



Salinas Valley  
CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

# BUSINESS JOURNAL



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## Latest Data Reveals Violent and Property Crime in Salinas has Risen Slightly After Years of Decline

By Kevin Dayton, Government Affairs Liaison

Since 2021, the Business Journal has annually published a table showing multi-year crime data trends for the City of Salinas, along with an article explaining the statistics in context. In turn, the Chamber encourages its members and the public to use this information when exercising their right to petition the city government regarding law enforcement and crime prevention programs.

Efficiency, transparency, and accountability related to crime data are important for the Chamber, as crime (or the perception of crime) can significantly affect the local and regional economy and the quality of life for the community. In addition, police expenditures (derived from our taxes) comprise about 40 percent of the city's annual Operating Budget.

### Background on Recent Salinas Police Department Upgrades to Data Collection and Analysis

Reporting crime data that's accurate and timely is also a priority for the Salinas Police

Crime Data see page 7

## New Housing for "Moderate Income" Residents Remains Elusive and Unlikely

By Kevin Dayton, Government Affairs Liaison

Readers of the Business Journal may have looked at the Monterey County Regional Housing Needs Allocations (RHNA) tables in the June issue. (See "Monterey County Jurisdictions are Assigned Goals for New Housing. What's Their Progress Toward Those Goals?") It's obvious that Monterey County cities and the county issue relatively few permits for "moderate-income" housing.

This is not a new phenomenon, but it is getting increased attention from government officials. Meanwhile, the City of Soledad just experienced a housing policy setback that shows why moderate-income housing doesn't get built.

### What Is Moderate Income?

Based on state and federal laws, households are classified as "moderate income" if their income is 80 percent to 120 percent of area median



income for their household size. Area median income is the amount at which half of households are above and half are below.

(Median is different than mean — often referred to as "average" — which is calculated by adding up incomes for all households and then dividing the sum by the number of households.)

In Monterey County, for

2025, the Division of Housing Policy Development of the California Department of Housing and Community Development has calculated the annual median family income at \$104,500 for a family of four and \$73,150 for an individual, for the purposes of Regional Housing Needs Allocations (RHNA).

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# Rancho Cielo's Veggie Box & BBQ Fundraiser Turns 10: A Decade of Nourishing the Community

By Adam Joseph, Rancho Cielo

**W**hat started as a modest idea at a Rancho Cielo board meeting has blossomed into one of Monterey County's most impactful fundraisers. Rancho Cielo's Veggie Box & BBQ Fundraiser celebrates its 10th anniversary on Aug. 18-22, 2025, marking a decade of feeding the community and generous giving.

"I just walked into the meeting with the concept of vegetables in a bag as a fundraiser," Veggie Box founder and Rancho Cielo board member Mike Costa recalls. "I presented a bag of six items, and everybody was all in favor of it."

In its first year, 900 veggie bags were assembled on a single line of tables. Costa reached out to local agricultural companies, contacted farms and spoke with prominent local produce leaders to request produce donations. Their support was instrumental, as was the spirit of innovation and determination that carried the event forward.

Those early boxes were packed with care — and with weight, thanks to miniature watermelons donated from the San Joaquin Valley. While logistics posed a challenge, the bags couldn't handle the small but heavy melons, the success of that first year proved that the idea had legs and heart.

The annual event gained momentum when bags



were replaced with boxes a couple of years later. Then, Costa says it truly became a bonafide success when Rancho Cielo partnered with local nonprofits, including the Salvation Army of Salinas, the Boys & Girls Club of Monterey County, the Food Bank of Monterey County and Second Harvest Food Bank of Santa Cruz.

Fast forward to 2024, and the scale is astonishing. More than 14,000 veggie boxes, filled with fresh produce from 15 prominent local shippers and growers, were distributed to families

and organizations across the region. The BBQ side of the event has grown just as impressively. Over 1,300 pounds of tri-tip were barbecued and served in more than 2,000 BBQ lunches to sponsors and the public.

The fundraiser has also become a significant collaborative effort, with hundreds of volunteers, students, alumni, Rancho Cielo staff, local businesses and community members coming together each year to make it all happen. In 2024, over 115 generous sponsors supported the cause, proving that

the event earned its place as a cherished tradition.

"It's about the students," Costa says. "That's the main thing — always remembering it's about the students. Everyone's on board with why we're doing this."

Mike's wife, Kim, who has also been instrumental in leading the fundraiser since its inception, echoes that sentiment, adding, "[The Veggie Box & BBQ Fundraiser] is a wonderful gathering of volunteers, community partners, and produce companies, all of whom support Rancho

Cielo!"

Their leadership and tireless dedication have helped transform a small, annual effort into a large-scale operation that not only raises funds for Rancho Cielo's programs but also provides fresh and healthy food to many in need.

As Rancho Cielo celebrates both the 10th anniversary of the Veggie Box & BBQ Fundraiser and its 25th year as a nonprofit organization, the milestone year will be capped off with a special celebration on Oct. 25, when the community is invited to gather at Rancho Cielo for food, wine and live music, and a moment to reflect on the remarkable impact it has made over the years.

From "vegetables in a bag" to a vital source of funding, skill-building and nutrition, the Veggie Box & BBQ Fundraiser is a shining example of what happens when people rally around a shared purpose. As the saying goes, "It takes a village," and thanks to the village behind Rancho Cielo, thousands of lives have been enriched, year after year.

Veggie boxes are on sale now. Visit [ranchocieloyc.org](http://ranchocieloyc.org) to learn more, volunteer, purchase for yourself and/or donate to families via the Boys & Girls Clubs of Monterey County, Food Bank for Monterey County, Salvation Army Salinas and Second Harvest Food Bank. 🌱