at the end of the 2022 season, the 2023 season factored the previous year's extension into its plan, and set the dates from May 13 – November 26, 2023. This year's trolley runs on Saturdays and Sundays, and includes a new trolley stop at the Santa Maria Public Market. The route has also been reversed this year to give riders a more immediate wine country experience at the front end of the loop. As of June 30, the trolley has seen 152 unique riders and a total ridership of 463. This is a 32% unique riders and 15% total ridership YTD increase. Looking forward at July 2023, ridership reports indicate a similar increase when compared to July of 2022.

770

Unique Riders



2,500+

Total Ridership

Managers Meetings

In the 22-23 fiscal year, we were able to restart our monthly meetings with local hospitality industry managers. This includes managers from lodging properties, restaurants, wineries, breweries, attractions, and more. These meetings give the Visitor Bureau a direct communication pipeline to the hospitality industry and provide the industry learning opportunities.

The meetings started in March of 2023, and have seen a steady attendance through the 4 meetings we have had so far. June's meeting saw a learning opportunity for the attendees where our marketing team, KPS3, hosted a Social Media Training. The training provided insight to the industry on best social media practices, how the industry can leverage our current social media channels, and how we can better collaborate to raise Santa Maria Valley's social media presence as a whole.

Restaurant Month & Craft Cocktail Contest

The beginning of 2023 brought back our Dine Out Santa Maria Style campaign, which was a month-long celebration of Santa Maria Valley culinary culture, held from January 13 – February 12, 2023. All-month long, some of our favorite restaurants served up special menu items for just \$20.23. 2023's Dine Out Santa Maria Style campaign saw the participating restaurants increase from 15 to 16, of which 5 were new restaurants that hopped on the campaign.

Our Craft Cocktail Contest returned and ran in concurrently with Dine out Santa Maria Style. We again had 8 participating restaurants take part in our Craft Cocktail contest, of which 2 were new participants this year. The handmade and unique cocktails found at various establishments are meant to represent our region's history and culture. Secret judges visited each location to get a taste of the cocktail offerings and additionally, consumers were able to judge by taking pictures of the cocktails and using the hashtag #SMVCraftCocktail and #SMVDineOut and posting to their social media channels.

2023 Craft Cocktail Winners:

- Fan Favorite: Cool Hand Luke's, Luke's Wild West Bourbon Berry
- Judges' Pick: Cubanissimo's, Guava Mojito

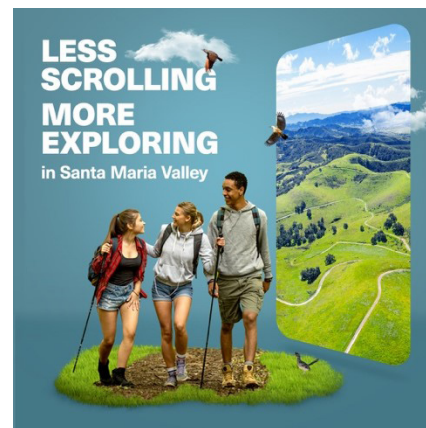
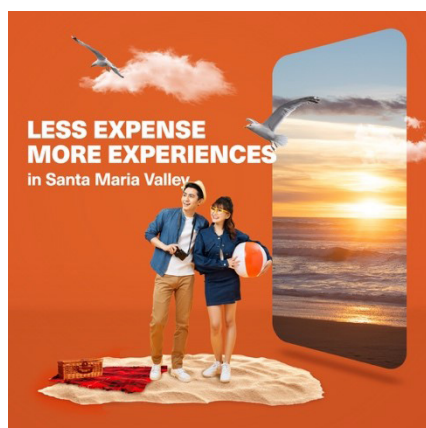


ATTRACTING VISITORS to the Santa Maria Valley

“Less is More” Ad Campaign

Shortly after the start of the fiscal year, the creative team got to work on an evolution of the highly successful Spice campaign – our primary campaign running for our paid social campaigns. This campaign had been out there since February of 2021 and, with a couple of refreshes, garnered results unlike any we’ve ever seen on the platform relative to ad and website engagement. As we saw that start to plateau, we knew it was time to give the campaign a bit of a “glow up,” introducing something new for Santa Maria Valley while leveraging components from the Spice campaign that we knew would continue to resonate with our audience. From this, the Less is More campaign was born.

