



Santa Maria Valley **ECONOMIC IMPACT REPORT**

May 2026 | Prepared for the Community of Santa Maria



Introduction

The Santa Maria Valley Chamber of Commerce is proud to present our Monthly Economic Impact Report for May 2026, highlighting ongoing efforts to support business growth, workforce development, tourism promotion, and community engagement throughout the region. During the month, the Chamber's Economic Development team held 7 meetings and events while providing assistance to local businesses.

Throughout May, the Chamber engaged in a wide range of programs and outreach efforts. Membership remained strong with 801 members and welcomed 3 new members, while the Hispanic Business Group, now at 225 members, continued to support local entrepreneurs with startup plans and direct business outreach. A major highlight of the month was the 2026 Business Expo & Job Fair, themed "Business in Bloom," which drew approximately 300 attendees and showcased local businesses and job opportunities. Tourism remained a key focus, with the Chamber supporting the West Coast Customs City Drive and Car Show and hosting a FAM tour with travel journalist Sandra Lee. Workforce development efforts advanced through the inaugural Civics Bee Regional Competition and a business tour at Art Craft Paint in partnership with the Workforce Development Board.

The Chamber remains closely connected to local government and regional partners through numerous events, meetings, and active community involvement. This included legislative advocacy with formal support for the American Alliance for Workforce and Border Security Letter to Congress and Transition Mental Health Association funding. This report highlights the Chamber's continued role in supporting local industries, strengthening workforce pipelines, and advancing the economic vitality of the Santa Maria Valley.

Table of Contents

Economic Development.....	1
Business Retention & Assistance.....	2
Providing Business Support.....	3-5
Tourism.....	6-7
Energy Initiatives	8
Workforce Development.....	9
Advocacy and Addressing Housing Needs.....	10
Community Involvement.....	10
Media Mentions.....	11

Economic Development



Business Retention & Assistance

The Chamber's Economic Development department provided business assistance services to 1 local businesses and residents.

Business Type	Support Provided
Swim school	Returned call
Business Start-up Questions	Returned call
Recycling business	Sent contacts and information / Working with Dave Cross

Requests for Information

The Chamber's Economic Development department received 1 request for information.

- Project Hei
- Project Velvet Hammer



Providing Business Support

Chamber Membership



Networking Opportunities



479+

Networking Event Participants

This includes the Chamber's weekly Build Your Business networking events, Chamber committee meetings, Business Expo & Job Fair, Cinco de Mayo MEGA Mixer, and ribbon cutting celebrations.



Joining the Santa Maria Chamber of Commerce was a natural decision for CADA. As we continue to expand our services in Santa Maria, we wanted to connect more deeply with the local community and be part of a network that prioritizes collaboration, support, and shared growth. The Chamber has already provided meaningful opportunities for us to engage with local leaders, raise awareness about our mission, and strengthen our presence in Santa Maria. We are grateful to be part of a community that values connection and is invested in the well-being of its residents, something that aligns closely with the work we do every day.

-Luna Shalabi,
Development Manager, Council on Alcoholism and
Drug Abuse



Business Expo & Job Fair

The Santa Maria Valley Chamber hosted the 2026 Business Expo & Job Fair celebrating the theme "Business in Bloom," representing renewal, growth, and the blossoming of opportunities across the Santa Maria Valley. This event drew approximately 300 attendees, giving local businesses the opportunity to showcase their work, connect with professionals, and cultivate meaningful partnerships.



Providing Business Support

Military Affairs Committee

Hugo Castañeda, representing the Workforce Development Board (WDB), discussed the challenges Veterans and Military Spouses face in finding employment. Key barriers for military spouses include employment discrimination, underemployment, and childcare issues. Veterans face difficulties translating military experience to civilian roles, navigating civilian hiring processes, and building professional networks. The WDB's Transitional Jobs Program supports 150 individuals with career services and 21 individuals with temporary subsidized employment.



Ambassador Committee

The meeting was led by Ambassador Chair Paula Fuller of American Self Storage. Cara Martinez, Chamber Staff Ambassador Liaison, provided updates on upcoming meetings and events and coordinated Ambassador assignments for these activities. Noemi Robles of Northern Santa Barbara County United Way (New Member Welcoming Sub-Committee Chair) presented a report on new members for April along with updates on recent Ambassador outreach efforts. Ambassador Profile was presented by Yvette Salazar of Allure Ballroom.



Business & Government Roundtable

Chelsea Duffy from Partners in Education delivered an informative presentation on the organization's work and facilitated a discussion on the internship and workforce development needs of youth throughout the Santa Maria Valley.



