



**02**

# **GOVERNANCE**

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## 02 GOVERNANCE

This chapter of the General Plan describes the system of governance in the City and provides goals and policies for West Hollywood to continue its positive relationship with residents, businesses, and visitors. Implementation actions are contained in Chapter 11.

### STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS

The State of California does not require that a city's general plan address governance. However, the City of West Hollywood views this as a critical topic for its community, so it is included as an optional element.

### CONTEXT

Since its incorporation as a City in 1984, the City of West Hollywood has established itself on the cutting edge of important social movements both as a community and as a municipality. Called "the creative city" for its collection of art, design and architecture, it is also creative in its personal and compassionate approach to city government. Since its incorporation, the City has prioritized excellence in governance and positive, constructive relationships with its residents, business owners, visitors, and neighbors. Some of the key accomplishments in 25 years of Cityhood include:

- Adopting landmark legislation such as the City's comprehensive Rent Stabilization Ordinance, Ordinance Prohibiting Discrimination Against People with HIV and AIDS, Domestic Partnership Ordinance, and the Ordinance Prohibiting Discrimination in Employment based on Sexual Orientation. Many of the City's landmark ordinances have been duplicated throughout the United States and other countries.
- Providing millions of dollars in grants to fund social service programs for people in need. The City's social services funding remains among the highest per capita in the nation.
- Sponsoring one of the first AIDS Awareness campaigns in the country in October 1985. The City's response to the AIDS crisis has been largely recognized as a model for other cities both nationally and globally.
- Adopting a Domestic Partnership Ordinance which provides equal rights for domestic partners and married couples in the City (1985).
- Establishing a non-profit housing development corporation, the West Hollywood Community Housing Corporation (WHCHC) (1986).
- Establishing the West Hollywood Marketing and Visitor Bureau to promote and market West Hollywood as a premier global travel destination (1986).
- Creating the CityLine Shuttle service which transports tens of thousands of persons a year (1992).

- Adopting the Sunset Specific Plan (SSP) to control growth and ensure development consistent with protecting the landmark street's legacy (1995).
- Establishing the East Side Redevelopment Project Area (1997).
- Completing the Santa Monica Boulevard Reconstruction Project, a two-year roadway improvement and beautification plan for the 3-mile stretch of Santa Monica Boulevard between La Brea Avenue and Doheny Drive (2001).
- Hosting some of the most popular special events in Southern California including the internationally-renowned West Hollywood Halloween Carnival, Christopher Street West LGBT PRIDE Festival and Parade, West Hollywood Book Fair and the Sunset Strip Music Festival. Each year hundreds of thousands of people visit West Hollywood to attend special events.
- Adopting the Green Building Ordinance (Green Building Requirements and Incentives for Private Development Ordinance) for both residential and commercial development in West Hollywood. It was one of the first mandatory Green Building programs in the country (2007).

## Civic Engagement

The West Hollywood community prides itself on being highly active in its own governance, and the City is committed to actively seeking public participation. The City strives to create an open process through which it can respond to its constituents' needs while balancing competing interests and opposing views. It is also committed to treating all individuals with respect and dignity, and providing courtesy and thoughtfulness in all interactions. West Hollywood values the artistic richness, idealism, and creativity of its community members. These qualities are an invaluable source of input to City staff and elected officials as they work with community members to create a more vibrant, socially rich, economically successful, and beautiful place to live, work, and play.

## City Council and Staff

West Hollywood is a general law city governed by the City Council/City Manager form of government. The City Council is elected by the community to provide leadership and policy direction and make important decisions on behalf of the City. City Council members serve for a term of four (4) years and are elected at large by the residents of West Hollywood. The Council selects a different Council member each spring to serve as Mayor and Mayor Pro Tempore. City Council establishes and makes direct and at-large appointments to the City's various Commissions and Advisory Boards. City Council hears appeals of Planning Commission decisions and reviews certain Historic Preservation Commission decisions. In addition, the City Council selects and formalizes on an annual basis the issues it feels are most important to achieving the City's goals through the



City Hall is located at the corner of Santa Monica Boulevard and Sweetzer Avenue.

budgeting process. The City Council appoints the City Manager to implement the City Council's direction and to oversee City staff, who carry out the City's daily functions and operations.

City Council proceedings are open to the public. The City of West Hollywood posts current agendas and maintains an extensive on-line archive of previous meetings and Council Minutes. The City also provides live and archived streaming video of City Council Meetings on-line and on the City's television channel.

## Community Representation

The City has a variety of Commissions and Advisory Boards that represent various community interests and perspectives. These bodies, which address a range of topics of importance to the City, are comprised of community members – residents, businesses representatives, and other stakeholders. The Commissions and Advisory Boards represent the community by making recommendations and/or decisions that guide City policy and actions. From time to time, the City also forms ad-hoc committees to address topics of current importance. The committees are typically formed to address a specific topic or issue and then, once resolved, are disbanded.

### Advisory Boards

City Advisory Boards provide advice to City Council regarding the unique interests and needs of West Hollywood. Members of Advisory Boards must either: (1) be a resident of West Hollywood; (2) be an owner of a legitimate business entity in the City; or (3) work in the City of West Hollywood or for a business or agency that serves West Hollywood. Each member of the Board serves a two-year term, and can be reappointed by City Council. Advisory Boards are not required by state or local laws. The City Council may add, alter, or disband advisory boards in its discretion. Topics addressed by City Advisory Boards have included: matters of interest to women; the Russian, lesbian and gay, transgender, and senior communities; and persons with disabilities.

