



City of West Hollywood: 'Top 20'

City of West Hollywood — A Snapshot of Our City

In 1984, the idea for a **City of West Hollywood** was proposed by an unlikely coalition of LGBTQ activists, seniors, and renters. These groups came together to form a City like no other with progressive policies and strong tenants' rights protections. Through tireless determination, the City of West Hollywood was officially incorporated as an independent City on November 29, 1984. Previously, West Hollywood had been an unincorporated section of Los Angeles County.

The first West Hollywood City Council established West Hollywood as the first City in the nation to have a majority openly gay governing body. Now, in 2022, the City Council has not only a majority openly gay governing body — it also has a majority of Councilmembers who are women.

For nearly four decades, the City of West Hollywood has demonstrated that it is like no other city in the world. Located in the heart of metropolitan Los Angeles, at 1.9 square miles, West Hollywood is a robust economic and cultural center instilled with idealism, creativity, and innovation. A spirit of community activism and civic pride thrives in West Hollywood for many of its approximately 35,000 residents.

Here are 20 things you may not know about the City of West Hollywood —

1. We provide remarkable social services.

Just after the City of West Hollywood was incorporated, it established its Social Services program to provide much-needed services to residents. Over its history, the City has provided millions of dollars in grants to fund programs for people in need. These include services for seniors; people with HIV and AIDS; members of the LGBTQ community; people with disabilities; alcohol and drug use recovery programs; support programs for Russian-speaking immigrants; services for people who are homeless; food programs; and health care services for people who are uninsured. Today, the City's Social Services Division budgets approximately \$5 million per year in funding critical support to programs that impact thousands of people in West Hollywood, and the City's Strategic Initiatives Division aims to

address homelessness, poverty, and aging with leading-edge initiatives that help people live better lives. City residents live longer and have lower rates of chronic diseases than residents of L.A. County, as a whole.

2. We run a tight ship when it comes to fiscal responsibility.

The City of West Hollywood has received high marks for sound general and fiscal management policies. The City, with its diverse revenue base, recovered quickly from the 2008 recession and is poised to recover quickly from the economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. The City has been recognized by organizations such as Fitch and Moody's, which have continually affirmed the City's excellent bond ratings and the City maintains an implied general obligation bond rating of 'AAA' which has been re-affirmed by S&P. For more than 25 consecutive years, the City has been awarded with a Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting and an Award of Financial Reporting Achievement by the Government Finance Officers Association (GFOA) for its Annual Financial Report, which is a set of detailed financial statements accompanied by a thorough presentation of the City's financial condition.

3. We love where we live.

The City regularly conducts and updates its Community Study, which is one of the most intensive regular community engagement projects in the City. The Community Study updates the City's demographic data and provides information that informs funding priorities for social services initiatives. Approximately 90 percent of respondents rate their quality of life as excellent or good, citing pedestrian orientation, central location, safe and quiet neighborhoods, amenities, and well-kept infrastructure. Did we mention the lovely weather?

4. We want to marry you.

West Hollywood was one of the first cities in the country to pass a resolution in support of marriage equality, paving the way for marriage equality initiatives all over the country. In June 2008, in a monumental moment in U.S. history, the City, in conjunction with the Los Angeles County Register-Recorder Clerk, began to issue marriage licenses and perform civil ceremonies for same-sex couples after the California Supreme Court ruled that a ban on same-sex marriage was unconstitutional. The City was forced to halt those marriages in November 2008 with the passage of Proposition 8, a constitutional amendment prohibiting same-sex marriage. A long legal battle ensued in federal court, which resulted in the U.S.

Supreme Court dismissing an appeal in *Hollingsworth v. Perry* in June 2013 allowing same-sex marriages to resume. History was made in June 2015 when the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that same-sex couples have a constitutional right to legally marry. Thousands of people celebrated in the City of West Hollywood for a Decision Day rally at West Hollywood Park.

