

Alameda County Supervisor Keith Carson, Fifth District

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Press Release

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Alameda County Supervisor Keith Carson first speaker in UC Berkeley Public Health Department “Civic Health: A Speaker Series”



Supervisor Carson (left) discusses policy making with graduate students at the Goldman School of Public Policy at UC Berkeley during “Civic Health: A Speaker Series” on Tuesday, March 18, 2014.

On Tuesday, March 18, 2014, Supervisor Keith Carson, President of the Alameda County Board of Supervisors, spoke at the Goldman School of Public Policy at UC Berkeley as the first invited guest in a speaker series about civic health.

In an intimate dialogue with graduate students from the Public Health Department, School of Public Policy and Graduate School of Education, Supervisor Carson shared insights from his years in public life as an entrepreneur, aide to former Congressman Ron Dellums and local elected official.

As one of five supervisors on the board that oversees Alameda County operations, Supervisor Carson has championed numerous progressive causes. He has advocated for a more transparent budget process; addressed inequities in the health care delivery system; expanded affordable housing options for low-income residents; and created job opportunities for youth, formerly incarcerated individuals, and others with barriers to employment.

As a member of Alameda County’s Health Committee, Supervisor Carson oversees one of the most essential parts of the safety net, the network of county hospitals, public health programs, community clinics and community-based providers that care for those in our community who are uninsured or underinsured.

The conversation on Tuesday began with an overview of the functions of county government and quickly moved into a discussion of Place Matters, an innovative initiative spearheaded by Supervisor Carson’s office since 2006. The goal of the project is to improve the health and life expectancy of residents by advancing community-centered policies through the lens of equity. The project examines the links between health and a variety of “place-based” factors such as access to healthy food, access to public green space, housing conditions, air quality, educational opportunities, transportation options and criminal justice practices.

“While the cost of healthcare overall has skyrocketed, that money isn’t being spent proportionally on preventative care,” Supervisor Carson noted. “We must invest on the front end in our communities by encouraging healthy habits, planning so there isn’t a liquor store every fifteen blocks, and building housing and facilities at transportation hubs. If we don’t talk about these issues in our schools and in our communities, then we will continue to see the food deserts and blighted areas that plague our communities.”

As the federal government downsizes, local governments and metropolitan areas will increasingly bear the responsibility of determining how to allocate resources, Supervisor Carson noted. Cities “are no longer strings of islands” acting independently—elected officials must work together at a regional level to plan for the needs of residents.

Bobby Stahl, a graduate student in the Public Health Department, asked Supervisor Carson how the county and other jurisdictions are planning to house the exodus of residents flowing into the East Bay from San Francisco and other cities with high costs of living. Affordable housing is one issue that is addressed on a regional level through bodies such as the Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG), Supervisor Carson remarked.

Alameda County started the planning process for those demographic shifts in 2006 with Vision 2016, an initiative that brought together experts to project where we should build transit-oriented development (TOD), how to attract new employees from GenX and the Millennials, where to build new schools and how to provide medical care and housing for the growing population of seniors in the community.

For more information about Place Matters, please visit:

<http://www.acphd.org/social-and-health-equity/policy-change/place-matters.aspx>.

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Alameda County Supervisor Keith Carson represents the Fifth District, which includes Albany, Berkeley, Emeryville, Piedmont, and parts of Oakland (North Oakland, Rockridge, Grand Lake, Fruitvale, and Dimond District neighborhoods). For more information about District 5 and Supervisor Keith Carson, please call (510) 272-6695 or visit <http://www.acgov.org/board/district5>