

THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF LOS ANGELES



**LOS ANGELES:  
STRUCTURE  
OF A CITY  
GOVERNMENT**

by Raphael J. Sonenshein, Ph.D.

*with the support of the*

John Randolph Haynes and Dora Haynes Foundation



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# Los Angeles

STRUCTURE *of a* CITY GOVERNMENT

by Raphael J. Sonenshein, Ph.D.

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**STATEMENT FROM  
THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS  
OF LOS ANGELES**

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Los Angeles was once the site of an Indian village, then of a Spanish colonial outpost and later a Mexican provincial capital. When Los Angeles was incorporated as an American city on April 4, 1850, it had a population of 1,610. There were no graded streets or sidewalks, no water system or lights and not a single public building. Sanitation and street lighting were simple. On Saturday mornings, residents cleaned up the streets in front of their own homes. Each owner whose house faced the street was required to put a light at the door in front of the house during the first two dark hours of every night.

Today, Los Angeles is the second largest city in the United States, with a population of nearly four million people over an area of 465 square miles. There are 7,366 miles of paved streets, a water and power system, sanitation services, street lighting and skyscrapers. The city government furnishes residents with water and electricity, sanitation services and police and fire protection. It maintains streets, parks, libraries and museums.

This book was written to show how Los Angeles city government has evolved, how it is organized and how it functions. The people determine the kind of government Los Angeles has. Voters shape the charter, establishing the basic framework of Los Angeles city government, and they elect representatives whose job it is to make government work. In 1999, voters approved a new city charter and along with it a new system of neighborhood councils and a Department of Neighborhood Empowerment (DONE) to promote greater participation in government. The goal was to make government more responsive to local needs by giving residents an even larger role in determining the quality of their lives.

The League of Women Voters of Los Angeles played a significant role in educating citizens on the need for a new charter and neighborhood councils. After the new charter was approved, the league published a "Guide to Neighborhood Councils," which served as a resource and workbook for bringing community members together in forming their own neighborhood councils. Since then, league members have facilitated neighborhood council elections for DONE in communities throughout the city.

The League of Women Voters of the United States was founded after the 19th amendment was ratified in 1920, ensuring that women could vote in every state. Since then, the league has been encouraging all Americans to become informed and to participate in the political process. The league provides nonpartisan election information, sponsors candidate debates and public discussions, studies issues, and works for legislation in the public interest. The league brings a unique combination of grassroots power, national influence, and a strong moral presence to local, state and national governments.

In 1911, California became the sixth state to grant voting rights to women. In 1919, one year before ratification of the 19th amendment to the Constitution, the League of Women Voters of Los Angeles was founded. Dora Haynes became its first president and the league has played a key role in Los Angeles government and politics ever since.

The Los Angeles League has studied and taken positions on many issues including fair housing, education, water resources, city planning, the civil service system, libraries and city charter reform. League members act as observers of city government, attending city council and council committee meetings, and public hearings. League members have served on city commissions and have won election to city offices. Former league president, Pat Russell, served on the city council for 18 years, and as city council president from 1983 to 1987. Former league vice president, Joy Picus, served four terms on the city council.

To help educate citizens about government, the league wrote and published *Los Angeles: Structure of a City*. First appearing in 1964, the book has been updated over the years. It has served as a valuable resource for Los Angeles residents, business people, city employees, and for individuals preparing for city civil service exams. The volume can be found on public library shelves as well as on desks in city government offices.

This entirely new, restructured and expanded fifth edition of the book provides citizens with a roadmap for navigating city government. It is filled with history about the city's government and contains new sections on departments, commissions and agencies that did not exist prior to passage of the 2000 charter. It is our hope that the book will motivate the people to actively participate in their government in a meaningful way. It is slightly renamed for greater precision, by adding the word *government* to the title.

The league is especially grateful to the John Randolph Haynes and Dora Haynes Foundation for its generous grants to the League of Women Voters of Los Angeles Education Fund, which made this fifth edition of *Los Angeles: Structure of a City Government* possible.

We also thank Dr. Raphael Sonenshein, who has led the development of this fresh version of the book, adding a new chapter to the long and valued history of the league's published guides to the government of Los Angeles. With his invaluable experience as executive director of the City of Los Angeles Appointed Charter Reform Commission, he has helped make this book an introduction to the city's new governing document for the 21st century.

The League of Women Voters of Los Angeles dedicates this book to the people of Los Angeles and to the city government's employees whose services contribute to the greatness of our city.



STATEMENT FROM THE  
JOHN RANDOLPH HAYNES AND  
DORA HAYNES FOUNDATION

---

*Donn B. Miller, President (1996–2004)*

*Jane Pisano, President (2005– )*

With the publication of this volume, the League of Women Voters of Los Angeles once again furthers its mission of strengthening our system of government by enabling citizens to participate knowledgeably in it. That vision led Dora Haynes to become one of the founders and the first president of the League of Women Voters of Los Angeles. She shared with her husband, Dr. John Randolph Haynes, an ardent interest in civic affairs as a means of improving the circumstances of their community.

Dr. Haynes was a principal leader in the movement for clean government that profoundly shaped the nature of Los Angeles city government. Together they created the John Randolph Haynes and Dora Haynes Foundation and dedicated its resources to furthering that noble ambition. It is only natural, therefore, that the foundation would join with the league in providing this work as a means of advancing our common goals.

The Haynes Foundation is proud, as well, of its long relationship with Raphael Sonenshein. Dr. Sonenshein's interests and abilities led the foundation to sponsor his important research on Los Angeles. His later service as a Haynes Foundation Fellow enabled the foundation and its trustees to draw upon his deep knowledge of our community, to benefit from his good judgment, and to enjoy his close participation in foundation affairs. We are proud that his experience and wisdom about Los Angeles government have been placed in the service of this important project.

Dora Haynes would join her foundation's trustees in saluting the league for its sponsorship of this volume. The league continues, in this new century, to take the lead in broadening the accessibility of civic knowledge and in furthering the prospect of broad-based, enlightened participation in the governance of our community.



## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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The development of a largely new version of this book emerged from the commitment of the League of Women Voters of Los Angeles to help the people of Los Angeles make the best use of their local government. Julie Rajan, the league's then-executive director, had the vision and determination to make this faith into a reality through the development of this book. Jane Goichman, league president, and a dedicated and energetic trio of league volunteers, Carryl Carter, Renée Chanon and Evon Gotlieb, demonstrated the league's belief in this project through the long process of reviewing draft after draft. Evon, along with league volunteer Sandy Wolber, provided copy-editing. Peter Perkowski and Ruth Horgan, league volunteers, gave the initial draft a thorough review, and Ellen Glettner, league administrative director, helped manage the completion of the project with the support of incoming league president, Liza White.

The John Randolph Haynes and Dora Haynes Foundation has been a friend of the Los Angeles League since Dora Haynes helped found the League of Women Voters of Los Angeles in 1919, and became its first president. Diane Cornwell, the foundation's administrative director, provided thoughtful advice and enthusiastic support, and foundation presidents, Donn B. Miller and Jane Pisano, demonstrated the belief of the trustees in the project.

Consistent with its long support of the league's efforts, the Haynes Foundation issued two grants for this project. The first supported the writing of the book. The second covered the costs of publication and distribution. Without the Haynes Foundation's generosity, this book could not have been completed. Additional support for copying was generously provided by the California State University, Fullerton Political Science Department and its chair, Alan Saltzstein.

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The author had the invaluable assistance of an extraordinary

researcher, Richard Dickinson, retired from the office of the city administrative officer (CAO). With his long experience at City Hall, Dick was able to track down even the most obscure information. Dick wrote the first draft of the sections on the CAO and on financing city government, and some portions of the preface. His work was indispensable. At all times, Dick represented the professionalism, experience and dedication of the city's work force.

City officials were extremely cooperative and provided more information than could possibly fit within this slim volume. The manuscript was carefully reviewed by Bill Fujioka, the city administrative officer, and his principal deputies, headed by Terry Muñoz. Their input was wise and indispensable and they deserve credit for greatly improving the book. Pedro Echeverría, assistant city attorney, carefully examined the manuscript and made extensive and valuable suggestions. Claudia Culling of the city attorney's office read the first draft of the manuscript with great care.

Comments on the draft in various stages were received from former CAO Keith Comrie; Planning Director Con Howe; former Assistant Chief Legislative Analyst Michael Barclay; Department of Neighborhood Empowerment General Manager Greg Nelson; Steve Grace, president of Channel 36; Steve Andrews of the Community Redevelopment Agency; Director of the Bureau of Street Services Bill Robertson; City Clerk Frank Martinez; and City Ethics Commission Executive Director LeeAnn Pelham.

Extensive interviews were conducted with John Miller, head of the LAPD office in charge of fighting terrorism; Philip Depoian, director of community affairs for the Los Angeles World Airport; Dwayne Letcher-Healy of the General Services Department; Greg Nelson and Parker Anderson of the Department of Neighborhood Empowerment; Glenn Gritzner of the Los Angeles Unified School District; and City Clerk Frank Martinez.

The book's production was supervised by Margi Denton of Denton Design Associates. Her creative sense and commitment to the project are evident on every page of the book. Mark Drayse, professor of geography at CSU Fullerton, created maps, charts and tables. Completion of the manuscript was greatly assisted by Callie White, who researched, fact-checked and copy-edited.



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Any errors of fact or interpretation that escaped the careful eyes of the generous readers and advisers at City Hall and from the wider community are solely the responsibility of the author.



*“The people of this State do not yield their  
sovereignty to the agencies which serve them.*

*The people, in delegating authority,  
do not give their public servants the right to decide  
what is good for the people to know  
and what is not good for them to know.  
The people insist on remaining informed  
so that they may retain control over  
the instruments they have created.”*

— from the Ralph M. Brown Act, 1953



## PREFACE

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*Raphael J. Sonenshein*

Welcome to *Los Angeles: Structure of a City Government*. This book is designed to help you understand the government of the nation's second largest city, whether you are a city employee, a resident of the city, a teacher, a student, a member of a neighborhood council, or just someone who is interested in Los Angeles.

Los Angeles is a different kind of city. It is huge in land area, decentralized in living arrangements, marked by an individualistic culture that pays little attention to politics and government. Many residents of Los Angeles have never seen an actual map of Los Angeles. Others are not certain whether they live in Los Angeles City, in another smaller city, or in unincorporated county territory. While public officials are important and powerful, they do not have the visibility that marks public office in eastern and midwestern cities like New York City and Chicago.

For these and other reasons, political participation has been relatively low in Los Angeles. This book is based on the belief that one way to broaden participation is to increase knowledge of the city government: what it does, why it matters, what it costs, where the money comes from, and where it goes. Without this knowledge and understanding, it is difficult to summon the energy to vote, to join a neighborhood council, or to speak in front of the city council. Armed with knowledge, residents feel empowered and insist that their voices be heard.

The most recent version of this series, *Los Angeles: Structure of a City*, was published in 1986. Since then, Los Angeles government has been shaken and changed in dramatic ways. Los Angeles experienced a riot in 1992 and an earthquake in 1994. Voters approved a wide range of reforms in the 1990s to create an Ethics Commission and to change the governance of the Los Angeles Police Department. Then, under the cloud of a secession movement, city voters adopted a new charter that incorporated innovative methods of public participation.

This book takes into account the changes made by the city's voters and helps show the way to Los Angeles governance in the 21st century. This is a new version of the league's book, written largely from scratch, but hopefully one that will stand with the dog-eared and well-used earlier

editions created by the League of Women Voters of Los Angeles. Sections of the earlier edition are incorporated into this version, with particular regard to the historical background of key city departments and offices. The sources for this book are wide and varied. The city charter and the Administrative and Municipal Codes are essential sources of information on city government. Princeton University Press gave permission to use some historical material from my book (*Sonenshein 2004*). Reports and other documents produced by city employees were extremely valuable, supplemented by newspaper articles, books and magazines. City employees with special knowledge of departments or of city issues were interviewed.

### **The Framework of Los Angeles Government**

The American system of local government is unique. In most nations, the national government holds the bulk of the power over municipal affairs. City governments in those nations (whether Great Britain, France, Japan, or others) are interesting and lively, but lack the home rule characteristic of American cities.

The power of American local government derives from the American traditions of federalism and devolution of authority. The United States Constitution is the fundamental governing document for all levels of American government. Like all governments, from the United States government itself to the smallest hamlet, the city of Los Angeles cannot undertake any activity that is in violation of the U.S. Constitution. Within that framework, however, cities have substantial opportunity to innovate and to govern themselves.

While the 50 states have legal standing under the U.S. Constitution, cities and counties do not. The state of California has its own constitution and Los Angeles must comply with it. The California Constitution governs both county and city government. Counties do not govern cities.

A general law city must organize itself in line with local government provisions in the state constitution and state statutes. By contrast, a charter city can design its own form of government and can develop some political and governmental autonomy. The city of Los Angeles is a charter city, allowing it a considerable degree of home rule.

The fundamental document of a charter city is the city charter. It can be short and sweet or long and detailed. This is the place where the voters place their highest aspirations for their political leaders. The

charter identifies the main governing bodies of the city, along with their powers and duties. No change can be made to the city charter without a vote of the people—not even a comma or a semicolon. Changes to the charter must be placed on the ballot by the city council or by the voters through an initiative.

Normally, city government operates through ordinances, which are local laws passed by the city council and signed by the mayor, or passed by a two-thirds vote of the council over the mayor's veto. While ordinances do not require a vote of the people, they must be consistent with the charter. It is obviously easier to change an ordinance than to change the charter.

In Los Angeles, as ordinances go into effect, most are placed into the Los Angeles Municipal Code, the Administrative Code, or the Election Code:

- The Municipal Code contains ordinances setting out regulations applicable to the general public, in most cases with penalties for violating these laws (e.g., parking violations).
- The Administrative Code deals with the internal structure and operation of the government (e.g., employment practices).
- The Election Code covers the procedures for electing city officials (e.g., the time, place and manner of city elections; procedures at the polls on election day; and rules about raising, spending and reporting financial contributions).

The government of Los Angeles is comprised of elective and appointive offices, including commissions, departments and agencies. The overall structure of elections is based on nonpartisanship, which means that no party designations appear on city election ballots. A 1911 amendment to the state constitution made all local elections in California nonpartisan, but Los Angeles voters could not wait and, in 1909, installed nonpartisan elections (*Erie and Ingram 1998*).

Elected officials include three citywide office holders elected at large (by all the city's voters). They are the mayor, the city attorney and the city controller. The charter establishes a city council made up of 15 members, elected to four-year terms by individual geographic districts of nearly equal size. All city elected officials are limited to two terms in office as a result of a charter amendment approved by the voters in 1993.

Charter Section 200 lists the following city officers: mayor, members of the city council, city attorney, city clerk, controller, treasurer, members of boards or commissions, city administrative officers, executive director of the Board of Police Commissioners, and others as prescribed by ordinance. Other than the mayor, the city attorney, the controller, and the city council members, all are appointed. Whether appointed or elected, all city officers are subject to recall by the voters.

Los Angeles is a large full-service municipal government. Normally when we consider the budget of Los Angeles, we think about the general city budget that is produced by the mayor and city council, but there is much more. The budgets of the three proprietary, or so-called independent departments—Airports, Harbor, and Water and Power—are separate, approved by independent boards of commissioners, and appear in the back of the city budget document only for information purposes.

With the general and proprietary budgets combined, the overall city budget of Los Angeles is equivalent to that of a \$12.6-billion-a-year business. The city directly employs thousands of people (48,226 in 2004–05). The city government impacts the local economy and employment by the wages it pays to its employees and by issuing millions of dollars of contracts on an annual basis. For fiscal year 2004–05, all city departments budgeted more than \$185 million for contracts; this amount does not include contracts let under bond issues or state propositions for transportation and other purposes (*Source: City Administrative Officer*).

Los Angeles delivers the full range of local municipal services to more than 3.8 million citizens living in an area covering 465 square miles. Since 1980, Los Angeles has gained nearly a million people and its population is estimated to grow to 4.5 million by 2020.

The city runs its day-to-day operations using business-like principles characteristic of large organizations. It must develop a balanced budget each year, maintain its high credit rating so that it can borrow money at favorable rates, and deliver the most service possible within the funds that are available.

While the city government is as large as a great corporation, it does not earn a profit for its shareholders. Rather, it is concerned with public goods: safety, the quality of life, and the proper planning, location and safety of the buildings being constructed in the city. The city must construct and maintain infrastructure that supports the business and daily life of its residents (e.g., streets, water, electricity, wastewater and solid



waste management), build and operate libraries and other cultural and educational institutions, and provide other services and programs that contribute to the well-being of those who live in, work in, or do business with the city.

On an annual basis, the city cleans and maintains over 7,300 miles of streets and alleys; trims over 680,000 street trees; serves over 14 million patrons at 72 libraries; and provides over two million meals to senior citizens (2003–04 data). It operates 382 parks that cover 15,686 acres, including the 4,217-acre Griffith Park, which is the largest urban park in the nation. It operates El Pueblo de Los Angeles Historic Monument near Union Station, the oldest park in Los Angeles. Its water and electric utilities deliver 218 billion gallons of water and 23.5 billion kilowatt-hours of electricity to city customers each year. Every day the Bureau of Sanitation treats over 432 million gallons of raw sewage, and each year it picks up over 1.7 million tons of solid waste.

Los Angeles operates a seaport and several airports that serve as hubs for the flow of passengers and goods that promote local, regional, national and international commerce. Los Angeles International Airport (LAX) is the fifth busiest commercial airport in the world, and the third busiest in the nation. Each year LAX handles roughly 700,000 flights, 60.9 million passengers and over 2.1 million tons of goods. Its counterpart in general aviation (private planes), Van Nuys Airport, is the largest general aviation airport in the country. Ontario Airport, located in the Inland Empire east of downtown Los Angeles, is a medium-sized airport that serves numerous American cities. Palmdale Airport, located north-east of Los Angeles, is an emerging part of the Los Angeles airport system and offers potential for expanded capacity.

The Port of Los Angeles, encompassing 7,500 acres of land and water with 43 miles of waterfront, is one of the world's largest seaports. The combined Los Angeles and Long Beach deep water ports handle the greatest volume of trade of any port in the United States. They provide for the import and export of finished goods and raw materials valued at more than \$100 billion a year from across the country and around the world. The combined Los Angeles/Long Beach harbors represent the world's third busiest container port complex, handling over 13 million containers and over 217 million metric tons of cargo a year. The Port of Los Angeles alone is the busiest container port in the United States and the seventh busiest container port in the world, handling over seven

million containers and 162 metric tons of cargo annually.

Los Angeles also operates a major cruise ship terminal, participates in the Los Angeles Visitors and Convention Bureau, runs a major convention center with about one million square feet of showroom space, and hosts events of international standing, including two International Olympic Games (1932 and 1984).

California cities have faced great financial challenges in recent times. Starting with the passage of Proposition 13 in 1978, California cities have been capped on the amount of property taxes they can collect, restricted in their ability to raise revenue, and faced with competition from other cities in search of sales tax revenue.

During the 1990s, Los Angeles suffered major disasters, including floods, earthquakes, fires and civil unrest. Through these crises, and despite fiscal limitations, the city government has maintained one of the highest municipal credit ratings for a big city and continues to provide reliable services to its residents.



LOS ANGELES:  
a different kind of city

When we think of big cities, we tend to imagine New York City, Chicago, Detroit, Philadelphia and other urban centers in the East and the Midwest. We think of cities that grew around natural formations like oceans, rivers and streams. We think of skyscrapers, dense populations packed into the urban core, and distant suburbs not part of the city. We think of “old” cities that were built and grew long ago into dominating industrial and commercial centers. We also think of cities with strong political party organizations, even with political machines and bosses, colorful in their history but marked at times by corruption.

Los Angeles has always been a different kind of city. It is the prototypical western metropolis, built by bold entrepreneurs even though it lacked the natural advantages of traditional cities. It lacked water, transportation and the rudiments of the natural urban economy. But Los Angeles has always had the drive, energy and imagination to succeed, from its early settlers in the 1780s to the youngster today who comes to Los Angeles to carve out a new career and a new life.

This city is younger, its historical roots more recent, and its most important developments more contemporary than traditional cities. In this chapter, we will explore the history of Los Angeles, how it evolved into a major city, and how its governing institutions were constructed and fine-tuned.

Los Angeles was founded on September 4, 1781, when a band of explorers sent by the Spanish Empire finished its journey from Mexico and arrived at a fertile valley in the shadow of mountains. This multi-ethnic group of settlers included Indians, blacks and those of mixed race. They were farmers, and immediately began to plant crops in the place they called *El Pueblo de Nuestra Señora la Reina de los Angeles del Rio de Porciuncula* (The Town of Our Lady Queen of the Angels of the Porciuncula River). A local historian, Doyce B. Nunis, Jr., has argued that the reference to the river is incorrect, and should not be considered part of the original name (*Los Angeles Times*, 26 March 2005).

Los Angeles became an American city in 1850 with California’s entry into the Union. Nineteenth century Los Angeles was a small town with a frontier atmosphere and a diverse population. There was no organized police department in early Los Angeles, and the usual method of fighting crime was to organize a posse of leading citizens (*Woods 1973*). Local politics were organized on a partisan basis and elections were vigorously contested. The majority of residents were of Hispanic origin. A small but

dynamic Jewish community played an active role in the city's politics (*Vorspan and Gartner 1970*).

The massive migration of tens of thousands of white Midwesterners beginning in the last quarter of the 19th century reshaped Los Angeles. The economy was transformed as the large Spanish landholdings, the *ranchos*, were sold and subdivided. The community shifted from agriculture to manufacturing and land speculation. In the wide open spaces of Los Angeles, *rancheros* had seen fields for plowing and grazing. New migrants saw subdivisions and manufacturing plants. Those who purchased land made fortunes as property values soared before the dawn of the 20th century.

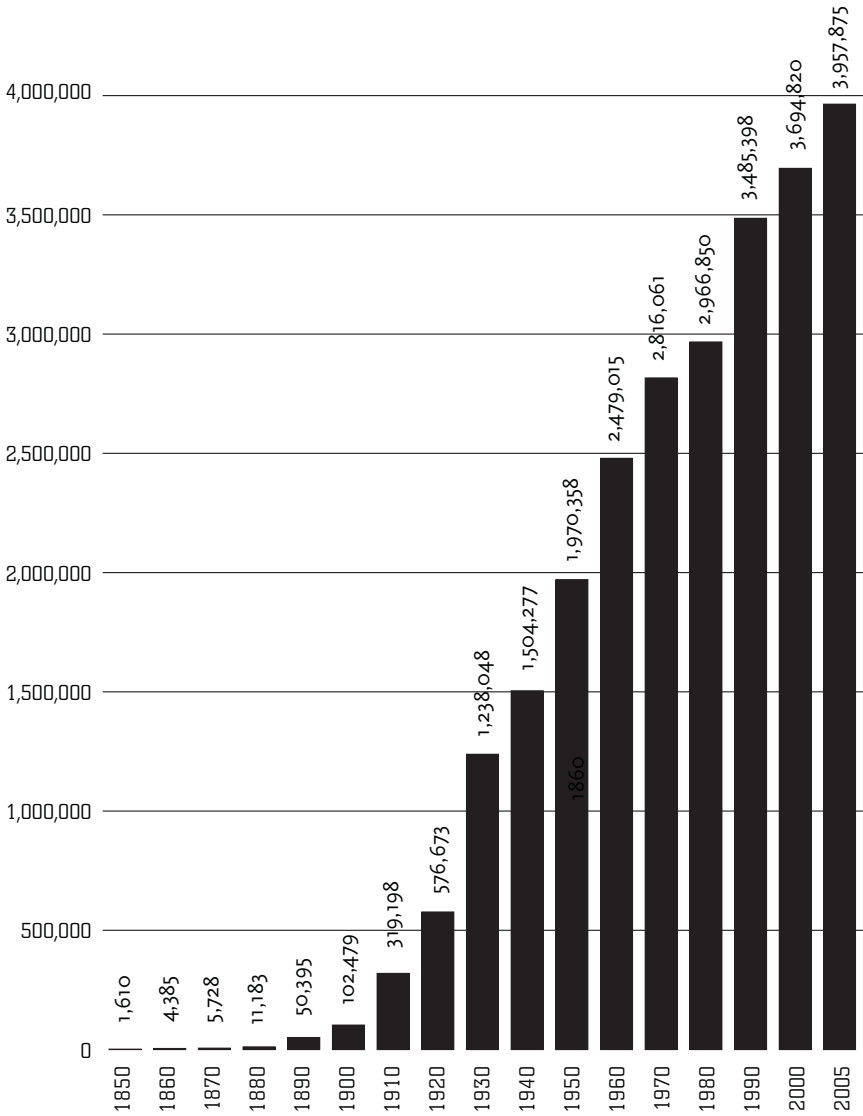
Economic transformation had large social consequences, as the American landowners married into *ranchero* families, inherited the land, and turned it to industrial and commercial uses. The easy multiethnic community of early Los Angeles was altered irrevocably by the massive migration promoted by business-oriented local boosters.

Among the leaders of the booster era were the *Los Angeles Times*, which welcomed each new migrant in the pages of the newspaper, and the railroads seeking customers for their cross-country lines. Boosterism helped create the idea of Los Angeles, with its glorious weather and seemingly limitless economic opportunities, advertised as a place to seek the "good life." A local business class competed mightily and successfully to obtain federal support for a Los Angeles harbor and to have a cross-country railroad connection to Los Angeles instead of San Diego. Under the leadership of these local capitalists, water was brought from Northern California, numerous communities were annexed to Los Angeles, and a major metropolis was created (*Erie 1992*).

Over time, this new Los Angeles community leadership shaped the politics of the city as well. As early as the 1880s, Los Angeles began to take on the character of a white-dominated, business-led, growth-oriented, conservative Protestant community of midwestern migrants.

While New York City and Chicago were incorporating immigrant groups through the Democratic party, the leadership of Los Angeles was hostile to immigrants and the political organizations and unions that would advance their influence. Bolstered by a unified white conservative, often religious, base of voters, these migrants held most of the public offices and dominated official power (*Singleton 1979*). No African-American, Latino or Jewish person held elected office in the city of Los Angeles

## Los Angeles Population Growth 1850 - 2005



Source: United States Census, California Department of Finance, City of Los Angeles CAO

between 1900 and 1949, when a Latino, Edward Roybal, was elected to the city council.

The ability of this dominant group of white conservative Midwesterners to shape local democracy was enhanced by legal changes in the status of cities. For much of the 19th century, local government had been hamstrung by a legal theory called Dillon's Rule, named for the judge in Illinois who ruled that cities were merely creatures of state government and whose view was widely accepted throughout the nation. In the late 1880s, for the first time, American cities began to enjoy the benefits of home rule. As states began to authorize greater leeway for urban governance, city charters emerged to codify the empowerment of cities. California became a leader in local home rule.

The 1879 California Constitution allowed large cities to write charters (*Erie and Ingram 1998*). In 1888, Los Angeles voters adopted the city's first home rule charter, which took effect in 1889. Under the new Los Angeles charter, most top officials were elected for a term of two years (*Hunter 1933:71-73*).

The 1889 charter established Los Angeles's system of citizen commissions to manage city departments. It also guaranteed municipal control of the water supply. A strong city council overshadowed the mayor (*Erie and Ingram: 60-61*).

In 1903, voters created a civil service system and strengthened the mayor's office. In 1909, voters abandoned the ward system, which had led to councilmanic corruption, and replaced it with an at-large system. They also instituted nonpartisan elections two years before the state constitution was amended to require it for all local elections (*Erie and Ingram: 65*). A half-century of lively party competition ended in Los Angeles.

Los Angeles voters continued to innovate in 1911. Voters approved the creation of a fire and police pension system, extended the recall to apply to appointed as well as elected officials and approved campaign finance legislation (*Erie and Ingram: 66*).

The founders of modern Los Angeles had their own version of the Progressive philosophy of political reform that was sweeping the nation, especially in the western and southwestern states. The governance structure of Los Angeles was designed to be a paradise of reform, to have the virtues of the small midwestern town in the clothes of a great city: "...the people of Los Angeles desired the size but not the character of a

modern metropolis...to combine the spirit of the good community with the substance of the great metropolis” (*Fogelson 1967: 191*). Los Angeles would be hostile to political parties and to anything that smacked of political machines or patronage. It would be thoroughly nonpartisan, not simply in structure, but in every aspect of the city’s political culture.



## The City Seal

*Created by ordinance: 1905*

### **Representation:**

Lion and Castle represent Spanish rule, 1542–1821.