5. We think home is where it all begins.

Not long after the City was incorporated, the West Hollywood City Council adopted its landmark Rent Stabilization Ordinance. Upon its adoption, this was one of the strictest rent control laws in the country. The City has an entire division dedicated to rent stabilization programs that promote a strong and vibrant residential community. The City provides a breadth of information and counseling services to both tenants and owners of residential rental properties, which includes in-house counseling services and written materials. The City also facilitates the development of new housing, the rehabilitation of existing buildings, and the development of mixed-use projects with a housing component.

6. We want you to be healthy.

The onset of the HIV/AIDS epidemic had a significant impact on the City of West Hollywood. The disease's elevated infection rate among gay men caused a devastatingly high number of deaths in the City. The City of West Hollywood was one of the first government entities to provide social services grants to local AIDS and HIV organizations. The City sponsored one of the first AIDS awareness campaigns in the country in October 1985 and the City's response to the AIDS crisis has been recognized as a model for other cities, nationally and globally. The City of West Hollywood's HIV Zero Strategic Plan embraces a vision to "Get to Zero" on many fronts: Zero new infections. Zero progression of HIV to AIDS. Zero discrimination. Zero stigma.

7. We act locally. We think globally.

During its nearly four decades, the City of West Hollywood has become one of the most influential small cities in the nation. We blaze a trail on progressive policy issues. No other city of its size has had a greater impact on the national progressive public policy agenda and our media reach is international. When there is injustice, we speak out. We are a sanctuary city and we pride ourselves on being a safe space for all, regardless of nationality or immigration status. We have a commitment to promoting social justice and equal rights. We work diligently to defend the

fundamental rights of our community members including LGBTQ people, people with disabilities, seniors, people of color, immigrants, women, and others.

8. We're here. Nearly half of us are queer. We're used to it.

The City of West Hollywood has been one of the most outspoken advocates for the legal rights of LGBTQ people. More than 40 percent of residents identify as LGBTQ. In 1985, the City of West Hollywood was one of the first cities in the country to adopt a Domestic Partnership Ordinance. In October 2014, the City marked an exciting milestone as the City Clerk's office at West Hollywood City Hall filed its 10,000th couple as registered Domestic Partners. The City's Lesbian and Gay Advisory Board was created in 1989. The City created the nation's first municipal Transgender Task Force in 2001; in 2009 this became the City's Transgender Advisory Board. Today's openly LGBTQ Councilmembers still receive international attention for being out and proud as elected officials.

9. We believe in women.

The City of West Hollywood supports women and fights for equal rights. The City, in 1993, was the first city in the nation to declare itself pro-choice. The City has continually supported state and federal legislation protecting and advancing women's reproductive rights and access to healthcare. In 2021, the City declared itself a safe harbor for reproductive freedom. The City has a strong record of supporting initiatives that call for equal pay for equal work. The City also has a Women's Advisory Board, which is involved in a myriad of programming and events that recognize and support women in the community. Three of five members of the West Hollywood City Council are women.

10. We walk the walk.

The City of West Hollywood has been voted The Most Walkable City in California by Walk Score, a service that helps promote walkable neighborhoods across the country. According to Walk Score, ranking rates are based on the distance to nearby amenities, such as grocery stores, restaurants, shopping, banks, schools, parks and public transit. West Hollywood's walkability is ranked higher than San Francisco, Los Angeles, and San Diego. The City encourages a fitness walking route with its Well West Hollywood walking routes, which connect West Hollywood Park and Plummer Park — a brisk round-trip walk on this route is equal to five miles or 10,000 steps, which is common benchmark cited for a health, exercise, and weight management routine. Throughout the years, West Hollywood's pedestrian-friendly

policies have included improving pedestrian connections to city parks, increased green-space and encouraging the location of neighborhood-serving businesses and amenities within walking distance of all residential neighborhoods in order to encourage walking as a desirable mode of transportation.

11. Мы говорим по-русски. (We speak Russian).

