

S P O T L I G H T O N

ALAMEDA COUNTY

A Guide to Enhancing the Image
of Local Government



A L A M E D A C O U N T Y



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City of San Leandro

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City of Pleasanton

123 Main Street
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www.ci.pleasanton.ca.us

CELEBRATE YOUR CITY

Spread the word and celebrate your City departments and employees. This is a Celebrate-Advertise-Recognize approach to enhance the City’s image in a fun, exciting, simple and low cost way. The following are recommendations and useful tools for celebrating your City:

Civic Celebrations

Often we forget to recognize civic service days. Typically, proclamations recognizing these civic celebrations are passed by the City Council. Proclamations are a simple way to raise local awareness of the various weeks and days of recognition. Additionally, ensure radio, newspapers and social media are incorporated to help spread the word. The following outlines these calendar days:

January	Human Resources Month
February	Engineers Week
March	Social Workers Month
April	Animal Control Officer Month, Library Week, Administrative Professionals Day
May	Historic Preservation Month, Police Week, Emergency Medical Service Week, Public Service Recognition Week, Public Works Week, Water Awareness Month
June	Fire Safety Month, Affordable Housing Month
July	Parks and Recreation Month
August	National Night Out
September	Cyber Security Awareness Month (IT)
October	Fire Prevention Week, Community Planning Month
November	
December	

Showcase Employees and Departments

Honor your employees that have contributed positively to enhancing your City’s image with a certificate of appreciation and a public acknowledgement. This could include video interviews with employees or departments.

Connect with Local Schools

Engage with civics classes, utilize poster contests, provide educational lessons, and games to create awareness about careers in public service. This is a great opportunity for public employees to share their job responsibilities with students, and how their job benefits the whole community.

Host a Community Event

Establish a community event to celebrate and spotlight your City’s unique characteristics. Include your local service groups, business partners, and schools. Also remember to invite your local radio and TV stations to cover the event.

LINKS AND RESOURCES

Background

- **City of Bell article** – discusses corruption amongst City leaders that led to criminal charges:
latimesblogs.latimes.com/lanow/2010/09/bell-officials-arrested-as-prosecutors-are-set-to-file-criminal-charges.html

Citizen Surveys

- **Survey Monkey website** – the free/lower cost web-based survey tool:
try.surveymonkey.com/?gclid=CKibtq2rsq0CFQR5hwodQRUiag
- **National Citizen Survey** – survey service utilized by municipalities to obtain citizen input:
www.n-r-c.com/index.html

Getting To Know Your City

- **Coffee with the Cops** – sample outreach material:
www.albanyca.org/Index.aspx?page=1070
www.sanleandro.org/civica/inc/displayblobpdf2.asp?BlobID=9862
- **City at a Glance** – sample of easy to follow guide to City government:
albany.patch.com/local_facts/departments-and-committees-30
- **State of the City** – video clips of several state of the City presentations:
video.search.yahoo.com/search/video;_ylt=A2KLqIUzd_9OUTQABo77w8QF?p=state+of+the+city&b=21&tnr=20
- **Citizens Academy** – sample of how a citizens academy can be organized and promoted:
www.dublin.ca.gov/index.aspx?NID=670
- **Neighborhood Socials** – sample of a monthly neighborhood meeting schedule and structure:
www.ci.santa-ana.ca.us/cda/NeighborhoodMeetingsRC.asp

Promote Your City

- Samples of how to promote your City in unique locations such as in-train BART and local movie theatres:
www.screenvision.com/m/advertising/local
www.videouniversity.com/articles/commercials-in-movie-theaters
www.bart.gov/about/business/advertising

Salary Transparency

- Government employee salaries in California:
lgr.sco.ca.gov/EntityList.aspx?entity=City&load=ByDefault&year=2010

Celebrate Your City

- National public service week website with templates to celebrate public service week:
publicservicerecognitionweek.org
- “Parks Make Life Better” campaign celebrating Parks & Recreation:
www.ci.sanmateo.ca.us/index.aspx?nid=324

GOVERNMENT TRANSPARENCY

Local Government Transparency – What’s Your Score?