Eagle holding the serpent is from the Arms of Mexico,  
representing Mexican rule, 1822–1846

Bear Flag represents the California Republic of 1846.

American Flag represents American rule.

Olives, grapes, and oranges represent agriculture.

Rosary beads around the seal honor the Mission Padres  
of early Los Angeles.



## The 1925 Charter

The framework for 20th century Progressive-era Los Angeles government was the 1925 charter. The charter was developed by a Board of Freeholders elected by the voters in June 1923. It was submitted to the voters in 1924, passed overwhelmingly and took effect in 1925.

The 1925 charter distilled the Los Angeles political culture, including its fear of corruption by elected officials. The charter strengthened the mayor and forbade the city council from interfering in administrative matters (*Hunter 1933*). The charter established citizen commissions appointed by the mayor to run city departments. While many cities have advisory boards and commissions to elicit citizen input, Los Angeles is unique in the degree to which such commissions have had decision-making authority. General managers of most charter departments were exempted from civil service (*Crawford 1995: 86*).

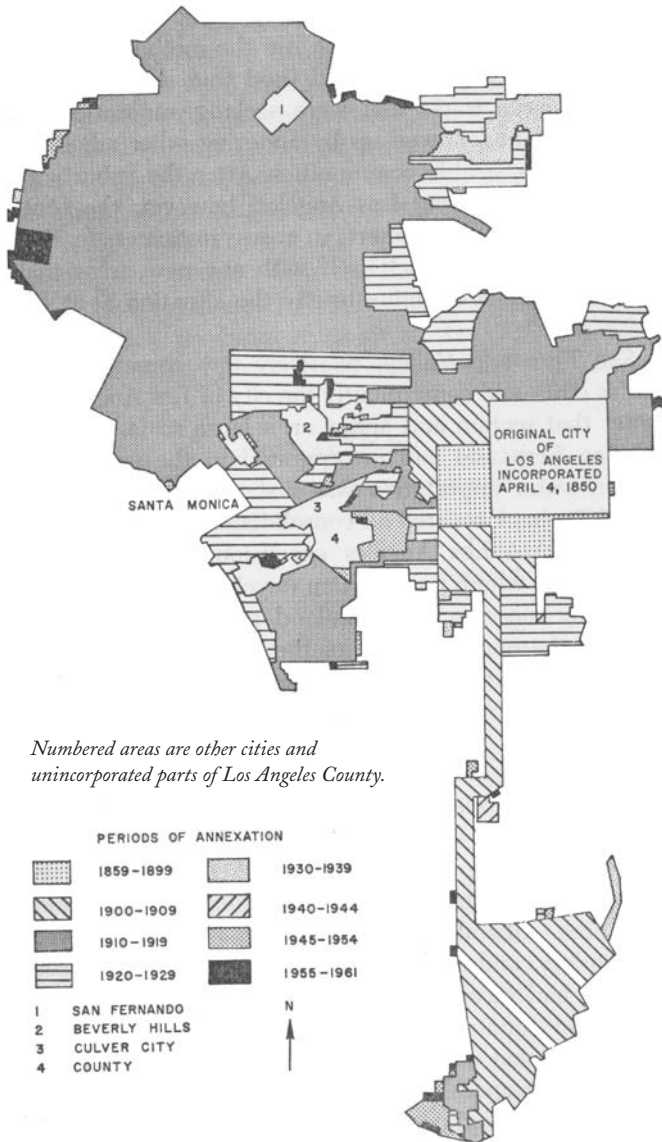
As Los Angeles was developing its reform government, it was also expanding geographically through annexation. The basis for the annexation movement in Los Angeles was the city's control of water, electric power and the harbor.

A number of smaller cities, Santa Monica, Culver City, Beverly Hills, and San Fernando, resisted annexation and continued to exist as viable independent entities. But there was considerable demand among other cities to join Los Angeles. In fact, the incorporation movement was so successful that Los Angeles became reluctant to accept new additions (*Crouch and Dinerman 1963*).

While the leadership of a transformed Los Angeles rested in the hands of conservative, growth-oriented leaders, their dominance was by no means absolute. Even with a system hostile to unions and to what city leaders considered radicalism, discontent boiled beneath the surface. In 1911, city voters nearly elected a socialist mayor, and they were dissuaded from doing so only by a deadly bombing of the *Los Angeles Times* in the midst of a labor dispute. On the other hand, the combination of cowboy capitalism and good government structures was popular with the voters. Bond issues for massive water projects passed by comfortable margins, and the charter in 1925 received widespread voter support (*Erie 1992*).

Nor were the city's leaders uniformly conservative. One of the principal voices of Los Angeles reform and a pillar of the local establishment

## Annexations to the City of Los Angeles



Source: Crouch, Winston, and Beatrice Dinerman; *Southern California Metropolis*; figure 6, p 161.  
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was Dr. John Randolph Haynes, an avowed socialist. Dr. Haynes's ideas were influential in the development of Los Angeles government during the Progressive era. He led the successful battle for public control of local utilities, embodied in the Department of Water and Power (*Sitton 1999*).

While the 1925 charter was a milestone in local government in Los Angeles, it could not prevent the abuses that occurred during the regime of Mayor Frank Shaw (1933–38). The Shaw era was marked by charges of corruption at City Hall. The charter did provide the ultimate solution, which was Shaw's recall by the voters in 1938.

The Shaw regime stands as the great moral lesson of Los Angeles reform. Shaw operated under the 1925 charter before it had been amended to provide civil service protection to general managers of departments. In 1937, a charter amendment granted civil service status to most department heads (*Crawford 1955:86*).

The Shaw regime reinforced the fear that with too much power, elected officials might become corrupt. The attempt to prevent corruption by blanket civil service coverage of department heads, however, was seen by later reformers as an obstacle to democratic accountability of top city officials.

Even with its many valuable features, the charter became the subject of debate from its early years. The first of a series of charter commissions issued a report in 1934 criticizing the charter for its ambiguity and lack of accountability. Other citizen commissions complained that the mayor's authority was too constrained by the powerful city council (*Appointed Commission 1997*).

Mayor Fletcher Bowron, elected in 1938 as a reformer to replace Shaw (*Sitton 2005*), made an effort to strengthen the office of the mayor and to exercise executive authority over departments. Complaining that department heads bypassed the mayor to work with the city council, Bowron sought in 1945 to create a city administrative officer (CAO). The council refused to support his proposal. In the same year, he instructed department heads to report to the council only through the mayor.

Bowron finally succeeded in getting a measure placed on the 1951 ballot to create a CAO to bring executive direction to the budget. The CAO plan won a narrow victory, with less than 52 percent of the vote. Bowron appointed Sam Leask, Jr. as the first CAO (*Rigby 1974*). While the new CAO reported both to the mayor and the council, the office for the first time made it possible for the mayor to set priorities for departments.

When Bowron was defeated in 1953 by Norris Poulson, Leask continued as CAO. Leask soon joined with the new mayor to try to rein in the powerful chief of police, William Parker. Selected as chief in 1950, Parker instituted a hierarchical command operation. He instilled pride and discipline into the LAPD, while tapping the latest scientific technology. He also intended to keep elected officials from “interfering” with the department.

The charter assisted Parker’s search for autonomy, since it guaranteed him civil service protection. His ability to develop political power through popularity, intelligence gathering, and what some viewed as intimidation made him nearly untouchable at City Hall. As one observer noted, “Parker wanted a department that answered to no one but its chief. He achieved this goal and in the process became a chief who answered to no one” (*Cannon 1997*). It would be left to later reformers to find a way to increase accountability without allowing corruption to flourish.

## **Changing the Charter**

By the 1950s, the charter was being called hopelessly outdated, filled with detail and confusion (*Bollens 1963*). In 1966, Mayor Sam Yorty (1961–1973) appointed a Charter Reform Commission under the leadership of Henry Reining, a dean at the University of Southern California. The Reining Commission worked for two years and produced a draft of a new city charter.

The Reining Commission’s proposals were far-reaching and controversial. They gave up on the existing charter and drafted a new one. The proposed charter granted much greater authority to the mayor than the existing charter, instituted a system of elected neighborhood councils with advisory powers, and largely eliminated the management role of citizen commissions. Under the Reining Commission’s charter, the city administrative officer (CAO) would report only to the mayor, not to both the mayor and the council.

While Yorty was pleased with the commission’s recommendations, the city council was not. The council rewrote the Reining draft charter. The CAO’s dual reporting role was restored and neighborhood councils were deleted. In many ways, the council’s revised charter did improve and simplify the charter, removing much unnecessary detail (*Herbert 1971*).

While the council's charter won widespread elite support, Yorty was tepid at best and rumored to be opposed (*Herbert 1971*).

The council draft added a provision making it easier for the city government to obtain revenue from the semi-autonomous Department of Water and Power (DWP). The DWP mobilized its forces against the new charter. Voters defeated the new charter twice, first in 1970 and then again in a revised version without the DWP provision in 1971 (*Erie and Ingram 1998*). Thus, the main attempt to comprehensively revise the 1925 charter ended unsuccessfully.

With the defeat of comprehensive charter reform, Los Angeles voters adopted a series of piecemeal amendments over the next 30 years. These amendments followed a pattern of increasing the authority of elected officials over previously unaccountable bureaucracies and steadily reducing the power of citizen commissions over city departments. As a whole, they had a considerable impact in weakening the citizen commission system. They also decreased the autonomy of proprietary departments. Meanwhile, the slim 1925 charter continued to expand, becoming an even more bulky and confusing document.

In the 1970s and 1980s, Mayor Tom Bradley took on the issue of civil service reform. He proposed to create an executive service in which the top department executives would be placed outside civil service. The council put the proposal on the ballot for the 1980 election but the measure failed. The executive service plan was placed on the ballot again in 1984 and this time only narrowly lost. Reform of the top managerial positions was not to pass until 1995, when the measure was proposed by Mayor Richard Riordan.

In 1989, a citizens' commission chaired by Geoffrey Cowan developed a set of recommendations for an ethics commission. The Cowan Commission's proposed charter changes were approved by the voters in 1990 (*see Chapter Eleven*).

In 1991, the city council placed a charter amendment on the ballot to allow the council to overturn and redo decisions by city commissions. Once in the charter, it became known by its ballot designation: Proposition 5 (as in, "The council Prop. 5'd that decision."). Proposition 5 became a vehicle to assert council control over commissions often seen as dominated by the mayor.

Another major charter reform took place in the early 1990s, one that increased civilian oversight of the LAPD. On March 4, 1991, a videotape

was seen worldwide, showing the police beating an African-American motorist, Rodney King. After the broadcast of the King videotape, then-Police Chief Daryl Gates asked some associates to form a commission to examine police practices. Bradley selected Warren Christopher, one of the city's leading private citizens, to head a separate commission. Christopher effected a merger between the two commissions and the historic Christopher Commission was underway. After numerous hearings and extensive research, the commission issued an array of recommendations for charter and policy changes. The city council placed most of the commission's recommendations on the 1992 ballot as Proposition F.

Proposition F made crucial changes in the charter, including removing the civil service protection for the police chief and strengthening the civilian leadership of the Police Commission. Prop. F passed in June 1992. By removing the civil service protection of the most visible department head, the chief of police, Proposition F laid the groundwork for the larger civil service reform in 1995 that placed the hiring and firing of all department heads in the hands of the mayor, city commissions and the city council.

Even with these changes, observers of Los Angeles government were still concerned about the fragmented power of elected officials and the lack of institutions to link the public to the government. The unfinished work of Los Angeles has been to rationalize and streamline government lines of authority and forge institutional links between the public and the government.

There was certainly a body of ideas about how to reform Los Angeles government. Although there was disagreement on the details, the broad outlines were: an enhanced role for the mayor in managing the government, greater control by elected officials over departments and citizen commissions, and provisions for democratic participation.

The dream of a revamped city charter with new structures of authority and new lines of participation remained adrift, awaiting a political storm to carry it ashore. It was not until the 1990s, with the rising interest in secession in various parts of the city and with a reform-oriented mayor, that the winds blew so strongly that reform could at last succeed.

## A New Charter for Los Angeles

*“We the people of the City of Los Angeles, in order to establish a responsive, effective and accountable government through which all voices in our diverse society can be heard; to provide fair representation and distribution of government resources and a safe, harmonious environment based on principles of liberty and equality, do enact this Charter.”*

— Preamble, Los Angeles City Charter, adopted by the voters, June 8, 1999

On June 8, 1999, the voters of Los Angeles adopted a new city charter, the first comprehensive revision of the city’s governing document in 75 years. The new charter made important changes in the city’s governance and opened the doors of City Hall to greater citizen participation. This book incorporates the changes made in the new charter.

The dream of making Los Angeles government more efficient, accountable and responsive became a reality under the threat of the breakup of the city by a strong secession movement in several parts of the city, but particularly in the San Fernando Valley.

In the mid-1990s, a movement to secede from the city of Los Angeles by residents of the San Fernando Valley gained considerable support. Almost from the time the Valley joined the city in 1915, there had been attempts to secede. These earlier secession movements failed either because of legal obstacles or internal divisions among secessionists. In the 1990s, there were fewer legal obstacles because of changes in state law, and there was greater unity among the secessionists. In 1997, a bipartisan alliance of state legislators passed a bill to eliminate the Los Angeles City Council’s veto of secession measures.

The threat of secession meant that city leaders had to consider whether better governance for Los Angeles might help keep the city together. However, Mayor Richard Riordan and the city council were at odds, and they each created their own charter reform commission. Riordan’s commission was elected, and the council’s commission was appointed. For two years, from 1997 to 1999, the two commissions competed with each other, but they eventually came together to create a unified charter (*Sonenshein 2004*).

When this unified charter was placed on the ballot in June 1999, it gathered widespread support from public officials and civic organizations, including the League of Women Voters of Los Angeles, and it won

60 percent of the vote. With a startup date of July 1, 2000 (except for the provisions on neighborhood councils, which went into effect immediately), the charter promised new governance for Los Angeles.

The new charter made significant changes to the existing charter. The charter was completely reorganized. For example, Volume One was reserved for governance questions, such as the powers of the mayor and council. Complex provisions regarding city employment and pensions were placed in a second volume. The charter was renumbered so that future changes could be incorporated in the appropriate sections without risking confusion. Modern wording was used, where appropriate; for example, “he” became “he or she” or was gender-neutral.

The new charter enhanced the management authority of the mayor and emphasized the council’s oversight and legislative roles. The 1991 charter provision (Proposition 5) that allowed the city council to overturn and remake decisions of appointed city commissions was reduced in scope. In the new charter, the city council can block commission decisions but cannot substitute its own decisions for those of a commission. The elected controller was given authority to conduct performance audits of city departments, a power that significantly increased the scope of the office.

To enhance citizen participation, the new charter created a system of neighborhood councils. Any neighborhood that meets the criteria is entitled to create a neighborhood council. Each neighborhood council is to receive early warning of upcoming city decisions and is to have the opportunity to be heard. In addition, the new charter decentralized the planning process by creating area planning commissions to handle, among other planning and zoning matters, appeals on zoning questions.

The voters did not approve one major change the charter commissions favored. Many people had long felt that Los Angeles City Council districts, which encompass a quarter of a million people each, are too big. While the commissions could not agree on how many members the city council should have, both commissions thought it should have more than 15 members. Two measures to enlarge the council were placed on the ballot alongside the proposed new charter: one to increase the council to 21 members and the other to increase it to 25 members. However, both ballot measures to increase the city council’s size lost by large margins.



[ 2 ]

elected officials

Los Angeles city government is based on the mayor-council structure that is typical of large American cities. In the mayor-council system, the mayor is elected by the people and is held responsible for the management of the city government. In the council-manager system, more common in small- and medium-sized cities, the city council holds the governing authority and selects a professional city manager to direct the operations of government. The city of Los Angeles has augmented its mayor-council system of governance with a city administrative officer (CAO) who provides professional support to elected officials.

The elected officials of Los Angeles serve full time and cannot accept other employment while they hold office. Compensation for elected officials was set in a 1990 ballot measure approved by the voters. The pay of council members was pegged to the salaries of municipal court judges, which in turn are set by the state legislature. The state later abolished municipal courts and merged their functions with the superior courts. The salaries of superior court judges are now the standard for council salaries.

Council salaries are the baseline for the salaries of elected officials. The controller receives 10 percent more, the city attorney 20 percent more, and the mayor 30 percent more than a council member. As of July 1, 2006, salaries were \$149,160 for each council member, \$164,076 for the controller, \$178,992 for the city attorney, and \$193,908 for the mayor.

## Mayor

### *Charter Sections 230–234*

The mayor of Los Angeles is one of the principal political figures in California and in the western United States. Elected to a four-year term, the mayor is limited to two terms.

During the Spanish era, the chief executive officer of the city was the *alcalde*, who also presided over the *ayuntamiento* (council) and served as judge and mayor. The Act of Incorporation in 1850 established the office of the mayor and the Common Council. In 1869, the mayor was made a member of all council committees and, in 1878, was given the duties of city judge.

The mayor's power was somewhat curtailed by the Freeholder Charter of 1889. The mayor still served on the Board of Health, the Police Commission, the Fire Commission and the Park Commission, and the appointments of the other members of the Board of Health remained in the mayor's hands. But the remaining members of the boards on which the mayor served were named by the council alone.

In 1903, a charter amendment gave the mayor the power to appoint all city commissioners. In 1911, the mayor was empowered to name the chief engineer of the Fire Department, the police chief and other officials. In 1913, the voters gave some power back to the council by allowing it to instruct appointed officials by ordinance and to remove them from office if they failed to obey the council's instructions.

The 1925 charter emphasized the separation of powers between the mayor and the council. The mayor's main sources of influence were the power of appointment and the preparation of the annual budget. Both appointments and removals, including those of commissioners, had to be approved by a majority of the council. The mayor's administrative control over departments was weakened by the provision that general managers were to be appointed by the commissions.

An Executive Department to assist the mayor was established by ordinance in 1935. The same ordinance gave the mayor the power to appoint first and second deputy mayors and other staff members. In 1965, a charter amendment returned to the mayor the power to appoint the general managers of six departments (in addition to the director of planning, a mayoral appointment since 1941).

For many decades, Los Angeles mayors struggled to exercise leadership alongside a powerful city council. During the debate over charter reform between 1997 and 1999, there was considerable interest in enhancing the authority of the mayor. As a result, a number of important charter changes were made to augment mayoral power. These included:

- Giving the mayor a veto over litigation settlements (lawsuits involving the city), previously controlled by the city council alone
- Allowing the mayor to remove most commissioners without council approval, whereas previously the mayor had to receive majority approval from the council
- Making it easier for the mayor to remove general managers of city departments
- Creating an Office of Finance
- Making it harder for the council to block mayoral proposals for reorganization of departments
- Giving the mayor the power to approve certain transfers of funds
- Authorizing the mayor to direct emergency operations
- Authorizing the mayor to represent the city in intergovernmental relations

In the current charter, the mayor is described as having “management authority” over the city government as well as being the chief executive officer of the city. The mayor’s powers and duties include appointing and removing staff; appointing heads of departments and members of commissions; publicly addressing the council on the state of the city; preparing and submitting the annual budget; coordinating emergency operations and intergovernmental relations; and issuing binding executive directives. The charter also creates an executive budget division to assist the mayor and authorizes the mayor to monitor departmental budgets.

The mayor’s administration has significant resources to bring to the task of executive leadership of the city. The mayor has a staff of employees who are exempt from civil service, meaning they can be removed at will. These staffers include deputy mayors, assistants, public relations staff, and others. While the city budget controls the overall budget of the mayor’s office, mayors are free to organize the office in a manner of their own choosing.

In addition to selecting and removing mayoral staff, the mayor has the power to appoint most department heads and city commissioners. Department heads (usually called general managers) are exempt from civil service and must be responsive to the direction of the mayor. Most department heads can be removed by the mayor but can appeal their removal to the city council, which can by a two-thirds vote override the removal.

Most commissioners serve at the pleasure of the mayor and may be removed unilaterally by the mayor. At any given time, there are several hundred commissioners serving five-year terms based on mayoral appointment and council confirmation.

Los Angeles mayors have frequently complained that the charter provides them with insufficient formal authority. But the mayor of Los Angeles does have considerable power. The mayor makes key appointments, presents the budget and can veto legislation. The mayor can develop political strength through coalitions with voters, interest groups, and other officials. However, the Los Angeles mayor does not have the even greater formal authority of mayors in some traditional big cities such as New York City and Chicago. In New York City, the mayor dominates a weak city council, has unilateral authority to appoint and fire key city officials, and now has considerable control over the schools. In Chicago, the mayor is bolstered by a strong party organization and has broad formal authority over the city government and the schools.

## Mayors of Los Angeles

*1961–Present*



Sam Yorty  
1961–1973



Tom Bradley  
1973–1993



Richard Riordan  
1993–2001



James Hahn  
2001–2005



Antonio Villaraigosa  
2005–

## Mayors of Los Angeles

1850–Present

<i>Name</i>	<i>Term of Office</i>	<i>Number of Terms</i>
Alpheus P. Hodges	July 1, 1850 – May 7, 1851	1
Benjamin D. Wilson	May 7, 1851 – May 4, 1852	1
John G. Nichols	May 4, 1852 – May 3, 1853	1
Antonio F. Coronel	May 3, 1853 – May 4, 1854	1
Stephen C. Foster	May 4, 1854 – Jan. 13, 1855	1
None	Jan. 13, 1855 – Jan. 25, 1855	
Stephen C. Foster	Jan. 25, 1855 – May 9, 1855	Partial
Dr. Thomas Foster	May 9, 1855 – May 7, 1856	1
Stephen C. Foster	May 7, 1856 – Sept. 22, 1856	Partial
Manuel Requena <i>Council President, Acting Mayor</i>	Sept. 22, 1856 – Oct. 4, 1856	
John G. Nichols	Oct. 4, 1856 – May 9, 1859	3
Damien Marchessault	May 9, 1859 – May 9, 1860	1
Henry Mellus	May 9, 1860 – Dec. 26, 1860	
William Woodworth <i>Council President, Acting Mayor</i>	Dec. 27, 1860 – Jan. 7, 1861	
Damien Marchessault	Jan. 7, 1861 – May 6, 1865	4
Jose Marcarel	May 5, 1865 – May 10, 1866	1
Christobal Aguilar	May 10, 1866 – Dec. 7, 1868	2
Joel Turner	Dec. 9, 1868 – Dec. 9, 1870	2
Christobal Aguilar	Dec. 9, 1870 – Dec. 5, 1872	2
J. R. Toberman	Dec. 5, 1872 – Dec. 18, 1874	2
Prudent Beaudry	Dec. 18, 1874 – Dec. 8, 1876	2
Frederick A. MacDougal	Dec. 8, 1876 – Nov. 16, 1878	2
Bernard Cohn	Nov. 21, 1878 – Dec. 5, 1878	Partial
J. R. Toberman	Dec. 5, 1878 – Dec. 9, 1882	4
Cameron E. Thom	Dec. 9, 1882 – Dec. 9, 1884	2
Edward F. Spence	Dec. 9, 1884 – Dec. 14, 1886	2
W. H. Workman	Dec. 14, 1886 – Dec. 10, 1888	2
John Bryson	Dec. 10, 1888 – Feb. 25, 1889	1

<i>Name</i>	<i>Term of Office</i>	<i>Number of Terms</i>
Henry T. Hazard	Feb. 25, 1889 – Dec. 5, 1892	2
William H. Bonsall <i>Council President, Acting Mayor</i>	Dec. 5, 1892 – Dec. 12, 1892	
Thomas E. Rowan	Dec. 12, 1892 – Dec. 12, 1894	1
Frank Rader	Dec. 12, 1894 – Dec. 16, 1896	1
Meredith P. Snyder	Dec. 16, 1896 – Dec. 15, 1898	1
Fred Eaton	Dec. 15, 1898 – Dec. 12, 1900	1
Meredith P. Snyder	Dec. 12, 1900 – Dec. 8, 1904	2
Owen McAleer	Dec. 8, 1904 – Dec. 13, 1906	1
Arthur C. Harper	Dec. 13, 1906 – Mar. 11, 1909	1
William D. Stephens	Mar. 15, 1909 – Mar. 26, 1909	
George Alexander	Mar. 26, 1909 – July 1913	2
Henry Rose	July 1913 – July 1915	1
Charles E. Sebastian	July 1915 – Sept. 2, 1916	1
Frederick T. Woodman	Sept. 5, 1916 – July 1919	2
Meredith P. Snyder	July 1919 – July 1921	1
George E. Cryer	July 1921 – July 1929	3
John C. Porter	July 1929 – July 1933	1
Frank L. Shaw	July 1933 – Sept. 26, 1938	2
Fletcher Bowron	Sept. 26, 1938 – June 30, 1953	4
Norris Poulson	July 1, 1953 – June 30, 1961	2
Samuel William Yorty	July 1, 1961 – June 30, 1973	3
Tom Bradley	July 1, 1973 – June 30, 1993	5
Richard Riordan	July 1, 1993 – June 30, 2001	2
James Hahn	July 1, 2001 – June 30, 2005	1
Antonio Villaraigosa	July 1, 2005 –	

*Source: Records Management Division, Office of the City Clerk*

## **City Council**

*Charter Sections 240–254*

The council consists of 15 members, elected by individual districts that must be close to equal in population. Elected to four-year terms, council members have been limited to two terms since 1993.

The first council, established by the Act of Incorporation passed by the California Legislature in 1850, consisted of seven members. In 1878, the state Legislature passed a bill, which Governor William Irwin signed, reorganizing the government of Los Angeles and giving the council 15 members with staggered terms.

The city returned to a smaller council in its first home-rule charter in 1889. Nine members were elected from individual wards for two-year terms. In 1909, a charter amendment abolished the ward system and the nine members were elected at large.

The 1924 charter ballot measure provided for 11 council members elected at large. An alternative measure appeared on the same ballot proposing that the city be divided into 15 council districts with one member elected from each district. The proposed charter received 126,058 affirmative and 19,287 negative votes. The measure providing 15 districts received 88,275 affirmative and 53,441 negative votes. It took the California Supreme Court to settle the conflict between the two measures in favor of district elections, giving the city its present system of 15 members elected by district.

The 1925 charter gave members of the council concurrent two-year terms. A charter amendment in 1953 changed the term to four years, with members from the eight odd-numbered districts and members from the seven even-numbered districts elected in alternate municipal election years. This is the form of today's Los Angeles City Council.

The council holds the legislative authority of the city. Before 2000, the council was designated as the “governing body” of the city. The 2000 charter reform removed that label, and the charter now does not state whether the mayor or the council is the governing body. While this action was largely symbolic, it did indicate a subtle shift in authority away from the council.

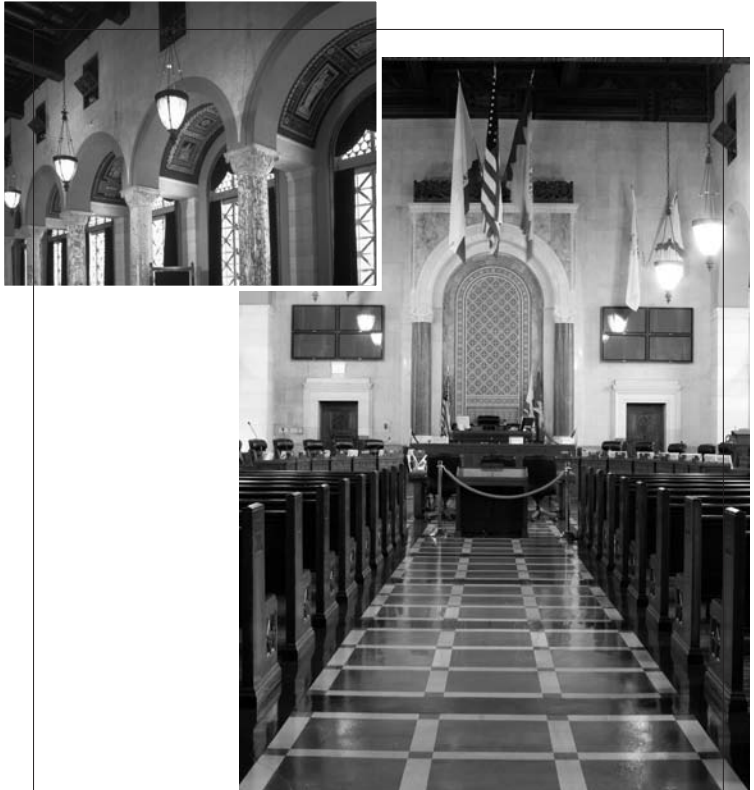
The charter requires that the council meet at least three days a week. While most meetings are held in City Hall, the charter explicitly allows meetings to be held “elsewhere in the City.”