The concept behind the Less is More campaign is this: We know that Santa Maria Valley is still less crowded, less expensive and less stuffy than some of our neighboring destinations. So, we wanted to talk about what visitors get when they focus on ‘less.’ Less worry means more seizing the moment; less distraction means embracing more experiences; spending less money means fitting more into your vacation. This concept focuses on all of the meaningful moments you can have when you add up Santa Maria Valley’s space, affordability, location and attractions.





Barbecue Month

Santa Maria Style is the superior style of barbecue and it's backed by a 150-year-old tradition, rooted in California history. Yet, for some reason, when people think of famous barbecue, they think of every region in the U.S. except for the Central Coast. Central California has been referred to as "one of the best-kept barbecue secrets in America."

We don't want to keep it a secret anymore. This Barbecue Month, we put Santa Maria Style on the map. The Barbecue Month mini-campaign was led by organic social—it's the most conversational and offers the perfect platform for sharing our story and having that story shared. By leveraging primarily vertical video, complemented by popular social media trends, we went all in on barbecue in a space that met the audience where they were with the type of content that would get their attention.

The campaign was driven by a strong creative concept and supported by public relations and paid social media tactics to broaden our reach and to ensure a consistent and well-saturated message throughout the month. The best part? The concept was designed to live on beyond just this month and this year. It would become a longer-term identity for Barbecue Month in Santa Maria Valley – one for which we can build recognition and continue to iterate on each year.

Barbecue Month results:

We sent 25 Barbecue Month press kits out to key national and LA-area food and travel media. Follow ups will continue, but it's already led to a connect with the digital editorial director of Travel + Leisure magazine. Our boosted posts resulted in 240,858 impressions, 3.6k clicks to the website (a 1.52% CTR) and nearly 49k engagements

- Our posts led to nearly 3k website sessions, two newsletter subscribers and three hotel referrals
- A dedicated email sent at the top of the month saw an open rate of 58% and a CTR of nearly 3% - the highest engagement metrics we've ever seen from a single email
- The Sizzle Central landing page attracted 2,518 unique page views with an average time of page of more than five minutes, 57 newsletter signup clicks, 94 cookbook downloads and 147 link clicks.

Influencer Marketing

This year, we welcomed five social media influencers to Santa Maria Valley through our partnership with Glocally. Social media sharing from a first-person perspective is a primary component of our influencer campaign. Influencers create and share content on their personal social media profiles which then gets amplified through the organization's owned channels. Instagram is our priority platform for this program, so we seek out micro-influencers whose audiences take interest in travel, wine, food and outdoors.



Overall, this year's influencer campaign resulted in:

- 436,000 impressions
- 147 posts
- 1.05% engagement rate

Public Relations and Paid Media

Our PR approach continues to be to primarily target the leisure travel audience, continuously reinforcing our unique experiences, Santa Maria Style barbecue, wine country and authentic hospitality at a value.

With Cision, we are able to add publicity value for stories trackable by the monitoring service. Throughout this fiscal year, we achieved \$1.62 million in publicity value through 35 stories placed and 9 FAMs.

Here are headlines from a few of our favorites in the last year:

- July 19, Yahoo Entertainment, Wine Tasting 'Santa Maria Style' with the Santa Maria Trolley
- August 16, New York Times, 12 Reasons to Love California Chardonnay
- September 13, Thrillist, Bust Out the Binoculars for This Wildlife-Fueled California Adventure

A full list of PR coverage can be found at santamariavalley.com/industry-info/in-the-news

Group Leads

The 22-23 fiscal year yielded 24 new group leads via a combination of website meetings/events submittals, our general partnership with CalSAE, CalSAE's 2022 Seasonal Spectacular, general complimentary services inquiries, and special project grant submissions. Out of the 24 leads we had 19 responses, leading to a total of a 79% response rate. Some highlights include:

