

City of Salinas drives transparency and collaboration through open data

270,000

API calls per year

69

Datasets

215,000

Files

CONTEXT:

INCREASING TRANSPARENCY
THROUGH DATA

The county seat of California's Monterey County, the City of Salinas has a diverse and multicultural population of approximately 160,000 people. As a city it is focused on using data to drive transparency, and is one of the first 50 cities in the United States to be certified by Bloomberg Philanthropies' What Works Cities initiative.

CHALLENGES:

BECOMING MORE EFFECTIVE
THROUGH SHARING DATA

As part of its focus on transparency and ensuring effectiveness, Salinas wanted to make data a central part of its operations, with up-to-date, relevant information shared both externally with citizens and businesses and internally between departments to drive collaboration and become truly data-driven.

“Our open data portal is all about government transparency. As well as external audiences it's actually a tool that can be utilized internally by our own staff, breaking down silos of knowledge and information within the organization. This helps drive collaboration to solve some of the most complex issues that we face.”



Eric Sandoval

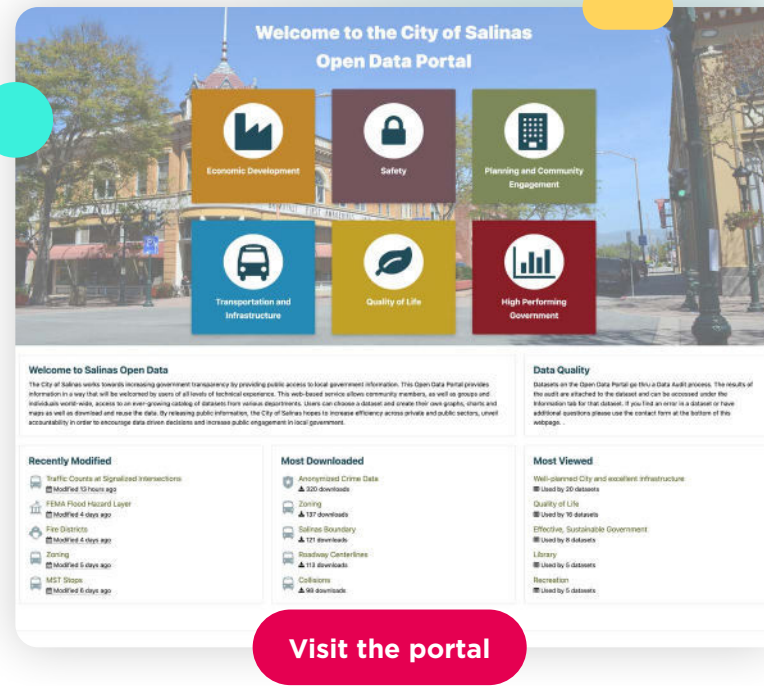
Innovation Team Leader and GIS Administrator



DATA EXPERIENCE: ENSURING ACCOUNTABILITY WITH OPEN DATA

When beginning its open data program, Salinas set out key objectives and metrics. It wanted the program to:

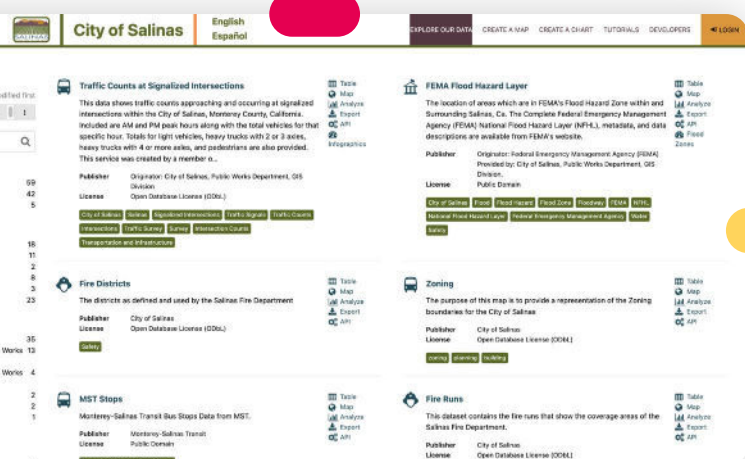
- **Help the city make government more transparent and accountable**
- **Reduce the effort and cost of providing information to external audiences**, including innovators and entrepreneurs
- **Improve internal collaboration through data sharing** between departments and agencies to solve complex problems



