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All Aboard

Frank's Fish Market will close to pave way for new Salinas train station.

Nick Rahaim 9 hrs ago



Nic Coury

Frank Favaloro has been in the seafood trade since he was a kid in Sicily. At 67, he's set to retire this month after being in business in Salinas for 25 years.

On a quiet Wednesday morning, Frank Favaloro sits at a plastic table eating beans and fish watching the news on Univision. The native of Sicily, Italy, prefers Spanish to English, but will speak whichever his customers are most comfortable with. A woman comes in and asks about his selection of fish in Spanish. A man wearing camo comes in and (in English) orders a half pound of squid, not to eat, but to use as bait.

This has been the routine at Frank's Fish Market, a hundred yards from the Salinas train station, for 25 years. He will close his fish market likely this month – to the dismay of many of his loyal customers – as the Transportation Agency for Monterey County is taking ownership of the building to bring in the New Year. Favaloro sold his property to the agency for \$460,925 last April.

“My customers want me to open in a new location, but my kids want me to retire.”

“I don't know what I'll do next,” says Favaloro, 67, who is a third-generation fishmonger – his father and grandfather sold the local catch just outside of Palermo, the capital in Sicily. “My customers want me to open in a new location, but my kids want me to retire.”

TAMC's purchase of the property is part of a plan to reshape Salinas City Center, and make the train station the public transit hub. To do so, TAMC and the city of Salinas want to extend Lincoln Avenue another block leading directly to the train station, and get rid of the current access streets Station Place and Railroad Avenue altogether.

The \$23 million project, a decade in the making, is still years from breaking ground, but the ultimate goal is that Caltrain will extend its Capitol Corridor commuter rail line from San Jose to Salinas. Once completed, the Salinas Transit Center, which serves Monterey-Salinas Transit buses between Lincoln Avenue and Salinas Street, will also be relocated to the train station, which will be dubbed the Salinas Intermodal Transportation Center.

“Moving MST will open up a huge piece of development property,” Salinas Mayor Joe Gunter says. “It could really kick off downtown with a new facility.”

But that vision is years away. TAMC's plan, by 2018, is to acquire nine properties that currently lie in the path of the Lincoln Avenue extension. So far, TAMC has purchased two: Favaloro's building, which is also home to Olivia's Cafe, and the AllU.S. Credit Union building in 2013.

TAMC made offers on the seven other properties in 2015 but has not been able to secure a deal. These parcels include West Market Coin-op Laundry and the former El Aguila Deli. TAMC will send revised offers this month. If no deals are struck, TAMC will use eminent domain.

For Favaloro, selling his property is bittersweet. He was looking for an excuse to retire, but his heart is still in his trade. Plus, if he didn't sell his property to TAMC at a negotiated price, the transit agency would have tried to take it anyway.

Favaloro's longtime tenant, Olivia Espinosa, proprietor of Olivia's Cafe, is now in limbo. She has signed a lease extension with her new landlord, TAMC, that will allow her to stay in business at her current location until at least April. She is looking for a new location, and TAMC officials are helping her relocate.

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