The council selects its leaders: the council president and the president pro tempore. Normally, this election occurs right after the seating of the newly elected council members. However, the council majority can change its leadership at any time. When the mayor is incapacitated or the office is vacant, the council president becomes acting mayor. Should the council president become incapacitated, the president pro tempore takes his or her place.

The city council draws its own district lines every 10 years, or more frequently if court decisions require the city to do so. After the completion of the United States census, the council creates districts that, according to federal court decisions, must be nearly equal in population. These district lines are embodied in an ordinance that requires the mayor's signature or passage by a two-thirds vote over the mayor's veto.

### City Council Chambers



## “Let’s Prop. 5 it” and... Section 245

Los Angeles government has always granted an unusual amount of authority to citizen commissions to supervise city departments. Mayors appoint city commissioners with the consent of the city council. In 1991, Los Angeles voters passed a ballot measure that greatly enhanced the power of the city council over city commissions. Prop. 5 allowed the city council to override decisions by city commissions and to make decisions in place of the commission.

Near the end of Mayor Tom Bradley’s five-term mayoralty, tensions arose between the council members and some city commissions. Council members drafted a ballot measure to allow the council to take up commission decisions and to temporarily allow the council to act as the commission for those decisions. The council sent the ballot measure ordinance to Bradley, who strongly opposed it, but inadvertently signed it. The courts ruled that even though Bradley did not intend to sign it, his signature was valid. Prop. 5 was placed on the 1991 ballot and passed handily.

While Prop. 5 was not often utilized by the council, it remained a potent weapon in the council’s already substantial arsenal. During the 1997–99 charter reform process, there was considerable debate about Prop. 5. While some wanted to keep it, others wanted to eliminate it. The charter commissions compromised. The council retained the ability to take up commission decisions, by a two-thirds vote. But now, by a two-thirds vote, the council can only veto and remand the decision back to the commission instead of making the decision itself. In order to prevent a ping-pong effect on land use decisions bouncing back and forth between the council and the commission, the council retained its full authority on decisions of the City Planning Commission. The revised Prop. 5 can be found in the new city charter in Section 245.

Important work of the city council is done in committees. The council may establish whatever committees it wishes, and the council president has the authority to assign members to committees.

Under the former charter, each member of the council was assured of being chair of one committee. Consistent with the philosophy that the council should have more flexibility, the 2000 charter requires only that every council member serve on at least one committee. The council committee system changes as different public issues arise. Some committees tend to be durable, such as Public Safety and Budget. Others are created to respond to particular situations. In 2002, for example, the council established the Ad Hoc Committee on the L.A. River to lead the effort to revitalize the river and its tributaries.

The council retains considerable flexibility to design its own staff structure. Los Angeles City Council offices have staff to provide constituent services and legislative support. However, the council also relies heavily on the advice of the chief legislative analyst (CLA). The office of the chief legislative analyst, described more fully in the next chapter, was created to provide an independent source of research accountable only to the city council.

The Los Angeles City Council ranks as one of the most powerful councils among big cities that have mayor-council systems. While the new charter reduced some of the council's authority over the daily operations of government, it remains a potent body. Its full-time members, even under the 2000 charter, have considerable sway over city policies, particularly on matters within their own districts. The relatively small size of the council for a city of its size (compared to 51 members in New York City and 50 in Chicago) makes it a formidable and effective force in city government.

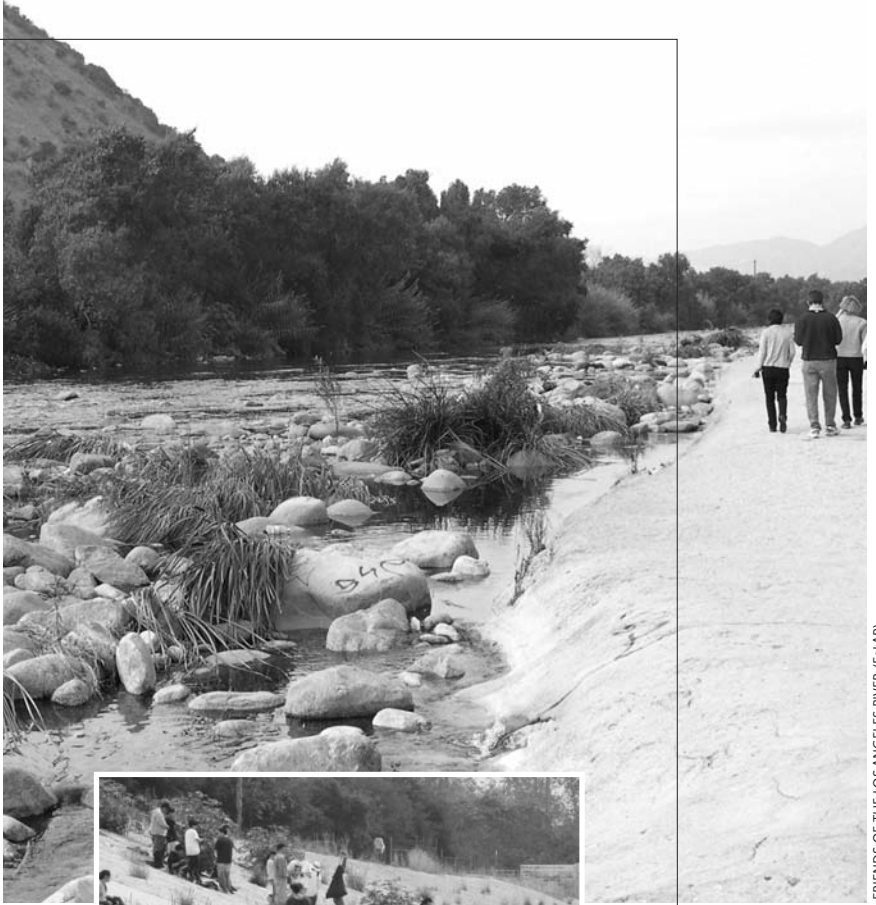
## The Los Angeles River

Many decades ago, Los Angeles had a river, a lively, often dangerous stream of water that ran through the center of the city. Until 1913, when water was imported from the Owens Valley, the river was the city's only source of water and helped the early city to prosper.

This beautiful river was hardly the reliable body of water around which most cities have centered their commerce and community. When the river overflowed its banks, the flooding was devastating. As a result of the floods, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, in a case of ecological overkill, essentially turned the river into a bed of concrete. The Los Angeles River became an irresistible location for film shooting, most memorably in the car races in the movie *Grease*.

In 1985, Lewis McAdams founded Friends of the Los Angeles River to advocate for its restoration. Mayor Tom Bradley responded to increasing community interest in reviving the river in 1989 by convening a task force to restore greenways. The county of Los Angeles established a committee in 1992 to create a master plan. In 2002, the city council established a committee led by Council Member Ed Reyes to help channel external funds and local resources into restoring the river.

In an ironic twist, local efforts to secure federal funding led to a federal appropriation to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to help revitalize the river. The first signs of new life are already appearing along the Los Angeles River. New parks and bike paths are already springing up, and the future of the river looks very bright.



FRIENDS OF THE LOS ANGELES RIVER (FOLAR)

## **Controller**

*Charter Sections 260–266*

The elected controller is the city’s paymaster and chief accountant. Originally the office was filled by the president of the city council. In 1878, an auditor’s office was created, with the auditor appointed by the city council. In 1889, the Freeholder Charter made the office elective. The 1925 city charter changed the name to controller.

City employees and public officials receive checks signed by the controller. The controller is expected to verify that the expense has been legally obligated and signed off by appropriate departmental officials before issuing a check. In reality, the charter allows the controller to delegate the “pre-audit” function to individual departments. The delegation process involves a rating system through which the controller assesses the accounting procedures of each department. If a department’s score is acceptable, it will be given the authority to process most ordinary financial transactions.

The 2000 charter enhanced the authority of the controller by adding a new power and responsibility: to conduct “performance audits” of city departments and programs. Before the charter was changed, the CAO had authority to conduct “management audits” and this function continues in the new charter. The controller’s performance audits allow an intense examination of departmental effectiveness and can have considerable impact on city government. The first controller to exercise this expanded authority was Laura Chick. The controller’s audits can be found on the city website.

The controller is one of the three main participants in the city’s financial oversight system, along with the treasurer and the CAO. There is some overlap among the offices. The controller is the city’s paymaster, and the treasurer controls the city’s cash and banking. The controller and the treasurer work together to reconcile the city’s cash on hand and obligations. The controller is a member of the treasurer’s advisory committee for city investments. While the CAO is responsible for issuing debt, the controller is responsible for the accounting function that arises when the city issues debt.

## **City Attorney**

*Charter Sections 270–275*

The city attorney is both the city government’s lawyer and a criminal prosecutor. In its early days, Los Angeles had a *procurador syndico* whose duty was to defend public rights. One of the municipal officers specified in the 1850 Act of Incorporation was the city attorney. The 1925 charter added a city prosecutor. That office was abolished in 1932, and the city attorney assumed its duties.

With more than 500 lawyers, the Los Angeles city attorney runs the second largest municipal law office in the nation (behind New York City). Employees of the city attorney’s office are protected by special civil service provisions that apply only to them. This system is set forth in Article X, Section 1050 of the charter.

The charter allows the city attorney to appoint four assistant city attorneys and four other persons who are not subject to civil service and serve at the pleasure of the city attorney. With the approval of the city council or the respective proprietary department board, the city attorney can contract for the services of outside counsel in order to obtain specialized expertise or additional resources in areas where temporary needs exist.

The city charter requires the city attorney to be a lawyer qualified to practice in the California courts for five years preceding his or her election. The city attorney shares responsibility for prosecuting crime in the city with the elected district attorney of the county of Los Angeles. The district attorney prosecutes felonies while the city attorney prosecutes misdemeanor violations occurring in the city. The city attorney handles more than 135,000 misdemeanor cases a year.

The city attorney’s Municipal Counsel Branch acts as the lawyer for departments, elected officials and city commissions. As counsel to the city, the city attorney may be asked to interpret the city charter, a document that may sometimes be open to several interpretations.

Another important duty of the city attorney is to represent the city in civil litigation. Under the old charter, the city council controlled litigation in most instances. That is, the council served as the city attorney’s client, making decisions such as whether or not to settle a lawsuit and on what terms. The 2000 charter changed the process of civil litigation. In

any particular case, the authority to speak as the client now rests with the agency whose funds or policies are primarily involved. If the council is involved in a civil action, it speaks as the client; if it is the mayor who is involved, then the mayor speaks as the client (*Charter Section 272*).

In cases other than those involving the proprietary departments and other specifically listed boards, monetary settlements are approved by the mayor up to an amount to be set by ordinance (\$50,000), then by a claims board if the case concerns a higher amount (up to \$100,000), and finally by the council for the largest settlements (over \$100,000). These dollar amounts, current in 2005, were established by ordinance (*Article 2, Section 5.173, L.A. Municipal Code*). The city council and the respective boards of certain specified departments are empowered to settle litigation that involves something other than the payment or receipt of money, subject to veto by the mayor and supermajority override by the council in the case of council-approved settlements.

The city attorney works with city departments on risk management issues to reduce legal liability for the city and also defends the city in cases involving workers' compensation.

Compliance with the Ralph M. Brown Act represents a significant part of the day-to-day work of the city attorney. For example, whenever a municipal body is in session, its members can consult the city attorney to find out if the provisions of the Ralph M. Brown Act on open meetings are being followed. City officials, departments and commissions rely on the city attorney for advice on how to provide public notice of meetings and how to run meetings with due regard for public comment. The city attorney now also advises neighborhood councils, as it does other city bodies and departments, on an as-needed basis.



[ 3 ]

appointed officials

Anyone who observes Los Angeles government on a daily basis quickly notices how much elected officials depend upon the expertise and judgment of people whom they have appointed to critical positions. The top appointed officials are exempt from civil service, thereby making the elected officials who appoint and remove them ultimately accountable for the performance of city government.

The city's appointed officials vary in their reporting relationships depending upon who appoints and removes them. A two-thirds vote of the city council is required to hire and fire the chief legislative analyst (CLA). The city administrative officer (CAO) is appointed by the mayor, with the concurrence of the council. A CAO who has been removed by the mayor can appeal to the city council, which may, by a two-thirds vote, override the removal. The city clerk and the treasurer are appointed and removed by the mayor, subject in both cases to the approval of a majority of the city council.

General managers of most city departments are appointed by the mayor, with the exception of proprietary and pension departments, whose general managers are appointed by their governing commissions with the concurrence of the mayor and council. Most general managers are subject to removal by the mayor. The removed general manager, however, can appeal the removal to the city council, which can, by a two-thirds majority, reinstate the official. In proprietary departments, the general manager is subject to removal by the department's commission with the concurrence of the mayor, but may also submit an appeal to the city council.

## **City Administrative Officer (CAO)**

*Charter Sections 290–293*

Administrative officers are important features of an increasing number of city and county governments. The office of the CAO offers a level of professional support that in a broader sense is provided by city managers in council-manager cities. While the CAO in a mayor-council city does not manage the government, as city managers do, he or she brings an invaluable level of professionalism and objective analysis to city decision making.

In 1913, Los Angeles established an Efficiency Commission to explore ways to operate in a more businesslike fashion. Theories of public administration highlighting professional management were gaining popularity among students of urban government. While council-manager cities already had city managers to play that role, mayor-council cities like Los Angeles did not.

In 1925, the charter was amended to establish a Bureau of Budget and Efficiency. For some time, mayors and good government reformers sought to extend the authority of the bureau. Mayor Fletcher Bowron succeeded in getting a CAO measure on the ballot in 1951, and it very narrowly passed (*Rigby 1974*).

The 1951 charter amendment gave to the CAO the powers of the former director of the Bureau of Budget and Efficiency, as well as many new duties. References to the former Bureau of Budget and Efficiency were eventually removed from the charter by a 1973 charter amendment.

The structure of the CAO's office in Los Angeles has been the subject of much debate among government reformers. One feature in particular—the “dual-reporting” relationship of the CAO to both mayor and council—has been both applauded and criticized. In 1969, the Reining Commission proposed that the CAO report only to the mayor, but the council deleted that provision from the draft charter.

The debate over the CAO re-emerged during the 1997–99 charter reform process. Mayor Richard Riordan proposed major changes to the CAO's office, including the end of the dual-reporting relationship. The charter reform commissions decided to keep the CAO's office largely intact. The new charter did make it somewhat easier for the mayor to remove the CAO. Where once a council majority was required to ratify a removal, now an appeal to the council by a fired CAO requires a two-thirds vote to override the mayor's decision.

The CAO is appointed by the mayor with council approval, and is exempt from civil service. The CAO must have had five years of administrative experience during the previous 10 years. The CAO's office serves as a central research staff for both the mayor and the council. The CAO produces over 4,600 reports, studies and projects a year on virtually every aspect of city business.

The CAO assists both the mayor and the council in the preparation and administration of the annual city budget. The CAO first helps the mayor prepare the budget. When the budget is presented to the council,

the CAO then helps the council analyze it. During the course of each fiscal year, the CAO is the chief financial adviser supervising the implementation of the budget to ensure that it is consistent with the requirements of the adopted budget.

The CAO is the city's chief risk management officer. The CAO coordinates the identification, evaluation, control and financing of risk. Risk financing may include self-insurance and the purchase of insurance where appropriate. The CAO conducts a variety of management reviews to evaluate departments, programs and activities, and to prepare recommendations to the mayor, city council and departments.

The CAO coordinates the compensation, benefits and employee-relations activities of city employees, including those in the three proprietary departments in accordance with state law (Myers-Milias-Brown Act, 1968) and city law (Employee Relations Ordinance, 1971). (*See employee relations section for more detailed discussion.*) The CAO represents the city's management in negotiations with employee organizations.

## **City Clerk**

*Charter Sections 280–281*

The city clerk is appointed by the mayor and confirmed by the city council. The city clerk may be removed by the mayor, but only with the concurrence of a majority of the council.

When the first government in Los Angeles was established under Spanish control in 1812, the only full-time paid city officer was the forerunner to the city clerk. The first council under American jurisdiction had a secretary who performed the same functions. The title of city clerk was first used in the charter of 1889.

Today, the city clerk serves as the clerk of the city council and maintains a record of all council proceedings; maintains the official city records and archives; keeps a record of the ownership of all real estate in the city; administers all city elections; provides special presentations for the council and the public; and provides administrative and personnel services to the mayor and council.

The clerk's Council and Public Services Division prepares legally required publication notices, including ordinances, documents, and indexes, and maintains all council files. The Calendar Section schedules

and prepares the council agenda and processes all files for council consideration. Professional staff members prepare council committee agendas, attend all committee meetings and prepare the final committee reports for full council consideration. The Creative Services Division designs most of the ornamental documents presented by the mayor, city council and other elected officials.

The Records Management Division administers a comprehensive citywide records management program and provides storage and reference service for city records and historical documents. All documents affecting the city, including ordinances, contracts, leases, deeds, and the official city seal, are in the custody of the city clerk. The clerk maintains a city archive for the preservation and management of historical records that date back to 1827.

The Election Division of the city clerk's office is responsible for the conduct of municipal and other elections in the city of Los Angeles. The city clerk also conducts elections for the boards of the Los Angeles Unified School District and the Community College District. The Election Division conducts initiative, referendum, recall, and other special elections in accordance with the city charter, the city Election Code, and state and federal laws. As of 2005, the area covered in conducting elections was 850 square miles (including the Los Angeles Unified School and Community College districts) and included approximately 1.8 million registered voters. The city is reimbursed for elections conducted on behalf of outside agencies. The majority of reimbursed costs are from the Los Angeles Community College District and the Los Angeles Unified School District.

The Land Records Division maintains records of the owners of all property within the city limits of Los Angeles. These computerized ownership records are used by city departments and the general public to notify property owners of matters that may affect their property interests. The division maintains about 2,000 maps showing property boundaries within the city. As part of the city's Construction Services Center, the division also uses these records to help process building permits.

The Administrative Services Division provides fiscal and personnel administration for the city clerk's office, the mayor and the city council. This division also coordinates the citywide Business Improvement District program, a partnership between the city and citywide business communities. The division also administers other special assessments

for the city. The new charter altered one responsibility of the city clerk, removing tax collecting authority from the clerk and transferring it to the new Office of Finance.

*Source for City Clerk:* Karen Kalfayan, Executive Officer, City Clerk, verbatim for most material.

## **Director of finance**

*Charter Sections 300–303*

The Director of Finance is a new appointive position that was created in the 2000 charter. Several powers previously held by the city clerk for the collection of fees for licenses and permits were transferred from the clerk to the Office of Finance. The director makes recommendations to the mayor and council regarding the “efficient organization of the revenue collecting functions” (*Charter Section 300*). The director of finance is appointed and removed in the same manner as general managers of city departments.

The Office of Finance can be pivotal in the city’s effort to streamline revenue collection, enhance tax simplification and balance the city’s need for revenue with the requirements of businesses and individuals.

## **City Treasurer**

*Charter Section 301*

In the original Act of Incorporation in 1850, the treasurer’s office was an elective position. In 1911, the office was made appointive, which it remains today.

The city treasurer controls city funds and their investment. Like the city clerk, the treasurer is appointed and removed by the mayor with the confirmation of the council. The treasurer may pay city funds based only on a warrant issued by the controller (“pre-audit” authority). However, payments from the city treasurer for bonds do not require the controller’s approval (*Charter Section 301A*). At the close of every business day, the treasurer must transmit to the controller a statement of the receipts and expenditures from various city accounts.

The treasurer is the investment manager for city funds, known as short-term investments. According to Charter Section 303, “the treasurer may deposit the money held in the Treasury in the institutions and upon terms provided by law.”

The city’s investment policy involves billions of dollars a year. Cash flows into city coffers through the receipt of taxes, fees and grants. That money is obligated for payment at various times throughout the fiscal year. Because of the difference in timing between cash inflow and outflow, the city has the opportunity to invest idle cash in order to contribute to the city’s revenue.

The city is highly restricted in how it can invest its funds. State law sets a standard for all municipalities. Stock investment, for instance, is prohibited. The legislative body of the city (the council) has the authority to direct the city’s investment policy, but it can delegate that authority to the treasurer. The city’s investment policy can be more, but not less, restrictive than the provisions of state law.

Los Angeles’s cautious investment policy for city funds has three priorities: safety of principal, liquidity and rate of return. Safety and liquidity always take precedence over yield.

## **Deputies to Elected Officials**

While there are few references to deputies to elected officials in the charter, these employees are among the most vital at City Hall. Each elected official has a specified number of appointments to positions that are exempt from civil service and whose holders can be hired and fired at will.

The mayor has an exempt staff that starts with deputy mayors and works down to press deputies, field representatives and others. The mayor’s office is usually organized so that management of the executive branch is distributed among various deputy mayors.

Council staff members develop, research and write ordinances (with the city attorney’s assistance), deal with constituents, and prepare press releases about their bosses’ activities. They run council field offices, which are major contact points for residents to get help from City Hall.

These deputies, while appointed, are different from appointed officials such as department heads. While department heads must be responsive to the leadership of the mayor and to the ordinances passed

by the council, they are also managers of governmental enterprises. Deputies to elected officials, by contrast, are expected to carry out the wishes of their appointing officials to the best of their ability.

## **Chief Legislative Analyst**

The chief legislative analyst (CLA) is a post that is mentioned only briefly in the 2000 city charter but is one of the most powerful positions at City Hall. In 1975, the city council placed the CLA in the Administrative Code (*Section 20.100-III*). Even though the CAO was to advise the council and the mayor on the budget, the council wanted its own budget voice. The ordinance directed that the CLA would be appointed and removed by a two-thirds vote of the council. The ordinance listed CLA roles as support for the council; preparing a ballot summary of city measures; providing technical support for council committees; and developing the city's legislative program and pursuing it in Sacramento and Washington, D.C. The CLA was also charged with analyzing the budget on behalf of the council.

The council relies on the CLA to keep its legislative process flowing, to provide research and options on legislative matters, and to help in negotiations with the mayor and other elected officials. But that only touches the surface of the CLA's role. Due to term limits, council staff come and go much more frequently than the CLA staff. The CLA acts as the institutional memory of the council, and a strong CLA can be a trusted adviser to council members.

The new charter made one important change to the CLA's role. Previously, the CLA had authority over intergovernmental relations. This function was transferred to the mayor. But this change did not touch the real source of the CLA's influence: the trust of the city council.



# [ 4 ]

boards and  
commissions

Citizen boards and commissions play a significant role in most city governments. These boards and commissions serve as voices of city residents in local government. Los Angeles goes further than most cities by granting extensive authority to selected commissions as well as defining their prominent role in the city charter.

The city council has the authority to create by ordinance any number of citizen boards and commissions. Most city commissioners in Los Angeles serve on advisory commissions that are not mentioned in the city charter. Some commissions are connected to a city department while others are free-standing.

Members of ordinance-created commissions are appointed by the mayor and confirmed by the city council unless the ordinance provides a different method of appointment. Under the new city charter, the mayor has the authority to remove any commissioner, regardless of whether the commission is created by charter or by ordinance, without council confirmation (with the exception of the Police Commission and the Ethics Commission).

Normally, commissioners are appointed for five-year terms. Tradition holds that city commissioners resign their offices upon the election of a new mayor, even though some may be reappointed by the incoming mayor.

The charter calls for commission appointments to reflect the city's diversity, including but not limited to "communities of interest, neighborhoods, ethnicity, race, gender, age and sexual orientation." (*Section 501e*). The charter requires that some commissioners must be chosen from particular geographic areas (one Airport Commissioner from the area surrounding Los Angeles International Airport and one from the area surrounding Van Nuys Airport; one Harbor resident for the Harbor Commission; and residents of the area of each Area Planning Commission). The table opposite lists all city commissions and joint commissions on which Los Angeles is represented.

## Boards and Commissions

### Charter established

Board of Airport Commissioners  
 Area Planning Commissions  
 Los Angeles City Employees'  
 Retirement System  
 Board of Civil Service  
 Commissioners  
 City Ethics Commission  
 Fire Commission  
 Board of Fire and Police Pension  
 Commissioners  
 Board of Harbor Commissioners  
 Board of Library Commissioners  
 Board of Neighborhood  
 Commissioners  
 City Planning Commission  
 Board of Police Commissioners  
 Board of Public Works  
 Commissioners  
 Board of Recreation and Parks  
 Commissioners  
 Board of Water and Power  
 Commissioners

### Ordinance established

Affordable Housing Commission  
 Board of Animal Services  
 Board of Building and Safety  
 Commissioners  
 Commission for Children, Youth and  
 Their Families  
 Citizens Unit for Participation in  
 Housing and Community  
 Development (CUP) Board\*  
 Los Angeles Memorial Coliseum  
 Board\*  
 Community Forest Advisory  
 Committee  
 Board of the Community  
 Redevelopment Agency  
 Board of Los Angeles Convention  
 and Exhibition Center Authority  
 Board of Convention Center  
 Cultural Affairs Commission

Commission on Disability  
 Disabled Access Appeals  
 Commission  
 El Pueblo de Los Angeles Historical  
 Monument Authority  
 Emergency Preparedness  
 Commission  
 Employee Relations Board  
 Environmental Affairs Commission  
 Health Facilities Authority  
 Commission  
 Housing Authority Commission  
 Human Relations Commission  
 Industrial Development Authority  
 Board of Information Technology  
 Commissioners  
 Board of Los Angeles Export  
 Terminal  
 Los Angeles Homeless Services  
 Authority  
 Martin Luther King, Jr. General  
 Hospital Authority  
 Metropolitan Transportation  
 Authority  
 Metropolitan Water District of  
 Southern California  
 Los Angeles City/County Native  
 American Indian Commission  
 Police Permit Review Panel  
 Quality and Productivity  
 Commission  
 Relocation Appeals Board  
 Rent Adjustment Commission  
 Commission on the Status of Women  
 Board of Taxicab Commissioners  
 Workforce Investment Board \*  
 Board of Zoo Commissioners

*\* not subject to council confirmation*

*Source: City of Los Angeles, Office of the  
 City Clerk, Commission Roster as of  
 October 4, 2005. Additional commissions  
 from city website.*

## **Selected Free-standing Commissions**

Some ordinance-created commissions are not linked to departments. The ordinances that create such free-standing commissions have features in common. The commissions are in effect charged with being the city's conscience on the issue, conducting research, holding hearings, organizing programs, and linking with other agencies within and outside the city government. City departments are normally directed to cooperate with free-standing commissions within the area of the commission's responsibilities. Below are some examples of free-standing commissions.

### **City Ethics Commission** *(See Chapter Ten.)*

#### **Commission for Children, Youth, and Their Families**

This commission, made up of between 11 and 15 members, advocates for the interests of children and youth within the city government. It was established by ordinance in 1995. All commission members must have demonstrated experience in the issues involving children, youth and families. The Administrative Code is very specific about these requirements. For example, members must include one policy-maker from the Los Angeles Unified School District; one must be under the age of 19 and a member of the Youth Council; and one must be a parent with a child under the age of 21.

The commission advises the mayor and council on issues of children and youth, works with the school district and other institutions, gathers data on children and youth, reviews the city's legislative program, and convenes meetings of city departments to discuss these issues. The commission has a particular interest in reviewing the city's child care policy, and supports the Youth Council, whose members (age 14–19) are appointed by the city council. The ordinance that created the commission transferred the child care coordinator from the Personnel Department to the commission.

### **Employee Relations Board** *(See Chapter Eleven)*

### **Human Relations Commission**

Before the Watts Riot of 1965, then-City Council Member Tom Bradley regularly and fruitlessly beseeched the city council and mayor to establish a Human Relations Commission. After the violence ended, the city established the commission Bradley had long sought.

In 1998, six years after the riots of 1992, the city council passed a new ordinance for the Human Relations Commission. The commission's task was to "reduce discrimination, tension and violence and to advance improved inter-group relations." In 1999, the commission undertook a process of community review, leading to its report entitled *Los Angeles at the 21st Century—An Assessment of Race and Human Relations*.

The commission's specific tasks include public education, legislation, investigation, and program initiation. The commission is expected to serve as a resource for any city agency or private organization that seeks its help. The commission staff is broken into five-person field teams ready to get involved in fighting hate crimes and tackling other community problems. They have also assisted neighborhood councils in building consensus within their own organizations.

### **Quality and Productivity Commission**

The Quality and Productivity Commission was established in 1985 by ordinance, which was amended in 1989 and 1998. The mayor appoints six of the 15 members; the other nine are chosen by the city council president. The CAO provides staff support for the commission.