In 2018 Salinas engaged with Bloomberg Philanthropies' What Works Cities initiative, a program that works with local governments to help them better use data to inform policy and funding decisions, improve services, create operational efficiencies, and engage residents.

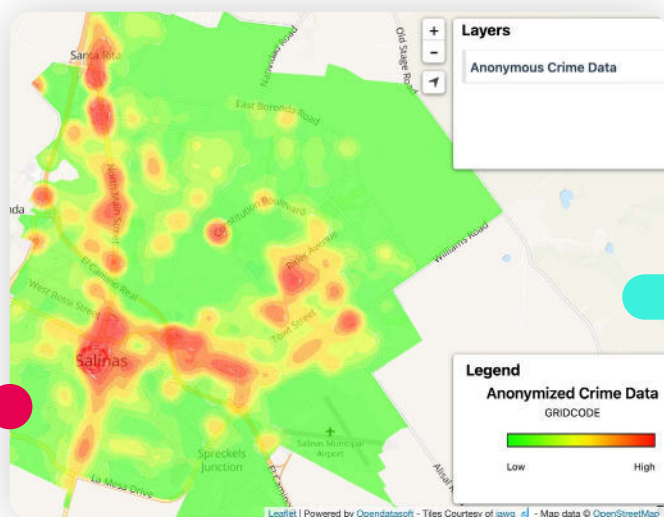
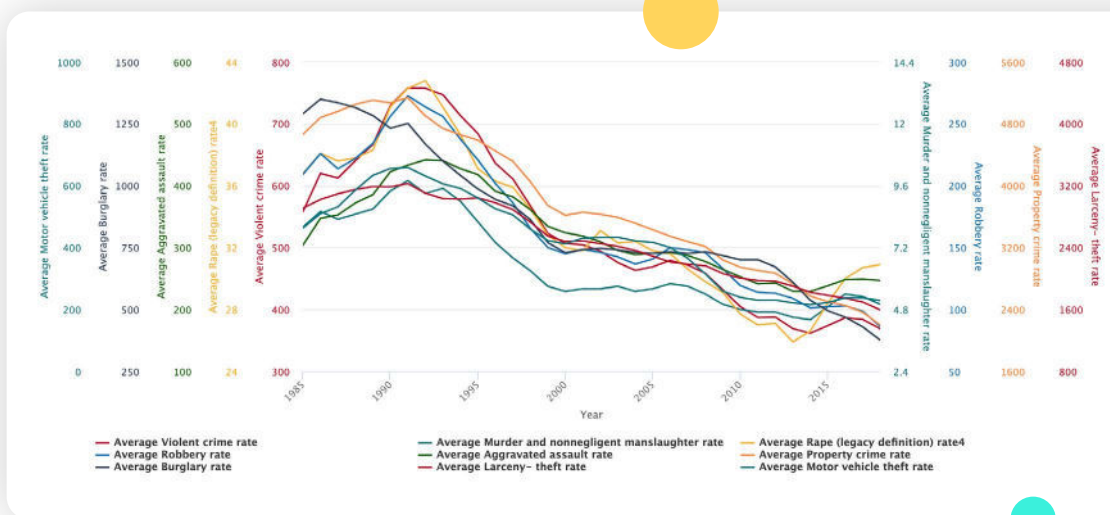
Using a grant from the program it created an open data governance structure and committee, and selected Opendatasoft (ODS) to deliver the technology platform to underpin its open data portal. Through research, Salinas understood that its portal had to meet the needs of three distinct audiences:

- **Data experts** who want to manipulate and reuse data,
- **Entrepreneurs** connecting to the portal through APIs,
- **Citizens** who want to find and view data in a straightforward, visual way.



