



February 10, 2015

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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ALAMEDA COUNTY LAUNCHES OPEN BUDGET WEBSITE
Project Encourages Deeper Understanding of County Finances and Priorities

Alameda County, as part of a multi-faceted effort to encourage public participation and government transparency, is launching its new "Open Budget Alameda County" website this week to promote greater understanding of how the County finances a broad range of programs and services.

The new budget website, available at <http://budget.acgov.org>, was created by Alameda County in partnership with the Seattle-based cloud software company Socrata, which focuses on expanding access to government data. Alameda County is the first county in California to launch a site using Socrata's customer-friendly Open Budget format, which uses charts, graphs, images and other tools to make government budget data easier to understand.

The site is part of a long-term effort led by County Administrator Susan S. Muranishi and Chief Information Officer Tim Dupuis to find ways to make the County Budget more accessible to County residents. Alameda County already encourages community participation and transparency in its budget process, which includes regular public meetings of the County's Budget Workgroup to openly examine issues facing the County leaders each year as they develop their fiscal priorities. The new website compliments these efforts by breaking down the annual budget in ways that appeal to users with a wide range of interests.

"The County's annual budget is the window to the investments that Alameda County, based on the decisions of our elected Board of Supervisors, makes in the community on behalf of our residents," Muranishi said. "We feel that providing easy access to County budget information will facilitate deeper public understanding of our priorities as a County and encourage more public participation."

The new Open Budget website provides detailed information about Alameda County's \$2.79 billion budget for FY 2014-15, with charts that break down allocations by program area, department and budget unit. The site also provides an in-depth view of the County's \$1.1 billion 2014-2019 five-year Capital Improvement Plan, and includes an interactive map showing major capital projects such as the \$668 million Acute Tower Replacement at Highland Hospital in Oakland (scheduled for completion in 2017).

The Open Budget site also links to a large quantity of other current budget information that Alameda County already has on its website to better inform residents interested in a more detailed view of the County's spending priorities. The information includes a short video overview, population figures, a list of cities and unincorporated areas, a Budget-at-a-Glance review, County program priorities, information on how the County supports community-based organizations, and the County's key accomplishments over the past fiscal year.

"Over the years we've done a number of things to make our budget and budget process more understandable to the public," said Alameda County Supervisor Keith Carson, Chair of the County's Budget Workgroup. "Our new Open Budget website is a giant new step in that direction, one we hope will help us ensure that the spending decisions we make as a County reflect the priorities of the entire community."