



**INSIDE THIS ISSUE:** Covid Related: Pandemic to Endemic **P.4** | Employers and COVID Sick Leave Laws **P.13**

## Water Flows from the Salinas Valley to the Monterey Peninsula

by Chamber Staff

There seems to be conflicting information, rumors and assumptions around the issue of water in Monterey County. So we have delved into the topic for our members. Is it true that water from the Salinas Valley is now going to the Monterey Peninsula residents to use as drinking water? Yes.

But don't jump to conclusions and accuse the Monterey Peninsula of "stealing water" to the detriment of the Salinas Valley. The current arrangement among several local governments to recycle water through the Monterey One Water (M1W) wastewater agency, solves many problems and benefits many parties. Among the benefitting parties are the City of Salinas and farmers in the Lower Salinas Valley.

### A Simplified Explanation

If you live in the City of Salinas, the Monterey Peninsula, or in Castroville/Moss Landing, you pay a sewer bill to a regional wastewater agency called Monterey One Water, prior to 2017, the agency was known as Monterey Regional Water Pollution Control Agency (MRWPCA). With the help of pumps, municipal sewage from the three areas is conveyed in three pipelines, to a Regional Treatment Plant near Marina.

You may have seen the facility as it is adjacent to the Last Chance Mercantile and Monterey Regional Waste Management District's Monterey Peninsula Landfill and Materials Recovery Facility.

Completed in 1990, this Monterey One Water Regional Treatment Plant has dry-weather flow capacity of 29.6 million gallons per day for "primary" and "secondary" →



**WATER** - Continued on page 16

## Salinas Downtown Vibrancy Plan Continues to Advance

by Chamber Staff

If you've attended the Downtown Salinas Farmers Market on the 300 block of Main Street on recent Saturdays, you've probably been astonished by the crowd size and the number of vendors. In fact, in February the event had 72 registered vendors and 52 more on the waiting list. Organizers of the Farmers Market are considering an expansion of the market to the 200 block, if it can be done while also increasing patronage of the businesses on that block. As it turns out, merchants on the 300 block have gained more customers from the Farmers Market than they have lost.

The now-completed Main Street Streetscape Project, opened up the street vistas to highlight the historic building facades, while eliminating unsightly relics of misguided efforts to compete against malls and sprawl big-box retail. The Main Street overhaul is one piece of the Downtown Vibrancy Plan, a comprehensive strategy approved by the Salinas City Council in 2015. The goal is to transform Downtown into a popular destination and neighborhood and phase out the tired, run-down, creepy place that drivers used to speed through on their way to somewhere more appealing.

The city was successful in using its Blight Accountability Ordinance, enacted by the Salinas City Council in 2019, to compel owners of high-profile deteriorated Downtown buildings to make a decision to either fix up their unsafe properties, sell them, or lose them in court proceedings. Now both interior and exterior construction is happening everywhere in Downtown - a successful follow-up to major public works construction projects at the train station (the Intermodal Transportation Center), West Alisal/Lincoln Avenue, and Main Street.

Under the Lincoln Avenue Corridor Master Plan, mixed-used development and parking garages will replace crumbling parking lots and vacant or underused land parcels, as intended in the Downtown Vibrancy Plan. With incentives provided under the city's Adaptive Reuse Ordinance, enacted by the Salinas City Council in 2018, historic buildings are now being renovated into multi-unit residences. Salinas will have a downtown full of residents of all incomes who have easy access to bus and rail transit.

The surprise of the popularity of the Farmers Market, to the point of overwhelming the organizers, is reminiscent of the Salinas Food and Wine Festival in Downtown Salinas last August. Every ticket to that event was sold before the event began, including the →



**DOWNTOWN** - Continued on page 9





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# Looking Forward to Serving as Your Board Chair in 2022

*- Rodney Meeks -*

*by Rodney Meeks, Board Chair*



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

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For those of you that do not know me here is a little background on me and my company. I grew up in Salinas attending Monterey Park Elementary School, Washington Junior High School, Salinas High School, Hartnell College, and Sacramento State University. My original career path was with the fire service. It was career day at Salinas High School and they offered firefighting training through the Regional Occupation Program (ROP). I worked as a seasonal firefighter for the California Department of Forestry at the Lockwood Station for three years while studying fire science at Hartnell College. It was then that my dad approached me about coming to work for him at Credit Consulting Services and eventually becoming his succession plan. I then changed my major to business and transferred to Sacramento State University.

I worked for my dad during the summer starting off in sales, and as a debt collector. After graduation I went to work for Northern California Collections in Sacramento where I learned commercial collections and earned a qualified manager's license. After 2 years I came back home to work full time for my dad.

One of the first things my dad told me to do when I came back to Salinas was to build my network. He said it's important to know the right people. He suggested I join the Salinas Junior Chamber of Commerce aka Salinas Jaycees. I joined the Salinas Jaycees and got really involved with fundraising events like the Allstar Football Game, Children's Christmas Shopping Tour, Haunted House, Airshow, and Night Golf Tournament.

I served as president of the Jaycees 1993-94. At that time the president of the Jaycees also had a seat on the Salinas Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors. From there I signed up for Leadership Salinas (Class Ten), which was leadership training offered by the Salinas Chamber of Commerce. Leadership training from both the Jaycees and

Leadership Salinas pushed me to serve as president of the California Association of Collectors and in leadership roles with the American Collectors Association. Involvement within these organizations has paid dividends beyond belief and has allowed to stay

current on all the important issues affecting my business. That is more true today than ever before as we face so many challenges running a business that include the pandemic, labor and housing shortages, the rapid pace of technology, cybercrime, government regulation, and inflation.

The Salinas Valley Chamber of Commerce is here to advocate for your business. Member engagement is the best way to get value out of your membership. Engagement provides you with knowledge to the local issues and access to resources. Engagement equals value. We have sent out a member survey and I encourage everyone to respond. I am also really excited to recognize our award winners at our Annual Awards Luncheon coming this April. I hope to see you there. ■

*Wishing you all success!*





# How Employers can move through the stages of COVID

by Spenser Smith, Lab Manager, ARCpoint Labs of Monterey Bay & Salinas

## Moving from the Pandemic Stage to the Endemic Stage of COVID is All About Managing Risk

The omicron surge has come and, at least in California, seems to be on its way out. Coupled with rising rates of vaccination and recovered cases of COVID-19, it now seems that the virus' peak danger and unpredictability may be behind us. As epidemiologists put it, the virus is moving from the "pandemic" or "emergency" stage to the "endemic" or "learning to live with the virus" stage.

