



Santa Maria Valley **ECONOMIC IMPACT REPORT**

**February 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 February 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 supported one potential new business and provided assistance to multiple local businesses and residents through consultations and startup support.

Throughout February, the Chamber engaged in a wide range of programs and outreach efforts. Membership remained strong with 818 members, while the Hispanic Business Group continued to support local entrepreneurs with beginning their startup journey. Tourism remained a key focus, with "Dine Out Santa Maria Style" advertising reaching over 12,000 users and website engagement driving 920 hotel referrals. Workforce development efforts advanced through "Caring Champions" teacher tours and participating in Partners in Education's Career Coaching program which helps high school students understand career interests and prepare for their next steps after high school.

The Chamber remains closely connected to local government and regional partners through 32 events and meetings, including 2026 State of Education. 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.....	6-8
Workforce Development.....	9
Advocacy and Addressing Housing Needs.....	10
Community Involvement.....	10
Media Mentions.....	11

Economic Development



Business Attraction

The Chamber’s Economic Development department provided direct support to 1 business this month.

Business Type/Idea	Support Provided
Sanitation Business	City Bus license/NAICS & SIC codes

Business Retention & Assistance

The Chamber’s Economic Development department provided business assistance services to 2 local businesses and residents.

Business Type	Support Provided
Sanitation Business	City Bus license/NAICS & SIC codes
SM Tire	Base Access



Providing Business Support

Chamber Membership



Networking Opportunities



340+

Networking Event Participants

This includes the Chamber's weekly Build Your Business networking events and Chamber committee meetings.

"The members are amazing people. The things that they are doing outside of the Chamber says a lot about who they are and how they contribute to our community as a whole"

- Alma Reyes, Sales & Marketing, Central West Produce

Event Updates

Santa Maria Valley Chamber in partner with Santa Ynez Chamber and Santa Barbara County Education Office held 2026 State of Education at Allan Hancock College to address the current issues and priorities of education in the county.



Providing Business Support

Tourism Marketing District

Discussion of open board seat and vote for a candidate, KPS3 report provided, discussed BBQ Festival Marketing; Influencer deep dive; Billboard options. Report of status of upcoming Restaurant Month, Strawberry Festival lodging packages, BBQ Fest MOU and BBQ Association



Ambassador Committee

The meeting was led by Ambassador Chair, Paula Fuller of American Self Storage. Vice Chair, Terè Paredes of Maya Restaurant provided a board update report. Cara Martinez, Ambassador Chamber Staff Liaison 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.

Business & Government Roundtable

City Manager Dave Rowlands came and shared his vision for the city and shared his leadership style



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
Food Business	Helped in connecting with SBA
Candle Business	Helped in start up process (Walk-In)
At Home Food Business	Helped with information on starting a business (Walk-In)
Mobile Detailing Business	Helped with information on starting a business (Walk-In)

Additional Activities

- HBA Event Planning- Feb 10
- 2026 Hispanic Business Alliance: Committee Kickoff- Feb 18
- HBA Membership Discussion- Feb 20
- HBA Logo Discussion- Feb 20
- BIPOC Meeting- Feb 27



