

Attachment B

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February 25, 2022

Ms. Melanie Beretti
Principal Planner/Advance Planning
County of Monterey

Dear Ms. Beretti,

The Salinas City Center Improvement Association (SCCIA) Board of Directors and Land Use Committee have reviewed the proposed 2022 Downtown Government Center Memorandum of understanding (MOU). SCCIA leaders are enthusiastic and supportive of what the City and County representatives have negotiated.

As a key strategic planning document for Downtown Salinas, the Salinas Downtown Vibrancy Plan was accepted on March 17, 2015 by the Salinas City Council and accepted on August 25, 2015 by the Monterey County Board of Supervisors. Both City and County contributed funding for the development plan.

We believe Downtown Salinas is a model for how local governments and a community benefit district are working together to transform a tired and neglected urban core into a prosperous and active destination with residential and commercial density development close to numerous public transit options. Downtown Salinas is undergoing the climate change-oriented transformation our state's leaders claim they want urban centers throughout the state, and would receive constant attention and praise from state officials and the news media if its location was in the San Francisco Bay Area or Los Angeles.

In the past four years, Downtown Salinas has benefited from the infrastructure and aesthetic improvements of the Main Street Streetscape Project (with Salinas Arch as an identity and placemaking symbol), the West Alisal/Lincoln Avenue Downtown Complete Streets Project, the Intermodal Transportation Center Salinas Rail Kick Start Project (package 1), the renovation of the East-West Wing of the Old Monterey County Courthouse, the demolition of the unsightly temporary trailers at 111 West Alisal Street, the renovation of the abandoned Southern Pacific Freight Depot into the new California Welcome Center, the City of Salinas Historic Building of Adaptive Reuse Ordinance (which has aided the conversion of the Salinas National Bank/Rabobank Building and the Farmers Mercantile Company Building to mixed use

residential development), and the City of Salinas Blight Accountability Ordinance (which liberated the people of Salinas and Monterey County from irresponsible and unaccountable ownership of the Bruhn Building and Greyhound Building).

There will soon be five brew pubs in Downtown Salinas. Restaurants are thriving and people are now excited about opportunities for outdoor dining and retail. Numerous arts projects are planned through cooperative efforts of the City of Salinas, CSUMB, the Blue Zones Project and the SCCIA. The City of Salinas managed to repel public pressure and even litigation to advance alternative Downtown visions that may have destined it to become an empty, deteriorating shell for generations to come.

SCCIA Leaders are excited about upcoming next steps to transform Downtown Salinas into a model of transit-oriented development. These next steps are entangled in the always-contentious issue of parking, or what some people describe as “places to store bulky personal passenger vehicles when they’re when they’re not operating. The goal of the Downtown Vibrancy Plan for residential development is to concentrate parking needs at a Government Center Parking Garage. Mixed-use, multi-story density housing near transit will replace ugly surface parking lots that are empty for 16 hours a day, five days a week and mostly empty 24 hours a day on weekends.

Already the City of Salinas is changing zoning codes and issued Requests for Proposals to achieve the residential component of the Downtown Vibrancy Plan. However, we understand the realities of parking infrastructure costs and the desire of most Monterey County residents to have access to free, convenient parking that requires minimal hassle or exertion to get to and from their worksite. That’s why this Memorandum of Agreement between the City of Salinas and the County of Monterey is pivotal to moving forward with the Downtown residential development.

It's possible some employees of the City of Salinas and County of Monterey would enjoy the opportunity to live in Downtown Salinas, within walking or biking distance of their workplace. Have you asked them?

Thank you to the Monterey County staff and the Monterey County Board of Supervisor’s for moving this forward!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "S. Ish".

Steve Ish
President, SCCIA