The main goal of the commission is to recommend productivity measures for city departments and propose them to the council. The commission issues awards for reducing costs, and works with other city departments, neighborhoods and the private sector to improve customer service and to encourage environmental and technological innovations in city government.

### **Commission on the Status of Women**

The Commission on the Status of Women was originally established by ordinance in 1975 and made a department of the city government in 1980. The commission has the responsibility to educate, investigate and promote policies regarding full participation and fair treatment of women.

The commission has seven members, appointed by the mayor and confirmed by the city council. The task of the commission is to inform

and advise the mayor and council regarding the needs and problems of women in the city of Los Angeles. The commission is particularly active in assisting women within the city government and in exploring issues of pay equity.

In 1975, the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women created a document to ensure equality for women, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). In 2000, Los Angeles became the second city in the nation to implement the international treaty by a council resolution pledging that the city would not discriminate against women in employment practices, funding and delivery of services. The commission is the lead agency for this activity. The commission oversees the city's efforts against human trafficking and child prostitution, leads the effort against sexual harassment in the workplace, and supports the Violence Against Women program.

In cooperation with Channel 35, the commission produces a talk show, "L.A. Woman," to highlight issues facing women in the Los Angeles area. The commission issues Women of Courage awards to female members of the Los Angeles Police and Fire Departments, along with other outstanding community members.

*Source:* Paula Petrotta, Executive Director, Commission on the Status of Women

[ 5 ]

charter  
departments

Much of the work of the city government is under the authority of city departments, managed by appointed officials, and staffed almost entirely by employees covered by the civil service system.

Departments are either created in the charter or by ordinance. Charter Section 514 authorizes the city council and the mayor to transfer powers, duties or functions from one department to another, except in certain cases including elective offices, proprietary departments, pension and retirement boards, disciplinary functions of the Fire and Police Departments, the City Ethics Commission, and the Fire and Police Departments themselves.

Under the charter, it is more difficult for the mayor and council to reorganize a charter-created department than one created by ordinance. Ordinance-created departments may be reorganized by an ordinance, which requires only a simple majority of the council and the mayor's signature, or a two-thirds council vote to override a mayoral veto. Charter-created departments may be reorganized by the mayor with the approval of two-thirds of the council, or by the council itself with a two-thirds vote or a three-quarters vote to override the mayor's veto. Of course, the voters may directly reorganize charter departments through the passage of an amendment to the charter at the ballot box.

There are five types of charter departments:

- Departments managed by part-time citizen commissions (Fire, Police)
- Department managed by a full-time citizen commission (Public Works)
- Departments with non-managing, advisory commissions (Personnel, Planning, Neighborhood Empowerment)
- Independent departments managed by citizen commissions (Library, Recreation and Parks, City Employees' Retirement System, Fire and Police Pension System)
- Independent proprietary departments managed by citizen commissions (Harbor, Airport, Water and Power)

The relationship among the mayor, citizen commissions, general managers of city departments, and the city council has long concerned Los Angeles reformers. To whom should general managers report? Those who favor a stronger mayor point to the possibility that general managers



can go around the mayor to build alliances with the city council. Those who worry that a stronger mayor would weaken checks and balances want to make sure that general managers do not ignore the council's oversight.

The 2000 charter struck a new balance between the mayor's and the council's authority over general managers. The charter increased the mayor's authority by removing the requirement for a majority vote of the council to ratify the firing of a department head and substituted an appeal process that requires a two-thirds vote of the council to reinstate the general manager. In addition, reformers vested in the mayor the review and salary authority for general managers appointed by the mayor and gave the same authority to the applicable commission for general managers appointed by a commission. The new charter gave the council the authority to set the overall guidelines for compensation for general managers, within which the mayor or commission could set the actual compensation (*Charter Section 507d*).

## DEPARTMENTS MANAGED BY PART-TIME CITIZEN COMMISSIONS

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### **Fire Department**

*Charter Sections 520–522*

For many years after the founding of Los Angeles, there was a great need for a fire department. Although the adobe buildings that were prevalent in the city's early days did not create a great fire hazard, the storage of large quantities of hay did. For 20 years, fires were fought by a "Volunteer Bucket Brigade" using three-gallon leather buckets and assisted by residents of the city. In 1870, all ex-members of the San Francisco Fire Department and members of other fire departments were invited to meet at Buffum's Saloon on Main Street for the purpose of organizing the Los Angeles City Fire Department.

The first volunteer fire department, known as Engine Company No. 1, was formed in September 1871. On January 12, 1886, a paid Fire Department was created by the city council with the selection of a Board of Fire Commissioners. At the time the Fire Department was formed, the volunteer corps consisted of 380 members.

Today's Los Angeles Fire Department (LAFD) is a far cry from the department of those early days. The Los Angeles Fire Department website describes the department as "a full service life safety organization active in fire prevention, firefighting, emergency medical care, technical rescue, hazardous materials mitigation, disaster response, public education and community service." The department operates 103 fire stations around the city and employs 3,382 uniformed personnel and 333 non-sworn support personnel. In 2004 alone, the LAFD responded 714,658 times to calls for aid from city residents (*Annual Reports of the L.A. City Fire Department*). Until June 2001, firefighters were required to live in the city of Los Angeles; that is no longer the case.

The 2000 charter ensures that Fire Department officials are in charge at the scene of an emergency. Section 521 states, in part:

*The officers of the Fire Department who are in charge at the scene of any fire or emergency shall have full power and authority to direct the operation of controlling and containing the fire or emergency. The officers may prohibit approach to the fire or emergency site and may remove any person, vehicle, vessel or thing not needed in controlling and containing the fire or emergency and preserving property in the vicinity.*

Fire departments around the nation are undergoing a major transformation from firefighting to emergency services. With better building construction and fire safety regulations, fire departments now provide a wide range of emergency services. The United States Department of Labor has indicated that firefighters have assumed an increasing role in emergency medical services. Many fire departments provide ambulance service for victims. (*See Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor, Occupational Outlook Handbook, 2006–07 Edition.*)

In 2003–04, the Fire Department responded to 41,027 fires; 3,975 hazardous materials incidents; 17,562 rescues; and 289,756 emergency medical events. During the same period, there were five firefighter deaths and 367 firefighter injuries. Fire Station 9, near downtown Los Angeles, is the busiest station in the nation (*Source: LAFD Factsheet*). Emergency Medical Services (EMS) continues to play a central role in the Fire Department's work, accounting for 793 incidents per day in a three-month period in 2004.

The department also investigates causes of fires. The top reason for fires in calendar year 2002 was cigarettes, which accounted for 2,358 fires. The Fire Department also provides services to the Port of Los Angeles. In 2003, the port purchased four new fireboats, including the most advanced in the world, and gave them to the Fire Department to assist in port security (*Business Wire*, 3/28/03).

## **Police Department**

*Charter Sections 570–576*

A Los Angeles Vigilance Committee was organized in 1836. The “Vigilantes,” as they were known, lasted well into the era of “official” law enforcement, which began in 1851. In that year the city marshal was appointed as the first peace officer in the awakening town. But the Common Council neglected to appoint a police force. Alone, the marshal was ineffective.

In 1853, the council authorized the 60 active and 40 reserve members of the volunteer Los Angeles Rangers. They worked hard to suppress the gamblers and carousers who worked in the “wide open” town. (The Vigilantes were also working hard, with spies and undercover agents spread throughout the population.)

The two groups retired about 1855. They were supplanted by the first uniformed force, the smart-looking, military-styled, blue-clad Los Angeles City Guards. The guards patrolled the saloons and the approximately 400 gambling halls.

In 1869, the Common Council authorized a force of six men under the marshal, who were paid a percentage of fines collected in lieu of regular salary. A year later, the department was placed under a Board of Police Commissioners. The city numbered almost 5,000 citizens, many of whom believed in a wide-open style of living. Since, as of 1876, the chief of police was also the dogcatcher and the city tax collector and received 2.5 percent of all tax monies collected, the profitability of the job tended to distract from establishing an effective policing agency.

Authority over the department seesawed for the next 50 years between the chief of police and the Police Commission. In 1925, the situation stabilized when the city charter placed the department under the control of the Police Commission.

In a city whose public officials were not particularly well known or visible to the public, the chief of police had a major role in the government, particularly after William Parker was appointed to the position in 1950. The charter bolstered the chief's position, as well as that of other department heads, because they were covered by the civil service system. Unless the chief committed a major violation, he or she would be almost impossible to dislodge.

In the 1960s and 1970s, racial conflict centered attention on the LAPD. Civilian oversight of the department was hard to attain. The videotaped beating of African-American motorist Rodney King in 1991 finally led to changes in the governance of the department. Following the outcry over the King beating, Mayor Tom Bradley appointed the Christopher Commission in 1991, which issued a scathing report about police misconduct and called for new governing mechanisms. Voters approved a set of Christopher Commission recommendations in the June 1992 elections.

The department today is governed by a five-member Police Commission, with members serving for a maximum of two five-year terms. The commissioners are appointed by the mayor and confirmed by the council. While most city commissioners may be removed unilaterally by the mayor, this is not the case for police commissioners. A police commissioner removed by the mayor has the opportunity to appeal to the city council, which by a two-thirds majority may overturn the dismissal.

Although critics have often charged that the police commissioners are subservient to the mayor and the chief, they do have considerable power. The commissioners "issue instructions" to the chief of police, except in the area of discipline, which is the chief's prerogative. They appoint and remove an executive director of the commission and an Inspector General (IG), whose job is to oversee investigations of police misconduct.

The Christopher Commission believed that the Police Commission spent too much time on detailed matters such as the issuance of police permits. In 1992, the city council therefore established by ordinance a Police Permit Review Panel. Upon delegation by the Police Commission, the panel authorizes permits for official police garages for towing and for such businesses as massage parlors, pool halls, junkyards, and security guards.

## The Terror Threat and Los Angeles

The terrorist attacks in New York City and Washington, D.C. on September 11, 2001, affected public safety planning in Los Angeles. While no attacks occurred on the West Coast, there was considerable worry that Los Angeles might be a target in the future. Assessments by city officials suggested that Los Angeles International Airport was one of the most attractive targets in the United States for terrorist attack. In 2000, police broke up the Millennium plot to attack LAX.

The new challenge posed by terrorism led to changes in the organization of the LAPD. Rather than establishing a new department along the model of the federal Department of Homeland Security, Los Angeles built its anti-terror program around existing and new resources. In 2003, the chief of police, William Bratton, created a Homeland Security Bureau within the LAPD.

In building its anti-terror organization, the department was able to draw on such existing units as the Bomb Squad and the Hazmat (Hazardous Materials) Unit. Organized crime units offered intelligence experts.

The anti-terror operation, whose name has changed several times, provides closed-door briefings to the mayor and the city council on a regular basis. In addition, LAPD officers rotate through an assignment in Washington, D.C. at the headquarters of the Department of Homeland Security. Close working relationships have developed since 2001 among the LAPD, the FBI, and the Los Angeles County Sheriff. In February 2006, Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa proposed to create permanent anti-terror and disaster response units within the Police and Fire Departments.

Should a terror emergency ever occur in Los Angeles, the various departments and offices will have to work quickly and in a coordinated manner. In the field, the supervising Fire Department and Police Department officers would make the initial determination about which department should take the lead. The initial city reaction would be directed from an underground bunker called the DOC (Department Operations Center). Civilian leaders would take charge in the nearby EOC (Emergency Operations Center).

*Source:* Interview with John Miller, head of the Homeland Security Bureau

Owing to the great sensitivity of the position of chief of police, the charter now includes a system for appointment and removal of the chief that allows greater civilian oversight. The chief no longer has civil service protection. Previously, chiefs could not be removed without cause, and civil service status meant that civilian oversight was extremely difficult to implement. The reforms limited the chief to two five-year terms, the second of which requires reappointment by the Police Commission. The mayor appoints the chief from a list of six names supplied by the commission. The mayor's choice must be confirmed by a majority vote of the council.

Removal of the chief is in the hands of the commission. The chief must apply to the commission for a second term. The commission may grant or refuse the request. The city council may intervene under Section 245, the provision of the charter that allows the council to review and overturn decisions by city commissions. The commission does not have to wait for reappointment, however, to remove the chief. The commission can remove the chief at any time, subject to the power of the mayor or the council to reverse the commission's action. The city council itself can remove the chief by a two-thirds vote. Unlike the commission and the council, the mayor cannot directly remove the chief.

In 1995, voters added the position of Inspector General (IG) to the charter. The IG, designated to oversee departmental investigations of police misconduct, reports directly to the commission, not to the chief. After questions were raised before the charter reform commissions about limits placed on the IG, provisions were added to the new charter to strengthen the office. The IG was guaranteed access to the same information about the department that the commission had and was also freed of the necessity to report to the commission through the commission's executive director.

Voters have always placed a very high priority on public safety, perhaps the highest priority of any city service. Yet, the city has struggled for decades with one of the nation's lowest ratios of officers to population. The comparison to New York City is striking. With nearly 40,000 sworn officers in New York compared to just over 9,000 in Los Angeles, the ratio of population to each officer is 205:1 in New York City and 399:1 in Los Angeles, with twice the geographic area to cover. Patrolling a vast city with a relatively small force has been an enduring challenge for the department.

## DEPARTMENT MANAGED BY FULL-TIME CITIZEN COMMISSION

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### **Department of Public Works**

*Charter Sections 580–582*

The Department of Public Works is the third largest department and also one of the oldest. The first meeting of the Board of Public Works was held on March 1, 1906.

The department is in charge of building the city's streets, bridges, sewers, storm drains, water and sewer treatment facilities, landfills, and public buildings, as well as maintaining most of those facilities. It is also in charge of the disposal of solid waste. The department has constructed such major facilities as Los Angeles International Airport, City Hall and the Hyperion and Tillman wastewater treatment plants.

The Department of Public Works maintains approximately:

- 680,000 street trees
- 230,000 street lights
- 10,000 miles of sidewalk
- 6,500 miles of streets
- 34,000 catch basins

The Department of Public Works is unique within the city government in that it is governed by a full-time, paid commission. Other city departments have either a governing commission with a general manager, an advisory commission, or no commission at all.

Because the public works commissioners serve full time, they cannot hold outside employment. This is similar to the requirement for elected officials. The commissioners are appointed and removed in the manner prescribed for most commissioners. The mayor appoints commissioners with city council approval and can remove commissioners unilaterally. The salary of members of the Board of Public Works is set by ordinance. Commissioners normally receive the same general salary increase as provided to general managers and other (non-safety) employees. The annual salary of a board member at the beginning of 2005 was \$108,179.

## What is a Pothole?

In a city filled with cars and buses, the health of the street system is crucial. Los Angeles has roughly 6,500 miles of streets and 800 miles of alleyways. Some of the streets of Los Angeles are more than 100 years old, dating to the first use of asphalt. Many are between 60 and 65 years old and have never been resurfaced.

Streets are made of a sub-base with flexible asphalt on top. If there is cracking, water gets inside the street and damages the sub-base which allows the asphalt to flex beyond its structural limits. The first symptom of trouble on a street occurs when cracking appears, nicknamed "alligator cracking" because it looks like the skin of an alligator. At some point, asphalt chunks fall out and leave a hole shaped like the bottom of a pot, with dirt coming through. That's a pothole. If a major thoroughfare has trouble, it's usually the outer wearing surface that is the trouble.

Young, healthy streets (approximately 700 miles) only need to be given a "maintenance blanket" or "overlay" and can earn another 10 to 15 years of good health. Then, there are the 1,000 miles of "failed streets." They require complete reconstruction, including a new sub-base on which a new level of asphalt and then a new driving surface can be created. Another 2,400 miles of streets, just over a third, are in acceptable shape, but are in danger of becoming failed streets if they do not receive significant resurfacing work.

Residents of Los Angeles can call 311 to report a pothole. Normally 800–1,000 such calls are logged each month. The 311 call is transferred onto a request form that is electronically transmitted to a service area for immediate action. The city pledges to fill the pothole within 24 hours—the only city to do so. Filling a pothole generally means pouring asphalt into the hole. There is no way to get at the underlying condition without a more extensive street repair.

Which streets should be repaired first? The worst ones, or the ones in danger of going bad? With budgets tight and with the state taking street repair funds to meet its own budget shortfall, the city has had to perform a sort of triage. The most expensive and difficult problem is a failed street, so the city's policy is to do everything possible to keep



streets from failing. It spends 80 percent of its street repair funds to save streets, by overlaying good streets and resurfacing troubled streets. Another 20 percent is used to reconstruct failed streets. But at this rate, the city cannot keep up with the long-term decline of its streets.

The city fell way behind in street repair after World War II, when big population increases were not matched by investment in street repair. It has been playing catch-up ever since. The city estimates that, if it could afford to repair 350 miles a year (instead of the current 200 miles per year), at a cost of \$150 million per year compared to the \$46 million it currently spends on street repair, and could maintain that level for 10 full years, then all failed streets could be reconstructed, and troubled streets could be kept from failure. At that point, it would take only half as much annual funding to maintain healthy streets forever.

*Source:* Interview with Bill Robertson,  
Director, Bureau of Street Services



In another departure from the city's general practice, the Department of Public Works is actually a set of five bureaus, rather than a single entity. The five bureaus are Engineering, Contract Administration, Sanitation, Street Lighting, and Street Services. The heads of these bureaus are appointed and removed by the mayor in the same fashion as general managers of city departments.

Since 2002, the Bureau of Engineering has provided the administrative support for the city council's award of competitive grants for the expenditure of Proposition K funds. Proposition K was passed by the voters in 1996 for the acquisition and improvement of parks, recreation and open space. Over a 30-year period, \$143.5 million will be allocated for these projects. The Engineering Bureau assists in the selection of projects to be recommended to the council for awards and also administers the grants.

The two charter reform commissions from 1997 to 1999 considered proposals to change the governance structure of the Department of Public Works. Some favored making the board a part-time entity similar to commissions in other departments, and creating a single general manager for the department. In the final charter, the board's structure was left unchanged. The new charter created a Director of Public Works (*Charter Section 582*) to serve as the department's chief administrative officer.

## Recycling Our Trash



BUREAU OF SANITATION

The city's fleet of 700 solid waste collection vehicles pick up 1.7 million tons of solid waste each year. Much of this never reaches a landfill. Each year the Bureau of Sanitation recycles 200,000 tons of glass, paper, cans, and other materials; it recycles about 2.6 million gallons of used oil; and it converts over 500,000 tons of green waste into mulch, some of which is distributed free to city residents. In a separate pilot program, 6,000 tons of food waste is composted. The bureau also disposes of 1,000 tons of household hazardous waste. Mayor Villaraigosa directed that the entire fleet be running on LNG fuel by 2010.

## Where does the garbage go?

Collection services are provided to 510,000 single-family residences and to an additional 210,000 multi-family residences. In 2005, the bureau collected a total of 1,835,392 tons of refuse. This included 976,297 tons of residential refuse, 500,714 tons of yard trimmings, 292,332 tons of recyclable materials, and 41,252 tons of bulky items. There were also 4,158 tons of horse manure.

Refuse is collected and taken to the landfill located at Sunshine Canyon for disposal. Each week, approximately 500 tons of refuse is taken to the Southeast Resource Recovery Facility in Long Beach where it is incinerated and converted into energy. Recyclable materials are taken to MRFs (material recovery facilities) where the materials are sorted by type and then sold to processors and manufacturers involved in the production of products containing recyclable material content.

Yard trimmings are taken to the Van Norman Mulching Facility, Lopez Canyon, and the Harbor Area facilities where they are converted to mulch and compost. The mulch is used for weed abatement by farms in Ventura County. The compost is used as a soil amendment by the Bureau of Sanitation and the Department of Recreation and Parks and is given away to residents of Los Angeles at various locations. In 2006, the city took steps to reduce its use of Sunshine Canyon and to explore alternative sites for some city refuse under its Solid Waste Integrated Resource Plan.

*Source:* City of Los Angeles, Bureau of Sanitation, verbatim summary of fact sheet and additional material from Tim McNamara



## Department of Public Works

<i>Office/Bureau</i>	<i>Regular Positions (note 1)</i>	<i>Budget (note 2)</i>
Offices of the Board of Public Works	151	\$19,700,242
Bureau of Contract Administration	309	23,719,985
Bureau of Engineering	946	78,790,668
Bureau of Sanitation	2,759	227,332,093
Bureau of Street Lighting	230.5	18,660,780
Bureau of Street Services	1,285	146,392,429

*note 1: regular positions from "Positions and Salaries Supplement to the 2005-06 Proposed Budget."  
Does not include as-needed or seasonal employees.*

*note 2: reflects direct budget appropriations, 2005-06 Adopted Budget; does not reflect additional related costs applied to departments.*



LA BUREAU OF SANITATION

## Where does our wastewater go?

### **Hyperion Sewage Treatment Plant:**

6,500 miles of sewer line feed about 400 million gallons of raw sewage daily to Hyperion and a couple of smaller treatment plants. The American Public Works Association (APWA) recognized Hyperion as one of the top 10 public works projects of the 20th century.

## DEPARTMENTS WITH NON-MANAGING, ADVISORY COMMISSIONS

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### **Planning**

*Charter Sections 550–566*

The planning system of Los Angeles city government involves five key players: the mayor, the City Planning Commission, Area Planning Commissions, the Planning and Land Use Management (PLUM) Committee of the city council, and the Planning Department. As neighborhood councils evolve, they are likely to play an increasing role in this process.

The director of planning is the head of the Planning Department. The director must be selected “on the basis of administrative and technical qualifications, with special reference to actual experience in and knowledge of accepted practice in the field of city planning” (*Charter Section 553a.*). This is a rather unusual requirement in the charter, which generally gives great flexibility to the mayor or to commissions in the selection of general managers of departments.

The City Planning Commission makes decisions on individual planning matters and makes recommendations regarding such broad rules as the general plan. It does not manage the department. The commission was expanded in size by the 2000 charter from five to nine members. Much of the commission’s role is to render advice on the general plan and other planning matters.

Area Planning Commissions (APCs) are an innovation created in the 2000 charter. As quasi-judicial bodies, APCs have the responsibility to hear appeals on local land use matters and may exercise other powers granted to them by ordinance. (*APCs are described in greater detail in Chapter Ten.*)

The planning process itself is defined in considerable detail in the charter. The most important task of the planning system is the creation of the general plan, which guides development throughout the city. California law requires that all cities and counties prepare a general plan that includes such elements as land use, open space, housing, seismic safety and public safety.

In 1971, the city adopted its first “specific plan” as a means of implementing the general plan. By 1984, community plans had been

adopted as city policy to cover each of the 35 community planning areas. In 1974, the state mandated that local zoning be consistent with local land use plans. In 1977, the city of Los Angeles was specifically ordered by state law to bring its zoning and land use element into conformity. In 1980, the city began a “General Plan-Zone Consistency Program” that involved massive rezoning to reduce and restructure city growth consistent with the adopted plan. Responding to a court order to speed up the consistency process, the city in 1985 imposed a moratorium that prohibited construction or development inconsistent with the plan.

Amending the general plan involves the commission, the director of planning, the mayor and the council. Public hearings must be held and the mayor and the council must have the opportunity to be heard. If both the commission and the mayor approve an amendment, the council may adopt the amendment by a majority vote. If either the commission or the mayor opposes the amendment, a two-thirds vote of the council is required to adopt it. If both the mayor and the commission oppose it, enacting it requires a three-fourths vote of the council.

The council must, by ordinance, establish rules for granting variances. Within the Planning Department, there is an Office of Zoning Administration, a quasi-judicial agency. The purpose of the zoning administrators, who are civil servants, is to recommend approval or rejection of applications for variances from zoning regulations.

Variances that have been granted may be appealed to the Area Planning Commission and from there may be appealed to either the City Planning Commission or the city council, but not both. The 2000 charter eliminated the Board of Zoning Appeals. No appeal is possible if a variance is denied by the Area Planning Commission. However, all planning decisions made by city commissions are subject to review and amendment by the city council under Charter Section 245. The 2000 charter specifically provides that the city council is not limited to vetoing planning decisions. After voting to bring a matter before it, the city council has the same authority to act on a matter as that held by the City Planning Commission or the Area Planning Commission.

In 2004, the Cultural Heritage Commission was moved from the Cultural Affairs Department to the Planning Department. Made up of five members, its main task is to identify historical or cultural sites and prevent them from being demolished.

## **Department of Neighborhood Empowerment**

*(See Chapter Ten)*

### **Personnel**

*(See Chapter Eleven)*

## **INDEPENDENT DEPARTMENTS MANAGED BY CITIZEN COMMISSIONS**

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### **Fire and Police Pensions**

*(See Chapter Eleven)*

### **Library Department**

*Charter Sections 530–535*

In 1872, interested citizens formed the Los Angeles Library Association and, within a year, opened reading rooms. In 1878, the council took over these reading rooms and created the Los Angeles Public Library. The mayor and council supervised the library until the charter of 1889 established the Board of Library Commissioners.

For 25 years, the Central Library moved from one building to another in search of larger quarters. Branches were established, the first one in Boyle Heights in 1900. A \$2.5 million bond issue was passed in 1921, which enabled the Library Department to build the Central Library at Fifth Street and Grand Avenue in downtown Los Angeles.

The Central Library opened to the public on July 6, 1926. In December 1970, it was listed in the National Registry of Historic Places. Over the years, there were numerous problems with the building. “By 1986, nearly 2.3 million books were crammed into the building, twice its intended capacity. Approximately 85 percent of the collection was housed in closed stacks, which are areas not accessible to the public...In addition, it had no fire suppression system and, since the early 1960s, had been

cited numerous times by the Fire Department for its deficiencies.”

*(Source: Los Angeles Public Library)*

In 1986, two fires devastated the library. The first fire destroyed 375,000 books and the second wiped out another 25,000. Volunteers came by the hundreds to try to save the remaining books. Mayor Tom Bradley led an effort to raise money to rebuild the library, which bore fruit in the opening of the revamped facility in 1993. The traditional card catalog was replaced by a computerized system, and the Tom Bradley wing included new rooms for various subject matters *(Source: Celebrate the “New” Central Library, 1993)*.

Charter Section 531 requires that the council appropriate to the Library Department an annual sum not less than 0.0175 percent of assessed value of all property in the city. Accordingly, the council appropriates at least seven cents per every one hundred dollars of assessed value toward the library *(LAAC, Section 158)*. Additional funds from the city general fund may be appropriated by the council. All of these funds are deposited in the Library Fund and expended under the authority of the Library Commission.



The Los Angeles library system includes the Central Library and 71 branch libraries. Pictured here are the Central Library and the interior of the new Sylmar Branch Library.



In 2001, the central library was renamed for Mayor Richard Riordan. The library today consists of the Richard Riordan Central Library, 71 branch libraries, and 6 million books. Nearly 1.5 million people have library cards. According to library statistics, 15 million people visited the library in 2004, borrowing more than 15 million items. In 2002, Los Angeles joined the nationwide movement to have whole communities read a book together. “One Book, One City L.A.” became a joint project between Mayor Hahn and the public library. The first four books chosen were *Fahrenheit 451* by Ray Bradbury (2002); *The House on Mango Street* by Sandra Cisneros (2003); *Seabiscuit* by Laura Hildebrand (2004) and *Little Scarlet* by Walter Moseley (2005).

## **City Employees’ Retirement System**

*(See Chapter Eleven)*

## **Department of Recreation and Parks**

*Charter Sections 590–597*

A Department of Parks was included in the city’s first Freeholder Charter, adopted in 1889. Placed under its jurisdiction were parks and public land that had been set aside for the perpetual use of the community in the original Spanish land grant. Parks on this land are now called the Plaza, Pershing Square and Elysian Park.

Los Angeles established the first municipal Playgrounds and Recreation Department in the United States in 1904. The city’s first playground opened within a year. A charter amendment adopted in 1947 consolidated the Department of Parks and the Department of Playgrounds and Recreation into the Department of Recreation and Parks.

Like the Library, the Department of Recreation and Parks has a dedicated stream of revenue. According to the charter, the Department of Recreation and Parks must receive a sum “not less than 0.0325 percent of assessed value of all property” (*Section 593a*). Of course, the council may and does appropriate additional sums for the department. All funds are to be deposited into a Recreation and Parks Fund, controlled, appropriated and expended by the Recreation and Parks Commission.

The charter includes a guarantee of perpetual public use of land set apart as public parkland. Section 594c states that “All lands heretofore or hereafter set apart or dedicated as a public park shall forever remain for the use of the public inviolate.”

The Department of Recreation and Parks maintains over 15,600 acres of parkland with 387 neighborhood and regional parks, seven lakes, 176 recreation centers and 372 children’s play areas, 13 golf courses, 387 tennis courts, eight dog parks, 58 swimming pools and seven skate parks.