Tourism

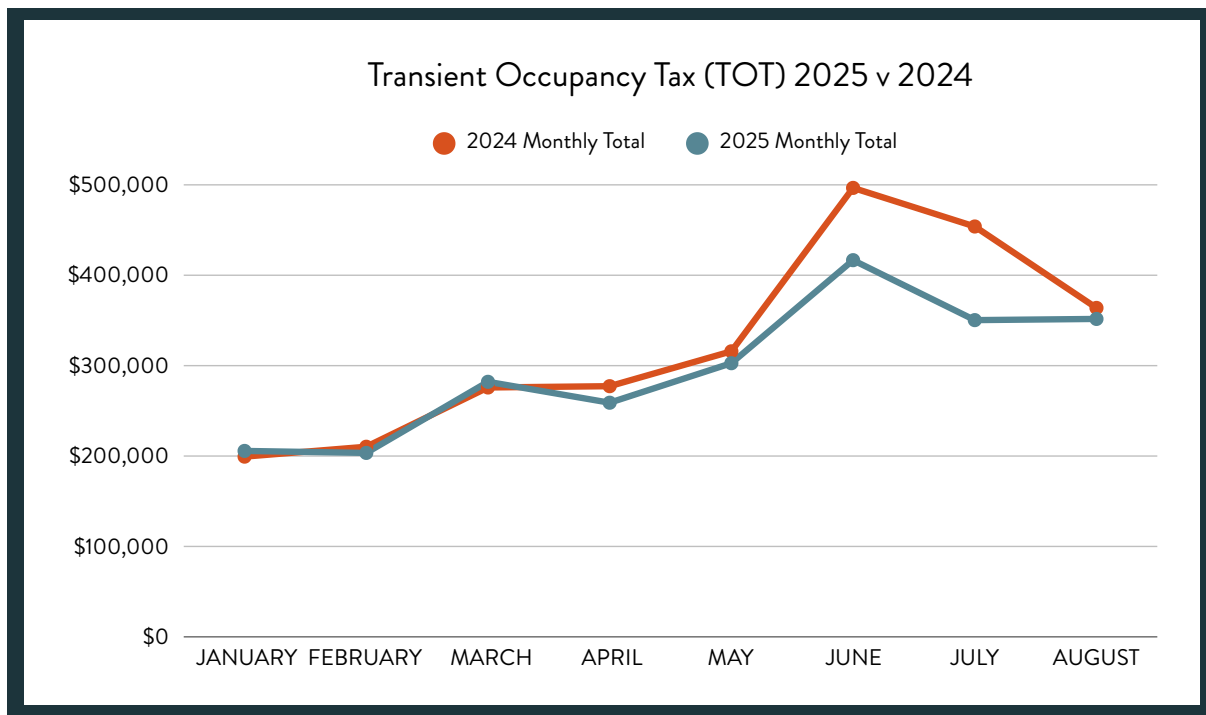
Transient Occupancy Tax Data

Despite the well-documented headwinds facing the tourism sector across the country, driven by consumer economic concerns and the current political climate, our Transient Occupancy Tax (TOT) revenue is demonstrating promising signs of stabilization as we head into the last quarter of the year.

The latest report, covering data through August, shows a monthly year-over-year decrease of 3.35%. This monthly result indicates a strong deceleration of the negative trend when compared to the average monthly year-over-year decline of 6.35% that the area has experienced so far this fiscal year.

While our year-to-date (YTD) revenue for the January-August period remains in deficit, showing an 8.54% decrease compared to the same period in the prior year, the most recent monthly performance highlights our destination's enduring appeal and the resilience of our local tourism market. We remain strategically focused on leveraging this recent momentum to close the gap and secure the strongest possible fiscal finish.

Month	2025 Monthly Totals	2024 Monthly Totals	Monthly Percentage Change
January	\$205,657.77	\$199,345.75	+3.17%
February	\$203,468.55	\$210,286.10	-3.24%
March	\$282,109.55	\$275,837.25	+2.27%
April	\$258,990.80	\$277,268.38	-6.59%
May	\$302,702.66	\$315,838.18	-4.16%
June	\$416,673.19	\$496,629.02	-16.10%
July	\$350,359.24	\$453,920.91	-22.81%
August	\$351,666.37	\$363,851.23	-3.35%



Tourism

Community Support

Santa Maria Speedway: The Santa Maria Chamber of Commerce has approved a Special Project Grant of \$3,000 to assist Santa Maria Speedway in expanding its marketing efforts into the Bakersfield and Fresno markets. This funding will support cable and digital advertising for the High Limit Sprints National Tour, scheduled for Thursday, August 20, 2026.

Dine Out Santa Maria Style 2026: The 2026 "Dine Out Santa Maria Style" campaign (Jan 16 – Feb 13) supported 11 local restaurants by driving off-season foot traffic through specialized menus and exclusive offers. Notably, local partners like Randy at Straw Hat Pizza reported over 100 participants in the first week alone.