But endemic doesn't mean gone. While the worst dangers of the virus may be peaking, a changed regulatory environment for employers will remain. Whether directly, through new regulations and mandates about testing or vaccination, or indirectly, with new norms of employee behavior and expectations, COVID-19 is sure to leave a lasting mark on how companies in Monterey County operate. The key to making this transition smoothly will come down to planning, adapting to a shifting regulatory environment, and managing the risk of COVID-19 in the workplace proactively instead of simply reacting to emergencies.

But what is the difference between a pandemic and endemic, and why does it matter? According to the Los Angeles Times, which has covered this topic extensively, "Endemic is related to two words we've come to know well: Epidemic: an infectious disease outbreak that is spreading rapidly through a community and pandemic: an epidemic that affects people throughout a large region or across multiple continents." When the virus reaches the endemic stage, it will still spread from one person to another, and it will still affect people all over the world. The key difference is that it will do both of those things at stable levels.

"Stability is important because it translates into predictability," says the Times "Knowing how many people will come down with COVID-19, when they're most likely to get sick and where they'll be most vulnerable will allow health officials to contain the disease with far fewer disruptions to the public at large. Influenza is a good example of an endemic disease. About 8% of the U.S. population comes down with it every year, and the bulk of cases are clustered in the winter months."

Meanwhile, business owners still have to deal with the ground constantly shifting beneath them as regulations change, new laws are introduced, and everyone scrambles to see what the so-called "new normal" will look like. For example, as reported by the LA Times, California would require workers to be vaccinated against COVID-19 under a bill introduced Feb. 11 by a group of Democratic lawmakers pushing for stricter inoculation laws in the state.

Assembly Bill 1993 by Assemblywoman Buffy Wicks (D-Oakland) would require employees and independent contractors to be vaccinated against COVID-19 as a condition of employment unless they have an exemption based on a medical condition, disability or religious beliefs.

"Keeping our communities safe is our top charge as elected officials," Wicks told the Times. "And we know that none of us want to go back to closing down schools or closing down businesses ... We know if we're vaccinated, we can combat this."

Under the bill, the Cal/OSHA would work with the state's public health department on guidance for employers on what would constitute a valid exemption. Businesses would face a penalty for failing to comply, although the amount has yet to be determined, Wicks said. Employers would have to notify the state that all workers are vaccinated against COVID-19 by Jan. 1, 2023.

Separately, on Feb. 9, 2022, Gov. Gavin Newsome signed legislation extending COVID-19 supplemental paid sick leave for workers, as well as early budget action to provide an additional \$6.1 billion in tax relief, tax credits and direct grants for small businesses hit hard by the pandemic, bolstering the state's historic COVID relief efforts and investing in California's entrepreneurial economy.

Meanwhile, California employers face potential risk on the civil front. A widely reported

case involving a worker at a See's candy factory is testing whether employees who become infected with COVID-19 while in the workplace and pass the infection to family members can sue the employer in civil court for resulting injuries suffered by third parties.

From January 2020 to Feb. 9, 2022, almost 5,000 cases have been filed nationwide, a whopping 2,000 in California alone. COVID-19 litigation is testing the limits of California expense reimbursements for employees' necessary business expenses in this remote environment.

Workplace regulations introduced during the pandemic don't seem likely to simply disappear, either. According to Cal/OSHA, employers are still responsible for providing a safe and healthy workplace free from recognized hazards like COVID-19. In fact, OSHA, on its website, says "Employers should engage with workers and their representatives to determine how to implement multi-layered interventions to protect unvaccinated and otherwise at-risk workers and mitigate the spread of COVID-19," followed by an 11-point list of mitigation measures (for a full rundown of the measures, go to: <https://www.osha.gov/coronavirus/safework>).

All of this adds up to a complex and shifting environment in which California employers now operate. Yet just as predictability in the spread of COVID-19 make it more tractable as a public health challenge, predictability of COVID-19 as a workplace hazard and regulatory issue will make it easier for prepared employers to manage the risk it poses.

John Arensmeyer, chief operating officer for the advocacy group Small Business Majority, said one uniform vaccine law would make it easier than piecemeal requirements that depend on where a person works. "Small businesses don't want to be traffic cops in debates about public safety," Arensmeyer said. "They're looking for a common statewide standard that disentangles them from politics and enables them to operate their businesses safely and predictably."

The bottom line is that businesses have to continue to be keenly aware of their employees' health and safety in the post-pandemic world. The COVID-19 virus isn't the only thing that will stay with us; the changes and challenges it has wrought in the workplace will be with us for a while, too.

Planning now minimizes exposure to those risks. Instituting a clear workplace policy, and updating it regularly to align with changing regulations, laws, and best practices, will be vital. A small investment in a flexible testing program can prevent huge potential legal fees, health risks, absences, even shutdowns. ARCpoint Labs of Monterey Bay is proud to be your resource for information about testing technologies, regulations, and best practices for whatever comes next.

ARCpoint Labs Manager Spenser Smith can be reached at [spenser@arcpointlabs.com](mailto:spenser@arcpointlabs.com) or (831) 324-0772. ■

*The article is intended to offer information by Chamber member, ARCpoint Labs. Maintaining a safe and productive work environment during the Omicron spike is more challenging than ever, and ARCpoint Labs of Monterey and Salinas are available to serve. The Chamber shall have no liability for the accuracy of the information and cannot be held liable for any third-party claims or losses of any damages.*



Spenser Smith,  
Lab Manager,  
ARCpoint Labs of  
Monterey Bay & Salinas





# City of Salinas to Require Rental Property Owners to Register and Pay Annual Fee

by Chamber Staff

## Salinas Valley Chamber Opposes

The Salinas City Council voted 6-1 in January to proceed with development of a city government registration and fee system for all owners/managers of rental properties in the city, with a review of the registry in a year for consideration of a mandatory city inspection program for rental properties. City staff will refine the proposal and bring it before the city council in March for final implementation.