One of the crown jewels of the park system is historic Griffith Park. The nation’s largest municipal park, Griffith Park includes the Griffith Observatory, the Los Angeles Zoo and the Greek Theater. In 1896, the eccentric Colonel Griffith J. Griffith donated over 3,000 acres of land to the city of Los Angeles. In an act of drunken insanity, he shot his wife, who miraculously survived. Upon his release from prison, he donated large sums of money to create the observatory and the theater (*Eberts 1996*). Currently, Griffith Park encompasses over 4,200 acres of land.

Compared to other large cities, Los Angeles is considered short of public parks. A 2005 study by The Trust for Public Land concluded that two-thirds of Los Angeles children 18 and under do not live in walking distance of a park, the worst among areas the Trust evaluated (*No Place to Play*). In 1930, Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr. proposed a chain of riverside greenways for flood control and recreation, but the plan was never adopted (*Hise and Deverell 2000*). Today, there is great momentum developing around parks, with such sites as the Taylor Yards and the Cornfield in the downtown area being explored as prospective parks, along with the restoration of the Los Angeles River.



Griffith Park is home to the Los Angeles Zoo, which has been located on a 113-acre site within the park since 1966. Formerly a part of the Department of Recreation and Parks, the zoo today stands as its own department. Pictured here is the new Sea Lion Cliffs exhibit, which opened at the zoo in 2005.

[ 6 ]

the proprietary  
departments

The semi-autonomous proprietary departments of Los Angeles city government are keys to the city's economic health. Provisions of the city charter governing the three proprietary departments can be found in Article VI. Each department is managed by a citizen commission. The commissions have the authority to hire the general manager, subject to the approval of the mayor and the council. The commissions can remove their general managers, but only with the approval of the mayor. The general manager may appeal removal to the city council, which by a two-thirds vote may overturn it.

## **Airports**

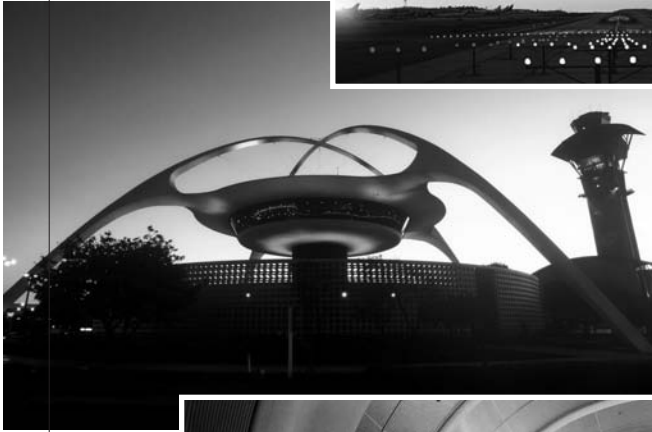
*Charter Sections 630–636*

The Department of Airports, now called Los Angeles World Airports (LAWA), owns and operates four airports, including Los Angeles International (LAX), one of the nation's leading international airports. The other airports are Van Nuys, Palmdale and Ontario.

The Los Angeles airport system began with a dirt strip known in the 1920s as Mines Field and used for Sunday "flying machine" exhibitions. In 1928, the city of Los Angeles leased 640 acres (one square mile), adopted the name Los Angeles Municipal Airport, and appointed an airport director. In 1937, the council made the first purchase for the present Los Angeles International Airport site, now 3,500 acres. The airport was officially designated Los Angeles International Airport in 1949, carrying with it the familiar aviation code of LAX.

The Department of Airports was created by ordinance in 1940, and in 1947 a charter amendment gave the Airport Department independent status. Passage of another charter amendment in 1963 gave the department the right to issue revenue bonds.

The members of the Board of Airport Commissioners are appointed by the mayor and confirmed by the city council. Commissioners can be removed unilaterally by the mayor without council approval. The 2000 charter increased the number of commissioners from five to seven and added a provision that one of the members must reside in the area surrounding LAX and the other in the area surrounding Van Nuys Airport. The purpose of these changes was to provide representation on the



LOS ANGELES DEPARTMENT OF AIRPORTS

Airport Commission for neighborhoods that are most affected by the operations of the two airports.

The commission is subject to regulations adopted by other governmental agencies. As it does with other public-use airports in the United States, the federal government has a key role in regulating Los Angeles city airports. The major federal agency whose regulations impact Los Angeles airports is the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA). This federal role includes setting the standards for airport development, assessing and approving the fitness of Los Angeles World Airports (LAWA) to operate each airport, and ensuring that the public's interest in interstate commerce is protected.

The state of California also has a regulatory role in land use near all public-use airports, while the county of Los Angeles has a comparable role in land-use decisions in airports within its boundaries.

Los Angeles owns and operates the airport land and controls all development and improvements to it. The federal government is the ultimate authority for the passenger capacity of airports. Additionally, the airlines have a vested interest in the operation of the airport and have considerable political clout in Washington. While the Airport Commission can set landing fees, for example, the airlines can exert pressure at the federal level to keep these fees down.

Prior to September 11, 2001, the airlines funded passenger security screening. The September 11 attacks created public pressure to federalize security, and now a federal agency, the Transportation Safety Administration (TSA), hires and trains the security people inside the airport. City employees are also involved in supporting airline security, with their salaries paid either by federal grants or revenues generated by airline charges that are ultimately paid by passengers departing from or arriving at LAX.

Under the current city charter, the city has its own airport police, independent of the LAPD, to patrol the airport grounds. The 2000 charter made explicit the separation of the airport (as well as the harbor) police from the LAPD. LAWA has a memorandum of understanding with the LAPD, and in an emergency (such as a bomb threat), the LAPD from a nearby substation would also respond.

There have been several proposals to amend the charter to allow the council to integrate the airport police into the LAPD. In 2005, voters turned down a ballot measure to allow the council to merge the two law enforcement agencies.

Federal law and regulations mandate that LAWA can use airport revenue only for airport-related expenses. While this provision prevents the Airport Commission from transferring funds from its budget into the city's general fund, the city may obtain reimbursement for services that directly benefit the airport, such as when the LAPD is called in to help with a security situation. Such billing is carefully monitored by the federal government, and if the city overcharges for services, it either must reimburse the airport or risk being hit with triple damages.

The state of California also plays a role in the airport system, although its role is less significant than that of the federal government. The state is involved in environmental and noise issues. The county of Los Angeles, through the Airport Land Use Commission (ALUC), generates a comprehensive land use plan (CLUP). Land use adjacent to airports, as well as any airport expansion, must be consistent with this plan. Opponents of airport expansion have tried to utilize the ALUC process to challenge expansion.

The growth of air travel in Los Angeles is a symbol of the development of Los Angeles as a world-class city, but it also exacerbates the problems inherent in combining world commerce with a livable community. The struggle over airport expansion is one of the most contentious issues in Southern California.

A major issue for the airport system in coming years will be how to accommodate increased travel loads without generating neighborhood opposition. Greater commerce at LAX may benefit the state's economy, as trucks move products from the airport onto Interstate 10. But the jet engine noise and cargo operations cause distress in the cities of Inglewood and El Segundo and the Los Angeles neighborhoods of Westchester and Playa del Rey. While the benefits are dispersed throughout the region, the costs are concentrated around the airport (*Erie 2004*).

LAX is an airport controlled by a single city, but by default, it has become a regional airport. The largest growth areas for air travel are Orange County and the Inland Empire, but sentiment against airport expansion at the site of the former El Toro Naval Air Base runs very high. There is a compelling need for regional planning for airport expansion.

## Department of Water and Power

*Charter Sections 670–682*

The history of the Department of Water and Power (DWP) is intimately tied to the development of Los Angeles as a major city. No other single factor in the history of Los Angeles has been as important as water. The site of the original pueblo was selected for its proximity to the Los Angeles River. Perpetual rights to all waters of the Los Angeles River were granted to the new pueblo by the king of Spain in 1781.

For many years water was distributed by means of a dam that diverted river water into a primitive system of *zanjas*, or open ditches. In 1868, the city granted a 30-year contract to a private firm to maintain and extend its water distribution system. The private water company's facilities were purchased by the city for \$2 million in 1902, and the first Board of Water and Power Commissioners was appointed to manage them.

The Los Angeles River, fed by the runoff from the watershed surrounding the San Fernando Valley, supplied the city with water. In the early 1900s, continued population increases coupled with a drought led the water department to identify a new source of water over 200 miles to the northeast in the Owens Valley, which receives runoff from the eastern slope of the Sierra Nevada range. Agents of the city of Los Angeles acquired water rights to much of the Owens Valley a tract at a time, setting off political struggles between the city and Owens Valley that have flared on and off ever since. After Los Angeles voters approved the issuance of bonds, construction began in 1907 on the 233-mile gravity-flow Los Angeles Owens River Aqueduct.



LADWP

**William Mulholland**, first superintendent and chief engineer of the LADWP, is considered the chief architect of the 233-mile long aqueduct system that delivered water from the Eastern Sierra mountains to Los Angeles using gravity to keep the water flowing. Mulholland's dream was realized in 1913 when water from the Eastern Sierra Nevada came gushing down the cascades into the Los Angeles basin. In addition to the original Los Angeles River water and the subsequent Eastern Sierra water, Los Angeles supplements its supply with water from the Colorado River, the State Water Project, local ground water wells, recycled water, and other sources.



The vast construction project was completed on schedule and under budget, and on November 5, 1913, the first aqueduct water arrived in Los Angeles. As he opened the spigot, Chief Engineer William Mulholland famously said, “There it is. Take it.”

With Los Angeles’s possession of a stable water supply, numerous communities adjacent to the city then voted to be annexed to Los Angeles, causing growth to continue its upward spiral. Hollywood (1910), Palms (1915), the San Fernando Valley (1915–17), Sawtelle (1922), Eagle Rock and Hyde Park (1923), Mar Vista and Venice (1925), Watts (1926), Barnes City (1927), and Tujunga (1932) all joined Los Angeles. The annexations expanded the city’s area ten-fold, from 42 square miles in 1900 to over 450 square miles in 1932 (*Crouch and Dinerman 1963*).

The enlargement of the city and the continuous influx of people caused Mulholland and DWP planners to look again for a new water source. As a result of earlier DWP surveys, Los Angeles joined with other cities in 1928 to form the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California (MWD). The MWD is one of the city’s largest water suppliers. Among other sources, the MWD draws water from the Colorado River.

In 1963, plans were initiated to import additional water from the Eastern Sierra by constructing a second aqueduct parallel to the original Los Angeles Owens River Aqueduct and terminating 137 miles northeast of Los Angeles, just south of the dry Owens Lake bed. This aqueduct was completed in 1970. In 1974, the first L.A. Aqueduct was extended 105 miles to Mono Basin.

### Where the water comes from

	<i>Los Angeles Aqueduct</i>	<i>Groundwater</i>	<i>MWD</i>
2002-03	30%	14%	56%
2003-04	33%	14%	53%
2004-05	48%	11%	41%

*Notes: Figures rounded; recycled water of about 1% is not shown.*

### Where the water goes

	<i>Amount (in acre-feet)</i>	<i>Percent of Total</i>
Residential	414,636	72%
Commercial/Government	147,793	25%
Industrial	21,319	3%

*Source: Los Angeles Department of Water and Power and DWP Quick Facts, 2005-06.*

## Electric Power Sources

	<i>Generating Units</i>	<i>Number of Units</i>	<i>Net Dependable Plant Capacity (MW)</i>
<b>LADWP-OWNED ASSETS</b>	<b>Hydro</b>		
	Aqueduct (Run of River)	12	48
	Owens Valley	10	118
	<b>TOTAL HYDRO</b>		166
	<b>Pump-Storage</b>		
	Castaic Power Plant	6	1,075*
	<b>Gas-Fired</b>		
	Harbor Generating Station	8	466
	Haynes Generating Station	7	1,565
	Scattergood Generating Station	3	801
Valley Generating Station	4	576	
<b>TOTAL GAS-FIRED</b>		3,408	
<b>TOTAL DEPARTMENT-OWNED</b>		4,649	
<b>EXTERNAL ASSETS</b>	<b>Hydro</b>		
	Hoover Power Plant	N/A	491
	<b>Coal-Fired</b>		
	Intermountain Generating Station (assuming no Excess Power Recall)	2	1202
	Navajo Generating Station	3	477
	<b>TOTAL COAL-FIRED</b>		1,679
	<b>Nuclear</b>		
	Palo Verde Generating Station	3	369
<b>TOTAL EXTERNAL GENERATION</b>		2,539	
<b>TOTAL DEPARTMENT GENERATING ASSETS</b>		7,188	

\* Castaic interim capacity rating taking into consideration an outage of one unit for modernization.

Los Angeles's municipal electric system came about as a logical outgrowth of the construction of the Los Angeles Owens River Aqueduct. In 1908, the city's first power plant was built in Owens Valley to generate power used in the construction of the aqueduct. In 1911, Los Angeles citizens were asked to vote on whether the city should develop hydroelectric sites along the aqueduct or lease the resource to private utilities. The vote was overwhelmingly in favor of municipal ownership. By 1916, the DWP was distributing electric power and a year later began generating its own power from a hydropower plant on the aqueduct near Saugus. This historic power plant, appropriately called Power Plant No. 1, continues to operate and is a popular tour destination for those interested in Los Angeles history.

A significant addition to the electric system occurred in 1922, when the city purchased the distribution facilities of Southern California Edison Company within Los Angeles. However, it was not until 1937, when the generation and distribution properties of the Los Angeles Gas and Electric Corporation were acquired, that the DWP became the city's sole electric power distributor.

For over 40 years, Los Angeles depended upon hydroelectric sources for its principal supply of electricity. As a matter of fact, as late as 1955, over 90 percent of the city's electric energy was supplied by waterpower. However, the phenomenal increase in energy demand brought about by the city's rapid growth after World War II, coupled with the shortage of economical hydroelectric sites, led the DWP to develop other sources of electricity.

Between the early 1940s and the late 1960s, the DWP built four large natural gas and oil-fueled electric power generating stations in the Los Angeles Basin in order to meet increasing demand. The oil embargo of the early 1970s, along with concerns about air quality in the Los Angeles Basin, caused the DWP to participate in out-of-state coal-fueled power stations. In 1986, the DWP began receiving energy from a large coal-fueled power station in Utah and a nuclear power generating station in Arizona. Today, coal is an important source of electric power for the city.

The Department of Water and Power is the nation's largest municipally-owned utility. During the 2001 energy crisis in California, tens of thousands of people statewide were without power and faced skyrocketing rates. Customers of the DWP and other municipally-owned utilities, however, largely escaped these problems.

The charter allows the city to sell water to other municipalities for the use of their own customers. It may also exchange water with any public agency and supply or distribute surplus water outside the city (*Section 673b,c*). A contract to supply surplus water outside the city must be approved by a majority of the voters at a regular or special election. The DWP board may arrange to supply and distribute or exchange surplus electric energy without a vote of the people. During the electric power crisis of 2001, DWP sold surplus energy to the state of California.

The charter details the governance structure of the DWP. The Board of Water and Power Commissioners has five members, appointed and removed in the manner of most city commissions. The department does not receive any funds from the city government. Its revenues derive from customer fees for water and power. It can issue its own revenue bonds. The board negotiates wages and benefits with its employees in a process that is separate from that conducted for other city employees. The city council, however, must approve wage agreements.

The board sets water and power rates subject to approval by an ordinance passed by the city council. If the department sells water or power outside the city, charges to non-city customers may not be lower than those charged to city customers (*Section 676b*).

The board also determines on an annual basis the transfer of revenue from the DWP budget to the general city budget. Normally, this amount has been approximately five percent of DWP revenue. In its proposed 2005–06 budget, the board proposed a transfer of seven percent of the previous year’s power revenue, which would equal \$27.7 million. Over a four-year period beginning in 2002–03, the DWP transferred more than a billion dollars to the General Fund.

### Transfers from the DWP to the City General Fund, 2001–02 to 2005–06

*in thousands*

	2001–02	2002–03	2003–04	2004–05	2005–06
Power Revenue	\$154,153	\$156,358	\$152,214	\$160,167	\$160,000
Water Revenue	27,247	27,523	27,649	29,815	29,800
Power Rev. Supplemental	25,000	29,000		60,000	
Total Annual	\$206,400	\$212,881	\$179,863	\$249,982	\$189,800

*Source: Figures from Department of Water and Power*

## **The Port of Los Angeles (Harbor Department)**

*Charter Sections 650–657*

The Port of Los Angeles, once known as the Harbor Department, plays a central role in the economic life of Southern California. Its roots go back to the origins of Los Angeles as a modern city.

While exploring off the coast of Alta California in 1542, Juan Rodriguez Cabrillo sighted a large bay. Observing a pall of smoke from Indian fires—the precursor of smog—he named the bay *Bahia de los Humos y Fuegos* (Bay of Smokes and Fires). By the late 18th century, the Spanish had established themselves in the area surrounding the bay, which they renamed San Pedro Bay. In 1805, the first commercial transaction took place at the harbor when a brig from Boston brought cloth, sugar and furnishings to the Franciscan monks in barter for hides and tallow.

By the 1880s, business leaders in Los Angeles recognized the importance of an ocean outlet for the city's commerce. Anticipating the development of Southern California, Collis P. Huntington had purchased most of the shoreline near Santa Monica and planned to build a major seaport there as a monopoly of the Southern Pacific Railroad. Proponents of a city-owned "free harbor," including the Chamber of Commerce, labor unions and the *Los Angeles Times*, opposed Huntington's plans and succeeded in obtaining \$3,000,000 in federal funds to develop the San Pedro location. Harbor construction began in 1889.

State law mandated that the city could not acquire the harbor without a contiguous land connection to the city. So, the city annexed a narrow strip of land, the "shoestring," that led from the central city to the harbor. In 1907, a harbor commission was created, and in 1909, the cities of Wilmington and San Pedro, the original owners of the harbor, voted to become part of the city of Los Angeles.

The city now had federal support, a land bridge and control of the territory of the harbor. The areas that the harbor covered were of inestimable importance to the state of California. Known as tidelands, these areas were protected by the state and would be granted to local governments to develop only for the benefit of the state. In 1911, the state of California issued a grant-in-trust to the city of Los Angeles for the tidelands that defined the Harbor District.

The State Lands Commission is empowered to enforce the provisions of the tidelands trust grant to Los Angeles. The power of the State Lands Commission was illustrated when residents of the harbor area sought to join the secession movement against Los Angeles in the 1990s. The State Lands Commission would not agree to transfer authority over the grant-in-trust from the city of Los Angeles to a new Harbor City. As a result, LAFCO, the state-county agency that assesses whether or not seceding areas can be self-supporting, ruled that the harbor area could not be economically viable. Consequently, harbor secession was not placed on the ballot.

The harbor steadily emerged as a vital economic force in Greater Los Angeles. Facing off against the competition of Long Beach Harbor, Los Angeles Harbor became a huge economic engine. At the nexus of export and import, the harbor became the gateway for trade between Los Angeles and the rest of the world. Some have suggested that a combined Long Beach-Los Angeles Harbor would be an even greater powerhouse, but such a plan has not come to fruition.

The Harbor Department today is governed by a five-member commission appointed by the mayor and confirmed by the city council. Unlike a number of other ports in the United States, the Los Angeles Harbor is completely self-supporting. It receives no public funds. It can issue bonds. The port receives revenue from grants, from fees for shipping services (docking, wharfing, piloting, and crane rentals), rent for use of port land and buildings, and royalties and interest. With these funds, the port can pay off its bond debt. The port now pays for various city services, mainly fire and emergency medical services (EMS), to the extent that these services directly support the port.

The scope and importance of the harbor are impressive. The Los Angeles and Long Beach ports are the first and second busiest ports in the United States as measured by container units. Together, they are the third busiest container port in the world after Hong Kong and Singapore. One-quarter of all water-borne cargo in the United States passes through the Los Angeles and Long Beach harbors.

Shipping has evolved over many decades. In earlier times, ships would bring their cargoes to harbors, where they would be unloaded by longshoremen. Then the goods would be placed on trucks and taken to railroad terminals. Most ship cargo today is moved in containers, gigantic boxes that can be stacked in an efficient way on a ship and then trans-

ferred by machine to waiting transportation. In the larger shipping companies, there is an on-dock rail system that speeds container cargo off port property.

In Los Angeles, environmental and economic concerns led to new ways of moving these containers. Instead of relying solely on trucks to receive the containers at the dock and then head up the freeways to several railway terminals, the Los Angeles and Long Beach harbors joined forces to support the construction of the Alameda Corridor project. They raised money from federal grants and from the issuance of bonds to construct a rail corridor.



LOS ANGELES HARBOR DEPARTMENT

Twenty miles south of downtown Los Angeles, the Port of Los Angeles through its 26 cargo terminals handles over 162 million metric revenue tons of cargo annually. The Port of Los Angeles is America's busiest port, and it encompasses 7,500 acres with 43 miles of waterfront. The port is also home to the World Cruise Center, a major west coast passenger cruise terminal.

Previously, each of the three major railroads had separate tracks that reached the two ports. The Alameda Corridor is now jointly used by all of the major railroads from downtown Los Angeles all the way to the harbor. The three railroads helped ensure the viability of the corridor by pledging to use it, and to pay fees for the service. The Alameda Corridor, which opened in 2002, made it possible to eliminate about 200 at-grade crossings where trains and automobiles intersected, thereby speeding both automobile and rail traffic.

The Alameda Corridor runs north and south between downtown Los Angeles and Wilmington. It parallels the 110 Freeway, also known as the Harbor Freeway. At Wilmington, it branches in two directions: one toward the Port of Los Angeles and the other toward the Port of Long Beach.

The Port of Los Angeles does not itself actually generate goods and services. It operates the port and acts as the landlord and developer of the Harbor District. The Board of Harbor Commissioners leases locations at the port to shipping companies that pay fees to berth, unload, and store cargo. The port also charges railroads to utilize the Alameda Corridor to move goods.

All revenues generated in the Harbor District must be placed in the Harbor Revenue Fund. None can be transferred to the city government to pay for fire and police protection outside the harbor. As in the case of the airport, there is a separate harbor police force enshrined in the charter.

In the wake of the attacks of September 11, 2001, the issue of port security has become more prominent. With its great economic importance locally and nationally, the Los Angeles-Long Beach Harbor complex requires substantial protection. Federal, state and local law enforcement agencies, including the U.S. Department of Homeland Security and the U.S. Coast Guard, the L.A.P.D. and the port police share responsibility for port security.





non-charter  
departments

The council by ordinance may create additional departments, offices and boards (*Charter Section 214*). Ordinance-created departments are not required to have a commission. By ordinance, the council can determine whether the department will be managed by a commission or by a general manager. With a few exceptions, commissioners of ordinance-created departments are appointed by the mayor to five-year terms, and must be registered voters of the city (*Charter Section 501d*). The ordinance may include additional requirements for commissioners. This section includes ordinance-created departments in place as of 2005.

## **Department of Aging**

In 1977, the city of Los Angeles was designated an Area Agency on Aging by the California Department of Aging, enabling the city to receive funds through the 1965 Older Americans Act and provide social services to residents of Los Angeles who are 60 years of age and older. The \$2.5 million received in federal funds was administered by the Office on Aging in the mayor's office. At that time, the state formally operated the city's nutrition program. As a result of the 1978 amendments to the Older Americans Act, the local Area Agencies on Aging were subsequently given the responsibility of administering the meals programs for seniors.

Demand for services increased, and in August 1977, the Office on Aging became a division of the then-recently formed Community Development Department. As the needs of the increasing older population became more apparent and diverse, the Aging Division became a separate Department of Aging on May 15, 1983.

The department is under the control of a general manager advised by a citizen commission. Its tasks include coordinating services and opportunities for senior citizens; helping individuals and organizations to develop services for senior citizens; administering programs from various governmental agencies, including the federal government, that are designed to serve seniors; and working with other city departments whose programs are relevant to seniors.

The department coordinates the Emergency Alert Response System (EARS), the Senior Community Service Employment Program and the meals program; works with the Department of Transportation on subsidized transit and charter bus programs; and operates 16 multipurpose

senior citizen centers. The department works closely with non-profit organizations that provide services to senior citizens. (*See Annual Reports of the Department of Aging.*)

## **Department of Animal Services**

The first public pound opened in Los Angeles as early as 1863. The 1925 charter provided for a Department of Humane Treatment to Animals. In 1947, it was renamed the Department of Animal Regulation and in 2002 became the Department of Animal Services. The department is under the control of a citizen commission. The mayor hires and removes the general manager.

Among the tasks of the department is the licensing of dogs, critical to ensuring that rabies vaccinations are widespread. The city normally licenses nearly 200,000 dogs a year, but this number is still well below the estimated dog population in the city. The department also investigates nuisances created by animals, administers pet adoptions, houses, feeds and cares for unwanted animals, and operates a mobile spay and neuter service (*Source: Blue Book, City Budget*).

For years, battles swirled over the city's policy of destroying unadopted animals living in city shelters. In 2002, the city destroyed more than 34,000 animals, leading to criticism from animal rights activists. In 2003, the city's goal became to have a "no kill" policy in place within five years; no animal that could be adopted would be euthanized.

## **Department of Building and Safety**

Until the middle of the 19th century, most of the buildings in Los Angeles were built of adobe. Wider use of lumber coincided with the adoption of a number of protective regulations that were embodied in the city's first building code. At the end of the 1800s, an ordinance was passed requiring the annual inspection of all buildings used by large numbers of people, and the office of the superintendent of buildings was created to enforce the Building Code. The present Department of Building and Safety was established in the 1925 charter.

The 1933 earthquake in Long Beach led to the first enactment of seismic regulations in the Los Angeles City Building Code. After the 1971 earthquake in the San Fernando Valley, the department took the lead in revising the seismic provisions of the Code. In 1981, the council adopted an ordinance that required the seismic upgrading of existing hazardous unreinforced masonry buildings.

The Department of Building and Safety today has the duty to enforce all ordinances and laws relating to the construction, alteration, repair, and demolition or removal of buildings or structures in the city. The department also enforces the city's zoning ordinances.

Each year, the department issues over 140,000 permits for building construction, valued at over \$3 billion; reviews and approves plans for nearly 40,000 projects; conducts over 630,000 inspections; completes and closes over 48,000 code enforcement cases; and resolves problems with over 2,800 nuisance buildings.

The department inspects businesses for compliance with building and safety laws, can order the closure of non-complying businesses and also serves over 400,000 walk-in customers a year.

Code enforcement can make the difference between a healthy and a dysfunctional neighborhood. Let a broken window stay broken and the result will be community deterioration (*Wilson and Kelling 1982*). By enforcing city codes in cooperation with the LAPD, the Department of Building and Safety is a key defender against neighborhood deterioration.

The Department of Building and Safety is the lead agency for the enforcement of state law on access for the disabled. State law requires that physically disabled persons have access to public accommodations. Any person may file an appeal of actions taken by the department to the Disabled Access Appeals Commission, made up of five members appointed by the mayor and confirmed by the city council. The mayor can unilaterally remove commissioners. Two of the members must be physically disabled persons, and two must be experienced in construction. The fifth member may be any resident of the city (*LAMC, Ch. 9, Section 91.105.5.2*).

## **Community Development Department**

Until the 1960s, Los Angeles government was relatively isolated from the daily issues that concerned low-income residents of the city. The governmental structures of the city and county of Los Angeles encouraged a separation between property services offered by the city and social services provided by the county. The county of Los Angeles controls the public hospitals, public assistance programs and other direct social services.

Until Tom Bradley was elected as mayor in 1973, Los Angeles was often reluctant to seek or accept federal funds that might involve it in the business of serving low-income populations. Mayor Sam Yorty, for example, was known for refusing federal anti-poverty funds in the 1960s because of his fear that the federal government would intrude into the political affairs of Los Angeles City Hall.

Bradley brought a new attitude to City Hall. From his first days in office, he aggressively sought federal funds to serve a wider Los Angeles community. He won federal funding for housing, economic development, and social services. Bradley's office was the only place at City Hall that could handle the large volume of federally-funded projects that began to flow through the city government.

Over time, the management obligations of these federal programs became a burden on the mayor's office. In 1977, Bradley and the city council established the Community Development Department (CDD). The CDD absorbed most of the federal programs that had been housed in the mayor's office and made the receipt and spending of federal money more routine. The CDD has retained the mission of serving low-income communities through the leveraging power of outside funding and regulation.

As the federal government shifted from categorical grants, for which the city had to compete, to block grants given to cities on the basis of a formula, the CDD became the vehicle for the city's application for the annual Community Development Block Grant (CDBG). That in turn meant that the dozens, indeed hundreds, of community organizations that hoped to win block grant money to provide social services had to apply to the CDD.

