Monterey Bay
ECONOMIC PARTNERSHIP

2026 STATE OF THE REGION

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 6, 2026

8:00-8:30 AM **REGISTRATION AND NETWORKING BREAKFAST**

8:30-8:45AM **WELCOME TO STATE OF THE REGION**

Welcome to Seaside: Mayor Ian Oglesby, City of Seaside
CSUMB Welcome: Carlos Vargas, Interim President, CSU Monterey Bay
MBEP Welcome: Kate Roberts, Interim CEO, Monterey Bay Economic Partnership

8:50-9:20AM **THE ROAD AHEAD: ECONOMIC FORCES SHAPING 2027**

Somjita Mitra, Ph.D., Chief Economist, California Department of Finance

What does 2027 hold for our economy, and what will it mean for businesses, workers, and communities across the Monterey Bay region? Explore the forces shaping the year ahead, from rising costs and a changing labor market to housing affordability and economic uncertainty. Gain insights into emerging risks, opportunities, and the trends that will shape our region's economic future.

9:25-9:40AM **FROM SACRAMENTO TO THE CENTRAL COAST: LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES & REGIONAL IMPACT**

Senator John Laird (Video)
Speaker Robert Rivas

Monterey Bay
ECONOMIC PARTNERSHIP

What do the latest decisions in Sacramento mean for the Monterey Bay region? Hear from California Assembly Speaker Robert Rivas and Senator John Laird as they share legislative updates, key policy priorities, and insights into the opportunities and challenges ahead for our communities, businesses, and regional economy.

9:45 - 10:15 AM MIDTERM ELECTION 2026: WINNERS, LOSERS & WHAT COMES NEXT

Ian Calderon, Former Majority Leader, California State Assembly; Founder Majority Advisors
Danny Fiero, President, Presidio Public Affairs

The votes are in, but what do the results mean for California and the Monterey Bay region? Join a conversation unpacking the 2026 midterm elections, the shifting political landscape, and what lies ahead for state and federal policy. Explore the potential implications for our regional economy, businesses, and communities as we look toward 2027 and beyond.

10:20 - 10:50 AM ELECTION RESULTS ARE IN! WHAT DO THEY MEAN FOR HOUSING IN 2027

Moderator: Alexa Johnson, Director of Housing Policy & Advocacy, Monterey Bay Economic Partnership
Dr. Shawn Tennenbaum, Superintendent, San Benito High School District
Elaine Johnson, Executive Director of Housing Santa Cruz County
Matt Huerta, Senior Housing Advisor, Monterey Bay Economic Partnership

With election results in, what could the changing political landscape mean for housing in the Monterey Bay region? Explore how emerging policy priorities and legislative decisions could shape housing affordability, development, and access in 2027, and what lies ahead for addressing one of our region's most pressing challenges.

10:50 - 11:05 AM BREAK

Monterey Bay
ECONOMIC PARTNERSHIP

11:10-11:40 AM PROTECTING ACCESS TO HEALTHCARE IN A CHANGING LANDSCAPE

Moderator: Kim De Serpa, 2nd District Supervisor, County of Santa Cruz
Jo Coffaro, Regional Vice President, Hospital Council Northern & Central California
Dr. Allen Radner, President & CEO, Salinas Valley Health
Dr. Mark Carvalho, CEO, Montage Medical Group; President, MoGo Urgent Care

As healthcare costs rise and state and federal policies shift, what does the future of healthcare look like for our region's residents? Explore how changes in coverage, funding, and workforce capacity could impact access to affordable, quality care, and how healthcare leaders, employers, and community partners can work together to address these challenges.

11:45 - 12:15 PM THE FUTURE TAKES FLIGHT: ADVANCED AIR MOBILITY ON THE CENTRAL COAST

Moderator: Lavera Alexander, Chief Growth Officer and CAAMCI Director, Monterey Bay Economic Partnership
BJ McClenton, Ph.D., Associate Director, ASSUREd Safe (FAA Center of Excellence for UAS Research)
Alice Griffith, Senior Director, State & Commercial Aviation, Crown & Secretary, FAA-supported Drone Safety Team (DST) Steering Committee

The future of aviation is taking off on the Central Coast! Join experts from ASSURE and the FAA Drone Safety Team to discover how CAAMCI is advancing next-generation aviation and how drone technologies are transforming wildfire response, search and rescue, and environmental protection across our region.

12:15-1:15 PM LUNCH

Monterey Bay
ECONOMIC PARTNERSHIP

1:15 - 1:35 PM INVESTING IN OUR CREATIVE ECONOMY

Danielle Brazell, Executive Director, California Arts Council

What if the value of creativity extends far beyond dollars and cents? Explore how California's growing creative economy can drive entrepreneurship, create jobs, and strengthen community well-being. From the state's new Creative Economy Plan to emerging opportunities for regional collaboration and investment, discover how creativity can fuel economic growth, innovation, and a thriving Monterey Bay region.

1:40 - 2:00 PM COMMUNITY RESILIENCE IN ACTION

Erica Padilla Chavez, CEO, Second Harvest Food Bank
MaríaElena De La Garza, Executive Director, Community Action Board of Santa Cruz County, Inc.

Meeting needs & building connections. From food insecurity and housing instability to emergency preparedness and immigration-related challenges, discover how Second Harvest Food Bank and Community Action Board are addressing urgent needs in the Pajaro Valley. Explore how community engagement, collaboration, and collective action can strengthen resilience and create opportunities for everyone to make a difference.

2:05 - 2:20 PM BEYOND THE NUMBERS: BUILDING A MORE INCLUSIVE & PROSPEROUS REGION

Dr. Chris Benner, Professor, Sociology and Founding Faculty Research Fellow, Institute for Social Transformation, University of California Santa Cruz

A more inclusive economy is a stronger economy! Join UCSC's Dr. Chris Benner for a first look at updated research developed with MBEP, revealing emerging trends, persistent challenges, and opportunities for business and community leaders to help shape a more prosperous future for our region.

Monterey Bay
ECONOMIC PARTNERSHIP

2:25 - 2:45 PM UNLOCKING OPPORTUNITIES: CONNECTING PEOPLE, TECHNOLOGY & JOBS

Maure Gildea, Director, Technology & Digital Access, Monterey Bay Economic Partnership

Discover how new broadband investments are expanding digital access across the Central Coast, and get a sneak peek at innovative programs connecting our workforce to emerging opportunities in precision manufacturing, AgTech, and robotics.

2:50 - 3:00 PM CLOSING REMARKS

Kate Roberts, Interim CEO, Monterey Bay Economic Partnership