To thoroughly evaluate the proposal before taking a position, the Salinas Valley Chamber's Government Relations Committee spent 90 minutes at its monthly meeting on February 9, hearing from city staff, supporters, and opponents of the proposal. In advance of the meeting, a comprehensive table of pros and cons of the registry program was prepared by staff.

After discussion, the Government Relations Committee recommended that the Chamber oppose the proposal. It was noted that the city was pulling all landlords in the city into involvement and financing of a new government program that should focus instead on the egregious violators. Some aspects of the proposal are a duplication of what the state and county governments already require. In addition, sometimes the violations that occur at rental properties are the result of tenants figuring out ways to bring in more income by quietly subletting their space, in violation of

their leases and the law.

There was concern that outside interest groups and trial lawyers would exploit the city's registry to target larger, well-funded property owners and managers with petty or baseless complaints in conjunction with demands for "settlement" payments to avoid litigation. City officials are aware of this potential abuse and have said that they will work to minimize that threat.

Ultimately, the City of Salinas needs to continue considering and adopting policies that encourage the construction of new housing units that ordinary people can afford. Compared to other local governments in the Monterey Bay region, the City of Salinas has made significant progress in enacting policies that promote housing. But more attention is still needed on challenges such as the cost of developer impact fees and the burdens of the permitting process. The city also needs to find an ideal balance between prodding private developers into building housing for low income households and undermining the economic incentive for those developers to risk investment in new housing construction.

Meanwhile, in a region where demand for housing far exceeds supply, there will be certain individuals who take advantage of market conditions to make money at the expense of others. The city government can drag the entire housing market into a costly new regulatory system that invites even more exploitation. Or, it can work to increase the housing supply while focusing on property owners who exploit the lack of equilibrium in housing. Your Salinas Valley Chamber prefers the latter option. ■



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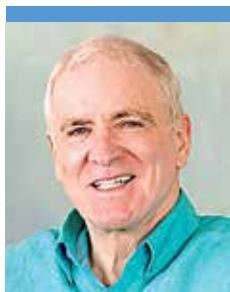
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# Salinas roots bring \$1 million gift to Natividad Foundation to memorialize life of Nora Dowd, 30-year Natividad nurse

**The gift from Edward M. Dowd is the largest donation from an individual in Natividad Foundation's history**

Natividad Foundation has received a \$1 million gift from Edward M. Dowd in memory of his mother, Nora W. Dowd.



Edward M Dowd



Nora Dowd



& CEO Jennifer Williams. "We are thrilled to be able to partner with him to create special places of healing at our hospital."

Founded in 1988, Natividad Foundation is a nonprofit that provides philanthropic support for Natividad through its partnerships with foundations, individuals, businesses and government agencies. Natividad is a hospital and trauma center that provides health care services to residents and visitors throughout Monterey County, regardless of ability to pay.

Philanthropist John D'Arrigo, president, CEO and Chairman of the Board, D'Arrigo

California, said the gift follows in the footsteps of his family's gift a decade ago to Natividad Foundation. In the family's honor, Natividad's specialty clinic was named the D'Arrigo Family Specialty Clinic. D'Arrigo, a Natividad Foundation board member, founded The Agricultural Leadership Council (TALC) in 2010. TALC has raised more than \$4 million for Natividad.

"This gift and the naming of the Mental Health Unit after Mrs. Dowd demonstrates that there is a new standard for giving to Natividad and new ways to memorialize people through major gifts," D'Arrigo said. "TALC set out to achieve a new model for giving more than a decade ago, and our work was followed with a \$500,000 gift from the Matsui family and now a \$1,000,000 gift from Mr. Dowd."

Natividad's Mental Health Unit provides comprehensive mental health services with 24-hour care. The state-licensed psychiatric center has 22 beds and is the only locked inpatient facility of its kind in Monterey County. Mental health services include psychiatric, medical and diagnostic evaluations. The unit also provides skilled interventions by licensed and experienced staff, patient education and medication management, group therapy, daily psychiatric sessions, comprehensive discharge planning, referral services and family education and support. Natividad averages over 600 psychiatric admissions a year with an average length of stay of seven to nine days. The Mental Health Unit also has psychiatric social workers who assist in connecting the patients with community resources and schedule follow up appointments.

"We are deeply grateful that Mr. Dowd chose the Mental Health Unit to honor the legacy of Nora Dowd and bring a more healing environment to its diverse patients," said Dr. Jeffrey Bass, board chair of Natividad Foundation and emergency physician at Natividad.

"Everyone at Natividad — from patients to families and staff — will benefit from the creation of the new courtyard, and we are excited about the upcoming improvements to the Mental Health Unit," said Interim CEO Dr. Chad Harris.

"This gift from Mr. Dowd is transformational for the hospital, and his generosity allows us to bring special projects like this to life." ■

"I am delighted to have the opportunity to give back to Salinas with this gift that celebrates the life of my mother," Ed said. "Philanthropy lets me bring healing for every patient at Natividad through beauty and the kind of gentle care and concern that my mother had."

Nora was a registered nurse at Natividad from 1966 to 1996, caring for patients at the Mental Health Unit. In 1927, at age 8, Nora immigrated to the United States from Ireland. In 1939, the World's Fair was in New York, and Nora met her future husband, Thomas P. Dowd. They were married in 1940 before moving to San Francisco, where they raised three sons, Edward, Thomas and James. In 1952, Nora and Tom moved the family to Salinas.

Nora graduated as a registered nurse from the nursing program at Hartnell College. She shared her kind heart and healing touch with thousands of patients during her 30-year nursing career at Natividad. She was also a faithful member of Sacred Heart Church and a volunteer in many organizations that benefited children and families who needed it most.

Ed's childhood in Salinas was rooted in agriculture and packing lettuce trucks. After high school, he served in the U.S. Air Force for four years then earned a Bachelor of Science degree from Santa Clara University. Dowd then established and grew a successful investment real estate career. He was a founder of San Jose National Bank and Commerce Savings and Loan in Sacramento. In 1981, Dowd founded EMD Properties, which flourished and today owns and operates about 1,000 residential rental units in the San Francisco Bay area.

