



Santa Maria Valley **ECONOMIC IMPACT REPORT**

April 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 April 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 6 meetings and events while providing assistance to local businesses.

Throughout April, the Chamber engaged in a wide range of programs and outreach efforts. Membership remained strong with 806 members and welcomed 11 new members, while the Hispanic Business Group, now at 220 members, continued to support local entrepreneurs with startup plans and direct business outreach. A major highlight of the month was the 2026 Strawberry Dinner, which celebrated the "Year of the Woman Farmer" by honoring women in agriculture and drew over 750 attendees. Tourism remained a key focus, becoming a partner with West Coast Kustoms and in the Santa Barbara Culinary Experience. Workforce development efforts advanced through future fiscal year planning for the successful Teacher Tours program, which connected 61 teachers with 17 local businesses.

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 bills like the MATCH Act and AB 2675, alongside strategic opposition to SB 1359, AB 2027, and SB 1284. 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.

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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
OTORO	Information on the Wine Trolley

Requests for Information

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

- Project Ellie



Providing Business Support

Chamber Membership



Networking Opportunities



1,000+

Networking Event Participants

This includes the Chamber’s weekly Build Your Business networking events, Chamber committee meetings, Housing Summit, and Strawberry Dinner

“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

Strawberry Dinner

The Santa Maria Valley Chamber hosted our 2026 Strawberry Dinner celebrating the year of the woman farmer by honoring women in agriculture. This event had over 750 attendees who enjoyed a tri-tip dinner, live music, raffle prizes and more.



Providing Business Support

Military Affairs Committee

Michael Boyer presented on housing developments in the pipeline and how they may or may not help the need for military housing.



Ambassador Committee

Cara Martinez, Ambassador Chamber Staff Liaison provided a board update in absence of our Vice Chair. She also shared updates on upcoming meetings and events, and coordinated Ambassador assignments for these activities. A report on new members for February was presented along with updates on recent Ambassador outreach efforts. Ambassador Profile was presented by Krystyna Amaral of Astound Business Solutions.

Business & Government Roundtable

Eric Daniels (PG&E) updated the Roundtable on the Diablo Canyon Power Plant, which California directed to continue operations to ensure state electrical grid reliability. Following a comprehensive Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) safety evaluation and local regulatory approvals, the NRC officially signed a 20-year reactor license extension for DCPD on April 2, 2026, securing its clean energy operations through 2045.



*Pacific Gas and
Electric Company*[®]

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
Bookkeeping Business	Upstart Support and Guidance
Tax Business	Upstart Support and Guidance
Mobile Detailing Business	Start up Business Plan Support
Food Business	Fictitious Business Name Support
Jewellery Store	Chamber/HBA Outreach
Jewellery Store	Chamber/HBA Outreach
Video Games Store	Chamber/HBA Outreach
Game Store	Chamber/HBA Outreach
Restaurant @ SMTC	Chamber/HBA Outreach
Restaurant @ SMTC	Chamber/HBA Outreach

