

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

November 3, 2025

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, Callender and Wadsworth

ABSENT:

STAFF: Planning Manager, Grant Leonard, and Outreach Coordinator, Bianca Arizmendi

COMMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC FOR ITEMS NOT ON THE AGENDA

Board Member Munoz: Notes he usually expects agenda updates and wants to report activity at Salinas historical sites work at 124 Clay Street that may lack permits and significant clearing activity at the John Steinbeck Free Library.

Chair Mazgai: Asked what Munoz wants to mention, suggests adding the issue to the December agenda, and notes that Yesenia is expected to present the review and flagging process for surveyed properties then. He adds that questions about the library's interior activity may need to go to the library director.

Board Member Munoz: Says he brought it up because he noticed the activity.

APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES: ID#25-468 October 6, 2025, Historic Resources Board Minutes

Chair Mazgai: Asked for comments or corrections to the minutes, then notes two of his own: on page two, the former owner of 14 Los Laureles should be corrected to Judge Henry G. Jorgensen, and on page eight, the spelling of Boronda Adobe needs correction. He then moves to call for a vote.

Board Member Wadsworth: Motioned to approve the minutes as amended.

Board Member Callender: Seconded.

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

NOES:

ABSTAIN:

This motion passed with a 6-0 vote

CONSIDERATIONS

ID#25-471 2026 Historic Resources Board Meeting Calander

Chair Mazgai: Introduced the proposed 2026 meeting schedule and asks for any comments or conflicts.

Board Member Shim: Notes that the September meeting is listed in the second week instead of the first and asks why.

Chair Mazgai: Explains that, as in prior years, the meeting is moved to the second week to avoid the Labor Day holiday. He then asks if there are any further comments or conflicts.

Board Member Shim: Moves to approve the 2026 Calendar.

Board Member Callender: Seconded

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

NOES:

ABSTAIN:

This motion passed with a 6-0 vote

ADMINISTRATIVE REPORTS

ID#25-469 Presentation on Salinas Heritage Tourism

Denise Estrada: Thanked the board for their support and notes their presence at Heritage Park events. She gives brief updates: congratulates ACE on a successful fundraiser, informs the board that partners such as the Steinbeck House and First Mayors are participating in the upcoming Monterey County Gives Program, and introduces new partners Michelle Fabian as the Steinbeck House administrative manager and Suzanne McBride joining the First Mayors board. She turned the presentation over to Craig for Heritage Tourism updates.

Craig Kaufman: Thanked the board and outlines recent developments. He explained the vision for regional heritage tourism and provides background on California Welcome Centers, noting there are 23 statewide and they must compete and pay to be part of the system. He summarized recent research from Travel Analytics Group commissioned by Visit California, emphasizing that visitors increasingly seek historical and cultural experiences, supporting their current direction. He highlighted growth at the Welcome Center—additional overnight stays critical for TOT/TID funding, 1,048 extra room nights in 2024, and significant increases in visitation. He described repeat visitor patterns and emphasizes the center's strategic location on the Juan Bautista de Anza National Historic Trail, which supports increased tours into Salinas. He referenced a 1905 postcard used in his presentations to illustrate the heritage connection.

Kaufman also reported that recent studies show visitors increasingly seek local history and cultural experiences, confirming the California Welcome Center's direction. He noted strong results: visitors who enter the Center stay an average of 1.6 extra nights, generating 1,048 additional room nights in 2024 and a 28% rise in visitation, with 2025 trending up 25%. Positioned on the Juan Bautista de Anza National Historic Trail, the Center is building regional heritage tourism through storytelling, place-making, and the

Valley of Anza program, supported by partners such as UC Berkeley and the National Park Foundation. He highlighted upcoming opportunities tied to the 250th anniversary of the De Anza expedition, potential Trails & Rails docent programming, and the arrival of CalTrain in 2028. Visit California and JLL formally recognized their plan as a model for economic development through heritage tourism, and Kaufman recently presented at the California APA on cultural heritage planning. Remaining challenges include the lack of local signage, unapproved banners, and restrictions on using the depot for intended improvements despite available funding and a board commitment to raise \$2 million. He emphasized the success of co-marketing among Heritage Park partners and strong visitor reviews, and he thanked the board for its continued support.