"I am privileged to be able to make philanthropic investments in organizations where an infusion of capital can create change that otherwise would not be possible," Dowd said. "This gift in memory of my mother allows me to make sure that her legacy of love and caring continues at Natividad."

The gift will fund a complete overhaul of the existing main lobby courtyard at the hospital and improve two outdoor spaces for patients at Natividad's Mental Health Unit. The hospital's Mental Health Unit will be renamed the Nora Dowd Mental Health Unit / Nora Dowd Unidad de Salud Mental.

"Gifts of all sizes to Natividad Foundation have a tremendous impact, and this gift from Mr. Dowd is historic for Natividad," said Natividad Foundation's President



# Changes to Residential Zoning and Development

by Patrick Casey, JRG Attorneys



California housing prices have continued to increase for years for many reasons, but the main one is that more people want housing than is available. This is true for both home ownership and rental housing. In an effort to address this problem, on September 16, 2021, Governor Newsom signed Senate Bill 9 (known as the Housing Opportunity and More Efficiency Home Act) that changed residential zoning and development laws. As a general statement, the Act allows a homeowner to (i) subdivide their current residential parcel into two residential parcels, and (ii) build two residential units on each parcel, subject to many conditions and restrictions contained in the Act. This is a complicated piece of legislation and this article is meant only to give the broad parameters of the Act.

The Act became effective January 1, 2022. The first part addresses a homeowner's ability to have two residential units on a single legal parcel. Previous law permitted a jurisdiction to zone an area as only allowing one single family residence on each legal parcel. In general, the

Act changed the law such that a homeowner can now have two residences on a single parcel, but subject to numerous

conditions. For example, a homeowner can only do this if they live in an "urbanized area" or "urban cluster." The U.S. Census Bureau defines an "urbanized area" as a city with at least 50,000 people and an "urban cluster" as an unincorporated area with at least 2,500 people and less than 50,000 people. In addition, any such development cannot result in the demolition or alteration of any housing that (i) is subject to a covenant, ordinance or law that restricts the housing to use by moderate, low or very low income individuals or families, (ii) is subject to any rent control or price control, or (iii) has been occupied by a tenant for the past 3 years (regardless of their income level).

The Act also address a homeowner's ability to do a lot split, but again subject to numerous requirements. For example, all of the restrictions detailed above apply equally to any proposed lot split. In addition, the lot split can only create two new legal parcels that must be of approximately equal size. No new lot can be smaller than 1,200 square feet. The property cannot be located in a historic district or be in the State Historic Resources Inventory. Also, no adjacent parcel can have been subdivided under the Act.

The discussion above only provides a sample of the various conditions and requirements that apply to any homeowner that wants to take these actions. A homeowner should consult with legal counsel to understand their rights and options under the Act. ■

*This article is written by Patrick Casey, who is a business attorney with the JRG Attorneys At Law firm in Monterey. You may reach the author at (831) 269-7114 or at patrick@jrgattorneys.com.*



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# Goodwill Central Coast Administers \$94K Housing Permanency Grant to Help Create Financial Stability

As inflation soars and the economy stalls, many Americans still face the devastating, day-to-day impacts from the pandemic — including deep rental debt and housing insecurity.

To help meet this continued need at the local level, Goodwill Central Coast (GCC) is administering a \$94,000 Housing Permanency grant that ends in June. This grant, received from United Way Monterey County, targets Monterey County residents who are at or below the county's 80% median income and are ineligible for the federal Emergency Rental Assistance Program (ERAP). The goal of the program is to provide immediate essential support such as food, clothing, bus passes and more — removing existing barriers to prevent residents from becoming homeless.

Some of these barriers include paying bills stemming from healthcare, high-interest loans, legal, DMV, utilities, security deposits, car repair, car insurance, etc. The program also offers case management to help residents navigate the system to access benefits and services. Case management may be accessing medical care, counseling, financial guidance, and much more.



"Our mission has always been to help strengthen communities, and we are proud to participate in this vital program," said Linda Sanchez, GCC's Prosperity Planner whose role in the program centers around outreach, communication, and one-on-one case management. "It's a critical program that is very much in need. Personally I wish we had more money and more time for this, because so many families out there could use this type of help, and they don't qualify for other programs."

The program is open to any resident of Monterey County (regardless of immigration status) who is considered low-income according to the Area Median Income (AMI) of Monterey County guidelines with

financial distress to remain housed. The applicant does not have to be affected by COVID directly, but at least one household resident does need to have tested positive.

The Housing Permanency program is another example of Goodwill's work behind the scenes beyond its stores and donation sites. As GCC's Prosperity Planner, Sanchez's overall goal is to help individuals become economically self-sufficient through individualized goal setting, case management, and providing access to a wide network of community services and partner programs to support the individuals journey in reaching their goals.

"We help our employees file their taxes, for free, partnering with Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) through the United Way," Sanchez shared. "We also ensure that families know about earned income tax credit, things like that. We do a lot behind the scenes, trying to expand and help the community in different areas."

To refer someone to the Housing Permanency Grant Program, or to start the application, contact Natalia Ramos at (831) 423-8611 ext. 8296 or email her at [NRamos@CCGoodwill.org](mailto:NRamos@CCGoodwill.org). Or contact Linda Sanchez by email at [LSanchez@CCGoodwill.org](mailto:LSanchez@CCGoodwill.org). ■

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tickets reserved for sale on the day of the event at the ticket booths. The crowds who came Downtown just to experience the activity far exceeded the previous eight festivals. It was the place to be in Monterey County on that day.



In fact, all of the recent annual and seasonal events held in Downtown Salinas have been much more popular than in the past. But why? Besides the physical transformation, one obvious change is cultural: people are more comfortable with

the idea of dining, gathering, and engaging in commerce outside after learning to adjust to COVID-19 public health orders. The City of Salinas is in the process of designing a permanent permitting program that's easy to follow and encourages restaurants and retail businesses to operate outside.

There will soon be five breweries in Downtown Salinas. New restaurants are opening, with positive reviews and repeat customers. The streets are clean, and pedestrians and bicyclists are enjoying the space, including the scramble crosswalks that allow people to cross intersections diagonally. The Salinas Arch on the 200 block now establishes a central identity point for photos and serves as a meeting location. Art, music, and light is displacing neglect, apathy, and blight.