The City of West Hollywood is home to a thriving community of people from regions of the former Soviet Union, which encompassed 15 republics — Russia, Ukraine, Georgia, Belorussia, Uzbekistan, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan, Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia. Many Russian-speaking community members established roots in West Hollywood after fleeing from discrimination and antisemitism. In the early 1970s, the then-USSR experienced a wave of emigration due to the politics of the government. Many people chose to come to Los Angeles to embrace the future opportunities of a free world for themselves and their children. They came here by way of support provided by local programs and nonprofits to assist Jewish immigrants in what would become incorporated as the City of West Hollywood. The City remains a thriving hub for the Russian-speaking community in the region. According to a 2013 survey of the community in West Hollywood, there are nearly 4,000 people who live in the City who identify a former country of the Soviet Union as their primary ancestry. This represents approximately 11% of the City's total population.

12. We love animals. We work to protect them.

The City of West Hollywood has been on the forefront of the animal rights movement for decades and the City's commitment to animal rights is one of its legacies. The City has consistently worked to enact leading-edge animal welfare legislation. The City's fur-ban ordinance, which went into effect in 2013, is one of the first of its kind in the United States. All retail establishments located within the City of West Hollywood are prohibited from selling, trading, distributing, importing or exporting any fur product. The term "fur product" means any item of personal attire, clothing or garment, which is composed in whole or in part from the pelt or skin of any animal with its hair, fleece (wool) or fur attached. The ban applies to shearing products, as the skin for such products is tanned with the wool still attached.

13. We're artsy. People like to visit.

The City of West Hollywood has a love affair with arts and culture. For a city of its small geographic size, West Hollywood has the highest concentration of public art

anywhere and the City is committed to providing accessible arts programming for residents and visitors. From walkable urban collections such as the West Hollywood Library's murals, sculptures on medians and walkways and in front of or on buildings, to iconic design institutions such as the Pacific Design Center and the MAK Center for Art and Architecture, West Hollywood is a cultural destination to be explored inside and out. The City offers a broad array of arts programs including: Art on the Outside (temporary public art), Urban Art Program (permanent public art), Summer Sounds, Winter Sounds, the WeHo Reads literary series, Free Theatre in the Parks, Arts Grants for Nonprofit Arts Organizations, Library Exhibits and Programming, the City Poet Laureate Program, Human Rights Speakers Series, and the #WeHoPride LGBTQ Arts Festival. Tourists from all over the globe visit West Hollywood for its iconic destinations such as The Sunset Strip and historic Route 66. The City's thriving creative and entertainment communities set trends in design, dining, music, fashion, art, and architecture.

14. We're a young city. Yet more than a few of us are seniors.

The City of West Hollywood is home to a large number of seniors. Approximately 15% of the City's population is senior, compared with 11% in Los Angeles County. The City has a long history of providing services and programs for seniors. In a 2013 survey of the community in West Hollywood, 86% of seniors reported that their quality of life is excellent or good. The City has an Aging in Place initiative, which provides clear goals for the City's work in anticipating and preventing obstacles to older adults who choose to remain in their West Hollywood homes. This builds upon policies and programs, such as senior services and arts and cultural events. The program's approach to wellness provides an integrated path for encouraging a supportive and compassionate community.

15. We PickUp. We Cityline. It's free.

The City launched The PickUp in 2013 — a free trolley service that's a cool and convenient alternative to driving for people who go out to nightlife and dining spots on or near Santa Monica Boulevard on Friday and Saturday nights. The PickUp is fun, flirtatious, and irreverent — and it helps curb driving under the influence in West Hollywood. The trolley uses a bright palette of primary colors and photos on its exterior, and inside it mixes up a full night of tracks for an on-board music experience. The best part is that riders can leave the car at home. Everyone benefits from less traffic. The City also offers an art-filled free shuttle, Cityline, that features Local and Commuter routes to get around the City and to go back and forth to Hollywood & Highland.