- 2024 CA State Square Dance Convention
- CCAPP
- Mini West Meet 2023
- CalSAE – AMC Owners Retreat

Influencers & Journalists

The first half of this fiscal year, we hosted 5 FAM (familiarization) Tours for influencers and journalists:

- Molly O'Brien - Molly O'Brien is a Los Angeles-based journalist who writes for a variety of travel and lifestyle publications, including Fodor's Travel, Travel + Leisure, Matador Network and Business Insider, among others.
- Laura Beausire - Laura Beausire is a Colorado-based freelance writer. You can find her work in Condé Nast Traveler, Food & Wine, Travel + Leisure, Business Insider, Wine Enthusiast, Marriott Bonvoy Traveler, The Telegraph, Hemispheres, Sierra, Robb Report, Family Traveller, The Denver Post, TravelAge West, and other publications.
- Rina Nehdar - Rina Nehdar is founder and editor of L.A. Family Travel. Her work can be seen in L.A. Family Travel, Travel + Leisure, Parents, Global Traveler Magazine LA Parent and more.
- Hannah Stephenson - Hannah came to Santa Maria Valley through a partnership with Visit California. She is a journalist with the UK's Press Association.
- Jeff Buchanan - Jeff Buchanan is a California-based motorcycle journalist and co-founder of Robb Report Motorcycles, primarily writing for RoadRUNNER, an independently owned and published motorcycle touring and travel magazine.
- Jochen Schliemann - Jochen Schliemann is co-host of Reisen Reisen - Der Podcast, the largest travel podcast in the German-speaking world. He has written for multiple German publications, and more recently, Reader's Digest.
- Judy Karnia - Judy Karnia is an Arizona-based journalist and expert contributor to TravelAwaits, a publication focusing on travelers above the age of 50. Her work can be found in TravelAwaits, Flipboard and Wander with Wonder.
- Cori Solomon - Cori Solomon is an award-winning journalist and photographer based in Los Angeles. Her work can be found at her blog, The Written Palette, along with Wander with Wonder, FWT Magazine and TravelWorld International Magazine.
- Andrew Harris - Andrew Harris is a Southern California-based veteran specialty radio show producer and an accredited food, wine and travel journalist. He is the showrunner for The SoCal Restaurant Show, a food and travel-focused radio show serving Southern California since 2012.



Photo from Jeff Buchanan's article for RoadRUNNER Magazine, "Santa Maria Valley: California Shamrock Tour".

Social Media Channels

The Santa Maria Valley remains active on a variety of social media channels. A full report can be found in the supplemental report included with this document. Some highlights from the fiscal year include:



Instagram reach was up 109% compared to last year.



263,800 video views on TikTok.



7,000+ hotel referrals from social media advertising.



Website Updates

In the first half of this year, we updated the design for the lodging property detail pages as we noticed that hotel referrals (instances of people clicking from hotel pages off to the booking sites) were dropping. After an analysis, we determined it was because of the placement of the “Book Now” button, especially on mobile. We’ve updated these pages to be optimized for mobile and with the addition of featured amenities on each page. Just two months after the update, the results confirmed our hypothesis:

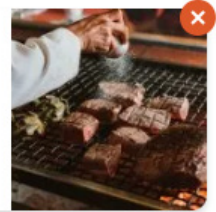
- Hotel referrals were up 30% year over year (that’s +150 referrals!)
- There were 395 ‘book your stay’ clicks
- There were 242 ‘check availability’ clicks
- The average time spent on these pages has more than doubled

Around the middle of the year, we designed a new, dynamic flyout on the website that would be a global feature to encourage more email signups. This was implemented in early February, and in one month alone we saw a 195% increase year-over-year in email signups directly attributed to the new flyout.

That success continued through the end of the fiscal year with noticeable year-over-year growth in email signups from that feature, as compared to the year prior where we had the more subtle flyout.

Hungry for More?