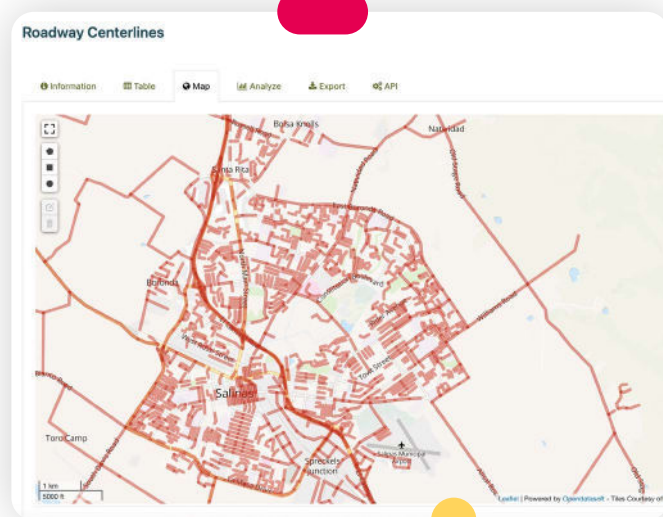
The portal was therefore created to deliver experiences for all three of these personas, as well as being available to internal staff to improve collaboration and decision-making. All datasets on the portal go through a comprehensive data audit process before being published, with the City's open data committee selecting priority data to make available, based on the needs of the three audiences.

One notable use of data is to underpin the Community Alliance for Safety and Peace (CASP) program, a community initiative involving multiple groups to target youth and gang violence. This uses data, such as on crime rates, socio-economic information and school performance to structure the program, focus strategies and approaches, and monitor progress. The resulting data-driven program has reduced youth violence by over 60% in the last decade, helping build a stronger, more peaceful community.



Citizens and businesses can now automatically visit the portal and find the information they need, including anonymized crime data, mobility data on traffic and bikeways, and the marker information used by engineering companies when carrying out construction work in Salinas. Data can be downloaded in multiple formats, visualized through maps and dashboards or automatically connected to through APIs for every dataset.

New datasets can be added quickly in response to demand, providing proactive answers that drive greater transparency and effectiveness. Moving forward Salinas is looking to increase the focus on data-driven storytelling, increasing the number of visualizations and dashboards that display information in ways that are easy to understand by non-experts, democratizing data sharing and further increasing openness and understanding.

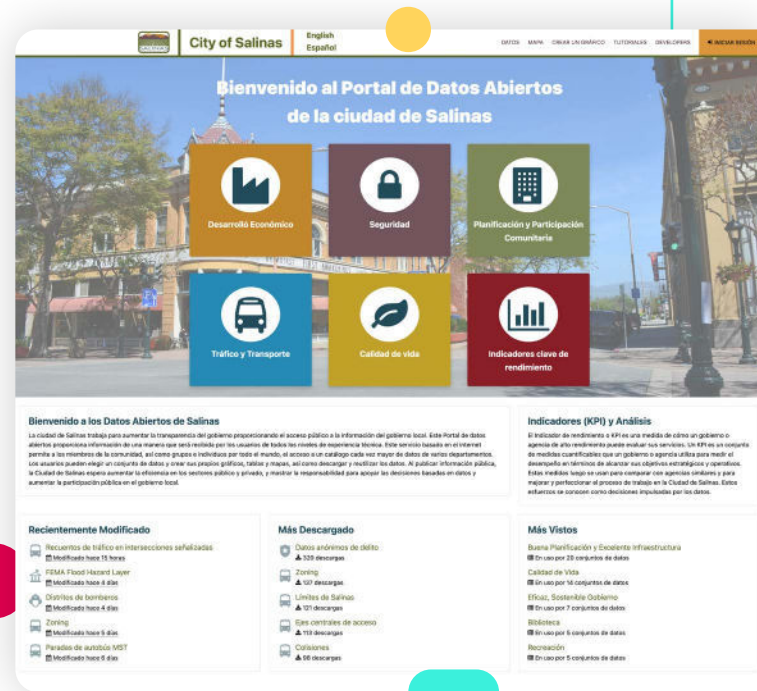


This open data is also underpinning new, entrepreneurial businesses, including in smart transportation and even by providing data on pharmacies licensed to sell cannabis under state law.

