

**UNOFFICIAL MINUTES
OF THE
SALINAS HISTORIC RESOURCES BOARD**

January 5, 2026

The meeting was called to order at 12 p.m. in the City Hall Rotunda.

ROLL CALL

PRESENT: Chairperson Mazgai, Vice Chairperson Shim, Board Members Hirahara, Munoz, and Callender

ABSENT: Wadsworth

STAFF: Planning Manager, Grant Leonard, Outreach Coordinator, Bianca Arizmendi, and Assistant Planner, Yesenia Segovia

COMMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC FOR ITEMS NOT ON THE AGENDA

Opened for public comment at 12:01 p.m.

Denise Estrada: Requested an update on the status of the draft letter of support for Heritage Park. She reported a recent fire at the historic Southern Pacific Freight Depot that caused flooring and decking damage at the far end of the building, with the welcome center unaffected. She also expressed disappointment that, after 26 years of partnership, the City of Salinas is providing no funding this year for the First Mayor's House, thanked donors for their support, and noted ongoing fundraising efforts to sustain programs.

APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES: ID#25-597

Board Member Hirahara: Moved to accept the minutes.

Board Member Munoz: Seconded the motion.

AYES: Chair Mazgai, Vice Chairperson Shim, Board Members Hirahara, Munoz, and Callender

NOES:

ABSTAIN:

The motion passed with a 5-0 vote

CONSIDERATIONS

ID#25-596 Discuss 2025 Accomplishments and 2026 Goals

Yesenia Segovia: Presented 2025 priorities and accomplishments, noting one approved Mills Act contract, completion of the certificate of appreciation program, and ongoing efforts for the survey update, plaque program, general plan implementation, HRB awareness, and training, including registration with the California Preservation Foundation. She then presented proposed 2026 priorities for board consideration, including completing the survey update, increasing awareness of programs, beginning the plaque program, continuing general plan implementation, expanding HRB awareness, and increasing training opportunities.

Board Member Hirahara: Asked how the HRB would be involved in general plan implementation and whether the board would be asked to provide input.

Grant Leonard: Explained that HRB involvement includes review of the updated general plan, particularly the historic preservation policies in the land use chapter, and the board's ongoing role in preserving historic resources. He noted the draft general plan has been released and that a presentation can be provided. He clarified that while the general plan is lengthy, HRB is not required to review the entire document.

Chair Mazgai: Asked about the timeline for HRB review and whether a presentation would be scheduled.

Board Member Hirahara / Board Member Callender: Board members expressed interest in having the draft general plan presented to the HRB.

Grant Leonard: Stated a presentation could be scheduled within the next month or two and added that city council study sessions are ongoing, with the next likely in February, along with a community open house workshop planned for a Saturday in February.

Chair Mazgai: Asked how awareness of the Mills Act and certificate programs would be increased beyond posting information on the city website.

Board Member Munoz: Proposed creating a clear diagram or guide explaining the historic preservation and permitting process, including alterations, HRB review, benefits such as the Mills Act, and guidelines for items like solar panels.

Chair Mazgai: Suggested modeling the guide after Spreckels' materials and asked Board Member Munoz to prepare a draft for future discussion.

Board Member Munoz: Munoz agreed.

Chair Mazgai: Emphasized the July 31 Mills Act deadline and suggested using the city's email newsletter to notify the public.

Yesenia Segovia: Confirmed this could be done.

Board Member Munoz: Asked about limits on Mills Act participation and incentives.

Grant Leonard: Explained there's no property cap, but there is a limit on annual tax revenue, detailed on the city's website.

Chair Mazgai: Noted the website provides the needed information for the public and board.

Chair Mazgai: Discussed the plaque program and the research conducted on different types of plaques, including wooden, bronze, and enamel. He emphasized the need to focus on cost-effective options and asked the board for input on moving forward.

Board Member Callender: Suggested offering three plaque options at different price levels, allowing homeowners to choose based on cost and placement, such as more durable materials for exterior placement.

Board Member Munoz: Highlighted San Juan Bautista's sophisticated plaque system, including bronze plaques with building history and digital QR codes. He proposed starting in Salinas with existing districts, such as the Steinbeck literary walk, and eventually incorporating digital or 3D records to preserve historical buildings in case of damage or loss.

Chair Mazgai: Asked if San Juan Bautista’s plaques are paid for merchants and noted that in Salinas, ideally, homeowners shouldn’t bear the cost since plaques benefit the public. He proposed reviewing three to four plaque examples first, then evaluating costs.

Board Member Munoz: Explained that in San Juan Bautista, plaques can be viewed from the sidewalk via QR codes without disturbing residents.