With Downtown Salinas now surging forward to vibrancy under its own market-driven momentum, the City of Salinas now shifts its primary focus to igniting the Alisal/ East Salinas commercial districts with the Alisal Vibrancy Plan. The Salinas Valley Chamber of Commerce is excited to see this next vibrancy plan move forward, in conjunction with the innovative new city plan to expand universal, affordable, quality broadband access there and throughout the city. ■

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# Inflation is a Regressive Tax

by Bill Hastie, MBA



Since mid-2021, inflation has been at the forefront of our daily news. By November, when the consumer price index (CPI) was reported to be 6.8%, a 40-year high, it became clear that inflation had become a serious problem and one that the Federal Reserve (Fed) had to take action to curb sooner than later. But the Fed found themselves focused instead on economic COVID relief using monetary policy to keep interest rates low and continue purchasing bonds in the open market as a means of injecting money into the economy i.e., growing the money supply. The 4th 2021 quarter gross domestic product (GDP) of 1.7%, or an annualized rate of 6.9%, was the highest reading for GDP since 1984, is another driver of inflation.



While the Fed had succeeded at keeping the economy growing out of the COVID-induced recession of 2020, inflation has grown at a rate some feared to be out of control. With December 2021 CPI of 7.2% and January 2022 of 7.5% (the highest since February 1982), the Fed has decided to halt its bond-buying activity as a means of slowing the growth of the money supply and to begin raising interest rates in March (inflation is defined as too much money chasing too few goods and services). These are the only two weapons the Fed has at hand to use to fight inflation.

So, what does this mean for the consumer? A trip to the grocery store will be the first indication of how this inflation will affect the average family. Virtually every product will cost more, in some cases a lot more, than even six months ago. Let's take beef and poultry, for example. A package of chicken will, on average, cost 12% more than it did a year ago. And for beef, the average cost increase tops 20%. The family basics – bread, milk, cereal, i.e., will cost the average family 8% - 10% more.

And what about fuel? Gasoline on the Central Coast has always been more expensive than other places, but regular unleaded is now a full \$1 more than the national average. It is difficult to find a local gas station that sells gas for less than \$4.50 per gallon, and over \$5 per gallon if you need supreme unleaded. Heating oil and natural gas have also climbed to prices not seen in decades. Indeed, fuel as a whole is up more than 40% since a year ago.

The true effect of this inflation on the average family is a reduction in their standard of living. While wages have risen an average of 4.8% over the last year, inflation of more than 7% means families are losing real purchasing power. Sadly, those most negatively affected by inflation are those at the lower end of the income spectrum. As such, inflation is a regressive tax on low-income families, and the lower their income, the greater the negative impact on the family. One can only hope the Fed's actions will soon curb inflation. ■

**Bill Hastie, MBA is the Founder of locally-owned Hastie Financial Group. If you would like to discuss your personal or company's investment needs, please contact Bill at [william.hastie@hastiefg.com](mailto:william.hastie@hastiefg.com)**



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# Mee's Skilled Nursing Facility represents a unique, holistic approach to caring for those we can no longer care for at home



Mee Memorial  
Hospital

As aging parents and their adult children negotiate an inevitable reversal of roles, families ultimately face difficult decisions when considering alternative living and care arrangements. Making that choice for a longtime spouse can be even more agonizing.

While caring for any aging family member can be viewed as an honor, it can also present serious physical and emotional challenges for those left to handle all the demanding details.

Stress often plays a big part in caregiving. Left unchecked, caregiver stress can have detrimental effects on physical and mental health. A study published in the Journal of the American Medical Association found that those who experience caregiver strain have a 63 percent higher risk of mortality compared to non-caregivers of the same age.

Furthermore, the consequences of chronically high stress levels extend beyond caregivers themselves. Physical, mental and emotional strain ultimately affect one's ability to provide quality care. Remember, you can't care for your loved one if you are sick yourself.

Realizing that you can no longer provide the level of care your loved one requires can bring on feelings of guilt and shame.

It's never an easy decision, but the Skilled Nursing Facility at Mee Memorial Healthcare System represents a unique, holistic approach to caring for those we can no longer care for at home.

The advantage of choosing a skilled nursing facility is right in the name. Skilled nursing care is a high level of medical care that must be provided by or under the direct supervision of licensed health professionals.

What makes Mee Memorial Skilled Nursing Facility unique is how residents are treated as individuals. Each receives unique, holistic care and is treated with compassion and kindness.

Among the reasons to choose Mee Skilled Nursing include the following:

- 5-Star Medicare rating
- Caring, attentive, highly-trained staff
- Around-the-clock acute care
- Spanish speaking

Mee Memorial offers 48 beds, providing the highest level of medical, nursing and rehabilitative care. Its location one level above the hospital enables a highly-qualified staff to provide valuable resources, including dietitians, social workers, and a wide range of caregivers who can and do check in every day. What's more, our South County facility provides culturally-sensitive care and ensures Spanish speaking residents feel at home.

Mee residents have access to around-the-clock acute care, because time is of the essence when a resident needs expedient medical treatment. The facility boasts the best nurse-to-patient ratios in the county, with highly-trained caregivers on staff. ED physicians and hospitalists are on-site seven days a week, 24 hours a day, and Mee provides a full-time infection-control nurse.

"Our specialty is individual, culturally appropriate care that feels like an extension of the home the resident has enjoyed their entire life," said Lisa Moylan, Chief Nursing Officer (CNO). "You may see us on a stroll around town, visiting the Fair, or listening to live music. Holidays are always a special time for our residents with decorations and activities.



We also encourage family involvement in the care of our residents. We are proud to have created a place to come and be comfortable."

Skilled Nursing at Mee Memorial offers an attractive list of features and activities, including a lovely garden courtyard. Daily activities include trips into the community and various events. Activities Coordinators provide a great roster of programs for residents of all function levels and needs while encouraging all to participate, these include:

- Art therapy, crafts and music
- Bingo
- Community outings
- Cookouts
- Gardening and flower arranging
- Interactive cooking
- Library books, movies, magazines, and audiobooks
- Live music and entertainment visits
- Reading groups
- Religious services and visits
- Special events and holiday parties



While Mee Memorial's credentials may ease a caregiver's mind, the guilt can still live on. What many family caregivers don't realize is that their role doesn't end with such a placement. They will still be part of the "care team" after they move. They will still need a trusted family member as their advocate. It's important that caregivers accept this newly defined role and the benefits it provides.