Sign up for the newsletter and we'll serve you choice updates. →



Digital Visitor Guide

Early in the second half of the year, we shifted our focus toward the design and development of a digital Visitor Guide. We wanted to be able to point potential visitors and trip planners (via social, email, etc.) to a visually aesthetic version of the printed visitor guide that they can use to gain inspiration for upcoming trips. Because the vast majority of our website traffic comes in via mobile device, the existing printed Visitor Guide PDF download isn’t a great user experience on your phone. The idea behind the digital version was for it to be a dynamic landing page with visually interesting content types and a clear path for consuming the information.

The digital visitor guide launched on June 8, 2023. By the end of the month, engagements and conversions were as follows:

- 246 pageviews from 203 users
- Average time on page of 38 seconds
- 1.21 average pages per session
- 3 downloads of the printed Visitor Guide
- 14 newsletter button clicks
- 3 clicks to the lodging page

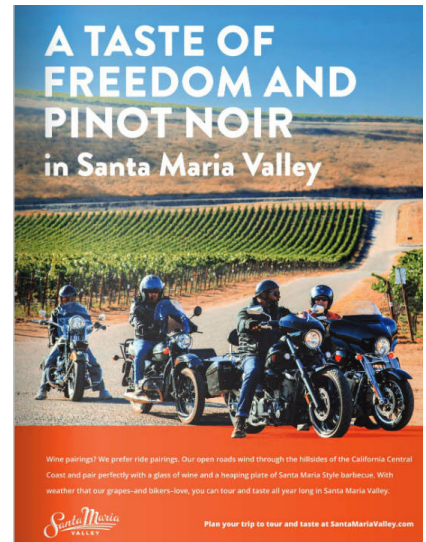


Advertising

Paid advertising placements included both print and digital publications targeting domestic leisure travelers. When possible, the Visitors Bureau participates in co-op advertising opportunities offered by our regional and state associations and/or coordinates co-op advertising with our local partners in an effort to extend the reach of our investments.

Advertisements promoting the Santa Maria Valley were placed in the following during the 22-23 fiscal year:

- PCPA Program and Ticketing Website
- Sunset Magazine Harvest Addition
- Roadrunner Magazine
- California Visitor Guide
- Central Coast Tourism Council Visitor Map
- The Sun Magazine
- CalSAE Meeting Planner e-blast
- Visit Santa Barbara dedicated e-blast



Website KPI's

The Santa Maria Valley tourism website remains a huge asset in bringing visitors to the Santa Maria Valley, and saw improved performance throughout the 23-24 fiscal year.

2,000

**Newsletter
Signups**

369,000

Website Visits

7,000

Hotel Referrals

REGIONAL Partnerships & Events

CaISAE

The California Society of Association Executives held their Seasonal Spectacular on December 13 & 14 at the Sacramento Convention Center. Taking advantage of the appointment exchange and trade show components, we were able to maximize the Santa Maria Valley presence among one of the largest association planner shows in the nation. The return of the Seasonal Spectacular event was successful in many ways and brought together an industry hit hardest by the pandemic. Having the opportunity to speak with many of the attendees first-hand, builds relationships and provides open-door discussions that otherwise would have been missed. Introducing Santa Maria Valley as a historic and family friendly host city for meeting and event planners is a win-win for those looking to connect outside of the congested larger destinations. Our community is positioned in a way that appeals to both restrictive budgets and those hoping attendees have experiential opportunities outside of their meetings as well.

CalTravel Summit

The Visitors Bureau attended the CalTravel Summit 2022 in the Greater Palm Springs Area. Travel, tourism, and hospitality professionals came together during this summit to discuss pressing advocacy issues, learn future tourism outlooks and forecasts, and to create new connections within the tourism space.

LA Travel & Adventure Show

The Santa Maria Valley Visitor Bureau recently attended the Los Angeles Travel & Adventure Show on February 18-19. This was our first Travel Trade Show back since the pandemic, and it was a huge success. We came in about 2000 pieces of printed collateral and tons of swag items and left with only empty boxes. The trade show also generated over 100 email sign ups.