Additional Activities & Updates

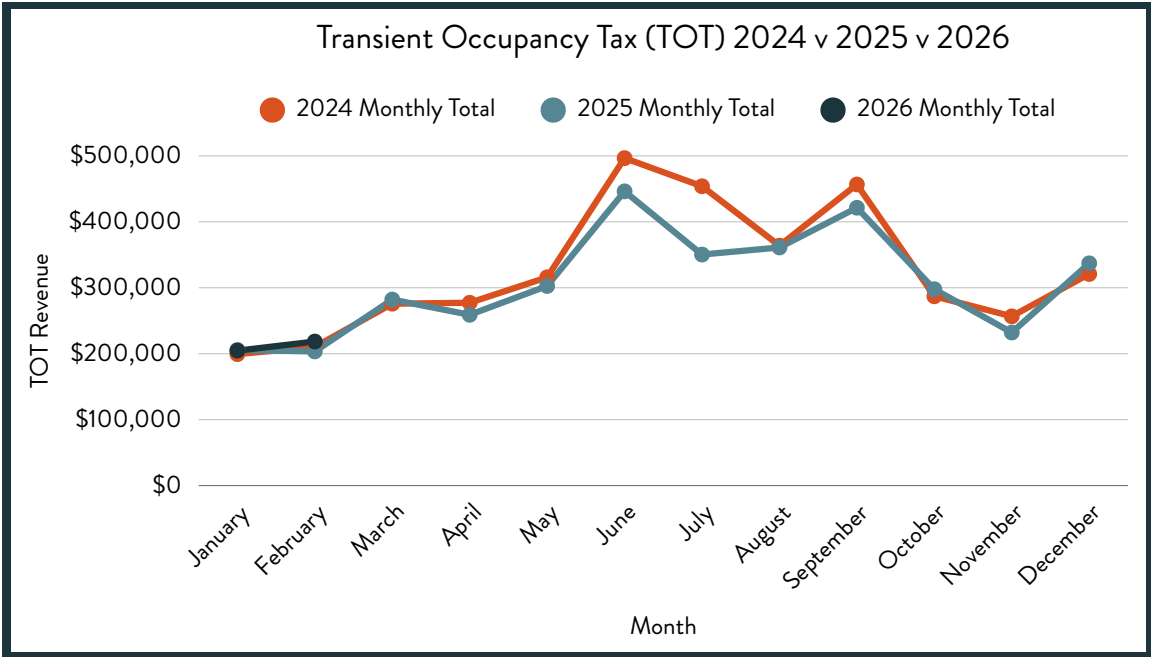
- Get Your Business Online GYB Workshop: Apr 1, 2026
- HBA Committee Meeting: April 15, 2026
- Meeting w/ local spanish media for partnership: April 7, 2026
- Placer AI Meeting for Business Data: April 16, 2026
- Placer AI Business Expansion Course: April 28, 2026



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

- West Coast Kustoms: The Chamber & Visitor Bureau demonstrated its commitment to local tourism and economic growth through active participation in the West Coast Kustoms April Planning Meeting. Represented by Suzanne Singh, VP of Economic Development, and Jennifer Ayala, Marketing Manager, the team outlined a comprehensive promotional strategy for the annual West Coast Kustoms City Drive and Car Show. Our contribution includes a high-impact media rollout featuring bi-weekly and weekly newsletter coverage, social media collaborative posts, and coordinated ticket giveaways across radio and digital platforms to drive community engagement and event attendance.
- Santa Barbara Culinary Experience: Furthering our commitment to regional tourism, CEO Michael Boyer and Marketing Manager Jennifer Ayala participated in the Santa Barbara Culinary Experience (SBCE) Advisory Committee April meeting. During this session, our team served as a strategic liaison, connecting SBCE Director Tamara Berndt with key wineries and restaurants in Santa Maria and Northern Santa Barbara County. This partnership aims to expand the reach of the Julia Child Foundation by facilitating local pop-up events, ensuring our region's world-class culinary and viticulture assets are prominently featured within the broader county-wide initiative.

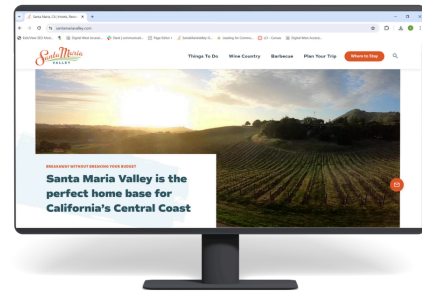


Website Traffic

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

37,978 Website Visits

1024 Website Hotel Referrals



Familiarization (FAM) Tours & Media



We hosted 1 FAM tour in March:

- Visit CA Partnership with Jacob & Esther Lee: Global Influencer Advisory Board members for Visit California, who run @LocalAdventurer.

Energy Initiatives

RMDZ PROGRAM:

The Santa Maria Valley Chamber of Commerce serves as the Zone Administrator for CalRecycle in coordination with the County of Santa Barbara, through the Recycling Market Development Zone (RMDZ).

