

South Salinas is convenient

Established neighborhoods close to schools, shopping and entertainment

Staff report

House hunters look hard at south Salinas homes, a tribute to the area's livability, said Beverley Meamber, president and chief executive officer of the Salinas Valley Chamber of Commerce.

South Salinas, a mostly middle- and upper-income area, is a wide section of the city south of West Market and John streets.

"South Salinas has a lot of well-established, lovely older homes, and people have taken care of them," Meamber said. "Parents also are looking at test scores, and some of the elementary schools in that area have fairly good ones."

The quiet streets are lined with mature trees and wide, well-kept yards, Meamber said.

"It has an established neighborhood look that appeals to many," she said.



RICHARD GREEN/THE SALINAS CALIFORNIAN FILE PHOTO

Kindergarten students at University Park school in south Salinas recite the Pledge of Allegiance in December 2005 in the classroom of Connie Rossi-Rains.

Schools are close enough to allow many children to walk from home. Grocery stores, restaurants and shopping plazas full of independently owned small businesses are within walking distance of many residences.

The area's peaceful community, parks and shopping helped lure Laurie M. Kampa, a local real estate broker, to south Salinas.

"The atmosphere of the older part of south Salinas is very attractive,"

Kampa said.

"It's quiet, older, well-established and convenient to eating out. Everything's in walking distance. Or you hit Davis Road and you can just shoot out to Kmart, Costco, the main post office, lots of places to go shopping."

Salinas Valley Memorial Healthcare System, with many associated medical offices, is in south Salinas.

So is Oldtown Salinas with its restaurants and entertainment venues, including the National Steinbeck Center and the new Maya Cinemas movie theater that opened in 2005.

"The downtown area's seeing lots of changes," said City Councilwoman Janet Barnes, who's lived in south Salinas since 1972.

"We've repaved and redone all of South Main Street — it's absolutely gorgeous. We had all the trees planted, and we're hoping to do more landscaping and sidewalk repairs."

The area offers easy access to Highway 68 for the drive to the Monterey Peninsula, as well as to a pleasant alternate route, west along Blanco Road to Reservation Road and Imjin Parkway, which connects to Highway 1 and its sweeping vistas of Monterey Bay.

East Salinas has working-class earnestness

Area has grown rapidly and has 'a lot of vitality'

Staff report

Through community involvement and various cultural activities, the residents of east Salinas are working to maintain an image of a family- and business-friendly neighborhood. While the community formerly known as Alisal has grown in population over the years, it has stayed true to its history.

East Salinas includes everything east of Highway 101 and south of Constitution Boulevard. Neighborhoods vary widely, ranging from gracious, well-kept homes to densely packed rental housing.

Although the district has grown considerably in the past 40 years, much of it maintains the working-class earnestness that always has been part of its character.

East Alisal Street is the defining backbone of the district, the economic and commercial artery that runs from the Highway 101 overpass to John Street.

It is home to many of the city's 2,000-plus Latino-owned businesses. The Salinas United Business Association represents about 550 businesses, with 60 percent of those in retail.

"There is a lot of vitality out here," said

Erica Padilla-Chavez, SUBA's executive director. "Business owners realize that you have to take pride in your business area. Revitalization is happening out here."

The area experienced its first population boom in the 1930s, when Dust Bowl immigrants came to the Salinas Valley in search of work.

Now it's home to many of the city's Latino residents, who make up a large part of the work force in Monterey County's \$3.4 billion agriculture industry and who mostly come from states in northern Mexico in search of work and a better life.

"What you find is that the people out here are a hardworking group that wakes up every morning and wants to make the community better," said César Lara, executive director of The Citizenship Project in Salinas, which helps immigrants apply for citizenship and offers English classes and employment help.

"People are working in more of a collaborative fashion than they have before to improve the quality of life for all residents," Lara said.



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Margarita Cervantes shops with her daughter, Rita, in August 2005 at the WIC Farmer's Market on East Alisal Street in Salinas.