In addition to the block grants, the CDD also administered federal funds from the Administration on Aging and federal housing funds. The CDD housed the anti-poverty program. By the late 1980s, the CDD had

undergone some additional changes. As public support grew for assistance to the aging population and for the expansion of affordable housing, the Departments of Aging and Housing were spun off from CDD.

The CDD authorizes Industrial Development Bonds (IDBs) and Empowerment Zone Bonds. These are vehicles by which the city encourages the construction, expansion or relocation of manufacturing facilities. In 1984, the CDD created the Industrial Development Authority (IDA), which issues tax exempt bonds, designs enterprise zones and offers gap financing. These bonds are offered at lower-than-market interest to manufacturers. The size of tax exempt IDBs ranges from \$2 million to \$10 million. State law limits these bonds to projects that can demonstrate that one job will be created for each \$75,000 in bonds.

## **Department of Cultural Affairs**

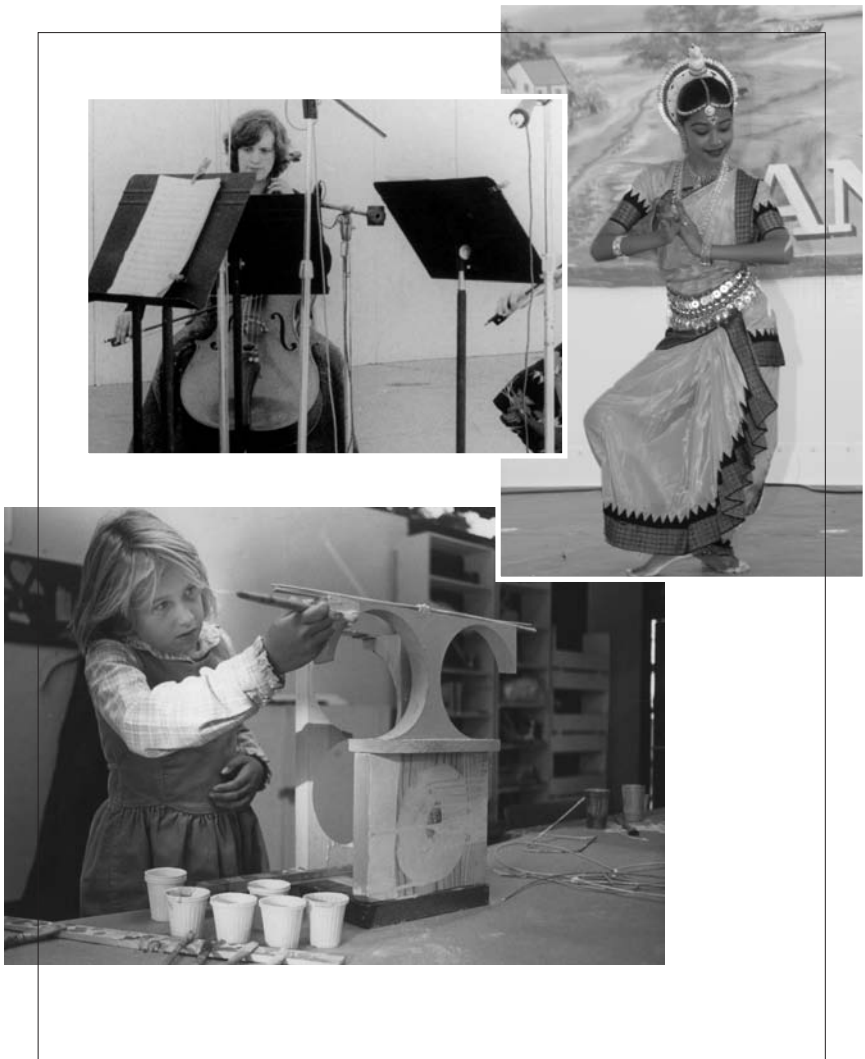
With one full-time employee, the Municipal Arts Department was created in 1925 to improve the appearance of the city's buildings and streets. In 1975, Mayor Bradley appointed an advisory committee on cultural affairs. The committee recommended a reorganization of the city's responsibilities in the arts and the creation of a new Cultural Affairs Department. On July 1, 1980, the Cultural Affairs Department was created by ordinance. This act restructured the Municipal Arts Department and added to it programs previously under the jurisdiction of the Recreation and Parks Department.

The basic program of Cultural Affairs is to award grants to artists in a wide variety of fields. The department also directs the public art program and helps to preserve and maintain the city's cultural heritage.

The department is under the control and direction of a general manager. The seven-member Cultural Affairs Commission is advisory to the department. The commission must approve any significant design changes involving public art. No work of public art may be altered or removed without the commission's permission. The Cultural Heritage Commission, formerly within the Cultural Affairs Department, was transferred to the Planning Department in 2004.

An arts fee ordinance requires developers of projects with a value greater than \$500,000 to spend one percent of the cost of the project to support public art. Developers may choose to spend the one percent to provide art on site as part of the project or to pay the fees to the city for use in public arts projects.

The department also gives grants to organizations large and small, including Los Angeles Unified School District's programs for youth and artists-in-residence.



COURTESY OF LOS ANGELES DEPARTMENT OF CULTURAL AFFAIRS

## **Department on Disability**

The Office of Disability was created in 1975, in response to the federal Rehabilitation Act of 1975. It was housed in the office of the mayor. The 1973 and 1990 federal laws on disability require local governments to provide accessibility to public accommodations, including public employment, buildings, facilities, programs, social services and transportation. In 1998, the city council created a Department on Disability, the first of its kind in the nation. It is the city's lead agency for compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), passed by Congress in 1990. The executive director is the head of the department.

The department is advised by a Commission on Disability, established in 1989 before the creation of the department itself. The commission has nine members, including both disabled and non-disabled persons.

The office of the City AIDS Coordinator is located within the department. The department is a source of assistance for the disabled, including the use of sign language interpreters to make public meetings accessible.

The department provides job training for the disabled and works with the Street Services Division of the Department of Public Works to ensure accessibility throughout the city. Specifically, the department monitors the city's compliance with the ADA for city employees and facilities.

*Sources: Annual Reports of the Department of Disability and L.A. Administrative Code, Chapter 20*

## **El Pueblo de Los Angeles Historical Monument Authority Department**

The historic core of Los Angeles can be found in a small stretch of territory around Olvera Street. Originally operated by the Department of Recreation and Parks, this area was transferred to a new department by a 1992 ordinance. The department is managed and directed by a nine-member citizen commission.



## **Emergency Preparedness Department**

In 1980, the city established an Emergency Operations Organization (EOO) under the direction of the chief of police. This interdepartmental body was designed to coordinate the city's response in case of emergency. Staffing came from several departments and was coordinated by the CAO.

The 1992 riots and the 1994 earthquake led to calls for greater coordination. The mayor and council established a division of emergency operations within the CAO's office. During the charter reform process, Mayor Richard Riordan argued that the mayor should have the formal authority to lead the city's emergency response. The charter commissions agreed and in the new charter named the mayor as coordinator of emergency operations.

The city established an Emergency Preparedness Department in 2000. In its current structure, the department provides day-to-day support for emergency operations.

## **Environmental Affairs Department**

The city established a Department of Environmental Quality in 1973, with a general manager and five-member board of commissioners. In 1989, a city ordinance established a Department of Environmental Affairs. Under the control of a general manager, the department is primarily designed to recommend citywide policies on environmental matters, and to provide information for city officials and residents about environmental issues.

## **General Services Department**

The General Services Department (GSD) was created by a 1979 ordinance that eliminated a number of departments and placed their functions under the General Services Department. These included the Department of Supplies, the communications functions of the Department of Public Utilities and Transportation, the Bureau of Public Buildings, and the Bureaus of Fleet Services and Public Right of Way and Land. There is no commission to govern or advise the department. The general manager,

appointed and removed in the same manner as most other general managers, is the head of the department.

General Services was established “to centralize into one entity the responsibility and the capability of providing general supportive services to other City departments.” General Services runs the mail and copying services, manages vacant city properties, leases city property, manages the City Hall Mall, and provides and maintains vehicles for city business. The department also functions as the purchasing agent for all non-proprietary departments and operates the salvage yard for supplies, equipment and building materials (sales of which earned more than \$2 million in 2004-05).

The GSD has expanded from a “blue collar” department into one of the more technologically advanced parts of the city government. But it still has a basic identity as the fixer-upper of City Hall.

The department is the city’s communications hub. It is responsible for telephone, mail, fax, cell phone, and other communications. The department provides testing and calibration services for materials and equipment for non-proprietary departments. The department maintains city buildings, including custodial services. The General Services Department also works with the city council to donate surplus city equipment to non-profit organizations.

The General Services Department’s 2004-05 workload included:

- More than 13 million pieces of mail processed
- 289,265 messenger stops
- Five million pieces of interoffice mail delivered
- 191 buildings cleaned in-house (more than 11 million square feet)
- 76 buildings cleaned by contract (more than 1 million square feet)
- 1,700 tons of refuse recycled at a savings of \$161 million
- 39,676 repair orders completed
- 3,350 special events coordinated
- 1,015 facilities security-patrolled
- 650 arrests
- 895 buildings in property inventory

In light of the terrorist attack on September 11, 2001, providing security for city buildings, other than those belonging to the proprietary departments or those where the LAPD is in charge, has emerged as an important role for the department.

## **Housing Department**

One of the most critical problems in Los Angeles is the chronic shortage of affordable housing. Los Angeles was originally designed as a paradise of single-family dwellings, and to a remarkable degree it has succeeded. The old image of Los Angeles must be adjusted, however, to the new reality that most Angelenos rent. According to the 2000 United States Census, 61 percent of the city's residents live in rental housing, and 39 percent live in owner-occupied units.

The city government has wrestled with housing issues for many decades. In 1988, a Blue Ribbon Committee for Affordable Housing appointed by Mayor Tom Bradley called for major reforms. As a result of the committee's work, in 1990, the city established both an Affordable Housing Commission and a new Department of Housing whose functions had previously resided in the Community Development Department.

The Housing Department is charged with developing a comprehensive citywide affordable housing policy to preserve and promote good housing. One of the department's missions is to help all city agencies keep affordable housing in mind in any activities that affect housing.

The Affordable Housing Commission was established by ordinance in 1990. The seven members of the commission must be either housing professionals or advocates for housing. One commissioner must be a member of a tenants' organization. The mayor, the Community Development Department, the Housing Authority, the Building and Safety Department, the Community Redevelopment Agency, and the City Planning Commission each appoints a liaison to the commission.

The commission acts in an advisory role to the mayor and council on housing matters, including rent control. The department may conduct hearings, perform housing needs assessments, update the housing database, develop a housing policy, and analyze departmental budgets with regard to housing.

In 1999, the city council convened a Housing Crisis Task Force. Its 2000 report (*In Short Supply*) found that “a worker earning the California minimum wage of \$5.75 would have to work more than 100 hours a week to pay the rent. The City must intervene in the market.” The task force also found that vacant land was very scarce, new construction had nearly ceased and much older housing stock was slated for demolition. The task force called on the city to establish a housing trust fund and a comprehensive strategy for affordable housing.

The Affordable Housing Trust Fund began under Mayor Richard Riordan, who committed \$5 million for fiscal year 2000-01. The fund has grown year by year, drawing from the city general fund and other governmental sources. The proceeds of the fund are to be spent within the city of Los Angeles to help provide affordable housing and to directly contribute to housing production. The funds are kept separate from other funds in the Housing Department and are spent upon recommendation of the general manager of the department subject to the approval of the mayor and council. City support for the Affordable Housing Trust Fund has continued to increase toward a goal of \$100 million.

In 1979, the city adopted a rent stabilization ordinance to protect tenants from skyrocketing rent increases and to provide landlords with a reasonable rate of return on their rental units. The Rent Adjustment Commission (RAC) was created to carry out the ordinance. It makes rules and also acts as the designated appeals board for decisions made by the general manager of the Housing Department. The RAC board is made up of seven members. None of the commissioners may be landlords or tenants. The commission does not handle individual complaints by tenants or landlords.

## **Information Technology Agency (ITA)**

In 1995, the city created a new department for information technology, replacing the Data Services Bureau, and consolidating functions from the Department of Telecommunications, the Department of Information Systems, and the Communications Services Division of the Department of General Services. The Information Technology Agency (ITA) was given authority over all telecommunications regulatory services, information processing, communications services, cable television, and cable

franchises. The ITA's mission is to stay on top of new communications technologies and make sure they are implemented throughout city government.

The ITA is under the control of a general manager. The general manager receives advice from two advisory bodies: the Board of Information Technology Commissioners (BITC) and the Municipal Access Policy Board (MAPB). The BITC has one major decision-making function: the analysis and negotiation of cable franchises.

The ITA operates the cable television station, Channel 35, which broadcasts meetings of the city council and other official events to the Los Angeles audience. It has its own studio for this purpose.

The ITA is a major technical resource for all of city government. If General Services is the worker with the toolkit, ITA is the computer specialist making sure that technology understood by a few is usable by the many. The ITA is supposed to promote the best technology and to make sure that it is standardized throughout the city government. Its charge, however, does not extend to the proprietary departments, unless those departments ask for assistance.

## **Department of Transportation**

Los Angeles has spent decades trying to create a bus and rail system that would reduce the number of private automobiles on the road. In 1979, the city established a Department of Transportation to coordinate “the City’s various ground transportation and ground transportation-related activities.”

The department’s mission includes traffic and other transportation issues. It has authority over traffic control devices (signs, signals and parking meters). Traffic officers and school crossing guards, including an elaborate system relating to requests by primary school principals for such guards, are under the department’s jurisdiction. The department is under the control and management of a general manager, advised by a seven-member Transportation Commission and a five-member Taxicab Commission.

In case of emergency, the Transportation Department is responsible for vehicular and pedestrian traffic, while the LAPD has overall operational control at the scene and is responsible for crowd control.

A Board of Taxicab Commissioners governs franchises for taxicabs. If feasible, three of the five members are to represent the tourism industry, senior or disabled citizens' advocacy groups, the Department of Airports, and/or the taxicab industry. The commission has the authority to prescribe regulations for the operation of, and rates charged by, taxicabs and is empowered to investigate complaints against the taxicab companies. Signs to this effect can be seen in each legal taxicab in Los Angeles.

## **Zoo Department**

The first Los Angeles Zoo opened in 1885. In 1956, the city's voters passed a bond measure to construct a major zoo, and in 1966, the zoo opened at its present site in Griffith Park. From 1966 to 1997, the zoo was under the control of the Department of Recreation and Parks.

On July 1, 1997, control of the zoo passed from the Department of Recreation and Parks to a Zoo Department under the control of a general manager, advised by a Board of Zoo Commissioners. One member of the board must be, *ex officio*, a member of the Greater Los Angeles Zoo Association (GLAZA), the zoo's private fundraising group.

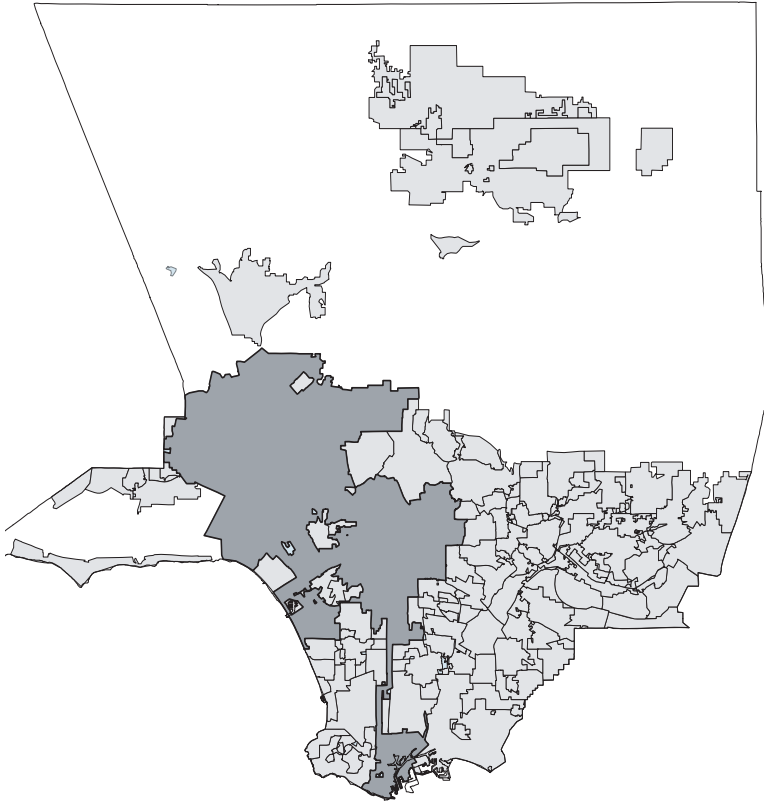
At least every five years, the department is required to present to the mayor and council marketing and business plans to indicate how the zoo can attract visitors and funds. Admission fees to the zoo are set by ordinance and can be found in the Administrative Code.

In the mid-1990s, the zoo was in jeopardy of losing its accreditation because of poor maintenance and animal care. In 1995, officials from the American Zoo Association (AZA) visited the zoo. Appalled at the conditions, the AZA gave the city one year to fix the zoo or lose its accreditation. Under new management, the zoo greatly improved its performance and met the required professional standards. The voters approved ballot measures for additional funds for the zoo in the late 1990s. (See *Annual Reports of the Zoo Department*.)



joint authorities and  
regional governments

## City of Los Angeles in the County of Los Angeles



*Created by: Mark Drayse, Department of Geography, California State University, Fullerton*

### **The City within the County**

At 3.9 million people, Los Angeles is the largest city in California and the second-largest city in the United States. But Los Angeles is just one of 88 incorporated cities and many unincorporated urban areas within the county of Los Angeles. The city occupies about 469 square miles of diverse terrain that goes from sea level to Sister Elsie Peak (5,080 feet), the highest spot in the city. Separately incorporated cities have their own governments and their own interests to pursue. The challenge of creating solutions to problems such as pollution and transportation that cross municipal boundaries is a persistent one for the Los Angeles region.



Los Angeles is a giant within its region. Consider that Los Angeles is the second largest city in the United States and by far the largest in the West. In the densely packed southern region of Los Angeles County, Los Angeles sits in the midst of dozens of other independent cities, like Gulliver surrounded by Lilliputians.

What Los Angeles does greatly affects its neighbors. If the city wishes to expand Los Angeles International Airport, cities like El Segundo, Inglewood and Torrance feel the impact. If it wishes to draw more water from the Colorado River, it must contend with San Diego and other cities—and even other states. As the region’s leading superpower, Los Angeles must exercise its strength with diplomatic skill, a standard that is not always attainable. And the numerous small and medium-sized cities can combine to frustrate the objectives of Los Angeles.

Los Angeles participates in a number of governing bodies that knit together, more or less successfully, the various cities and special districts of the region. As the problems of air quality, transportation and water supply continue to grow in complexity, Los Angeles must negotiate and bargain with other governments, smaller in size but collectively potent, over key resources and powers. While this work can be extremely frustrating, the future of Los Angeles increasingly depends on these bodies over which the city has only partial control.

Each of the joint powers or authorities described in this section has its own system for appointing members. Elaborate measures are taken to assure representation from the two biggest actors, the city and county of Los Angeles, and to provide additional representation for the 87 other cities in Los Angeles County.

## **Commission on Local Governmental Services**

The Commission on Local Governmental Services (originally known as the Los Angeles City-County Consolidation Commission) was established by the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors in 1977. The commission’s duty is to determine how to maximize efficient delivery of multi-jurisdictional governmental services within the county. It authorizes studies to identify redundancies in public service providers, to improve services and to ensure cost-effective service delivery. The commission

also makes recommendations based on the outcome of its studies and is mandated to “pursue, monitor and report on the implementation of its recommendations.”

The commission has 21 members, two of whom are appointed by each of the five county supervisors, two by the mayor of Los Angeles, three by the Los Angeles City Council president, and one each by the Independent Cities Association, the California Contract Cities Association and the Los Angeles Division of the League of California Cities. There are also three members appointed by, respectively, the county’s CAO, the sheriff, and the LAPD.

### **Los Angeles Convention and Exhibition Center Authority**

In August 1966, the city council voted to create a convention center financed by bonds to be guaranteed by the city of Los Angeles, based on a lease-back arrangement. In the same year, the council approved an agreement establishing the Los Angeles Convention and Exhibition Center Authority Commission. The authority was created under a joint powers agreement between the city and county, with the financial responsibility remaining with the city. The Los Angeles Convention and Exhibition Center Authority Commission authorized the issuance of \$28.5 million in revenue bonds and subleased the Convention Center project to the city of Los Angeles for a term of 40 years on a net lease basis. The city is obligated to use and operate the Convention Center.

The city assumed responsibility for operation and maintenance of the center in 1971. The center was under the control of the Department of Recreation and Parks until July 1, 1973, when the Municipal Auditorium Department was created. The sole function of the Municipal Auditorium Department was to operate, maintain and promote the Convention and Exhibition Center.

The operation of the Convention Center is now under the control of the Convention Center Department established by ordinance in 1973. The presence of such a center in the city is intended to stimulate local trade and commerce commensurate with the standing of Los Angeles as a major commercial center.

The department is under the control of a general manager, advised by a five-member commission. The Convention Center today holds 770,000 square feet of exhibit space. It is located in close proximity to Staples Center. One of the most exciting events at the Convention Center is the swearing-in ceremony for new American citizens.

## **filml.a., inc.**

The film industry, whether television or movies, is one of the city's most important economic engines. Other countries and other states are constantly competing to offer incentives to draw film business away from Los Angeles. The long-term concern of city leaders is that "runaway production" will begin to affect the Los Angeles economy. Yet the city continues to be a highly desirable venue for filming due to its climate, collection of film talent and inviting lifestyle. In 2004, the city council passed, and Mayor James Hahn signed, legislation to exempt creative talent with annual income of up to \$300,000 from business taxes and to reduce the business tax paid by motion picture, television and radio producers beginning on July 1, 2005.

Until 1995, the city and county each had its own office to encourage film production. When the decision was made to merge the efforts of the city and county, the operations were also moved from the two governments to a contract agency, the Entertainment Industry Development Corporation (EIDC). The \$3 million to \$4 million a year that had previously flowed into city and county coffers in film permit fees were turned over to the agency in payment for its services. The agency helps production companies navigate the process of obtaining filming permits, often working with communities in which filming takes place to assure that the filming process will not unnecessarily disrupt the neighborhoods.

The EIDC's large board of directors included numerous elected officials as well as members of the entertainment industry. By 2002, the agency was under investigation by the district attorney for making campaign contributions to members of the board, and for paying excessive salaries to executives. The executive director was indicted by a grand jury on charges of embezzlement and forgery.

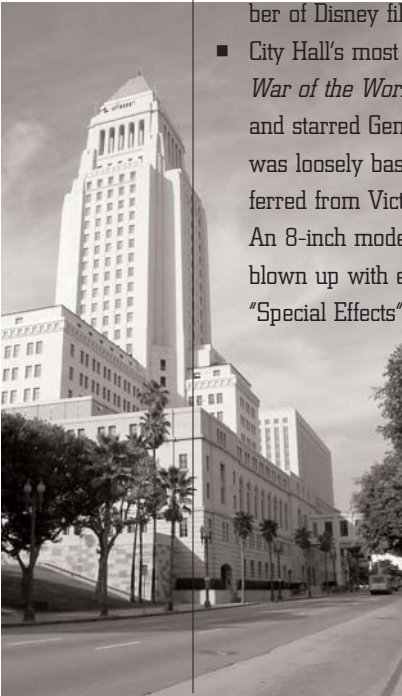
As a result of the scandal, the agency was reorganized. In December 2003, the EIDC revised its board composition and agreed to a set of

detailed accounting procedures to prevent the recurrence of the problems that led to the previous investigations. In 2004, the organization was renamed FilmL.A., Inc.

## City Hall as a film location

### FILMS

- Los Angeles City Hall was used in films almost from its dedication in 1928 when Lon Chaney and director Jack Conway brought their film crews to the Civic Center to shoot *While the City Sleeps*. The final touches were made to the new City Hall and the “talkies” were introduced.
- City Hall appeared in many early movies including, among others, *Straight from the Shoulder* (1936), *Mildred Pierce* (1945), *Get Outta Town* (1959) and *D.O.A.* (1963).
- Other appearances include *Protocol*, *It Seems Like Old Times*, *Dagnet*, *48 Hours*, *Another 48 Hours*, and a number of Disney films.
- City Hall’s most illustrious appearance in films has to be the *War of the Worlds* (1953). It was directed by George Pal and starred Gene Barry, Ann Robinson and Lewis Martin. It was loosely based on H.G. Wells’ novel—with action transferred from Victorian London to modern Southern California. An 8-inch model of City Hall was created which was then blown up with explosives. The film won the Oscar for “Special Effects” that year.



ROBERT QUEZADA

## TELEVISION

### *TV Series*

- For 10 seasons City Hall was Police Headquarters for *Dagnet*.
- It was also The Daily Planet in the *Superman* series.
- *Kojak* and *Cagney and Lacey* used Los Angeles City Hall to represent parts of New York City.
- It has also been seen in *The Rockford Files*, *Matlock*, *Hill Street Blues*, *LA Law* and *Equal Justice*.

### *TV Movies and Mini-Series*

- It was the Vatican in the TV mini-series *The Thornbirds*.
- It played the U.S. Capitol in *The Jimmy Hoffa Story*.
- It portrayed the Texas office of an aspiring Lyndon Johnson in *LBJ: The Early Years*
- It appeared in *MADD* and *Blood Feud*

*This information was obtained from a Project Restore Newsletter article authored by Steven Phillips. Verbatim summary from Project Restore website: <http://www.lacity.org/restore/rstol1.htm>*

Updates (courtesy of Kevin Jew, Project Restore):

*The Agency, Alias, Anger Management, Boomtown, A Civil Action, Crossing Jordan, Daredevil, First Daughter, The Flannerys, I.D., JAG, Judging Amy, LA Confidential, Legally Blonde II, Mr. Sterling, Murder By Numbers, The Perfect Sleep, Shaggy Dog, Timecop 2, West Wing, XMEN 2, XXX-State of the Union, Yours, Mine & Ours*

## **Housing Authority of the City of Los Angeles**

The Housing Authority of the City of Los Angeles (HACLA) was chartered by the state in 1938 as a result of the 1937 federal Public Housing Act. HACLA is a state-created agency operated by city officials under a cooperative agreement between state and city.

The city enters into contracts with HACLA to provide its services. Most of its funding comes from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. The seven commissioners are appointed and removed by the mayor, with the appointment confirmed by the city council. Five of the commissioners serve four-year terms, and two commissioners who serve for two-year terms must be residents served by the Housing Authority. Actions of the board are not subject to veto by the city council under Section 245 of the charter.

HACLA is the largest housing authority in the western United States. It operates public housing and the rental assistance program known as Section 8. The authority was projected in 2005 to pay \$674 million in housing assistance payments to approximately 17,000 private landlords. In 2005, 23,425 persons lived in the authority's public housing, senior housing, and low- and moderate-income housing. The waiting list for public housing was large, numbering 23,677 families. Section 8 programs provided rental assistance to 110,142 people in 2005, with a waiting list of 94,164 families.

*Source: Hugo Garcia, Housing Authority*

## **Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO)**

During the political struggle over the secession movement in the San Fernando Valley and other parts of the city, an obscure state agency, known as LAFCO, became a central player. To the surprise of many observers, LAFCO had the power to determine whether or not there would be an election to decide the question of secession.

The purpose of Local Agency Formation Commissions is to bring some sense to the vast array of local governmental agencies in California.

Each of the 58 counties of California has a LAFCO. Originally established in 1963, they were strengthened in 2000 by the Cortese-Knox-Hertzberg Act, which directed LAFCOs to discourage sprawl and encourage orderly government. The 2000 act delegated the legislature's power to draw boundaries to LAFCOs. LAFCOs can have a significant impact on growth and development. If a LAFCO approves the creation of a special water district, for example, it can help induce growth in a new area.

LAFCOs have the power to regulate the boundaries of cities and special districts. They do not have authority over school district boundaries. The process by which a LAFCO can make a boundary change begins with a petition by registered voters, landowners or a local governing body. The petition might be for an annexation or for a municipal incorporation (such as that of West Hollywood in 1984). LAFCO reviews the proposal, conducts public hearings and then makes a recommendation. If there is sufficient protest, LAFCO will call an election. In some cases, LAFCO can initiate the process of boundary change should it desire to reduce the number of special districts.