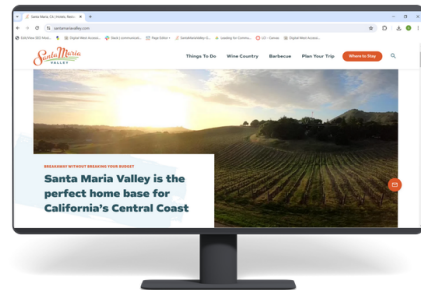


Website Traffic

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

42,372 Website Visits

920 Website Hotel Referrals

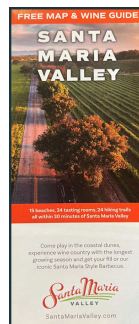


Brochure & Visitor Guide Distribution



160

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



160

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

Tourism

Trade Shows & Industry Partner Events

W.A.C.E. Annual Conference: Our team of 12 attended the W.A.C.E. Annual Conference (Western Association of Chamber Executives), a premier professional development event for chamber of commerce leaders across 21 Western US states and Canada. Held in early 2026, it offers high-level networking, keynote sessions, and educational workshops designed to strengthen, train, and support chamber staff.



Paid Advertising

Dine Out Santa Maria Style: The 2026 Restaurant Month's boosted ad on Facebook and Instagram reached 12,077 users and was viewed 27,848 times, primarily among the age group of 35-44.



Familiarization (FAM) Tours & Media



We hosted 2 FAM tours in February:

- Steve Lyons: Freelance travel journalist for Pod Well Traveled, Yahoo Entertainment, Yahoo Life, and more.
- Jared Dillingham: Travel writer and journalist based in Phoenix, AZ. Featured on CBS5 and 3TV in Phoenix, as well as in online and print publications such as Canvas Rebel, Voyage Journey, Bold Joinery, and many more.

Workforce Development

Teacher Tours

February “Caring Champions” tour included tours at Allan Hancock College’s Healthcare and Education programs, Children’s Resource & Referral, and Merrill Gardens. We’ll conclude this year’s Teacher Tours Program with a tour of VSFB in March which will include teachers from throughout all of Santa Barbara County.



Partners in Education

We participated as a Career Coach in Partners in Education’s Career Coaching session on Core Values. The Career Coaching program helps high school students understand career interests and prepare for their next steps after high school.



Leadership Santa Maria Valley

February’s topic day focus was Government. The class toured City Hall and then met with Mayor Alice Patino and City Manager Dave Rowlands. In the afternoon they went to the County Administration Building and met with 4th District Supervisor Bob Nelson. They heard from a panel of speakers from County Services and then a legislative panel.



Workforce Development Board

The Workforce Development Board Hosted an Industry Tour at Flying Goat Cellars. Preparing to kick off our “Women in STEM” marketing campaign in March.



COUNTY of SANTA BARBARA
WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARD

Advocacy and Addressing Housing Needs

Advocacy and Support Letters

Diablo Canyon Power Plant support letter to the water board.

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

- WACE Annual Conference
- Career Coaching with Partners in Education - Defining Core Values
- 2026 State of Education
- REACH Workforce Partner Strategy Session - Regional Talent Pathways

Business Support & Meetings

- BYB weekly networking meeting (4)
- Chamber Mixer at First United Methodist Church
- Chamber Board Meeting
- Business Tour - Flying Goat Cellars

Community Events

- Santa Maria Valley Young Professionals Group Meetup



Chamber Media Mentions

Topic	Publication
State of Education:	Lompoc Record Noozhawk Santa Maria Times Santa Maria Times Santa Maria Times KEYT
Santa Maria Young Professionals	Santa Maria Times Noozhawk
Events and Programs	Noozhawk Santa Maria Times
Business of the Quarter	Santa Maria Times Santa Maria Times
Chamber Commentary and Spotlight	Santa Maria Times Santa Maria Times
Staff Recognitions	PacBizTimes 40under40

Tourism Media Mentions

Topic	Publication
Cocktail Contest	Santa Maria Times Santa Maria Times





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