One way cities can enhance their image is to become more transparent. The Alameda City/County Management Association should encourage and applaud local governments in our County that have focused on giving taxpayers a transparent look at local expenditures. We suggest tracking how transparent cities and other special districts across Alameda County are with tax dollars. It is recommended that all local governments in Alameda County implement transparency by posting the following five key documents on your City’s website:

Basic Government Transparency – Scorecard

City	City Check Registry	CAFR	Budget	Salary Schedules	Council Agenda
Alameda	●	●	●	●	●
Albany	●	●	●	●	●
Berkeley	●	●	●	●	●
Dublin	●	●	●	●	●
Emeryville	●	●	●	●	●
Fremont	●	●	●	●	●
Hayward	●	●	●	●	●
Livermore	●	●	●	●	●
Newark	●	●	●	●	●
Oakland	●	●	●	●	●
Piedmont	●	●	●	●	●
Pleasanton	●	●	●	●	●
San Leandro	●	●	●	●	●
Union City	●	●	●	●	●
County of Alameda	●	●	●	●	●

If you are not a City with all “green lights” at a minimum, you should commit to maintaining a basic level of transparency. Once the basic level of transparency is met why not create an unprecedented level of openness in Alameda County and specifically in your local community.

The following represents additional levels of transparency for your City. To achieve the next level of transparency, utilize social media outlets, allow for more online services, broadcast your Council meetings, incorporate a City newsletter and utilize Citizen Survey tools. The highest level of transparency would include city programming on government access television, regular non-regulatory community meetings, reporting of performance measures or annual report posting on your City’s web page.

WHERE THE MONEY GOES

Open government is an accountable government and one that creates a positive image. One way to show your community how their tax dollars are spent is to visually explain local finances.



How To Use The City Buck Template

You can utilize the template in the following ways:

Example 1

Side #1 – where the money comes from

Side #2 – where the money goes

Example 2

Side #1 - show top City spending categories

Side #2 – show % of total City budget

Example 3

Utilize The City Buck as a way to encourage a Shop Local Campaign

Example 4

Utilize The City Buck to educate employees about City wage & benefits costs

GETTING TO KNOW YOUR CITY

In general, the community seems to be unfamiliar with the structure and services provided by local government. To gain a better understanding of local government and help enhance image, the following outlines a variety of ways to encourage the community to get to know their City:

Your City at a Glance

A brief descriptive guide that includes each City department/division and the services provided by that group that are most sought out by the public. This can be both a paper brochure and a web-based interactive tool.

Real People – Employee Spotlights

Conduct interviews with City staff to help put a familiar face with a City service. Include information about their years of service, reasons why they work in local government, etc. Employee spotlights can be posted on the City's website, in newsletters or on community bulletin boards.

Meet & Greets

Provide an opportunity for furthering open dialogue between the community and particular departments within your City. Meet & greets could include "Coffee with the Cops," "Running with Recreation," "Problem-solving with Public Works," etc. A general theme should include the concept that there are no wrong questions, and that departmental staff is there to get to know the community, just as the community is getting to know the City. Meet & greets can be hosted at a local restaurant, meeting center, community center, or other community-oriented space.

Job Shadowing/Fairs

Collaborate with local school districts or youth programs and offer job shadowing programs to youth interested in a career in local government. Participate in job fairs that may be conducted within the region, by the local high schools, or other organizations, to promote the multidisciplinary opportunities within local government.

Citizen's Academy

Foster backup support for City operations through creation of a citizen's academy. The academy can be focused on a particular topic such as crime prevention, or have a broader context such as general community building.

State of the City

Provide an annual summit that addresses the state of the City, current issues, successes, needs, and upcoming opportunities for community engagement. Include Chairs from particular Boards/Councils/Commissions to provide updates regarding their recent achievements.

PROMOTE YOUR CITY'S IMAGE

It's about building a relationship with the community.

In the private sector, the need for marketing and promoting your image is clear: companies with great images survive and thrive; companies with poor images dwindle and die. For local government, the need is similar. The types and levels of local government services are dependent on public policy, and therefore, public perception. So much of what cities do happens behind the scenes. The effort to promote the City's image needs to address who we are and what we do. The following are recommendations for proactively building this relationship.

Employee Involvement

Engage employees on a regular basis to seek their ideas for promoting the City's image. City employees regularly interact with the community and thus have a large impact on the City's image. Have conversations with employees about how their work fits with the big picture of the City's values and goals. Emphasize the importance of customer service, as the employees are a direct reflection of the City's image. Assist employees with developing simple statements that answer: "What do you do for a living?" and "What is the value of your work?" Encourage employees at all levels to participate in local non-profit and community-based groups to further enhance the relationship with the community.