Board Member Callender: Supported QR codes for commercial buildings but noted they may be less practical for private residences.

Board Member Hirahara: Asked if plaques are mainly for residences or for more detailed historic buildings and inquired about funding.

Chair Mazgai: Confirmed multiple plaque types would be used—simpler for residences—and provided a rough cost estimate for bronze plaques at \$400–\$500 each, excluding installation and shipping. She emphasized the board would review examples first before finalizing costs.

Board Member Munoz: Noted that historic buildings have both challenges and benefits—higher maintenance costs but increased property value. He suggested engaging the real estate community to educate them on the advantages of historic properties, leveraging the updated city historic survey.

Chair Mazgai: Agreed, emphasizing the importance of the Page & Turnbull historic inventory as a reference for real estate, cultural heritage, and education. He highlighted that historic designations can increase property value and city revenue. He also proposed adding the City of Salinas art collection as a 2026 priority, noting the need for an inventory and proper storage or display.

Board Member Munoz: Supported creating a venue for exhibiting and preserving the city’s art collection.

Yesenia Segovia: Confirmed the art collection could be added to the 2026 priority list at a future meeting.

Board Member Munoz: Recommended community presentations to educate real estate professionals and the public on the benefits of historic buildings and the updated city historic survey. He also emphasized HRB member training through the California Preservation Foundation and training for the Permit Center to ensure consistent guidance and protection of historic resources.

Chair Mazgai: Acknowledged the importance of these initiatives.

Board Member Shim: Suggested incorporating the December 2025 California Building Standards and Amendments (Title 18) into HRB agendas to ensure compliance with state, national, and local historic codes.

Chair Mazgai: Proposed passing the information to Grant Leonard and Yesenia Segovia for city review and possible website posting.

Board Member Munoz: Added the need for a dedicated city historic ordinance to provide clear guidelines.

Board Member Shim: Noted that the information came from a recent Board of Supervisors meeting and is relevant for overseeing historic restoration and rehabilitation.
ID#25-593 Update on Historic Resources Survey and Historic Context Statement Development

Grant Leonard: Provided an update on Page & Turnbull's work, noting that their reconnaissance survey of potentially historic properties was completed in December, including photography and site visits. They are now preparing DPR forms for each property. He also shared that the draft Historic Context Statement, a mini-history of Salinas to guide preservation decisions, has been reviewed and posted for public comment.

Board Member Hirahara: Confirmed that the Historic Context Statement is currently a draft.

Grant Leonard: Clarified it is a public draft, and significant comments may lead to revisions before finalizing and adopting it with the updated survey.

Chair Mazgai: Confirmed that any property meeting historic criteria will be included in the inventory, without quotas based on style or type.

Grant Leonard: Affirmed that all qualifying properties will be included.

Board Member Shim: Noted that the reconnaissance survey increased properties from 104 to 500 since 1989, and proposed historic districts expanded from three (Maple Park, Steinbeck, East End) to ten, reflecting significant change.

Chair Mazgai: Observed that more buildings now meet the 50-year threshold, explaining the increase in inventory.

Board Member Hirahara: Asked for clarification on proposed districts from 1989 and who decides to establish them.

Grant Leonard: Explained that Page & Turnbull evaluates whether areas qualify as historic districts, but the decision to establish a district rests with either citizens proposing it to the HRB and City Council or the City Council under city code.

Board Member Hirahara: Asked if residents could establish a historic district if a majority supported it.

Grant Leonard: Confirmed that process is outlined in the Historic Resource Board Ordinance.

Chair Mazgai: Noted the council could override resident opinion if it chose to move forward.

Grant Leonard: Referred back to the ordinance as written.

Chair Mazgai: Recalled past opposition in 1989–90 due to property rights concerns, which prevented districts from being established. Emphasized the importance of education and preserving architectural character to maintain district desirability. Highlighted that benefits of historic districts generally outweigh negatives.

ID#25-594 Chinatown Pre-Development Activities Update

Grant Leonard: Provided the monthly Chinatown update on historic and formerly historic properties. Reported architects have submitted a design package for planning review: 38 Soledad Street: Replication of the historic building that burned last fall, using recovered elements, consistent with zoning and mixed-use plan (up to 55 apartments with ground-floor commercial). Some design details like colors and awnings are still flexible. 45 Soledad Street: Design package being finalized. Original brick façade replicated for first two floors, with three additional stories for senior housing and ground-floor commercial. 37–39 Soledad Street (Republic Cafe and Lotus Inn): Exterior facades preserved and repaired; interior remodeling ongoing. Asian Cultural Experiences of Salinas (ACES) museum development planned, with residential or commercial use above first floors. Noted ongoing cleanup by disaster recovery contractors, including debris removal, roof repair, stabilization, and lead/asbestos testing at 39 Soledad Street. Security fencing has been updated. Next steps include continuing cleanup and stabilization, finalizing plans for 45 and 37–39 Soledad Street, developing requests for affordable housing developers, and providing a City Council update at the end of the month or February.