**PARTNERS
IN EDUCATION**
Preparing Students for What's Next

Providing Business Support

Hispanic Business Support

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



Business Outreach & Assistance was provided to the following Hispanic businesses:

Business Type/Name	Support Provided
Cake Business	Start up assistance
Mobile Food Business	Start up assistance
Mobile Wash Business	Start up assistance
Mobile Cleaning Business	Support for new location information

Business Outreach Walks:

Business Type/Name	Support Provided
Mexican Food Restaurant @ SMTc	HBA Outreach
Jewelry Store @ SMTc	HBA Outreach
Mexican Food Restaurant in Downtown SM	HBA Outreach

Additional Activities & Updates

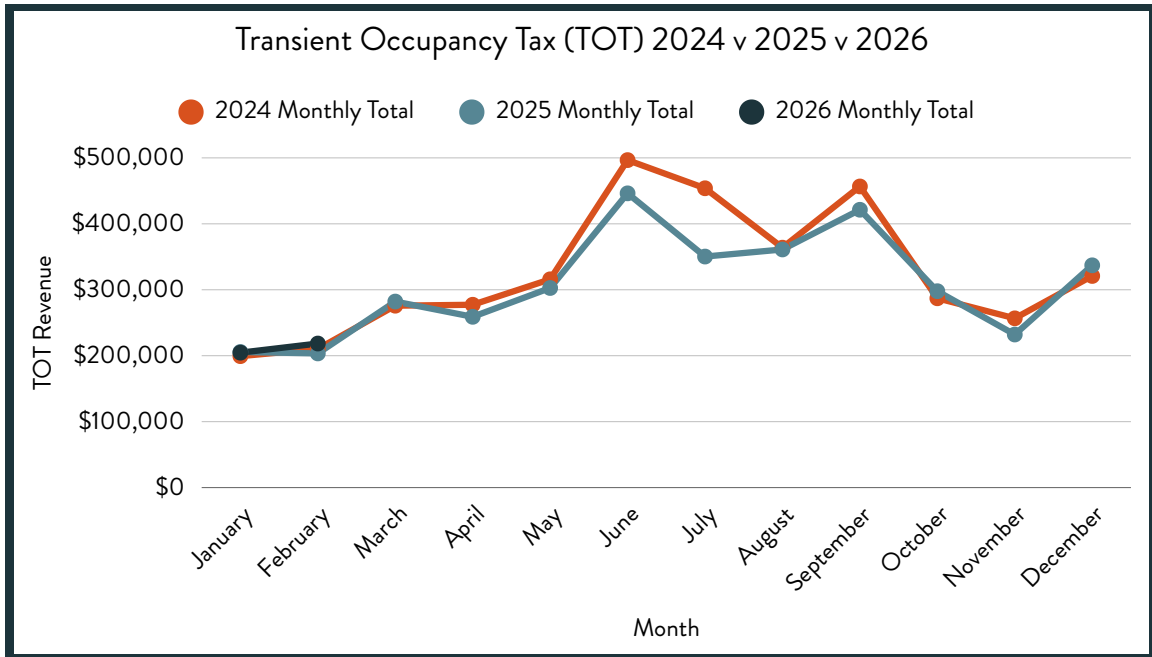
- Cinco De Mayo MEGA Mixer: May 7, 2026
- HBA Committee Meeting: May 13, 2026
- Meeting w/ Gregg Hart Representative: May 6, 2026
- Spotlight Filming Support – La Tradicional Ice Cream Shop (HBA Member): May 14, 2026
- HBA GYB Planning Meeting: May 30, 2026



Tourism

Transient Occupancy Tax Data

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



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

Tourism

Community Support

The Chamber & Visitor Bureau demonstrated its commitment to local tourism and economic growth through active participation in the West Coast Kustoms May Planning Meeting. Represented by Jennifer Ayala, Marketing Manager, the team recapped the Chamber's comprehensive promotional strategy for the annual West Coast Kustoms City Drive and Car Show, which took place at the end of the month. The Chamber's contribution included a high-impact media rollout featuring bi-weekly and weekly newsletter coverage, social media collaboration, and coordinated ticket giveaways across radio and digital platforms to drive community engagement and event attendance. CEO Michael Boyer, Jennifer Ayala, and Efrain Salazar attended the WCK Hall of Fame and media dinner, where all three were presented with a plaque recognizing the Chamber's contributions over the year.



Website Traffic

Our tourism website (santamariavalley.com) remains a strong driver for hotel referrals.

50,875 Website Visits

1,143 Website Hotel Referrals



Familiarization (FAM) Tours & Media



We hosted 1 FAM tour in May:

- Travel journalist Sandra Lee, who writes for Mommy Poppins and Tiny Beans, visited the area in May. Her expertise in multigenerational travel provided an ideal connection to the ongoing Santa Maria Valley Family Style campaign.

