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## Salinas begins a survey to assess historical buildings in the city.

Celia Jiménez

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“Every city is unique and has its own personality,” says Michael Mazgai, an architectural historian who supports the process of updating the inventory of historic structures.

DANIEL DREIFUSS

Walking around downtown Salinas can be an architectural adventure. There are dramatic bas relief busts on the original courthouse (now county offices) by artist Jo Mora, and large Queen Anne homes with asymmetrical facades, art deco flair and embellishments on several commercial buildings, such as those that are home to Alvarado on Main and Live@Heirloom Pizza Co. The city has a brochure that includes a map and over 50 historical buildings focusing mainly on art deco, a style that shaped the city during the agricultural boom from the 1920s-'40s.

To learn more, and create a more thorough catalog, the Salinas City Council on Dec. 3 approved a citywide historic resources survey update, with a nearly \$364,000 price tag. The last time the city embarked on an inventory of its historic assets was in 1989. Additional updates were made eight years ago during a downtown property survey, and this effort is meant to be more comprehensive.

“The city is interested in exploring a new effort to fully catalog historic structures in Salinas,” Community Development Director Lisa Brinton wrote in a report to the city council.

“I’m over the moon that the city has moved forward with this. It’s a great decision,” says Michael Mazgai, an architectural historian and a member of Salinas’ Historic Resources Board. “There are buildings in different parts of the city that are special, and we still don’t really have designated, official historic districts.”

Historical surveys are important in guiding planning decisions and can aid in preservation programs, such as historical designation for buildings.

Beyond planning relevance, Mazgai believes such an undertaking can increase pride in the community.

“There’s so much history here that helped define Salinas, but frankly, I don’t think most of the residents know about it,” he says. “If they don’t know about it, how can tourists or the rest of the public find out about it? It’s great heritage tourism [and] promotes business.”

According to Brinton’s report, the survey aligns with Salinas’ General Plan and a statewide historic resources preservation program the council approved in June, among other things.

Page & Turnbull, Inc., an architecture, design and planning firm, will be in charge of conducting the survey, evaluating cultural resources and cataloging sites, structures and buildings. That process is expected to be completed by the end of 2026.

Celia Jiménez