### Commissions

The City's various commissions make recommendations to the City Council, and in some circumstances have approval authority, for a range of topic areas important to the City's services, operations and development over time. It is within the purview of the City Council to establish the composition, work, and responsibilities of any Commission. Typically, the following requirements apply to the City's commissions:

- Commissions typically consist of five (5) members, appointed by individual Council members, and two (2) members appointed by the Council as a whole (at-large).
- Each member of a commission serves a two-year term commencing June 1st following a general municipal election.

- Members must have a significant interest in the City such as residency, business or residential ownership, economic involvement or some other valid link to be determined by the City Council.
- Members of each commission may not be officers or employees of the City.

Commissions have been formed to address topics including: arts and cultural affairs, business licensing, human services, public facilities, public safety, transportation, rent stabilization, redevelopment, and historic preservation.

The Planning Commission is a permanent commission of the City. It is the only Commission that is required to be enacted under State law. Regularly scheduled meetings are held to review and act on certain matters related to planning and development. The project or application types addressed by the Planning Commission are detailed in the City's Zoning Ordinance. For certain types of development applications, the Planning Commission is required to review and either approve or deny, with the City Council only reviewing if the Planning Commission's decision is appealed.

Certain planning and development decisions are required by state law to be reviewed and either approved or denied by the City Council at a public hearing, subsequent to a review and recommendation by the Planning Commission. This occurs anytime any of the following are part of a development application:

- Specific Plan
- Development Agreement
- Zone Map Amendment
- Zone Text Amendment
- Cultural Resource Designations
- General Plan Amendment
- General Plan Map Amendment

The Planning Commission includes both standing and ad-hoc subcommittees. Over the years, these subcommittees have addressed topics including design, long-range planning, and signs. The Subcommittees do not vote, nor do they take any other legal action, and are not required by law.

## Regional Partnerships

Part of the City's decision-making process involves having strong partnerships and relationships with outside agencies and organizations. This is due to both a desire to have good relations with the City's neighbors and out of necessity, since West Hollywood is bordered by other jurisdictions and receives many services from outside agencies. The City commonly works on issues of mutual interest with the adjacent cities of Los Angeles and Beverly Hills. The City's police and library services are provided by Los Angeles County, and it is part of Los Angeles County's Consolidated Fire Protection Service District.

In addition, a variety of outside agencies provide services to the City's residents and businesses. These include the Los Angeles Unified School District, the City of Beverly Hills and the City of Los Angeles Department of Water and Power for water service, wastewater collection from the City of Los Angeles, and energy from Southern California Edison. City staff and members of the City Council regularly participate in the regional decision-making process. Elected officials and staff are actively involved with the Westside Cities Council of Governments, the Southern California Association of Governments, Metro, and other regional agencies.

## E-Governance

The City recognizes and supports the need to maintain a high level of service to the community. It further recognizes the need to pursue and engage various informational technologies to make communications more efficient and accessible. The City's Public Information Office regularly updates its New Media Strategy, which includes use of social networking, streaming video, photo-sharing, and other technologies as they evolve. In order to continue to improve the ease of doing business with the City, additional services including online permitting services for certain types of development or building projects, and streamlined processing of general requests for service or information are being explored.

# GOALS AND POLICIES

## **Goal G-1: Ensure that the community is active and engaged in the decision-making process.**

*Intent: To engage a diverse cross-section of the community in the City's decision-making process related to policies, ordinances, and funding priorities, ensuring that the actions taken by the City reflect the needs and interests of the community as a whole.*

- G-1.1 Continue to be responsive to community inquiries, providing public information and recording feedback from community interactions.
- G-1.2 Continue to make public meetings accessible to the population.
- G-1.3 As practical, utilize volunteers to assist with community programs and services and seek to utilize the professional/trade skills of volunteers.
- G-1.4 Strive to reflect a comprehensive cross-section of the community in appointments to Boards, Commissions and Committees.
- G-1.5 Consistently engage in community outreach through neighborhood forums, social media, the latest technologies, personal interaction, and other methods on a regular basis, and by utilizing special events to engage the public.
- G-1.6 Periodically solicit service evaluations from the community and utilize feedback to improve and develop the City's policies, ordinances, programs, and funding priorities.
- G-1.7 Host periodic public forums on issues important to the community, facilitating these forums with the purpose of guiding City policy.



## **Goal G-2: Maintain transparency and integrity in West Hollywood's decision-making process.**

*Intent: To maintain the community's trust and to serve residents and business owners toward realizing the community's vision.*

- G-2.1 Maintain the community's trust by holding meetings that are open and available for all community members to attend and participate.
- G-2.2 Engage the community by hosting a variety of events, meetings, workshops, and study sessions.
- G-2.3 Maintain a high level of customer service and accessibility to the community.
- G-2.4 Coordinate with regional agencies as needed.

## **Goal G-3: Provide excellent customer service, including utilization of emerging technologies.**

*Intent: To serve the community with professionalism and courtesy, and to strengthen information sharing and communication between the City and its constituents.*

- G-3.1 Strive to provide access to facilities, programs, and services at times and locations that are convenient for residents and businesses.
- G-3.2 Make use of social networking tools to communicate with constituents.
- G-3.3 As feasible, continue to expand the City's website with data and materials for residents and people doing business with the City, including City Council and Commission agenda packets, permit application forms, web-based GIS systems, and use of new technologies as appropriate.
- G-3.4  As feasible, establish a "virtual" public counter through an on-line permitting system.
- G-3.5  As feasible, expand the use of document imaging to maintain and provide access to vital records.