



Alameda Native History Project

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Mayor Ezzy Ashcraft and Members of the Alameda City Council
Alameda City Hall
2263 Santa Clara Ave
Alameda, CA 94501

RE: Budget Workshop for FY 2025–26 and 2026–27 – Request to Reallocate Archive Funding

Dear Mayor Ashcraft and Members of the Alameda City Council,

I am writing to provide public comment for **Agenda Item 3-A** of the **May 5, 2025 Special City Council Meeting**—the **Budget Workshop for Fiscal Years 2025–26 and 2026–27**.

Specifically, I urge the City Council to discontinue funding for Alameda Museum's role in housing the City's Official Archives, and to relocate those materials to a secure and accessible municipal facility—specifically City Hall West.

While Alameda Museum is a private organization, the City currently entrusts it with the storage of publicly owned historical records—and allocates public funds in support of this role. That arrangement is no longer tenable. Public records require public oversight, transparency, and accessibility. Even a small subsidy becomes indefensible when it supports an institution that has failed to uphold the basic responsibilities of stewardship and inclusion.

Alameda Museum has consistently failed to uphold basic standards for archival stewardship, transparency, and cultural accountability. While a public catalog exists, it fails to distinguish City-owned materials from the Museum's private holdings. Public records have been comingled

to the point of near inextricability—a direct violation of public trust and a breakdown in municipal oversight.

The Museum also lacks the cultural competency and legal awareness necessary to handle Native American artifacts responsibly. It continues to hold items found in the ground across Alameda, dismissing them as non-funerary simply because they were not retrieved from the Sather Mound. This reasoning is both incorrect and irrelevant: under California law, these are Tribal Cultural Resources and must be treated with the same care and protection afforded to all such items.

Rather than respond to public concerns with accountability, the Museum has quietly removed sensitive materials from display. They have not pursued cultural sensitivity training. They have not engaged with the Muwekma Ohlone Tribe. And if they have, they should be able to prove it. That is not responsible stewardship—it is censorship. And it undermines the Museum's credibility as a public-facing institution.

The Museum continues to center white settler narratives—Victorian homes, civic clubs, and military contributions—while erasing:

- Ohlone people, whose ancestral shellmounds were destroyed and used as road base for Bay Farm Road.
- African American communities, whose ongoing struggle for fair housing remains undocumented.
- Chinese and Asian American laborers, who drained the West End and sustained Alameda's agriculture amid open racism.
- The Spanish colonial period, and its devastating legacy for Indigenous communities.

These are not gaps in knowledge. They are choices—choices that public funding should not support. The City must take responsibility for ensuring that its archives are stored, protected, and made available in a way that reflects the full breadth of Alameda’s history and serves the entire community.

Therefore, I respectfully urge the City Council to:

1. **Cease all public funding** related to Alameda Museum’s storage or management of City records, beginning this budget cycle.
2. **Commission an independent audit** and inventory of all City-owned historical materials currently under the Museum’s control.
3. **Relocate the City’s Official Archives** to a municipally managed site—such as City Hall West—that guarantees access and security.
4. **Implement formal custodianship standards** and access policies to protect City archives and ensure public transparency.
5. **Establish a working group or commission** to develop an inclusive cultural history center or archive reflecting the stories of all Alamedans—especially those erased from the current narrative.

This issue is about more than where records are stored. It is about who is remembered, who is forgotten, and what kind of Alameda we want to build.

Thank you for your time and your commitment to equity and truth in public memory.

Respectfully,

Gabriel Duncan

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