Recent successes include:

- Two same-day Backyard Composting Workshops in coordination with the City of Santa Maria, County of Santa Barbara, and the UC Master Gardener Program. Attendees were provided with no-cost composting machines, paid for through Zone Incentive Funds accessible to the Chamber of Commerce through the RMDZ program.
- Completion of an Orange Tagging project with Marborg, where residences were reminded and urged to set out their food waste bin. The RMDZ program provided ZIF funds for printing and manpower for the pilot program.
- The Chamber through the RMDZ program provided assistance to Enevi, LLC, a local plastics recycler. With the Chamber's help, the company was able to process their Land Use Permit from Santa Barbara County and achieve an operational business loan through the RMDZ program and CalRecycle.



SoCalGas:

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:

- The Chamber hosted a webinar for School Districts in the tri-county area, emphasizing energy efficiency resources.
- The Chamber hosted a webinar for Jurisdictions with Aquatic Centers in the tri-county area. Pools use a high amount of energy and access to rebates and resources is essential.
- Altogether, these two webinars were able to connect with over 20 jurisdictions including municipalities and school districts.
- The Chamber hosted a comprehensive meeting with the Santa Ynez Tribe of Chumash Indians for energy efficiency resources to include an upcoming site visit to Chumash facilities.
- The Chamber is organizing a bus visit to the SoCalGas Resource

Center in Downey where energy resources are showcased, including a Hydrogen House that is powered completely by hydrogen technology. The visit will include up to 30 representatives from our Central Coast Region. Stay tuned for more details.



Workforce Development

Teacher Tours

We held our program recap meeting with SBCEO & began planning for FY27 Tours. This past year's tours were the most successful yet in terms of both business & teacher participation, with 61 teachers participating and 17 local businesses visited.



Workforce Development Board

We continue to work with our partners at the WDB and SBCEO on the workSBC initiative, which is helping build a centralized database of work-based learning and other career pathway-aligned opportunities across Santa Barbara County.

We held our first steering committee meeting to present the program to this group and their role in the project. We are finalizing the planning for our June steering committee meeting, which will be held in person in Solvang. Priorities for the steering committee include focusing on the funding and sustainability of this project, and giving feedback on what the digital platform may look like.



COUNTY of SANTA BARBARA
WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARD

Leadership Santa Maria Valley

April's topic was Sustainability & Natural Resources. We toured Engel & Gray's compost yard, had a presentation on energy and climate change from Ramon Elias, toured Dewelson Farm, and Presqu'île Winery. At the end of the month the LSMV Alumni hosted a Lunch & Learn. Our guest speaker was Steve Baird with the ECHO Group and Band of Brothers. He shared about how the Casa de Flores, house for Veterans began and how they support veterans in need.



Advocacy and Addressing Housing Needs

Advocacy and Support Letters

Topic	Stance
MATCH ACT	support
SB 1359	oppose
AB 2675 (Arambula): Education Technology Empowerment Act	support
AB 2027	oppose
SB 1284	oppose



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

- LSMV Lunch & Learn
- Candidate Academy Kick-off Mixer
- Candidate Academy
- Housing Summit
- Immigration Forum

Business Support & Meetings

- BYB weekly networking event
- Chamber Executive Committee meeting
- Chamber Board of Directors meeting
- LSMV Advisory Committee Meeting
- Chamber New Member Orientation
- Hispanic Business Alliance "Grow Your Business" event

Community Events

- VSFB Quarterly Award Ceremony
- Strawberry Industry Recognition Dinner
- Elks Rodeo Queen Kickoff
- State Square Dance Convention (welcoming remarks)
- Chamber Mixer with Santa Barbara Humane

Chamber Media Mentions

Topic	Publication
Events	Noozhawk Noozhawk Santa Maria Times NoozHawk KEYT NoozHawk Lompoc Record Santa Maria Times Santa Maria Sun Lompoc Record
Commentary/Spotlight	Santa Maria Times Santa Maria Times
Cocktail Contest	Santa Maria Times Noozhawk
Grants	Santa Ynez Star

Tourism Media Mentions

Topic	Publication
Travel	Local Adventurer Travel + Leisure
Santa Maria Style Barbecue	Fast Food





(805) 925-2403 | santamaria.com | santamariavalley.com