The Mee facility prides itself on maintaining contact and open communication between the facility, families and residents, with the team ready to arrange professional services for all residents. "We work with all hospitals and referring agencies to review and accept patients and meet their needs," said Moylan.

Remember, a commitment to enjoying a life of your own will make you a more refreshed caregiver and protect against stress and burnout.

Too much stress, especially over a long time, can harm your health. As a caregiver, you're more likely to experience symptoms of depression or anxiety. In addition, you may not get enough sleep or physical activity, or eat a balanced diet — which increases your risk of medical problems, such as heart disease and diabetes. As a caregiver, you may be so focused on your loved one that you don't realize that your own health and well-being are suffering. Watch for these signs of caregiver stress, published by the Mayo Clinic:

- Feeling overwhelmed or constantly worried
- Feeling tired often
- Getting too much sleep or not enough sleep
- Gaining or losing weight
- Becoming easily irritated or angry
- Losing interest in activities you used to enjoy
- Feeling sad
- Having frequent headaches, bodily pain or other physical problems
- Abusing alcohol or drugs, including prescription medications

While skilled nursing isn't the only option available, it is certain to provide your loved one with the care and engagement that they require. And that's a winning formula for everyone.

**To find out more about Mee Memorial Skilled Nursing Facility, or to seek a consultation, call (831) 385-7276. ■**



# Member News

## Scheid Family Wines Celebrates 50 Years

Scheid Family Wines, based in Monterey County, celebrates its 50th anniversary this year. "Achieving our 50-year milestone could not have happened without a tremendous amount of courage and hard work", says founder and Chairman of the Board, Al Scheid. Widely recognized as a leader in quality, innovation and sustainability, Scheid Family Wines is celebrating 50 years, and their legacy of growing grapes to producing of global wine brands. Look for special tastings and events throughout the year in its tasting rooms in Carmel and at its estate winery just south of Greenfield along Highway 101.



Nancy Scheid, Al Scheid, Scott Scheid

## Monterey County Fair Announces Official Theme, Poster Artist for 2022 Fair

The Monterey County Fair has announced the theme for the 2022 Monterey County Fair: "Wool Meet Ewe at the Fair!" The fair will be held September 1-5, 2022, with the Livestock Show scheduled for August 24-28, both at the Monterey County Fair & Event Center, in Monterey. Illustrator and designer Scott Westmoreland, has also been announced as the poster artist. Westmoreland illustrated the fair posters in 2009, 2015, 2019, and has served as a comprehensive artist for the motion picture industry, and is a regular contractor for the Walt Disney Company and MCA Universal.



## Salinas Valley Memorial Healthcare System - First DAISY Award of 2022

Since 2015, SVMH has administered the nationally recognized, DAISY program, given to nurses for extraordinary care. Adrienne Leyva, RN and her extraordinary response to the emotional and physical needs of a new mother, is the first 2022 recipient of the Hospital's DAISY Award.



(L-R): Daniela Jago, Adrienne Leyva, and Lisa Paulo

## Monterey Bay FC Brings Professional Soccer to Monterey County

Monterey Bay F.C. is set to begin play in its inaugural USL Championship campaign March 12, and kicks-off the season against Phoenix Rising FC in Phoenix. The Club will play six games on the road to open the schedule and will return home for its 17-match home schedule. On May 7 it begins when they host the Las Vegas Lights FC, in Seaside, at the newly-renovated Cardinale Stadium.



## 101<sup>st</sup> Annual Awards Luncheon

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# New Supplemental COVID-19 Sick Leave

by Bradley J. Levang, Fenton & Keller



Employers with 26 or more employees must provide up to 80 hours of 2022 COVID-19 Supplemental Paid Sick Leave ("COVID 19 paid sick leave") to covered employees for qualified COVID-19 related leave taken from January 1, 2022 through September 30, 2022. Because the requirements differ from the prior COVID-19 supplemental sick leave, employers need to prepare revised COVID-19 paid sick leave policies.

Only employees unable to physically report to work or telework are eligible for COVID-19 paid sick leave. Covered employees have two separate "banks" of up to 40 hours of COVID-19 paid sick leave. In one bank, covered employees are entitled to take COVID-19 paid sick leave if they are:

- Subject to a quarantine or isolation period related to COVID-19 as defined by federal, state, or local orders or guidance.
- Advised by a health care provider to self-quarantine or isolate due to concerns related to COVID-19.
- Attending an appointment, for themselves or a family member, to receive a COVID-19 vaccine or booster.
- Experiencing symptoms or caring for a family member experiencing symptoms related to a COVID-19 vaccine or booster that prevent the employee from being able to work or telework.
- Experiencing COVID-19 symptoms and seeking a medical diagnosis.
- Caring for a family member who is subject to a quarantine or isolation order or guidance or who has been advised to self-quarantine or isolate by a health care provider due to concerns related to COVID-19.
- Caring for a child whose school or place of care is closed or otherwise unavailable for reasons related to COVID-19 on the premises.
- Tests positive, or if they are caring for a family member who tests positive, for COVID-19.

Employers may limit an employee to 24 hours or 3 days of leave for each vaccination or booster appointment and any resulting symptoms unless a health care provider verifies the need for additional recovery time.

In the other bank, employees are entitled to additional leave of up to 40 hours if the employee tests positive for, or is caring for a family member who tests positive for, COVID-19.

Full-time employees receive 40 hours of leave for each bank. If employers need to calculate the number of hours of leave for non-full-time employees they should review the law's specific calculations for such leave, which depends on the employee's length of service and variability in worked hours. But generally, non-full-time employees are entitled to the number of hours they typically work in a week for each bank.

COVID-19 paid sick leave is separate from other forms of legally mandated paid sick leave. Employers cannot count an employee's previously received regular sick leave or Cal/OSHA exclusion pay toward the employer's obligation for 2022 COVID 19 paid sick leave.