SHARING DATA EFFECTIVELY WITH THE ENTIRE COMMUNITY: DELIVERING A MULTILINGUAL APPROACH

The City of Salinas is ethnically diverse, with a majority of the population being Spanish-speaking. To ensure information is easily understandable to all citizens and local businesses, the Salinas open data portal is therefore natively available in both English and Spanish.

The Opendatasoft platform makes it easy to configure a multilingual version for each dataset in Salinas' catalog, providing translations without creating separate copies for each language. That makes the open data portal agile and easy to navigate, supporting the city's multilingual approach and ensuring engagement with the entire community.



OPENDATASOFT: THE ALL-IN-ONE PLATFORM FOR DATA SHARING AT THE CITY OF SALINAS

Following a comprehensive RFP process, Salinas chose Opendatasoft based on the strengths of its technology and the comprehensive support the company provides. By using Opendatasoft's easy-to-use platform Salinas is able to manage, publish and share data with all its audiences, benefiting from three key features in particular:

EASE OF PUBLISHING

Through in-built connections to major business software and GIS systems, new datasets can be quickly identified, cleaned, checked against data governance rules and then uploaded. For example, new sewer data was published by the city within an hour of the process beginning.

MULTIPLE FORMATS

The 69 datasets on the platform can be immediately downloaded by users in a range of formats, from flat file formats such as CSV, JSON and Excel to Geographic file formats such as GeoJSON, Shapefile and KML, as well as via APIs. This reduces workload and boosts efficiency.

STRONG SECURITY

As the ODS platform is SaaS-based, it is hosted in the cloud, with data protected by strong IT security technology. This removes an overhead from the Salinas team, providing them with peace of mind that their portal is secure, well-guarded and resilient.



Opendatasoft architected its solution on AWS as an IaaS and leveraged AWS's comprehensive, secure, scalable, and cost-effective portfolio of services, including Amazon RDS, Amazon Elb, Amazon ElastiCache. This allowed the City of Salinas to maximize value from its Opendatasoft-based data sharing project, helping it become data-driven.

RESULTS:

A PLATFORM FOR DATA-CENTRIC GOVERNMENT

By embracing open data and working with Opendatasoft, the City of Salinas is building a platform for data-centric government. It is seeing key benefits in three specific areas:

▶ **Increased collaboration internally between teams**

Sharing information via the open data platform not only makes it available externally, but also internally. This breaks down departmental silos and enables teams to work together on complex programs, such as CASP, using data to share information and drive greater collaboration.

▶ **Measurable ROI and greater efficiency**

Previously providing information in response to incoming requests was a time-consuming, manual process, involving locating data, transforming it to be in the correct format and then supplying it. Making data automatically available via the portal, in all popular formats, automates the process, increasing efficiency and providing tangible ROI across the 270,000 API requests Salinas receives every year.

▶ **A platform for transparency and innovation**

Salinas is now able to easily share data with citizens, organizations and agencies, increasing transparency around government activities and providing information that can be used for innovative new businesses. By focusing on data storytelling through visualizations and dashboards Salinas is further increasing openness and engagement.

“We’re a smaller city with modest means, so we plan to integrate technology into our programs to drive automation, efficiency, and data-driven decision-making. The platform delivers enormous return on investment for us and we really see Opendatasoft as a partner to help us achieve our goals.”



Eric Sandoval
Innovation Team Leader
and GIS Administrator



“The experiences of the City of Salinas show how open data can underpin a more data-driven approach to government that builds trust, enables collaboration and delivers innovation across the community. Through its program it is putting data at the heart of its operations, increasing both engagement and efficiency.”



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