Association Memberships

Association memberships allow the Visitors Bureau an opportunity to leverage large-scale platforms that provide cooperative advertising, industry relations, networking opportunities, data and trends specific to travel and tourism and advocacy. Currently, a member of CalTravel, U.S. Travel and the Central Coast Tourism Council, we actively work and advocate for travel and tourism alongside many of our industry peers.





WHAT'S Next

- FY23 influencer strategy + execution
- Spice campaign refresh
- Digital media mini-campaigns
- Refreshed Print Guides
- Events & Festivals Strategy | City-wide Event
- Mid-week Campaign - \$100 gift cards
- Targeted meeting planner effort
- Trade Shows
- SMX Allegiant inbound marketing campaign

APPENDIX A

Financials - Economic Development

Economic Development Commission Fiscal Year 2022-2023 - Annual Financials

	<u>Jul '22 - Jun 23</u>
Income	
42200 · Program Sponsorships	10,000.00
42300 · Program Contract Income	332,500.00
59050 · Administrative Fees	-63,455.00
Total Income	<u>279,045.00</u>
Expense	
61000 · Administrative Expenses-Shared	1,000.00
62000 · Building Expenses - Shared	200.00
63000 · Personnel Expenses - Shared	58,342.66
64000 · Professional Services - Shared	53,030.00
71000 · Operations Expenses	54,429.80
72000 · Prof. Development Expenses	1,585.00
73000 · Marketing & Sales Expenses	49,832.79
81000 · Event Expenses	6,144.36
Total Expense	<u>224,564.61</u>
Net Income (Year 1 of 2-year contract)	<u><u>54,480.39</u></u>

1. This report includes pre-audited results. An annual audit will be released later this fall.

2. FY23 EDC Financials include two special projects (COSM: PACC Feasibility Study; Solstra Outreach)

APPENDIX A

Financials - Tourism Marketing District

Tourism Marketing District

Fiscal Year 2022-2023 - Annual Financials

	<u>Jul '22 - Jun 23</u>
Income	
41000 · TMD Assessments	894,890
41050 · City Admin Fee	-17,944
46000 · Interest Income	32
Total Income	<u>876,977</u>
Expense	
60200 · Administration	125,285
64000 · Marketing	
60100 · Account Management	55,008
64010 · Media Placement	165,500
64015 · SEO / Media Management	48,000
64020 · Photo / Video Assets	33,164
64080 · Creative Development	59,915
64100 · Social Media / Email / Content	133,196
64280 · Local Event Grants	10,000
64340 · Memberships & Subscriptions	10,560
64450 · Public Relations / Influencer	96,495
64500 · Research & ROI Tracking	4,471
64610 · FAMs / Promotions	10,310
64640 · Social Media	1,986
64900 · Miscellaneous/Contingency	6,474
Total 64000 · Marketing	<u>635,079</u>
65000 · Miscellaneous	1,258
Total Expense	<u>761,622</u>
Net Income	<u><u>115,355</u></u>

1. This report includes pre-audited results. An annual audit will be released later this fall.

APPENDIX A

Financials - Visitor Bureau

Visitor Bureau

Fiscal Year 2022-2023 - Annual Financials

	<u>Jul '22 - Jun 23</u>
Income	
42000 · Program Revenues	593,000.00
53000 · Advertising, Sales & Royalties	10,710.00
59050 · Administrative Fees	-252,115.00
59200 · Miscellaneous Income	3,166.00
Total Income	<u>354,761.00</u>
Expense	
61000 · Administrative Expenses-Shared	141.39
62000 · Building Expenses - Shared	350.00
63000 · Personnel Expenses - Shared	151,005.93
64000 · Professional Services - Shared	269.82
71000 · Operations Expenses	15,067.68
72000 · Prof. Development Expenses	6,471.98
73000 · Marketing & Sales Expenses	133,179.71
74000 · Publication Expenses	15,402.79
81000 · Event Expenses	136.98
Total Expense	<u>322,026.28</u>
Net Income (Year 1 of 2-year contract)	<u><u>32,734.72</u></u>

1. This report includes pre-audited results. An annual audit will be released later this fall.



Santa Maria Valley Economic Development Commission
Santa Maria Valley Visitors Bureau & Tourism Marketing District
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