COVID-19 paid sick leave must be itemized on employee paystubs, or other written notice provided on payday, and separate from the employee's regular paid sick leave. Employers must also conspicuously display the Labor Commissioner's poster regarding COVID-19 paid sick leave (<https://www.dir.ca.gov/dlse/COVID19resources/2022-COVID-19-SPSL-Poster.pdf> / <https://www.dir.ca.gov/dlse/COVID19resources/Spanish/2022-COVID-19-SPSL-Poster.pdf>) and email it to remote employees.

While the new law requires employees to request retroactive COVID-19 paid sick leave, employers may choose to identify employees who missed work for a qualifying reason since January 1, 2022, and if such employees were unpaid, pay the COVID-19 paid sick leave. If employees have used regular sick leave or PTO, employers should reclassify the hours as COVID-19 sick leave and adjust the employees' sick leave or PTO hours accordingly. ■

*Bradley J. Levang 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](http://www.fentonkeller.com).*

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# Ribbon Cuttings • Chamber Events



Salinas Mayor Kimbley Craig congratulates Independent Transportation Services Monterey County Executive Director, Jessica McKillip, on 10 years of service and the grand opening of their new office in Oldtown Salinas.



Esteban & Paloma Garcia proudly open new business, 10-8 Uniforms, in North Salinas, joined by family, Salinas Valley Chamber staff, supporters and City Councilman Orlando.



Our Staff, Ambassadors, & Members joined the team at Panera Bread to connect over lunch. Deliciously fresh sandwiches, salads, drinks, and pastries were generously provided by the wonderful staff at Panera Bread.



Celebrating this brand-new brewery in Oldtown Salinas. Visiting La Cantina is a hoppin good time, cheers to their success!



We were pleased to support Vicente Soria – Founder and Owner of TTC (Tax the Cat) Bookkeeping & Tax Preparation. TTC became a member in 2020 and became an Ambassador this year.



Grand re-opening of Panera Bread at Northridge Mall. The Salinas Panera Bread opened just before the pandemic, for most of 2020 they were only able to operate their drive through. We were so excited to celebrate their fully opened café.



One of the most important factors to children's success in school and life is being surrounded by caring adults. First 5 Monterey County believes that we all have the potential to be those caring adults. We support services for parents, caregivers, and the early childhood workforce to ensure Monterey County children have the quality early childhood experiences they deserve.

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Here's how you can show your gratitude:

1. Get vaccinated and stay up to date on your booster shot when eligible.
2. Double-down on precautions such as mask-wearing and physical distancing, especially during COVID-19 surges.
3. Stay home if you feel sick.
4. If you know an essential worker, **PLEASE THANK THEM!**





(first and second stage) treatment of sewage, far beyond the amount it has ever received. Currently the plant receives about 17 million gallons per day in municipal wastewater flow. That available treatment capacity allows an opportunity for Monterey One Water to bring in and treat additional water from other sources.

In addition, Monterey One Water has the opportunity to do something useful with that treated wastewater instead of dumping it in the ocean. It can recycle it.

In 1998, a new “tertiary” (third stage) treatment plant, called the Salinas Valley Reclamation Plant, began operating in conjunction with a recycled water distribution system called the Castroville Seawater Intrusion Project (CSIP – pronounced Sea-Sip) that supplies irrigation water to Castroville area farmers. Some municipal wastewater is diverted to this facility for treatment, stored in a pond, and then conveyed through pipelines to fields in the Castroville area for crop irrigation.

### Seawater Intrusion

As far back as the 1930s, Castroville-area farmers noticed salty seawater appearing in underground water sources (aquifers). This was happening because users were pumping more water from the aquifers than was being replenished, creating a voided space where there was once freshwater. The aquifer is typically replenished from rainfall, surface and underground water flows, and other percolation from the surface. This re-charging of the aquifers was inadequate, and thus over-drafting of the aquifers was occurring, allowing seawater to intrude into the voided space.

The Castroville Seawater Intrusion Project uses recycled wastewater to reduce the pumping in the area, and thus slowing the seawater intrusion in the aquifers under the cropland. Once CSIP was operational, many farmers were required to cease pumping their private wells, reducing groundwater extraction. However, the Monterey County Water Resources Agency (MCWRA) continues to operate wells in the area as a supplemental water source for CSIP.

In the late 2000s, the Castroville Seawater Intrusion Project received another boost of water supplies from a new operation called the Salinas Valley Water Project. Water was released on occasion from the Nacimiento and San Antonio reservoirs, near the border of Monterey County and San Luis Obispo County. The water released from the two reservoirs flowed downstream into the Salinas River, and accumulated behind an inflatable rubber dam near the Monterey One Water Regional Treatment Facilities in Marina. A new Salinas River Diversion Facility then sent the accumulated water behind the dam to a chlorination system before flowing to the storage pond on-site where it was mixed with recycled water. Following the chlorination and being combined with the recycled water, the water was distributed to farmers as part of CSIP.

In the mid-2010s, years of drought occurred. There wasn't enough water for the Castroville Seawater Intrusion Project, and the Monterey County Water Resources Agency had to pump more water for CSIP from its supplemental wells to provide to farmers. At the same time, the CSIP supplemental wells built in the 1990s were less productive or even ceased operations.

### In Pursuit of Recycling More

At this time of need, Monterey One Water took advantage of another opportunity to recycle water. The City of Salinas Industrial Wastewater Treatment Plant was collecting industrial wastewater, i.e. water from washing vegetables, from about two dozen agricultural-related businesses and disposing of the water through percolation/evaporation ponds. Starting in 2014, Monterey One Water coordinated with the City of Salinas and Monterey County



Water Resources Agency to divert the summertime flows of the industrial wastewater to the Regional Treatment Facility, thereby providing some extra recycled water for the Castroville Seawater Intrusion Project. This has continued on occasion and was done most recently, in the summer of 2021.

In 2015, the Monterey One Water board approved the Pure Water Monterey/Groundwater Replenishment Project to expand recycled water use. In addition to obtaining and recycling municipal wastewater, Monterey One Water worked with the City of Salinas and the Monterey County Water Resource Agency to construct diversion facilities which can divert, store and treat urban stormwater runoff from South Salinas. Other diversion facilities were constructed to capture water from the Reclamation Ditch that flows through the City of Salinas, and water from the

Blanco Drain that collects water from agricultural fields south and west of Salinas. The additional diversion structures constructed, allowed more treated industrial wastewater effluent to be conveyed to M1W's Regional Treatment Facilities.

