

The Modesto Bee



Stanislaus commuters follow higher pay to out-of-county jobs

BY ATMIKA IYER
aiyer@modbee.com

Stanislaus County residents who commute to the Bay Area for work earn, on average, \$35,700 more per year than those working locally, according to a 2020 report from the County Workforce Development.

The top three occupations residents commute to the Bay Area for are corporate management, construction and extraction, and office and administrative support roles. Those three occupations are followed

by transportation and material moving, production, and installation, maintenance and repair.

The same report said that for Stanislaus commuters to Sacramento, Elk Grove, Merced and other counties, the top two occupations are corporate management and office and administrative support, while health-care and education tied for third.

Census data from 2023 compiled by Opportunity Stanislaus shows 113,152 people commuting out of the county for work. Of those, 24.5% are going to jobs in goods production,

25.9% to jobs in trade, transportation, and utilities, and the remainder spread across various industries.

The data shows 14.3% of commuters earning less than \$1,250 a month, 25.4% earning between \$1,251 and \$3,333 a month, and 60.3% earning more than \$3,333 a month.

“What’s interesting is that we have our own economy that feels pressure from wages and salaries from the Bay Area. That’s unique,” Dave White with Opportunity Stanislaus said. “People are willing to pay the price of the commute because they’re going to make

more money, and that’s just the way it is. So that puts pressure on local employers and local government to be able to match that.”

White said there’s a lot of construction happening in bigger markets including the Bay Area, creating work for those in the industry. He added that construction work as a whole requires people to move city to city based on the project.

The average annual salary for a construction manager in the San Francisco, Oakland and Fremont areas is about \$164,760, according to the National Bureau of Labor Sta-

tistics. In the San Jose, Sunnyvale and Santa Clara areas, the average is \$168,220. In Modesto, that average is \$131,500.

For those employed in installation, maintenance and repair occupations, the annual salary in the San Francisco, Oakland and Fremont areas is \$81,010. In the San Jose, Sunnyvale and Santa Clara areas, it’s \$82,000. In Modesto, the average salary is \$67,850.

In healthcare, the average annual salary for nurses in San Francisco, Oakland and Fremont is \$176,900. In San Jose, Sunnyvale and Santa Clara, it’s \$194,950. For nurses in Modesto, the average annual salary is \$143,670.

And in education, high school teachers employed in San Francisco, Oakland and Fremont on average make \$119,470 per year. In the San Jose, Sunnyvale and Santa

SEE COMMUTERS, 12A



Sebastian Jones, right, talks with Tyrone McKinney and the Bee at Monterey Park Tract near Ceres, Friday, June 26, 2026.

Monterey Park Tract fights decades of water contamination

BY KATHLEEN QUINN
kquinn@mcclatchyservices.com

The Monterey Park Tract has two main streets and fewer than 200 residents, almost exclusively Black and Latino.

Like many areas of rural Stanislaus County, it relies on septic systems and has no gutters or sidewalks.

The community once known as Sand Hill because of its alluvial soil was founded in

1941 when jobs in Stockton to support the war effort ran out and people built houses on small lots in Stanislaus County where there was farm work.

When county leaders applied for a grant in the early

1980s to help Monterey Tract residents get access to clean water, they did not do enough to prevent long-term contamination.

HOW DID THE WATER BECOME CONTAMINATED?

There is a dairy next to the community and a hog farm next to that, with orchards to the north and east. When

SEE WATER, 9A

Mural Alley revamp in downtown Modesto delayed to 2027

BY PAT CLARK
pclark@modbee.com

Construction on an outdoor gallery planned for downtown Modesto has been delayed until next year.

Mural Alley’s transformation was planned to begin this summer, with a winter opening, according to a February story in The Bee.

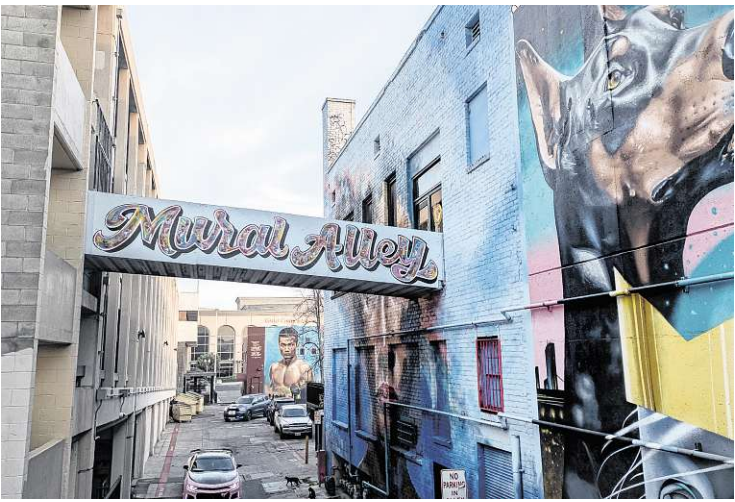
But it’s now slated to begin in spring 2027, with completion targeted for July, Sonya Severo, the city’s public relations and

legislative affairs manager, said in an email string late last month. “The timeline could shift slightly depending on weather,” she wrote

Mural Alley, located on a 90-degree angle that connects from J to 10th streets, “is already a jewel of our downtown,” Severo said in the February story.

“This redesign is about elevating the visitor experience, making the space more inviting for families, and creating a premier destination that celebrates our city’s artistic identity,” she said at the time.

But Severo said in the recent emails that because the alley also “functions as both a fire



“Mural Alley” off J Street in downtown Modesto is pictured in February.

lane and a key access point for many downtown businesses,

SEE MURAL, 12A

How food places can verify service dogs in California

BY DOMINIQUE WILLIAMS
dwilliams@modbee.com

In July, a Stanislaus County Walmart received a health inspection after several complaints were filed alleging there were non-service dogs in the store.

During the inspection, a dog was seen being carried in an electric shopping cart. The store manager was taught the legal questions employees may ask a person who enters the food facility with an animal and was told not to allow non-service animals.

Below are the two ADA-compliant questions employees can ask, along with answers to other questions regarding the legality of dogs in places that serve and sell food.

WHAT QUALIFIES AS A SERVICE ANIMAL?

Only dogs can be service animals, according to the Americans with Disabilities Act. The breed of dog is not restricted.

A service dog cannot be denied “based on assumptions or stereotypes about the animal’s breed or how the animal might behave,” according to the ADA. Service dogs are not required to wear a vest, ID tag or specific harness, nor does the law require documentation or proof of certification or training as a service animal.

“There are individuals and organizations that sell service animal certification or registration documents online,” the

SEE DOGS, 10A



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