Energy Initiatives

Public Sector Regional Energy Pathways Program

The Chamber serves as Regional Ambassador for SoCalGas in Santa Barbara, San Luis Obispo, and Ventura Counties for the Public Sector Regional Energy Pathways Program. This successful partnership has been in place for many years.

Recent successes include:

- A site visit with the Santa Ynez Band of Chumash Indians was organized to examine natural gas use, energy efficiency projects, commercial kitchen improvements, and technical support for their ongoing energy requirements.
- The Chamber of Commerce and SoCalGas made a presentation to the Santa Maria Joint Union High School District Board recognizing the district's energy and cost savings through SoCalGas resources. The Board received a check representing rebates for pool covers at Righetti High School, and a certificate recognizing the district as an Energy Efficiency Partner. Over the course of 5-years, the district saved over 104,912 therms, and with rebates and energy cost savings, the district saved \$89,634. That is money available to be used for district programs.



Recycling Initiatives:

RMDZ Program

The Chamber serves as the Zone Administrator for the Recycling Market Development Zone in the Santa Barbara region. The Chamber has contracted with the County of Santa Barbara for this work under CalRecycle.

Recent successes include:

- ENEVI, LLC, a local company specializing in recycling agricultural plastic into pellets for use in downstream plastic products, received their RMDZ operational loan with the direct assistance of the Chamber of Commerce. The Chamber assisted ENEVI with site assistance, permitting assistance, financial review, and securing an RMDZ loan through CalRecycle. The loan was necessary for full implementation of a second line of equipment. The Chamber has been working with them for over two years and continues to do so through the RMDZ program.
- The RMDZ program has been working with another start up company with hopeful news in the not too distant future.
- The RMDZ program has leveraged over \$40,000 in incentive funds for workshops and pilot programs that benefit critical aspects of recycling and helps to meet the goals of CalRecycle.



Workforce Development

Civics Bee Regional Competition

The Chamber held its inaugural Civics Bee Regional Competition at Santa Maria City Hall. Contestants competed in a Civics Quiz and gave presentations and answered questions on their essays, addressing how they would use civics to solve a local community problem. Both contestants — local middle school students — advanced to the State Competition.



Workforce Development Board

The Chamber, in partnership with the Workforce Development Board, hosted a business tour at Art Craft Paint. Participants learned about local jobs available in airplane design, painting, and repair, and the skills needed to be successful in this industry and at this local business.



COUNTY of SANTA BARBARA
WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARD

Leadership Santa Maria Valley

May's topic focused on Arts & Recreation. The class toured the CRR Children's Discovery Museum and the Abel Maldonado Center to learn about opportunities for youth. In the afternoon, participants learned about the Central Coast Running Club and traveled to TeeBox Social to explore that business and enjoy the golf simulator and other activities. In mid-May, the LSMV program held its Annual Meeting & Alumni Reunion at Naughty Oak Brewery, with 16 people attending.



Advocacy and Addressing Housing Needs

Advocacy and Support Letters

The Chamber issued 2 advocacy and support letters this month.

Topic	Stance
American Alliance for Workforce and Border Security Letter to Congress	Support
Transition Mental Health Association funding support	Support



Community Involvement

Local Meetings & Events

The Chamber's Economic Development department stays actively involved in the community to build relationships and understand the needs of local businesses and the community.

Economic & Community Development

- City Council Meetings / Business of the Quarter presentation
- Blosser Ranch Groundbreaking
- Business Tour at Art Craft Paint
- Candidate Forum — 5th District Supervisor

Business Support & Meetings

- BYB weekly networking event
- Ribbon Cutting — Quality Inn & Suites
- Ribbon Cutting — Children's Resource & Referral (WINGS Infant Center)
- Partners in Education Board Retreat
- United Way Board Meeting
- LSMV Board Meeting
- LSMV Annual Meeting & Alumni Reunion

Community Events

- Civics Bee Regional Competition
- Latino Legacy Awards
- Rotary Barn Party
- Elks Rodeo

Chamber Media Mentions

Topic	Publication
Regional Civics Bee	Noozhawk Santa Maria Times Lompoc Record
Commentary/Spotlight	Santa Maria Times Santa Maria Times
Community Involvement	Santa Maria Times KEYT KEYT NoozHawk Santa Maria Times Santa Maria Times
Business Expo and Job Fair	Santa Maria Times KEYT

Tourism Media Mentions

Topic	Publication
Santa Maria Style Barbecue	Food & Wine
Wine	Associated Press Wine Enthusiast





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