Monterey One Water could potentially recycle the new sources of supplies for the Castroville Seawater Intrusion Project through the existing infrastructure. It is important to note that Monterey One Water and the Monterey County Water Resources Agency plan to recycle this water for the Castroville Seawater Intrusion Project under an agreement with several terms and conditions, not all of which have yet been fulfilled. As a result, the water flows from sources other than the municipal wastewater flows have not yet gone to the CSIP.



Currently, this water flow goes to the new Advanced Water Purification Facility at the Regional Treatment Plant. That water then gets conveyed through a pipeline, built and maintained by Marina Coast Water District, for injection into aquifers located to the east of the City of Seaside. Injections began in early 2020, and the water is mixed with other groundwater. The California American Water Company (Cal-Am) will eventually extract that water from the aquifer, for treatment and delivery to its Monterey Peninsula customers.

More water sources for recycling are available. While the plans of Monterey One Water to divert water from the Tembladero Slough near Castroville have been abandoned, Lake El Estero in the City of Monterey is still a viable site under consideration for future water diversion. And to increase storage capacity, Monterey One Water officials have also discussed injecting recycled water into the aquifer under Armstrong Ranch, adjacent

to the Regional Treatment Facility.

The Marina Coast Water District is also planning to use the Pure Water Monterey recycled water system through its own Regional Urban Water Augmentation Program (RUWAP). The District sends municipal wastewater to the Monterey One Water Regional Treatment Plant, and then the purified recycled water returns to the Marina Coast Water District for landscape irrigation in the former Fort Ord.

### Now What?

There are many benefits of these numerous, inter-agency arrangements and new facilities. Less water and pollution goes to the ocean, Lower Salinas Valley farmers get more recycled water, seawater intrusion into aquifers is reduced, groundwater quality is improved, less stormwater pollution goes into the Salinas Valley watersheds, and the Monterey Peninsula gets a source of drinking water to reduce detrimental use of the Carmel River Alluvial Aquifer and Seaside Groundwater Basin. And the shared infrastructure saves money for participating local governments and rate payers.

This simplified explanation leaves out a lot of the controversies, pitfalls, and obstacles regarding these projects and the flow of water in Monterey County. But in general, if every interested party cooperates and avoids using the water supply as a tool to impose ideological visions, or to make money at the expense of others, water recycling can provide many benefits. Regional collaborations that allow wastewater and water supplies to pass freely between the Salinas Valley and the Monterey Peninsula can help the entire region achieve elusive water resource goals. ■





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[Sales@SignsbyVan.com](mailto:Sales@SignsbyVan.com)



## Scale Microgrid Solutions

Scale's core focus is designing, building, financing, owning and operating cutting-edge distributed energy assets that offer cheaper, cleaner, and more resilient power to our clients. Our mission is helping large energy-consuming customers to take charge of their energy infrastructure and future-proof their businesses.

[www.scalemicrogridsolutions.com](http://www.scalemicrogridsolutions.com) • 201-689-5987  
[info@scalemicrogridsolutions.com](mailto:info@scalemicrogridsolutions.com)



## Splash Car Wash

Splash Car Wash is the go-to for your car wash needs. We offer both Express Exterior and Full-Service car washes. We now offer unlimited car washes, by becoming a VIP member of the Unlimited Wash Club, you can wash your vehicle as often as you like for ONE LOW PRICE each month! Memberships start at \$25/ month. Stay clean & stay happy!

[www.splashandwash.com](http://www.splashandwash.com) • 831-785-8000  
[david@splashandwash.com](mailto:david@splashandwash.com)



## Join Us!

For an updated list of Non-Profit and Chamber events visit [www.salinaschamber.com](http://www.salinaschamber.com)

- **Chamber Connect at Lunch - China House**  
848 E. Alisal Street, Salinas  
**March 10, 12:00-1:00 pm**,  
Authentic, fresh, and often locally sourced Asian dishes.
- **Chamber Mixer - Wonder Wood Ranch**  
8100 Wild Horse Road, Salinas  
**March 17, 5:00-7:00 pm**,  
Wonder Wood Ranch brings HOPE ON HOOVES to foster, high-trauma, gang-impacted, and/or homeless youth in County.
- **Center for Nonprofit Excellence of the Community Foundation for Monterey County**  
**March 25, 9:00 am**,  
[www.cfmco.org/workshops](http://www.cfmco.org/workshops)  
Virtual. Staff recruitment and hiring.

## Visit Downtown Salinas Support Local Business

- ▶ Shop at unique and locally owned boutiques and stores
- ▶ Dine and drink at family-owned and operated eateries and bars
- ▶ Visit the National Steinbeck Center, Saturday's Farmers Market, or one of the locally owned theaters



#SalinasCityCenter • [SalinasCityCenter.com](http://SalinasCityCenter.com)

Follow @SalinasCityCenter to stay up-to-date on events happening in Downtown Salinas.



SHOP

DINE

PLAY

# Do You Have an Employee Who Has Tested Positive for COVID?

# What is the Safest, Fastest Way to Get Them Back to Work?

**CALL NOW!**

The answer, as you might expect, is not so simple and depends on a myriad of factors, including what kind of test was administered by the employee or lab.

ARCpoint Labs of Monterey Bay provides the most comprehensive menu of laboratory testing and screening services in Monterey County, including a variety of COVID-19 testing that can help your employees get back to work in a safe and timely manner.

In fact, if you or your employees have any question about COVID testing procedures or CDC testing and quarantine guidelines, our experts can answer all your questions with a simple phone call. An appointment for a more-accurate PCR test is also available by calling us.

## ARCPOINT LABS OF MONTEREY BAY

📍 24560 Silver Cloud Court, #103, Monterey, CA 93940

📞 (831) 324-0772

@ [www.arcpointlabs.com/monterey-bay/](http://www.arcpointlabs.com/monterey-bay/)

## ARCPOINT LABS OF SALINAS

📍 635 Sanborn Place, Suite 24, Salinas, CA 93901

📞 (831) 975-4313

@ [www.labtestsalinas.com](http://www.labtestsalinas.com)