

The Budget Process and Document

Basis for Budget Development

The budget is the City's financial plan for delivering effective services and efficiently managing the revenues which support those services. The City's Charter and municipal code provide broad governance for the preparation of the operating and capital budgets.

This budget allocates available resources to the provision of programs, services and projects in support of community needs and expectations, without compromising the long-term financial health of the City. The budget is also developed based on the following:

- City Council's Priorities
- Service level prioritization, as identified by Council
- Availability and sustainability of resources
- Organizational financial status and budgetary guidelines
- Legal mandates

The annual operating budget is a financial plan for a specific period of time. Salinas prepares a one-year operating budget and a six-year capital improvement program (CIP) plan. The operating budget and first year of the CIP plan are adopted by Council and implemented by staff.

The review of the operating and capital budget is structured around public hearings conducted prior to City Council adoption of the budget in order to incorporate community input into the decision-making process.

City Council Priorities

The City is committed to providing high-quality, cost-effective services that reflect the City's core values and strategic goals. City Council established priorities, which are topics or service areas that will receive significant attention during the year. The top priorities guide both budget development and department priority setting. The following are the City Council's top priorities for FY 2025-26, adopted in May 2025: Economic Development, Housing, Infrastructure, City Services, Public Safety, and Youth and Seniors.

Operating Budget – Calendar

December: Budget guidelines and timeframes are developed and distributed for the operating budget. The prior year base budget is provided to departments for review and adjustment, as necessary. The base budget is the starting point for the budget development process.

February: Departments submit requests to reallocate staffing and non-salary resources for the upcoming year to meet changing operational needs. The reallocation process may result in no net change to the level of resources allocated to the department overall. Departmental requests for changes and/or augmentations to the base budget are submitted to the City Manager for review. Departments provide targeted outcomes and performance measures associated with requests for resources or service level augmentations. Departments also submit updates to the budget document regarding goals and objectives, significant accomplishments, and key performance measures. The City Manager and Finance staff review operating budget requests while Human Resources review personnel requests.

March: Internal budget study sessions are held with the City Manager to discuss department budget requests.

April: Finance completes preparation of the proposed operating budget based on the City Manager's direction.

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May: Finance prepares the operating and capital budget documents. The City Manager releases and presents the proposed operating and capital budgets to City Council and posts the budget document on the City's website. Through a series of public hearings, the budget is discussed, and amendments are proposed.

June: Final adoption by City Council occurs after a public hearing in June. All changes made during the public process are incorporated into the adopted budget documents which are distributed to City libraries as well as posted on the City's website.

Budget Meeting/Hearings With City Council and Finance Committee*			
May 6	Finance Committee	Council Chambers	
May 27	City Council	Council Chambers	FY 2025-26 Budget Study Session
June 10	Finance Committee	Council Chambers	
June 17	City Council	Council Chambers	Public Hearing – Budget Adoption

*These meeting were in person with the option to attend by teleconference.

Understanding the Budget Document

The operating budget document includes citywide information as well as information specific to each fund and each department. The City receives revenue from numerous sources, many of which have restrictions on how funds can be used. Separate funds are established to account for the different types of revenues and their allowable uses. The annual budget information is available after the publication of the Proposed Budget, which occurs in May. The Adopted Budget is available in June.

General Fund: This fund is used to account for all general revenues of the City (e.g., property, sales, transient occupancy, and utility user taxes). In general, these funds are allocated at the discretion of the City Council. This revenue is used to support citywide services such as public safety, community services, planning and development services, and administrative support services.

Measure E: This is a one-half of one percent (0.50%) transaction and use tax. It was approved by the voters as a general-purpose tax, which means that revenue generated from this tax can be used to support citywide services such as public safety, community services, planning and development services, and administrative support services. Revenue from this tax is allocated at the City Council's discretion.

Measure G: This is a one percent (1.0%) transaction and use tax. It was approved by the voters as a general-purpose tax, which means that revenue generated from this tax can be used to support citywide services such as public safety, community services, planning and development services, and administrative support services. Revenue from this tax is allocated at the City Council's discretion.

Enterprise Funds: These funds are established to function as self-supporting operations wherein expenditures are entirely offset by fees or charges for services. For example, the City of Salinas provides sewage, parking, and airport services. Revenues from fees or charges are accounted for in separate enterprise funds and can only be used to pay for expenses related to those services.

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Internal Service Funds: These funds are established to account for a variety of business services provided by one City department (or division) to other City departments. Fleet maintenance, general liability, and workers' compensation services are provided to all City departments through internal service funds. Departments are charged for these services based on their respective utilization.