The nine members of the Los Angeles LAFCO are called commissioners. A city selection committee made up of the mayors of each city within the county appoints two members and an alternate. The county supervisors appoint two members and one alternate. The president of the Los Angeles City Council appoints one member and an alternate. An Independent Special District Committee selects two members and two alternates. The county supervisors also select one member and one alternate to represent the San Fernando Valley. These eight commissioners select one member of the public.

*Source on LAFCO structure: Tami Bui and Bill Ibrke, It's Time to Draw the Line: A Citizen's Guide to LAFCOs, California's Local Agency Formation Commissions, Second Edition, 2003 (May).*

## **Los Angeles City/County Native American Indian Commission**

The Los Angeles City/County Native American Indian Commission, established in 1993 by the county board of supervisors, consists of 16 board members. The board of supervisors, the city of Los Angeles, and the Los Angeles Native American community each appoints five members, and there is one emeritus commissioner. The criteria for

commissioners are that they represent the county's diverse Native American population, have experience as effective leaders in community activity, and demonstrate an awareness of the problems of urban Native Americans.

The basic function of the Native American Indian Commission is to disseminate information and inform city and county governmental bodies of the issues and concerns of the urban Native American community. The commission investigates factors that have a negative impact on the welfare and socio-economic status of Native Americans and makes recommendations to the county supervisors and the Los Angeles City Council regarding the alleviation of such conditions. The commission also serves as a coordinating agency for community groups and for various federal, state, county, city, and private agencies with respect to Native American affairs.

### **Los Angeles County Health Facilities Authority Commission**

Following the 1965 Watts riot, there was considerable interest in improving community facilities in the inner city. In 1974, the county and city entered into a joint powers agreement to create the Los Angeles County-Martin Luther King, Jr. General Hospital Authority Commission. The main purpose of the authority was to provide for the construction and operation of a hospital.

Of the 15 commissioners, 10 were appointed by the supervisor of the second county supervisorial district in South Los Angeles. Five were chosen by the mayor of Los Angeles and confirmed by the city council. The hospital is currently governed directly by the county board of supervisors.

There is still a joint powers Health Facilities Authority Commission, to "[a]cquire, construct, improve, expand, reconstruct, remodel, replace and equip certain hospital and health care facilities and related facilities within Los Angeles County which constitute portions of the Los Angeles County Hospital System and related health care facilities." The county board of supervisors appoints five members and the mayor of Los Angeles appoints the remaining two members, with the approval of the city council. The commission issues revenue bonds for county health facilities.



## **Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA)**

The MTA was established in February 1993, from the merger of the Southern California Rapid Transit District (RTD), the county's bus and light rail transit operator, and the Los Angeles County Transportation Commission (LACTC), which planned and administered transit services.

The MTA board has 14 members. Five are appointed by the county board of supervisors. The mayor of Los Angeles serves ex officio. Two public members and one Los Angeles City Council member are selected by the mayor. The mayor of Los Angeles has considerable authority because of the votes of the four Los Angeles members, and because the mayor is in the rotation of those who serve as chair. Upon his election as mayor in 2005, Antonio Villaraigosa assumed the position of chair of the MTA with the goal of pursuing expanded rail transportation.

Four mayors or city council members are chosen by the Los Angeles County City Selection Committee. The city of Los Angeles is excluded from this group, which is divided into four geographical sectors: North County-San Fernando Valley; Southwest Corridor; San Gabriel Valley; and Southeast-Long Beach. Cities within those sectors can nominate candidates for the MTA Board, and then each city has a weighted vote based on population. The governor appoints one non-voting member.

On an average weekday, more than a million bus boardings take place in the MTA area. In fiscal year 2004, there were 330 million. The MTA has 18,500 bus stops, 189 bus routes and an active fleet of 2,593 buses.

The rail system has become more extensive than seemed possible decades ago, and more additions seem likely. The rail system has 212,000 boardings on an average weekday. As of 2005, the Metro Rail system consisted of the Blue, Green, Red, and Gold Lines. An Orange Line busway is now a factor in transit for the San Fernando Valley.

- The Metro Blue Line runs north and south between Long Beach and Los Angeles.
- The Metro Green Line crosses the Blue Line, running east and west between Norwalk and Redondo Beach, curving south near the Los Angeles International Airport.

- The Metro Red Line subway meets the Blue Line in Los Angeles and provides service through downtown, between Union Station, the Mid-Wilshire area, Hollywood and the San Fernando Valley.
- The Metro Gold Line connects with the Red Line at Union Station, and runs northeast to Pasadena. The Gold Line is also being extended east from Union Station to East Los Angeles.
- The Orange Line Busway connects Warner Center in Canoga Park with the North Hollywood Metro Station.

*Source: [http://www.mta.net/riding\\_metro/riders\\_guide/planning\\_trip-02.htm#TopOfPage](http://www.mta.net/riding_metro/riders_guide/planning_trip-02.htm#TopOfPage)*

The MTA funds municipal bus operators and transportation improvements. The MTA has an art department that incorporates art into transportation projects throughout the county. One-half of one percent of rail construction costs is allocated to original art works selected through a peer review process.

## **Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority (LAHSA)**

Social services are generally under the control of the county of Los Angeles, but the large homeless population in the heart of downtown has brought the city of Los Angeles into the issue as well. What services can be provided to the homeless? What are the health and safety implications for the homeless population? What is the impact on local businesses? These issues concern both the city and county and have led to joint efforts.

In 1993, the county supervisors and the mayor and council approved a joint powers agreement to establish a Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority (LAHSA). The authority has 10 commissioners, half appointed by the supervisors and half by the mayor of Los Angeles with the confirmation of the city council.

The LAHSA distributes between \$45 million and \$60 million in federal, county and city aid to nonprofit agencies that serve the homeless. The authority is assisted by a 39-member advisory board, which includes government officials and current and former homeless people.

## **Los Angeles Memorial Coliseum Commission**

The Los Angeles Memorial Coliseum and Sports Arena have operated in tandem since 1959, but the storied history of these facilities dates back to the early 20th century. The Coliseum and Sports Arena are under the authority of the Los Angeles Coliseum Commission, which was formed under the Joint Exercise of Powers Act on September 25, 1945.

The commission consists of nine regular members and four alternates. Three regular members and one alternate are nominated by the chair of the county board of supervisors, one regular and one alternate by the president of the Los Angeles City Council, two regular and one alternate by the city of Los Angeles Recreation and Parks Commission, and three regular members by the California Science Center Board of Directors. (<http://bos.co.la.ca.us/Rosters/FactSheets/CHV-15.htm>).

No taxpayer funds are used to support the facilities. The complex is supported solely by the revenue it generates.

The Coliseum was constructed in the early 1920s and opened its doors to the Los Angeles public in June 1923. The first football game was played in the stadium on October 6, 1923, with the University of Southern California hosting Pomona College before a crowd of 12,836.

The Coliseum is the only facility in the world to play host to two Olympiads, two Super Bowls and one World Series (1959) and, along with the adjacent Sports Arena, is credited with the migration of professional sports to the West Coast. The complex provided a home for the Rams (from Cleveland, 1946-79), the Dodgers (from Brooklyn, 1958-61) and the Lakers (from Minneapolis, 1960-68), and was the expansion home of the San Diego Chargers (1960, AFL) and Kings (1967, NHL).

The 92,516 seat Coliseum served as the home of the Los Angeles Raiders of the NFL from 1982 through the 1994 season, and currently serves as the stadium for University of Southern California football and international soccer competition. There is frequent discussion of enticing the National Football League to bring a professional franchise back to Los Angeles to play in the Coliseum.

## **Metropolitan Water District (MWD)**

Two agencies provide the water that made Los Angeles a great city: the city's Department of Water and Power (DWP) and the joint authority known as the Metropolitan Water District (MWD). The DWP first found the water supply that allowed Los Angeles to grow into a great metropolis and constructed the aqueduct from Owens Valley that was completed in 1913. In 1928, Los Angeles joined with other cities to create the MWD. The first major project of this agency was the construction and operation of the 250-mile-long Colorado River Aqueduct, which was completed in 1941. In addition to wholesaling Colorado River water to local agencies in the six-county Southern California coastal plain, the MWD distributes water from the California Aqueduct, which brings water south from the Sacramento River Valley. The MWD provides drinking water to 18 million residents of Southern California, and must contend with declining shares of Colorado River water as new growth continues in such southwestern states as Nevada.

The governance structure of the MWD grants considerable influence to the city of Los Angeles. There are 26 member agencies, including cities and water districts. The city of Los Angeles, the Municipal Water District of Orange County, and the San Diego Water Authority, with four members each, have the largest single delegations on the 37-member board.

## **South Coast Air Quality Management District (SCAQMD)**

The South Coast Air Quality Management District (SCAQMD) plays a key role in the environment of the Los Angeles region. As the largest city in Southern California, Los Angeles has a vital interest in the regulations promulgated by the AQMD. During the 1980s and 1990s, strict rules from the AQMD made a major dent in the historic pollution of the Los Angeles area.

The AQMD governing board has 12 members, representing the state of California, the four counties in the region (Los Angeles, Orange, San Bernardino, and Riverside), and the cities within those counties. Of the 12 members, nine are elected officials. An elected county supervisor

represents each of the counties of Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside, and San Bernardino, upon selection by their own boards of supervisors. Another five members are city council members appointed to the board by a selection committee of the city councils in their own counties. While the city of Los Angeles is not automatically represented on the board, it would be highly unusual for the city not to obtain a nomination by the city selection committee.

Because Los Angeles County is so large, it is entitled to two of these city council representatives: one eastern and one western. These members are elected by their respective city selection committees. The remaining three board members are appointed by state elected officials: one by the governor of California, one by the speaker of the state assembly and one by the state Senate Rules Committee.

### **Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG)**

The Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG) is the largest regional government agency in the United States. As the designated metropolitan planning organization, SCAG is mandated by the federal government to research and draw up plans for transportation, growth, hazardous waste management, and air quality. Additional mandates exist at the state level. SCAG's mission is to provide regional planning for a six-county area that includes 18 million residents and 187 cities. The six counties are Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside, San Bernardino, Ventura, and Imperial. The initial planning for the Alameda Corridor, which opened in 2002, began within SCAG in 1982. SCAG develops a transportation plan for the region and also reviews environmental impact studies for projects with regional significance. In 2004, SCAG began planning for a decentralized airport system in the region to accommodate the huge increase in air travel anticipated in the coming decades (*source: <http://www.scag.ca.gov/who.htm>*). Of the 76 members of the governing board, Los Angeles has 16 members: the mayor and all 15 city council members.

## **Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA)**

In 1945, the state of California passed a landmark community redevelopment law to allow cities to redevelop “blighted” areas (neighborhoods that have deteriorated and are in need of revitalization or alternative use). The Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA) was established by resolution of the city council on April 15, 1948. It is a state agency, authorized and governed by state law and directed to a large extent by the mayor and city council.

The CRA is managed by a seven-member commission, appointed by the mayor and confirmed by the city council. The removal of CRA commissioners is governed by a city ordinance that largely follows state law, and which provides roles both for mayor and council in the removal process. Like the proprietary departments, the CRA is headed by a general manager (called a chief executive officer) who is appointed by the commission, not by the mayor.

The formal mission of the CRA is to revitalize the city’s blighted neighborhoods, to increase the supply of housing, and to generate economic growth. For many California cities, redevelopment is the vehicle for urban revival, for building shopping centers, and rebuilding historic downtowns. Few can compare to the range and scope of the CRA’s work in Los Angeles. In 1975, Mayor Tom Bradley announced the largest downtown redevelopment project in America. Bradley’s plan reshaped downtown into a global headquarters city, but it also generated substantial resistance.

The finances of the CRA depend on a mechanism known as tax increment financing. If the CRA invests funds in the redevelopment of a declared blighted area, there may be a significant increase in property values and therefore a larger property tax assessment. Tax increment funds are defined as the sum of all additional property taxes collected in the project area after the plan is adopted. The original “taxing entities”—school district, county government, junior college district, city government, special taxing districts—continue to receive all their original allocations, and for projects adopted or expanded since 1994, a portion of the incremental growth as well. A major portion of the increase is allocated to the redevelopment agency to make investments in the blighted area to return it to economic and physical health.

Until state law was changed in 1994 to create a consistent formula, the CRA negotiated sharing of the increment with other local agencies on a case-by-case basis. With minor variations in the later years of a redevelopment project, the formula for distributing the new property taxes now requires that 20 percent of the increase is passed through to all the original taxing entities; an additional 20 percent is to be allocated to an Affordable Housing Trust Fund; and the remaining 60 percent is available to the redevelopment agency for its work program. Almost half of the CRA's projects were adopted after the passage of the 1994 law that established this formula.

Housing for low- and moderate-income persons and families is the only redevelopment activity specifically mandated in California Community Redevelopment Law. As a matter of current policy, the agency has increased its minimum set-aside of tax increment revenue for affordable housing from 20 percent to 25 percent, with the additional five percent to be allocated to the city's Affordable Housing Trust Fund.

The CRA can also issue bonds to conduct redevelopment activities. These bonds are paid for out of the proceeds of tax increment from the redevelopment project area or, in some cases, from the new development itself. In addition to bonds, the CRA can receive revenue from lease payments within redevelopment areas, from developer contributions and fees, and from federal, state and city grants. In fiscal year 2004-05, the agency's total budget was more than \$358 million.

In recent decades, the CRA has extended its reach well beyond downtown. While many projects continued to be downtown (eight out of 32 active project areas in 2004), nine were in South Los Angeles, one (along with three limited revitalization areas) in East Los Angeles, five in the Harbor area, five in Hollywood, and four in the San Fernando Valley.

## **The City and the School District**

Not many people know that there is an intricate relationship between the government of the city of Los Angeles and the Board of Education of the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD). The first school was created in Los Angeles in 1817. In 1854, the first superintendent also served as the mayor (*Rand Corporation 2005 appendix C*). The school district was a department of the city government until 1937 when it became a

special district under state law, governed by an elected board of education. The LAUSD was created by the voters in 1960, when they “unified” the elementary and secondary schools. In 1967, the community college system, which had been part of the LAUSD, became independent, and is now governed by its own elected board.

Los Angeles has the second largest school system in the nation, after New York City. With 741,201 students in 2004 (compared to more than 6 million statewide), the district had 434 elementary schools, 78 middle schools and 56 high schools. In 2004, the district’s student population was 72.8 percent Latino, 11.6 percent Asian, 11.6 percent African-American, and 9.0 percent White.

The school district’s budget comes from state and federal revenues as well as other sources. The district is highly sensitive to state funding. City government has an interest in school district funding; the city and the school district are both allies and competitors for state financial support. City government has been called upon by state government to sacrifice revenue to help fund the schools when the state runs into budget shortfalls.

General law cities have virtually no connection to their local school systems. Charter cities, however, can exercise authority over the governance of their local school districts if enabling language is written into the charter. The city charter can specify whether the board will be elected or appointed; what board members will be paid; and how election districts will be designed.

The Los Angeles City Charter has authority over school district governance. This power, moreover, can be exercised only by all voters who live within the boundaries of the district. About 80 percent of the LAUSD electorate falls within the borders of Los Angeles City. Charter measures that would alter the governance structure of the district must be submitted to all voters within the district, including those who do not reside within the city of Los Angeles. In addition to Los Angeles, the LAUSD includes a number of cities such as Bell, Huntington Park, South Gate, Cudahy, Gardena, San Fernando, and West Hollywood.

This authority might be mistaken for a grant of authority to the city government over the operations of the school district. Actually, the charter has authority over the governance of both the city government and the school district. The voters of the city and of the school district can utilize the charter to make changes in their governance. In the case of the



schools, the choice is between governance by district voters through the charter or governance by the state legislature through state law. The day-to-day operations of the school system are in all cases subject directly to the state Education Code, and a city, whether general law or charter, has no power to interfere in these matters.

Currently, the Los Angeles school board consists of seven part-time members elected by district. This structure followed the 1978 approval by the voters of a ballot measure to alter the system of electing school board members from at-large to individual districts. The district lines are set by the city council in the same process that is used for city council districts. An advisory redistricting commission established by the 2000 city charter helps the city council to draw school district lines. Elections for the board of education are conducted by the Los Angeles City Clerk.

School board members are paid the maximum allowable under state law for a district of its size, \$24,000 per year, plus small allowance adjustments. An amendment to the city charter could allow board members to receive higher pay, but absent such charter changes, board member salaries will continue to be set by state law.

According to the charter, “The Board of Education shall have the power to control and manage the public schools of the Los Angeles Unified School District in accordance with the Constitution and laws of the State” (*Section 805*). The board of education hires and fires the superintendent and sets school policy. The daily operations of the schools are under the control of the superintendent and the professional staff.

At times, there has been talk of breaking up the LAUSD. A district breakup cannot be accomplished through the city charter. Permission must first be received from the state board of education. When the idea was brought to the state board in 2001, it unanimously rejected the request in accordance with the recommendations of the State Department of Education.

City officials have become increasingly interested in the work of the schools. Voters do not draw neat boundaries to separate the city government and the school district and expect that government officials should all work to improve education. In some big cities, mayors have been given authority over the local schools. In New York City and Chicago, for example, mayors have been given *de facto* control over the schools. California government has tended to insulate school districts from mayors and councils.

Some have proposed that the mayor of Los Angeles should have the power to appoint some or all of the members of the board of education. Such a change could be accomplished either through a change in state law, or quite possibly, by amending the city charter in a ballot measure to be placed before all district voters. In 2005, newly-elected Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa called for exploration of the idea of placing the mayor in charge of the district. In 2006, state legislators passed a law to provide partial mayoral control of the school district.

[ 9 ]

financing the  
city government

## The City Budget

The city's fiscal year runs from July 1 to June 30. This is the same fiscal year as the state of California but different from that of the United States government, which begins on October 1. State law requires a municipality to have a balanced budget. The amount of revenue the city expects to receive from existing taxes, fees, fines, licenses, and other sources must be sufficient to cover the amount it appropriates in the budget. Otherwise new revenue sources must be found or some appropriations must be cut. The city can, however, gain voter permission to borrow money by issuing bonds.

Advance planning is the key to the city budget. Even as one fiscal year begins, the city's leaders must start planning for the next year's budget. The budget process begins around August, 11 months before the start of the fiscal year, when the mayor sends a budget policy letter to city departments, bureaus and other offices. The mayor's letter defines the chief executive's objectives for the city for the next fiscal year and guides city offices in preparing their annual budget requests.

The charter sets out key budget milestones. City department heads must submit their budget requests to the mayor by January 1. In recent years, the mayor has instructed city departments to submit their budget requests in November or December. On or before February 1, the mayor publishes his or her budget priorities for public comment. On or before March 1, the controller submits to the mayor, with copies to the city council and the city administrative officer (CAO), a detailed estimate of how much money the city will need to pay its ongoing indebtedness.

By March, the mayor, working with the CAO, Office of Finance, and the controller, will have developed an estimate of revenue. These revenue projections guide the mayor as he or she meets with general managers, examines department budget requests, and formulates a budget. The charter requires that the mayor deliver a Proposed Budget to the city council by April 20.

After the council receives the mayor's budget, it is referred to the Budget and Finance Committee, which holds public hearings at which various departments and bureaus, the mayor's office, general managers, the CAO, and the chief legislative analyst make presentations. At the conclusion of the hearings, the committee delivers its recommendations

to the full city council. The council must act by June 1 to accept, reject, reduce or increase the budget. If the council does not act by that date, the mayor's budget takes effect. There are no late budgets in Los Angeles city government. The requirement of timely council action means that the mayor has significant budget authority.

If the council makes any changes to the Mayor's Proposed Budget, the mayor has five working days to veto, restore or otherwise change any of the items altered by the council. The mayor's power is called a line-item veto because the mayor does not have to veto the whole budget resolution the way a president must with a congressional bill. The mayor may choose to veto only the parts to which he or she objects. Following the mayor's action, the council has five working days to either sustain or override the mayor's changes to the council's action by a two-thirds vote. The result of this entire process is the Adopted Budget for the next fiscal year.

The charter requires that neighborhood councils be consulted in the budget process. Article IX, Section 909 of the city charter mandates that each neighborhood council "may present to the Mayor and Council an annual list of priorities for the City budget." The mayor must "inform certified neighborhood councils of the deadline for submission so that the input may be considered in a timely fashion."

Los Angeles prepares its budget on a modified cash basis of accounting. It recognizes revenues when cash is received. On the expenditure side, appropriations show both cash payments and encumbrances for purchase orders and contractual services. Encumbered appropriations that have not been paid at the end of a fiscal year will be paid with those same encumbered funds in subsequent years.

## **Budget Documents**

Most of the information about the budget can be found in a few key public documents. The Mayor's Proposed Budget displays the budget on a line-item or account basis. Section 1 includes the Mayor's Message; the Budget Statement; Description of the Budget Process; the Budget Calendar; Economic and Demographic Information; and Summary Budget Exhibits. Section 2 (General Government Budget) includes summaries of the proposed budgets of the departments, appropriations to departments and

“non-departmental” items. There is also the mayor’s Neighborhood Council Budget Summary, an innovation that began with Mayor Hahn’s 2004-05 Proposed Budget.

The Adopted Budget shows the final budget actions of the mayor and council and is similar in format to the Mayor’s Proposed Budget. The Adopted Budget reflects the final appropriations by line item. The Detail of Department Programs with Financial Summaries, known as the Blue Book, may be the most useful of the budget documents for anyone who wants to know about the programs, productivity and performance of city departments. The Blue Book supplements the budget document and explains how the mayor proposes to change programs from one year to the next.

While the Mayor’s Proposed Budget shows the amounts proposed for salaries (i.e., line items), the Blue Book shows what programs the employees would perform if given those salary dollars. For example, the Blue Book shows how many stray animals are to be picked up by the Department of Animal Services or the number of miles of streets that are to be resurfaced by the Bureau of Street Services. These budget documents may be viewed on the city’s website (*www.lacity.org*). They are also available in the city branch libraries and at certain city offices, including those of the various elected officials and the city administrative officer.

The Detail of Positions and Salaries shows the positions filled by employees of the city. This document is broken down by department and lists authorized positions by civil service class, the number of positions authorized, and the general salary ranges. The salary data may not reflect the total direct compensation for individual positions, because it does not include bonuses and other provisions that are included in the various memoranda of understanding (MOUs) with unions and other collective bargaining organizations. It also does not reflect overtime, pensions and health and medical benefits. The aggregate costs of those items are shown in the adopted budget as line-item appropriations to departments and as non-departmental appropriations. The MOUs that are in force with the various employee bargaining units may be viewed on the city’s website (*http://www.lacity.org/cao/MOUs/index.htm*).

## City finances

The total budget of the city and its three proprietary departments was \$12.61 billion for fiscal year 2004-05:

### 2004-05 Adopted Budget

<i>Category</i>	<i>Appropriation or Revenue (\$ millions)</i>	<i>Authorized Positions</i>
<b>Proprietary Departments</b>		
Airports	\$952.9	3,244
Harbor	600.1	764
Water & Power	4,749.4	8,580
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>\$6,302.4</b>	<b>12,588</b>
<b>General City Budget</b>		
Budgetary Departments ( <i>from Aging to Zoo</i> )	\$2,853.0	32,570
Budgetary Departments with control of their own revenues or special funds	195.0	3,068
Non-departmental ( <i>various items such as funds from Propositions A &amp; C; liability claims; employee benefits; General City purposes, etc.</i> )	2,340.1	—
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>\$5,388.1</b>	<b>35,638</b>
<b>Grants &amp; Other Non-Budgeted Funds</b>	<b>\$924.1</b>	
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$12,614.6</b>	<b>48,266</b>

Sources: 2004-05 Adopted Budget—Exhibits C & G

### General City Budget

For the 2004-05 fiscal year, the general city budget, excluding proprietary departments, was approximately \$5.39 billion. Elected officials have control over only three-fifths of the city's general budget because of restrictions on the use of some of its revenues. Unrestricted revenues may be used for any lawful municipal purpose. Restricted revenues, also referred to as special purpose funds, are derived from specific revenue

sources, placed in individual special funds, and are legally restricted as to how the monies are spent.

Restricted revenues include sewer revenues, gas taxes, grants, and fees for various special services. Sewer revenues are dedicated to operating the wastewater collection and treatment system. Gas taxes are dedicated to fixing the streets and other transportation programs.

Section 3 of the budget lists the various special purpose funds, including a description of how each restricted revenue source may be spent, a summary of revenue available and of how the funds are to be spent, and a recap of the expenditures for the most recent three fiscal years.

Unrestricted revenues are generally those other revenue sources including property tax and sales tax listed in Exhibit B of the budget document. One important difference between city and county government budgets is that a much higher percentage of the city budget is unrestricted. Most of the Los Angeles County budget is restricted. Much of the county revenue is in the form of “pass through” from federal and state sources.

The unrestricted and restricted (special purpose fund) parts of the city budget broke down in the following way for fiscal year 2004-05:

### **Revenues in the City Budget: Restricted vs. Unrestricted**

<i>Source of Funds:</i>	<i>Total (\$ millions)</i>	<i>Percent of Total</i>
Unrestricted Revenues	\$3,246.3	60.2%
Restricted Revenues	2,141.8	39.8%
Total General City Budget	\$5,388.1	100.0%

*Source: 2004-05 Adopted Budget—Exhibit D*



## **How Does the City Spend Its Unrestricted Revenue?**

The following table summarizes how that \$3.246 billion in unrestricted revenues was allocated in the 2004-05 adopted budget. Historically, public safety programs have received the majority of unrestricted revenues. Fire and police programs currently get about two-thirds (66.1 percent) of the unrestricted funds that the mayor and council can control.

### **Allocation of Unrestricted Revenues**

<i>Program or Function</i>	<i>Total (\$ millions)</i>	<i>Percent of Total</i>
Public Safety ( <i>police and fire</i> )	\$2,145.5	66.1%
Public Works ( <i>refuse collection, street services, capital improvements, etc.</i> )	484.8	14.9%
Library, Recreation & Parks and Cultural Affairs	298.9	9.2%
Other ( <i>City Attorney, CAO, Controller, Finance, Mayor, Council, City Clerk, Convention Center &amp; Unappropriated Balance</i> )	317.1	9.8%
Total Unrestricted Budget	\$3,246.3	100.0%

*Source: 2004-05 Adopted Budget—Exhibit E*

The budget does not reflect all city expenditures. For example, some departments are only partially supported by the general city budget and are only reported in the budget to the extent that those departments receive a budgetary appropriation. They include El Pueblo de Los Angeles Historical Monument Authority Department; the Library Department; the Department of Recreation and Parks; and the two retirement systems (Fire and Police Pensions and City Employees' Retirement System).

## **Where Does the Money Come from?**

Los Angeles depends on a wide array of revenues to finance infrastructure and municipal services. Some revenues tend to grow with inflation, while others fluctuate due to economic cycles, remain relatively flat or even decline. Overall, the cost of city government tends to grow each year because of demand for more services, the rising cost of salaries and employee benefits, and the increasing costs of the goods and services that are purchased from the private sector.

Like all California cities, Los Angeles has faced the problems of local government finance. When California voters approved Proposition 13 in 1978, they drastically reduced local revenue from the property tax and channeled authority over the allocation of the property tax to the state government in Sacramento. Proposition 13 gave the state government the incentive to take money from city and county governments to balance its own budget. In 2004, Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger and the legislature agreed to take more than \$1.3 billion in local revenue to balance the state budget in return for a promise to make it much more difficult to do so in the future. This plan was embodied in a state ballot measure (1A) passed in November 2004.

Each source of revenue has its own unique impact on the taxpayers. For example, the property tax is paid directly only by those owning property in Los Angeles (though indirectly by renters), while the transient occupancy (hotel) tax is paid by those who are visiting Los Angeles. Naturally, public officials will anger fewer local voters by raising the occupancy tax, but local businesses may fear that tourism will suffer.

The city may charge a fee for services that are used only by a limited number of residents. For example, a building permit fee is paid only by those wishing to start new construction or modify an existing building. Because the fee is supposed to recover the city's cost of the special service rendered, the fee for a permit associated with modifying a single-family home would obviously be much smaller than the fee to build a multistory office building. The larger fee reflects the greater amount of time spent by the city engineers and inspectors checking plans and visiting construction sites.

The following table shows the leading sources of revenue that were included in the 2004-05 adopted budget.