Chair Mazgai: Asked about the orangey-brown space next to 38 Soledad Street and whether it was a pass-through.

Grant Leonard: Explained it's a Moongate-inspired entrance to the apartments, with a second-floor patio and moon sculpture integrated into the railing.

Chair Mazgai: Criticized the southern façade facing Market Street as generic and not reflective of Chinatown. Noted that while the apartments are welcome, the design lacks an Asian aesthetic despite prior feedback requesting it.

Board Member Munoz: Agreed, saying the design is monotonous with solids and voids and should include playful, culturally reflective details.

Chair Mazgai: Compared it to Dai-chi Village on Rossi, which has Japanese characters and varied colors, noting that the new design feels outdated like a 1950s dorm and urged improvement.

Board Member Hirahara: Asked if this is the final design.

Grant Leonard: Clarified it's for planning approval only; final design elements will be worked out before building permits. Acknowledged the desire for playful, culturally reflective features on all sides and said they are being incorporated.

Board Member Hirahara: Noted prior public outreach included similar discussions, and design refinements would return for community input, including from ACEs, particularly for elements like wooden walls, Moongate patios, and roof structures.

Board Member Shim: Expressed concern that the new structure near Republic Cafe and the museum could overpower the historic character of the district and erase Chinatown's architectural heritage, referencing patterns in other California cities.

Chair Mazgai: Commented on the color of the high-rise behind the recreated corner building, saying it draws attention but clashes with surrounding structures. Suggested it could be changed.

Chair Mazgai: Commented that changing the building color could help it feel more like part of the community.

Board Member Munoz: Added that architectural motifs are also needed to create harmony.

Chair Mazgai: Asked if this project might be fast-tracked and the first to be built on Soledad Street.

Grant Leonard: Confirmed it's possible since it's a renovation, not new construction, owned by the city, and involves less intensive development than other projects requiring developer partnerships and financing.

Chair Mazgai: Asked about the number of apartments.

Grant Leonard: Said the design is still being finalized; housing trust funds and other grants are available.

Board Member Hirahara: Explained the Republic Cafe project has fewer units because it qualifies as a renovation, not new construction, allowing use of certain funds. Noted that future projects at 38 and 45 Soledad will add over 100 units.

Board Member Callender: Asked if unspent grant money could be redirected.

Board Member Hirahara: Said the housing trust funds will likely be fully utilized by the end of the next fiscal year.

Chair Mazgai: Asked whether the renovation preserves only the facade or the interior as well.

Board Member Hirahara: Clarified that the facade is preserved, the building is structurally sound, and interior work is in good condition, with renovations focused on restoring the restaurant and museum space.

Board Member Shim: Noted the Republic Cafe building needed power washing to remove mold and preserve it. Offered to present a condensed version of a California Preservation Foundation seminar on rehabilitation at a future meeting or share materials with the board.

Board Member Hirahara: Confirmed that contractors are currently performing the cleaning and noted the Republic Cafe is on the National Register, which adds restrictions.

Chair Mazgai: Suggested sharing the seminar link so members could review it on their own time.

Board Member Shim: Emphasized the seminar's value because it provides an in-depth process not available online.

Board Member Munoz: Added that as California Historical Foundation members, the board has access to seminars for training to maintain CLG status. Highlighted the importance of following the Secretary of Interior's guidelines to preserve historical buildings, especially facades, and that new architecture should reflect the historic district's character.

Board Member Comments

Board Member Hirahara: Reported that he and Sal prepared recommendations on the HRB resolution, submitted to Grant and staff. Noted that the consultant report from Harrison Associates (master plan for ITC) will be on next month's agenda, and their recommendations may be adjusted based on that report. Emphasized that the agenda will likely include both the report and the resolution.

Board Member Shim: Asked if this concerned the Welcome Center; Hirahara clarified it pertains to the entire historic district at the training stage.

Board Member Munoz: Asked about the city's annual historical preservation report and the need to submit board member training information, including titles, duration, and presenters.

Chair Mazgai: Stated the city will request the information, and members should respond when asked to avoid stray emails and maintain consistency.

Board Member Hirahara: Asked if this relates to economic conflict of interest reporting.

Grant Leonard: Confirmed it does not.

ADJOURNMENT

Confirmation of attendance for next regular meeting on February 2, 2026.

The meeting was adjourned at 1 p.m.

Michael Mazgai
Chairperson

Grant Leonard
Executive Secretary