Capital Improvement Funds: Revenues and expenses for capital projects not associated with Enterprise or Internal Service activities are accounted for in separate Capital Improvement funds. Capital investments that are associated with Enterprise or Internal Service activities are reported and included in those fund types.

Special Revenue Funds: These funds are used to account for the proceeds of revenues that are designated for specific or restricted uses. These funds include gas tax funds from the state, in lieu housing fees assessed for the City's Below Market Rate housing projects, and transportation mitigation fees paid by developers. Other special revenue funds include assessments for parking lot bond payments, parking permit revenues, Community Development Block Grants (CDBG) funds from the federal government, and development impact fees related to sewer & storm, parks & playgrounds, libraries, street trees, arterial/traffic, fire, and police.

Debt Service Funds: Debt financing is occasionally undertaken for the purchase, replacement, or rehabilitation of capital assets. Separate funds are established to account for these nonoperating expenses.

Budget in Brief

The Government Finance Officers Association (GFOA) recommends that governments strive for broader consumption and greater comprehension of the budget document. For this reason, the City is introducing a new Budget in Brief document this year. The budget document is very important as it identifies the services to be provided (along with the funding), and the rationale behind key decisions. It is a very timely task to read and understand the entire budget document. Introducing the Budget in Brief that captures these elements is essential. Users of the budget document will benefit from this high-quality report intended to promote better communication, and ultimately making it easier to comprehend the information that is being presented.

Department and Enterprise Fund Information

The budget document includes information for each department as follows:

Programs and Services	Describes division functions and programs within the department.
Expected Service Delivery	Highlights the major work plan items for the department for the upcoming fiscal year
Top Accomplishments	Highlights the top accomplishments for the department for the prior fiscal year
Budget Actions	Identifies major changes from the prior year budget
Operating Funds Managed	Lists the operating funds and descriptions that the department manages
Budget Summary	Summarizes key expenditure, revenue, and position data for the department and/or fund
Performance Measures	Lists key department performance measures related to some goals, objectives, and key quantifiable department outputs
Position Detail	Lists full-time equivalent (FTE) positions
Organizational Chart	Depicts full-time equivalent (FTE) positions within the department.

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Budgetary Basis

The budget is prepared in accordance with Generally Accepted Accounting Principles (GAAP). The budget for governmental funds has been prepared on a modified accrual basis. The modified accrual basis recognizes expenditures when the related fund liability is incurred. Revenues are recognized when they become both measurable and available. “Measurable” means the amount of the transaction can be determined and “available” means collectible within the current period or soon enough thereafter to be used to pay liabilities of the current period.

Fund Structure and Accounting Basis

The accounts of the City are organized on the basis of funds and account groups, each of which is considered a separate accounting entity. The operations of each fund are accounted for with a separate set of self-balancing accounts that comprise its assets, liabilities, fund equity, revenues, and expenditures or expenses, as appropriate. Government resources are allocated to and accounted for individual funds based upon the purposes for which they are to be spent and the means by which spending activities are controlled.

Governmental Funds

General Funds account for all financial resources necessary to carry out basic governmental activities of the City and support essential City services such as police and fire protection, street maintenance, libraries, and parks. General Fund, Measure E, and Measure G are examples.

Special Revenue Funds are used to account for specific revenues that are legally restricted to expenditures for specified purposes. Measure X – Transportation and Safety, SB 1 – Road Repair, and National Opioid Settlement Funds are examples.

Debt Service Funds are used for the accumulation and disbursement of financial resources that will be used to make principal and interest payments on general long-term debt.

Capital Project Funds are used to account for major capital acquisition and construction activities.

Proprietary Funds

Enterprise Funds are used to report business-type activities for which a fee is charged to external users for goods or services. The Airport, Sewer, Industrial Waste are examples.

Internal Service Funds are used for services provided to internal users and account for the financing of goods or services provided by one department to other departments on a cost reimbursement basis. General Liability and Workers Compensation are examples.

Fiduciary Funds

Private Purpose Trust Funds are used to account for any trust arrangement not properly reported in a pension trust fund under which principal and income benefit individuals, private organizations, or other governments. Successor Agency is an example.

Pension Trust Funds are used to account for resources that are required to be held in trust for the members and beneficiaries of defined benefit pension plans, defined contribution plans, or other employee benefit plans. The City’s only pension trust fund is the Deferred Compensation Fund.

Custodial Funds are used to account for assets held in an agent capacity by the City for individuals, private organizations, other governments and/or other funds that are not required to be reported in pension trust funds, investment trust funds, or private-purpose trust funds.