16. We throw great parties.

Each June, West Hollywood is the epicenter of regional LGBTQ pride festivities. In 2022, the City launched its inaugural WeHo Pride weekend and parade, and the City celebrates the artistic contributions of the LGBTQ community with its vibrant and eclectic WeHo Pride LGBTQ Arts Festival, which features exciting arts, culture, and community events ranging from exhibits to author talks to music performances to stage productions. The City has a long history of hosting one of the most unique Halloween gatherings in the world, as well, bringing tens of thousands of creatively costumed revelers to a pedestrian-oriented Santa Monica Boulevard.

17. We love good design.

West Hollywood is synonymous with good design. It's not just the blue skies, palm trees, and swimming pools. The City's Design District is well established as a cultural destination for high-caliber design, art, fashion, dining, beauty, and more. Simply stated: trends start here. For many decades, the walkable radius of Melrose Avenue, Beverly Boulevard, and Robertson Boulevard has served up a unique and exciting mix of design pioneers, global visionaries, and creative leaders who embrace the latest in style, sophistication, and flair. Whether shopping, strolling, or dining, the Design District is firmly pinned as a global destination and a local favorite. All within a few footsteps of the blue, green, and red buildings of the Pacific Design Center.

18. We strip.

As in the world-famous Sunset Strip. It's ours and it's quintessentially West Hollywood. What's not to love? The Sunset Strip embraces the allure of many seasons of yesteryear — from the era when it was best-known as the playground halfway between Hollywood and Beverly Hills for glamorous show-biz luminaries like Marilyn Monroe, Clark Gable, Greta Garbo, and Desi Arnaz, and was home to infamous nightclubs and bars like Ciro's and The Mocambo; to the era that Bob Dylan, The Doors, Buffalo Springfield, and Janis Joplin took center stage at the Strip's rock-and-roll music venue launchpads like the Whiskey a Go Go, the Roxy, and the Rainbow and then to the era that the Strip embraced Mötley Crüe, Guns N' Roses, and more — the Sunset Strip is a global destination in the world's entertainment capital both for locals and globetrotters, alike. Today the Sunset Strip, or, just The Strip, stretches 1.6 miles through the heart of the City of West Hollywood with restaurants, hotels, music venues, nightclubs, and retail shopping that are

consistently featured on the world's best of lists, luring an eclectic crowd from all over the globe.

19. We're green.

The City of West Hollywood is dedicated to sustainability and to preserving our environment. Sustainability is a core value in the City and it means thinking about our behavior in a global and long-term context, and recognizing that the choices we make today have a profound effect on our future. West Hollywood recognizes the importance of this principle and thoughtfully strives to reduce its environmental footprint in ways that prioritizes equity and justice, values reciprocity, and mitigates unintended consequences. Sustainability staff in West Hollywood are responsible for implementing progressive green policies; enhancing the efficiency of its municipal operations; and offering a host of toolkits, workshops, and programs to the broader community to help all constituents reduce their impact.

20. We're always looking toward the future.

The City of West Hollywood has invested in a series of leading-edge Capital Projects, including an amazing Master Plan for West Hollywood Park. In 2011, the City celebrated the opening of its new LEED-rated West Hollywood Library to showcase the City's rich intellectual, literary, and cultural diversity. The City is passionate about adopting fresh new ideas and the latest in technological advancement. The WeHo Smart City initiative, launched in 2018, aims to holistically weave technology throughout the urban fabric as a means of enhancing its community's quality of life and sets forth a multi-phased roadmap to efficiently incorporate smart technologies, digital tools, and data analytics into City services for greater efficiency and enhanced customer service. At West Hollywood City Hall, staff members have formed an Innovation Catalyst Group (ICG), which explores the development and implementation of groundbreaking ideas. The City, through this group, has launched Geographic Information Systems (GIS) and Open Data initiatives.

That's just the beginning — check out more at **weho.org**
Find West Hollywood on social media **[@wehocity](#)**
Sign up for e-mail updates at **www.weho.org/email**

For reporters and members of the media seeking additional information about the City of West Hollywood, please contact the City of West Hollywood's Public Information Officer, Sheri A. Lunn, at (323) 848-6391 or **slunn@weho.org**.