Board Member Hirahara: Asked how “extra stays” are defined.

Craig Kaufman: Explained it means visitors stay an additional night in the area, generating more TOT/TID revenue, though not necessarily within city limits.

Board Member Hirahara: Noted that more nights equal more tax revenue.

Board Member Munoz: Asked for visitor statistics since the Welcome Center opened in Salinas.

Craig Kaufman: Reported year-over-year tracking, noting October increased from 536 visitors last year to over 800 this year, with strong growth in tours as well.

Board Member Wadsworth: Asked who must approve signage.

Craig Kaufman: Said approvals for depot use, signage, and naming all fall under the city.

Board Member Wadsworth: Asked if this is a planning department issue.

Craig Kaufman: Said he is unsure.

Grant Leonard: Clarified it is a property management matter previously under community development but now under administration and the city manager. He and Yesenia are working on replacement banners and will discuss the broader requests with the city manager.

Chair Mazgai: Noted that one banner proposal included placing them along West Market to draw attention into the property.

Craig Kaufman: Stated that Rotary is ready to fund and install welcoming signage or banners, but the project has been on hold due to multiple, inconsistent reasons over the years. He clarified they are not seeking an official park designation and emphasized the importance of a public-private partnership for success. The private sector is prepared to fund tenant improvements and banners, but city approval is still needed.

Chair Mazgai: Asked if delays were due to semantics around the word “park” and suggested alternatives like “plaza” or “square.” Noted that banners themselves would effectively serve the purpose regardless of terminology.

Craig Kaufman: Agreed it is largely a “paper tiger” issue, emphasizing respect for the city and the need for council direction to move forward.

Board Member Hirahara: Asked if the California Welcome Center receives state funding.

Craig Kaufman: Responded that currently it does not but Visit California and JLL validation could open future state support. He noted that Speaker Rivas has visited and supports exploring state funding.

Board Member Hirahara: Confirmed that the Welcome Center is financially responsible for signage, pending city approval.

Craig Kaufman: Confirmed.

Denise Estrada: Emphasized the urgency of refurbishing the depot and preparing for incoming rail service, noting it as a key economic driver. She stressed the need for the city to be an active partner and highlighted strong community and Rotary support, urging action rather than words to advance heritage tourism.

Chair Mazgai: Asked what type of support was needed and facilitated discussion on forming a subcommittee to draft a resolution recommending city approval of signage and banners.

Board Member Callender: Suggested the board draft a recommendation to the city council to advance the project.

Board Member Hirahara: Confirmed the board can send recommendations but noted wording would be critical.

Chair Mazgai: Asked for volunteers to draft a resolution for Council. Munoz, Hirahara, and Shim volunteered.

Chair Mazgai: Confirmed subcommittee can only have two members, and asked if Shim could not serve since she is already on a subcommittee. Shim agreed and Mazgai confirmed Munoz and Hirahara would serve with direction to focus on key points supporting signage and banners for city approval.

Grant Leonard: Noted the city is completing a master plan update and public survey; suggested timing the subcommittee's work with the upcoming opportunities and strategies memo, with existing conditions presented next month and recommendations expected by early 2026.

Craig Kaufman: Expressed frustration that \$65,000 was spent on a consulting study over three years without a released report, citing this as part of ongoing delays.

Board Member Callender: Asked for a timeline for the subcommittee's draft, with the next board meeting suggested.

Board Member Hirahara: Emphasized that recommendations should align with staff input and reflect clear reasoning.

Board Member Shim: Agreed the resolution should clearly state support for signage and banners based on key points from presentations.

Denise Estrada: Suggested the subcommittee use the provided portfolio and backup information to support the resolution.

Chair Mazgai: Thanked presenters and encouraged the board to move forward with recommendations while recognizing facility expansion is a separate issue requiring additional direction.