Speakers Bureau

Most communities have a number of non-profit and community-based groups, including: youth, senior, professional, business, civic, cultural, faith-based, athletic, special interests, and neighborhood associations. Establish a Speakers Bureau of 8 to 10 internal experts who are also skilled at public speaking. Deliver presentations to local groups at their regularly scheduled meetings. For success, the Speakers Bureau must attempt to meet with each group of ten or more members at least once per year. The focus of the presentations is threefold: (1) basic education of City services (rotate topics with each round of presentations, e.g. police, fire, development services, parks, public works, etc.), (2) personal profiles that share stories and highlight the contributions of one or two employees, and (3) an opportunity to receive input and answer questions.

Newsletter

Utilize the content from the Speakers Bureau to create a newsletter inserted into utility bills or other City mass mailings, such as activity guides and welcome packets.

Posters / Advertisements

Utilize the content from the Speakers Bureau to create posters for display in visible locations, such as lobbies/waiting areas of City buildings. For more exposure, consider advertising programs through movie theaters, BART and other public transit facilities.

Social Media

Facebook, Twitter, blogs, and other social media should be used frequently to convey key messages, receive input, and develop a network of followers. These are valuable tools for reaching varied segments of the population and building the relationship with the community.

BACKGROUND

In the wake of the City of Bell salary and public fund misappropriation scandal, there seems to be a negative public image of abuse that crosses many sectors of local governments. In addition to the salary scandals that plagued the City of Bell and others, there is the notion of perceived pension abuses and post employment benefits that have also contributed to a growing negative image of local government and their employees. This growing public mistrust can make it difficult for cities to develop public policy and deliver services efficiently to their communities.

The Alameda County Local Government Leadership Academy was founded in 2011 and is a jointly planned and funded training and talent development program for City and County agencies in Alameda County. The program is sponsored by the Alameda County City/County Management Association. This Academy is aimed at accelerating the development of emerging leaders by promoting leadership skills. One team project of the Academy included enhancing the image of Local Governments in Alameda County. To address these issues, our team developed a toolbox of methods and/or approaches that cities within Alameda County can implement to further enhance their image in their respective communities.

This guide is divided into the following categories, each containing different methods and/or approaches to improving your City's image:

- Citizen Survey Options
- Getting to Know Your City
- Promote Your City's Image
- Government Transparency
- Where the Money Goes
- Celebrating Municipal Service
- Resources and Links

It is our hope that the guide will provide cities the necessary tools to help create a consistent, positive image for all cities within Alameda County.

CITIZEN SURVEY OPTIONS

Many Mayors, City Managers and City Councils are running their cities and communities without information and feedback from the vast majority of their City's residents. A relatively small number of vocal residents typically attend City Council meetings and provide suggestions and feedback. Unfortunately their opinions and feedback are often biased and represent their own personal interests, which are frequently different than the opinions of the majority of residents. Costly decisions are often made without the benefit of hearing preferences and gaining insight from residents.

Based on preliminary research, most cities in Alameda County do not regularly survey their communities to find out how satisfied they are with their government services. Community satisfaction surveys are important because they can assess the performance of a wide range of municipal services and leaders, and provide information and insight for increasing performance and resident satisfaction, often without the need to increase spending. Beginning with some type of citizen satisfaction survey can provide a benchmark from which modifications to delivery of services can then be made or decisions prioritized. Follow-up surveys can then be used to measure any successes. Below you will find a table summarizing some of the options available to you for surveying your community.

Survey Name	Summary	Cost
"How is Our Service?" Cards	4" x 6" card containing 5 to 8 questions soliciting feedback related to services received. Can be used by any department from Development Services to Public Works – Maintenance. Summary of data received can then be used to modify various services.	\$
Survey Monkey	Online survey tool with options that range from free to \$780 annually with various options for number of questions and responses per survey, how survey is conducted and results summarized. The more expensive options allow survey customization as well.	\$ – \$\$\$
National Citizen Survey	Uniform survey tool used to assess residential satisfaction with community amenities and government service provision. The survey results can then be used for community planning and resource allocation, program improvement, policy making and tracking changes in residents' opinions about government performance.	\$\$ – \$\$\$
Other Third Party – Random Phone Survey	Utilizing a third party to conduct a telephone survey of random constituents inquiring about their satisfaction with local government services.	\$\$\$

LOCAL GOVERNMENT LEADERSHIP ACADEMY IN ALAMEDA COUNTY

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{ Openness will strengthen our democracy and promote efficiency and effectiveness in Government }



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