ID#25-470 Chinatown Pre-Development Activities Update

Grant Leonard: Provided an update on Chinatown redevelopment. The fire-damaged building at 38 Soledad Street (including 36 and 34) is scheduled for demolition early this month. Across the street, at the Republic Café, a contract is underway for emergency stabilization, weatherproofing, and removal of animals. Long-term planning with TEF Design is continuing for housing at 34–40 Soledad Street, mixed-use development, and a museum at 37–39 Soledad Street in collaboration with ACES. Floor plans and layouts are still conceptual but progressing.

Chair Mazgai: Asked for clarification on demolition and potential preservation of architectural elements.

Board Member Hirahara: Commented on progress and the conceptual museum at the Republic Café.

Board Member Shim: Asked about the fire-damaged building, potential historic structures, and the height of the proposed affordable housing.

Grant Leonard: Confirmed 34–40 Soledad will have affordable housing with mixed-use commercial on the first floor, and 37 (Republic Café) is nationally registered while 39 is under review for historic significance. Any safe architectural elements from demolished buildings may be preserved or replicated in the new design. The affordable housing will be five stories. Phasing and construction order will be determined after design and RFP processes.

Chair Mazgai: Confirmed that the West side of Soledad Street will likely be the first site for affordable housing construction.

ID#25-484 Rehab Right

Grant Leonard: Updated the Historic Resources web page to include links for the cities of Berkeley and Oakland, as well as the Secretary of the Interior National Standards. Confirmed that Spreckels information can also be linked in the future.

Chair Mazgai: Noted that the updated web page is user-friendly and a valuable public resource. Asked about any future agenda items.

FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

Board Member Munoz: Reported that the California AIA is urging architects to participate in preserving the White House and advocate to Congress regarding unauthorized alterations. Highlighted the importance of following Secretary of Interior guidelines and drew parallels to preserving local historic buildings in Salinas. Provided

details on the Clay Street property near the Steinbeck Library and noted ongoing activity at historic sites including the Octagon House and Salace House.

Chair Mazgai: Noted that historic preservation is an ongoing challenge and emphasized public engagement through advocacy and online petitions. Clarified locations of Clay Street properties and expressed interest in the historic barns and structures on the site.

Board Member Shim: Shared concern about the demolition of historic 1930s homes in Santa Cruz for affordable housing, noting a broader trend affecting preservation, including the White House and Chinatown. Mentioned remodeling at the Sacred Heart Church site.

Board Member Callender: Requested updates on Clay Street and Steinbeck properties for future agenda items and helped clarify property addresses and locations in discussion with other members.

Chair Mazgai: Discussed observed facade work on local properties and noted the need for clarification on historic property flagging and the Page and Turnbull inventory process. Emphasized the importance of understanding permitting and the designation process, and suggested future training for the board on how flagged properties are handled. Confirmed deadlines for subcommittee work and stressed the need for thorough property review before submitting recommendations.

Board Member Munoz: Highlighted that any facade alterations must follow due process, referencing work on the Vallejo Free Library. Suggested board access to training used by Monterey County for reviewing historic properties and asked about access to preliminary property suggestions from the Page and Turnbull survey.

Board Member Shim: Asked clarifying questions about the role of the subcommittee, limitations due to the Brown Act, and public participation. Suggested a progress report from the subcommittee for future meetings and sought guidance on reviewing properties efficiently.

Board Member Hirahara: Clarified that the board can make recommendations but cannot retroactively affect permits. Noted ongoing permitting processes.

Board Member Wadsworth: Raised a potential recusal regarding the California Welcome Center project and suggested a future discussion about property owner rights once properties are added to the historic inventory.

Grant Leonard: Explained that the subcommittee is responsible for screening Page and Turnbull's work, submitting missing properties, and ensuring accurate identification. Clarified that the preliminary property list is not public because it is tentative and based on windshield surveys. Confirmed that historic designation requires owner consent, except for historic districts approved by the city council.

OTHER BUSINESS
ADJOURNMENT

Conformation of attendance for next regular meeting on December 1, 2025
The Meeting was adjourned at 1:16 PM

Michael Mazgai

Chairperson

Grant Leonard

Executive Secretary