## Revenue Estimate—2004–05 Fiscal Year

<i>Revenue Source</i>	<i>Amount (thousands)</i>	<i>Percent of Total</i>
Property Tax	\$ 711,158	19.4%
Utility Users' Tax	569,726	15.5%
Licenses, Permits, and Fees	449,451	12.2%
Sales Tax	394,000	10.7%
Business Tax	386,895	10.5%
State Motor Vehicle License Fees	236,200	6.4%
Power Revenue Transfer	159,400	4.3%
Documentary Transfer Tax	138,100	3.8%
Transfer from Reserve Fund	122,871	3.3%
Transient Occupancy Tax	118,685	3.2%
Municipal Court Fines	114,000	3.1%
Parking Users' Tax	65,222	1.8%
Power Revenue Transfer—Supplemental	60,000	1.6%
Other (see note)*	145,398	4.0%
<b>Total General Receipts</b>	<b>\$3,671,106</b>	<b>100.0%</b>
Special Receipts	1,416,247	
Available Balances	300,714	
<b>Total Revenue</b>	<b>\$5,388,067</b>	

*Source: 2004–05 Adopted Budget*

\* Other revenues include: grant receipts; franchise income; water revenue transfer; tobacco settlement; interest earnings; transfer from telecommunications; residential development tax; civic center parking income; transit shelter income; Los Angeles Mall rental income; and transfer from tax reform fund.

About 90 percent of the revenue in the category of municipal court fines comes from parking fines. The schedule of fines is established by the city council and can be found in the Administrative Code. Other receipts include fees charged for laboratory work for sobriety tests conducted by the Los Angeles Police Department and fines paid for citations issued for violations of the Los Angeles Municipal Code (e.g., leash law violations).

The largest revenue transfer to the General Fund comes from the power revenue and water revenue funds of the Department of Water and Power. Charter Section 344 allows the council, with the consent of the Board of Water and Power Commissioners, to direct by ordinance the

transfer of surplus revenue to the general fund. Historically, this transfer has equaled approximately five percent of the total operating revenue of the power revenue fund in the preceding fiscal year. This transfer was increased to seven percent beginning in 2002-03. The transfer is limited by the Department of Water and Power's revenue bond covenants. A separate annual transfer is made to the city budget from the DWP water revenue fund.

In developing the budget for each successive year, budget planners must make rather sophisticated projections about the future state of revenue, including an estimate of how revenues will be affected by the regional economy, construction and real estate, the change in personal income, taxable sales, tourism and hotel overnight visitors, and the climate.

The impact of the state budget on local government must also be considered. The city must be alert to potential state shifts of local property tax revenue (Education Revenue Augmentation Funds, or ERAF) to Sacramento. While the percentage of total revenue delivered by the property tax has declined over the last two decades, the property tax is still the single largest source of general fund revenue. The city makes its own estimate of property tax based on the county assessor's estimate of growth in assessed valuation.

All taxable real and personal property is classified as either "secured" or "unsecured" and is listed accordingly on separate parts of the assessment roll by the county of Los Angeles. The secured roll primarily contains real property (land and improvements), whereas the unsecured roll contains taxable property that is not secured by the underlying real property, the majority of which is business equipment on leased or rented premises, and other taxable personal property such as boats and aircraft. Over 90 percent of the city's assessed valuation consists of property contained on the secured roll.

Proposition 13 (1978) limited the tax on real property to one percent of the property's "full cash value." The county collects the real property taxes and apportions the taxes among local taxing agencies on the basis of a formula established by state law in 1979. That formula was modified in fiscal years 1992-93 and 1993-94, resulting in reduced city revenue. These modifications were known as "ERAF" shifts because city, county and special district tax revenues were shifted to the Educational Revenue Augmentation Fund. Under this formula, the city receives a base-year

allocation plus an amount based on the growth in assessed value of properties sold or transferred, new construction and the rate of inflation. As of fiscal year 2003-04, the city of Los Angeles remained, to no one's surprise, the highest valued municipality in the county, with net revenue-producing assessed valuation of \$263 billion, a 7.8 percent increase from fiscal year 2002-03.

A utility users' tax is imposed on all users of natural gas, electricity and telephone services within the city's limits. The tax rate is established by the city council. The tax is a percentage of utility charges that varies between 10 percent and 12.5 percent. County, state, federal and foreign governments within the city are not subject to this tax. By state law, insurance companies cannot be taxed on property used for insurance purposes.

Sales and use taxes are collected on the total retail price of tangible personal property sold, unless specifically exempted. Effective January 1, 2002, the statewide sales tax rate was 7.25 percent. One percent of the sales tax collected by the state is collected on behalf of cities (or, for unincorporated areas, on behalf of counties). Allocation of this local component is on the basis of "situs," or the point of sale.

Additional sales taxes can be collected based on local voter approval. An additional one percent sales tax is collected in Los Angeles County for the Los Angeles Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA). A portion of those funds is remitted to the city for deposit in two special revenue funds. The following table shows the components of the 8.25 percent sales tax in the county of Los Angeles in 2004.

## Sales Tax Components—2004

### LOS ANGELES COUNTY

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#### STATE RATE

General Fund Portion	5.0%	This rate was temporarily lowered to 4.75% in calendar year 2001, but returned to 5% on January 1, 2002.
Local Revenue Fund	0.5%	To support health program costs.
Local Public Safety	0.5%	For the Local Public Safety Fund, approved by the voters in 1993 to support local criminal justice activities. The city gets a share of this money, almost \$30 million.
Total State Rate	6.00%	

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#### UNIFORM LOCAL TAX RATE

		This rate is levied by all counties, of which .25% is for county transportation funding. The remaining 1% is allocated to point of sale jurisdiction.
County Transportation	0.25%	The county allocates a small portion to the city.
Local Point of Sale	1.00%	This is the city sales tax. (Until State Economic Recovery Bonds approved by the electorate on the March 2004 ballot are retired, 25% of the city's Sales Tax will be received by the city in property tax revenue.)
Total Uniform Local Rate	1.25%	

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#### OPTIONAL LOCAL RATES

		State law permits optional voter approval of local tax rates. These rates are levied in .25% and .5% increments.
Proposition A 1980	0.5%	County voter-approved measure to improve public transit and reduce traffic congestion.
Proposition C 1990	0.5%	County voter-approved measure to improve public transit and reduce traffic congestion.
Total Optional Local Rate (County)	1.00%	Of this amount, a small percentage is transferred to the city of Los Angeles.

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#### TOTAL SALES TAX RATE IN LOS ANGELES COUNTY

8.25%	This rate ranges within the state from 7.25% to 8.5%. No county imposes the maximum allowable rate of 8.75%.
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A business tax is imposed on persons engaged in a business in the city. Most businesses are taxed on gross receipts, and rates vary from \$1.18 per \$1,000 of gross receipts for wholesalers to \$5.91 per \$1,000 of gross receipts for selected businesses and occupations. The city council has frequently debated ways to keep business taxes low so that businesses do not migrate to neighboring communities with lower business taxes.

In 2004, the city council adopted a business tax reform plan that included several components: (1) a small-business exemption, which eliminated the business tax for businesses that had gross receipts of \$50,000 or less in 2005, and which was slated to include businesses with gross receipts of up to \$100,000 thereafter; (2) exemption up to \$300,000 for creative artists “whose activities are primarily for entertainment and/or aesthetic purposes”; (3) reduction of the tax burden on small and medium-sized film production companies; (4) elimination of taxes on bad debts; (5) reduction in the number of business tax filing categories from 75 to seven; and (6) a gradual reduction of the business tax by 15 percent for all businesses.

Since 1948, the state has imposed a vehicle license fee (VLF) equivalent to two percent of the market value of motor vehicles, in lieu of local property taxes. The VLF is an annual fee on the ownership of vehicles registered in California, including automobiles, motorcycles, pick-up trucks, commercial trucks and trailers, rental cars and taxicabs. The state takes a share of the VLF, and the remaining revenues are apportioned equally among counties and cities on the basis of relative population within the state. After his election in 2003, Governor Schwarzenegger implemented a rollback of the rate of the VLF, causing a shortfall in local governments’ revenue. Much discussion ensued about how to “backfill” this revenue gap. Proposition 1A, approved by the voters in November 2004, restored funding to local governments by allocating property tax dollars in lieu of VLF funding.

The city receives revenue as reimbursements for services. The following table shows the breakdown of revenues from licenses, permits and fees.

## Source of Licenses, Permits and Fees

<i>Source</i>	<i>Amount</i>
Ambulance Fees	\$46,500,000
Services to Sewer Program	38,510,545
Services to Department of Airports	47,539,488
Services to Harbor Department	20,641,150
Miscellaneous Reimbursements from Other Special Funds and Other Agencies	106,771,228
Building and Safety Fees	71,997,756
Other Departmental Receipts	116,885,702
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$448,845,869</b>

*Source: City of Los Angeles, City Administrative Officer. 2003-04*

## Impact of the State Budget

The state budget has a significant impact on the city's finances. This is particularly unsettling because the state and city fiscal years start and end at the same time. If the state has trouble deciding on its budget (which seems to happen every year), Los Angeles must adjust its own budget. Unlike Los Angeles, which has charter-mandated deadlines for completion, the state of California can miss budget deadlines.

On March 2, 2004, state voters approved issuance of up to \$15 billion in bonds to repay accumulated state budget debts. These bonds are a general obligation of the state. To make the bonds attractive in the marketplace, they were secured by an additional one-quarter cent sales tax. So that taxpayers would see no difference in their sales tax, the local sales tax was reduced by one-quarter cent. Once again, city governments were forced to suffer as a result of state budget problems.



## **Off-Budget Services**

The formal budget does not include certain unbudgeted revenues such as those from street lighting assessments. Street lighting assessments are projects under which residents in an area have voluntarily agreed to be separately assessed for lighting improvements. Another more recent example of off-budget service is the Business Improvement District (BID). BIDs are normally confined to commercial areas. The businesses in a BID voluntarily agree to assess themselves for certain district improvements. The Downtown Business Improvement District assesses itself for tourist-related services, additional sidewalk cleaning, extra security, and certain physical improvements that are agreed to by BID members. While the city clerk administers the BID funds and assists the BIDs with elections and certain administrative tasks, the finances of the BIDs are not reported in the city budget.

## **Reserves for a Rainy Day**

### **Unappropriated Balance**

The city maintains a reserve that is available within the city's budget to meet contingencies and emergencies that inevitably arise during the fiscal year. Charter Section 312 requires that an amount known as the Unappropriated Balance (UB) be included in the budget to be available for appropriations later in the fiscal year to meet contingencies as they arise. The city earmarks certain amounts within the UB for events that may or may not occur, including extraordinary increases in the cost of petroleum products or unforeseen expenses related to pending or future litigation.

### **Reserve Fund**

These funds are outside the budget. Reserve funds represent general unrestricted cash that is set aside for unforeseen expenditures and emergencies. Monies in the reserve fund can be transferred into the budget for such purposes. Unallocated general revenue and unencumbered general fund appropriations are transferred into this fund at the close of the fiscal year.

In 1998, the city council adopted a reserve fund policy that requires the city to maintain a reserve fund (unreserved and undesignated) equivalent to two percent of general fund revenues. It is now comprised of a contingency reserve account and an emergency reserve account. The contingency reserve account is available to cover unexpected expenditures and/or general fund revenue shortfalls upon authorization by the city council. The emergency reserve account may not be utilized for funding unless the mayor and city council determine that there is an urgent economic necessity and conclude that no other viable sources of funds are available. The 2004-05 budget's reserve fund was \$112.7 million, which was more than three percent of general fund revenues.

### **City Debt Management Policy**

An individual may finance certain major purchases like a new home or automobile by borrowing money and repaying the loan over time with interest. Similarly, the city borrows money for major capital expenses. Just as the individual works to maintain good credit, so too, the city works to maintain one of the highest credit ratings of any municipality. It does so by limiting its long-term debt. The city's high credit rating translates into savings of millions of dollars in interest payments each year that can then be spent on more services for the public.

In August 1998, the city council adopted a formal debt management policy that established guidelines for the structure and management of the city's debt obligations. These guidelines include target and ceiling levels for certain debt ratios that are used for financial planning. The debt policy places restrictions on what can be financed, limiting financing only to those items with a useful life of six years or more. The two most significant ratios are:

**Total Direct Debt Service as Percent of General Fund Revenues (15.0 percent):** The ratio of annual debt payments for voter-approved and non-voter-approved debt cannot exceed 15 percent of general fund revenues overall.

**Non-Voted Direct Debt Service as Percent of General Fund Revenues (6.0 percent):** Annual debt payments that are not approved by voters cannot exceed six percent of general fund revenues. The six percent ceiling for non-voter approved debt may be exceeded only if: 1) there

is a guaranteed new revenue stream for the debt payments and the additional debt payment will not cause the ratio to exceed 7.5 percent, or 2) if there is not a guaranteed revenue stream but the six percent ceiling will only be exceeded for one year.

### Actual Debt to Ceiling

*As of July 1, 2004*

<i>Ratio</i>	<i>Ceiling</i>	<i>2003-04</i>	<i>2004-05</i>
Total Direct Debt Service as Percent of General Fund Revenues	15%	8.10%	9.73%
Non-Voted Direct Debt Service as Percent of General Fund Revenues	6%	4.03%	4.94%

*Source: City of Los Angeles, Office of the City Administrative Officer*

### Current Debt

The following table shows how the city's debt has changed in recent years.

### Per Capita Debt

<i>Fiscal Year</i>	<i>Direct Net Debt</i>	<i>Net Debt Per Capita</i>	<i>Net Debt as Percent of Assessed Valuation</i>
1999-00	\$1,998,237,449	\$541	0.982%
2000-01	2,018,175,000	539	0.928%
2001-02	2,279,430,000	599	0.979%
2002-03	2,524,542,012	653	0.977%
2003-04	2,626,040,942	671	0.929%

*Source: City of Los Angeles, Office of the City Administrative Officer (not adjusted for constant dollars). See the CAO website for detailed information on the city's Debt Management Program ([http://www.lacity.org/cao/Debt\\_Mgmt/index.htm](http://www.lacity.org/cao/Debt_Mgmt/index.htm)).*

## **Lease Obligations**

In addition to bonded debt, the city may also enter into long-term lease obligations. Leases can be undertaken without first obtaining voter approval as long as these agreements meet certain requirements under state law. The city has entered into various lease agreements under which the city must make annual lease payments to occupy public buildings or use equipment necessary for city operations. These lease agreements are made with a non-profit corporation known as the Municipal Improvement Corporation of Los Angeles (MICLA) and established by the city for this purpose. Payments appear in the annual budget as expense items.

The city also has entered certain joint powers authority arrangements, such as with the Los Angeles Convention and Exhibition Center Authority. Securities are issued, either in the form of lease revenue bonds or certificates of participation, which are based upon these lease agreements. Both of these financing arrangements are lease obligations of the city's general fund.

[ 10 ]

participation in  
city government

Compared to cities with strong party organizations and a long tradition of civic involvement, Los Angeles can seem politically disconnected. Levels of political activity are relatively low. The 2000 charter sought to improve opportunities for participation in Los Angeles by creating neighborhood councils and area planning commissions. Hopefully, these changes will result in a more active populace and greater public input into City Hall.

While media coverage of Los Angeles city government does not compare to that of New York City, where local politics is a vastly popular sport, there are ways to follow City Hall events in person, via telephone and on television. The city government has used advances in technology to improve the public's access to information and to foster greater input into the decision making process. Agendas for upcoming meetings of the city council, council committees, city commissions, and other city boards covered by the Brown Act are now available on the city's web site. This system also allows members of the public to establish a free electronic subscription service to particular agendas. The city council and council committee meetings and selected commission meetings can be viewed (live or taped) on the city's cable channel "LA Cityview Channel 35" or streaming on the web at [www.lacity.org](http://www.lacity.org).

The public may also listen to these meetings via a live, dial-in telephone service. The city web site provides other information-gathering tools including the council voting record, electronic access to the reports underlying items on the agendas, and a historical record of previous council actions.

Certified neighborhood councils can submit community impact statements, either electronically or via letter, indicating their positions on pending legislative matters for inclusion on the agenda itself. The city's Information Technology Agency, in conjunction with the city clerk, has developed a pilot program to allow the public to testify before the city council via video feed from remote locations. In addition to the use of electronic communication, the city council and its committees schedule meetings in various parts of the city throughout the year.

In addition to these opportunities, Los Angeles residents have several formal avenues to influence city hall: representative democracy, direct democracy and neighborhood participation.

## Representative Democracy

Voter turnout has been only moderate in Los Angeles. This is consistent with general patterns of nonpartisan cities with elections in odd-numbered years, rather than in even-numbered years when there are partisan state and federal races on the ballot that normally increase turnout. Turnout in Los Angeles may be further reduced by confusion among voters about the jurisdictions within which they live.

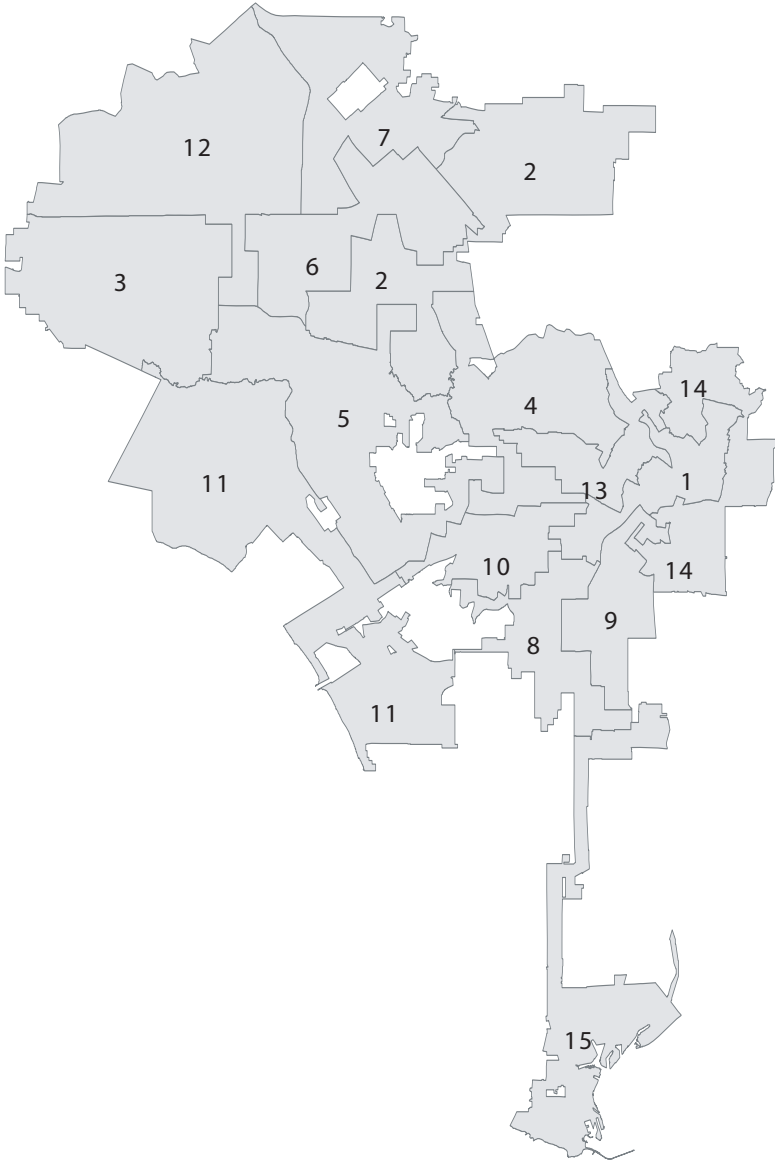
All city candidates run for four-year terms unless they are seeking to complete the unexpired term of an elected official who has vacated the office. All Los Angeles voters have the opportunity to vote for the citywide offices of mayor, controller and city attorney. Council members are elected from 15 districts. Half of the council seats are up for election every two years. The citywide offices and the odd-numbered council seats were open in 2001, the even-numbered seats in 2003, the citywide offices and the odd numbered ones again in 2005, and so on.

Candidates for city offices run on a nonpartisan primary ballot. No party designation appears on the ballot (*Charter Section 424b*). If one candidate wins a majority (more than 50 percent) of the vote in the primary, he or she is elected. If no candidate receives a majority, a runoff is held between the top two candidates.

Any registered voter is eligible to run for office if he or she lives in the city and, in the case of the council, has lived in the council district, for at least 30 days prior to filing a Declaration of Intention of Candidacy with the city clerk. A candidate for city attorney must also have been qualified to practice law in California for the prior five years. A candidate is disqualified from running for office if he or she has been convicted of a felony or, under certain circumstances, was convicted of a conflict of interest or governmental ethics charge within the preceding five years.

In order to become a candidate for a city office for a regularly scheduled municipal election, a resident must file a Declaration of Intention to become a candidate not earlier than 120 days, nor later than 115 days prior to the primary nominating election. The filing period for special elections held to fill a vacancy is set by the ordinance ordering the special election. A nominating petition must be signed by 500 registered voters whether from the city as a whole for at-large elections, or from the council or school board district within which the election will be held. In addition,

# City of Los Angeles City Council Districts 2006



*Created by: Mark Drayse, Department of Geography, California State University, Fullerton*



the candidate must pay a filing fee. In lieu of paying the fee, the candidate may submit a petition signed by 1,000 registered voters. Certified write-in candidates are allowed in both the primary and general elections.

Absentee ballots are widely used by Los Angeles voters. Absentee or vote-by-mail ballots now generally account for 25 to 30 percent of the ballots cast in municipal elections. State law allows absentee-only elections, but only in very limited circumstances. If the city wishes to conduct all-absentee elections with greater flexibility than state law currently offers, the charter would have to be amended. Voters turned down such an amendment in 1997. Ironically, the measure failed to pass even among those who voted by mail.

Vacancies in elective offices can be filled in one of two ways: appointment by the city council or by special election. The council cannot appoint someone to fill a vacancy if more than half of the four-year term remains. In that case, the council may appoint someone to fill the vacancy until June 30 of the next odd-numbered year. A special election must be held to fill the remaining two-year portion of the term.

The council may also choose to hold a special election instead of appointing a replacement office holder. If the vacant office is in the city council, the council president will appoint a “caretaker” to ensure that constituent services are provided and to work with other council members to process legislation related to the district until a new office holder is seated. Traditionally, the chief legislative analyst (CLA) has been appointed to act as the caretaker; however, the council president may appoint another person to fulfill that task.

In 1993, the voters amended the city charter to limit the time that city elected officials may serve to no more than two terms. The time served by someone appointed or elected to serve out less than two years of an unexpired term does not count toward the term limit requirement. The implementation of term limits has accelerated the turnover in elective city offices and has increased the number of special elections being held to fill unanticipated vacancies.

Candidates for city offices are subject to the city’s campaign finance laws and may participate in the system of public financing of campaigns. These laws and rules, passed by the voters in a 1990 election, are set forth in Charter Sections 470-71. Los Angeles has one of the toughest campaign finance laws in the nation.

## Campaign Finance Laws

### Campaign Spending Limits

To qualify for the matching funds program, city candidates must agree to limit their spending in the primary election and for the general election as follows:

	<i>Primary Election</i>	<i>General Election</i>
Mayor	\$2,251,000	\$1,800,000
City Attorney	\$1,013,000	\$788,000
Controller	\$900,000	\$676,000
City Council	\$330,000	\$275,000

### Personal Funds

To qualify for the matching funds program, a city candidate must agree to limit personal spending for the primary election and for the general election as follows:

	<i>Primary Election</i>	<i>General Election</i>
Mayor	\$100,000	\$100,000
City Attorney	\$100,000	\$100,000
Controller	\$100,000	\$100,000
City Council	\$25,000	\$25,000

### Maximum Available Matching Funds For Participation\*

The matching funds system establishes limits on the maximum public funds available to each qualified candidate in the primary and general elections. The limits are as follows:

	<i>Primary Election</i>	<i>General Election</i>
Mayor	\$667,000	\$800,000
City Attorney	\$300,000	\$350,000
Controller	\$267,000	\$300,000
City Council	\$100,000	\$125,000

*\* A limited amount of additional matching funds may be available for the general election to participating candidates when: (1) a significant amount of certain non-candidate spending (any combination of independent expenditures and member communications) occurs in his or her race; or (2) his or her opponent is a nonparticipating candidate who uses a significant amount of personal funds in the election and exceeds the spending limit listed above.*

Source: <http://ethics.lacity.org/Election/2003/mfoverview.cfm> (verbatim)

No person may donate to the campaign of a candidate who has not filed a Declaration of Intent to Solicit and Receive Contributions. No person may donate more than \$500 to any city council candidate or committee controlled by that candidate in a single election, or more than \$1,000 to any citywide candidate. However, because of the Supreme Court ruling in *Buckley vs. Valeo* (1976), the charter cannot limit the amount a candidate may contribute from his or her own personal funds to his or her own campaign.

In addition, a person may give a contribution of no more than \$500 to a campaign committee not controlled by a candidate if it supports or opposes a city candidate. The council can by ordinance adjust charter contribution limits to take into account changes in the cost of living.

The charter limits contributions from organizations. Charter Section 470c(7A) states that no city council campaign can accept in a single election more than \$150,000 from “persons, other than individuals”; the limits for controller and city attorney are \$400,000 and for mayor \$900,000. These limits, however, will not apply to any candidate if one candidate in the race decides to forgo public financing and either accepts contributions, or makes expenditures, in excess of the applicable spending limits.

The charter also limits loans to candidates, because if loans must be paid back after the campaign, the public will have little idea who supported the candidate until after the election is over.

The charter requires the city council to create, by ordinance, a system of public financing of some of the costs of city campaigns with concurrent limits on campaign expenditures for those who agree to participate in that system. (*See “Campaign Finance Laws,” page 160.*)

Wealthy candidates always have the option of going around the system. Independent campaign committees have played an increasing role in city elections with consequences that have eroded the principles of public accountability. Yet the intent of the campaign finance law has been met in many ways, as candidates seek to raise and spend funds on a more level playing field.

## Direct Democracy

### Initiative

The initiative (*Charter Sections 450-455*) allows the voters to write a law. Those who wish to submit an initiative must submit a draft of the petition to the city clerk. The city attorney must then give the measure a title and provide a summary of its provisions, which then becomes part of the petition to be circulated to the voters.

The petition must be signed by registered voters equal to 15 percent of the total number of votes cast for all candidates for mayor in the most recent mayoral election. For example, in the 2005 mayoral runoff election, 493,084 ballots were cast for mayor. Until the next mayoral election, petitions for initiatives would require the valid signatures of 73,963 registered voters out of the city's total registration of roughly 1.5 million voters.

All signatures must be gathered within a 120-day period. No signatures gathered earlier than 120 days before filing will be accepted. Once the petition is filed, the city clerk will examine it and issue a certificate of sufficiency or insufficiency. This decision is not reviewable by the city council.

The City Elections Code (*Section 335d*) allows the city clerk to utilize a random sampling method to assess signatures. If a random sampling shows that fewer than 90 percent of the signatures are valid, the petition can be declared insufficient. If the sample reveals that more than 110 percent of the required signatures are valid, the petition can be declared sufficient. If the sample shows a result between 90 percent and 110 percent, then each signature must be examined individually to determine the sufficiency or insufficiency of the petition.

If the clerk certifies the sufficiency of signatures on the petition, the council has 20 days to act. The council must either adopt the measure as an ordinance and present it to the mayor for signature or veto, or place it on the ballot either by a special election or at the next scheduled city election. If the petition is designed to overturn an ordinance previously adopted by the voters, the city council must place it on the ballot; it cannot simply adopt the proposed ordinance.

If the initiative measure is passed by a majority of the voters, it becomes law. Because it was adopted by the voters, it cannot be overturned by the city council, but only by another voter-directed effort.

## Referendum

A referendum may take place under two circumstances. First, the city council itself may place before the voters an ordinance that the council is considering. This is done when the council wants to obtain voter approval before enacting an ordinance. In the second case, a group of citizens uses the referendum process in an effort to prevent an ordinance from going into effect.

The signature requirements and time frame for submission make referenda exceptionally difficult to accomplish. The number of signatures must be equal to 10 percent of all votes cast in the preceding mayoral election. All signatures must be obtained within 30 days after publication of the ordinance. If voters manage to meet the bar and submit signatures, the council can repeal the ordinance, thereby eliminating the need for the election. Or, the council can call a special election or schedule the measure for the next city election, if it is more than 110 days away.

## Recall

Most Americans know about the recall because of the dramatic removal of California Governor Gray Davis in a statewide recall in 2003 and his replacement by Arnold Schwarzenegger. But the recall is much more familiar to local elected officials in California, who have seen city council and school board members removed by the voters on more than one occasion.

Most people know that elected officials in Los Angeles can be recalled from office. Very few people know that all officers of the city, elected or appointed, are subject to the recall, as provided in Section 200 of the charter. This includes city commissioners and general managers and executive directors of city departments.

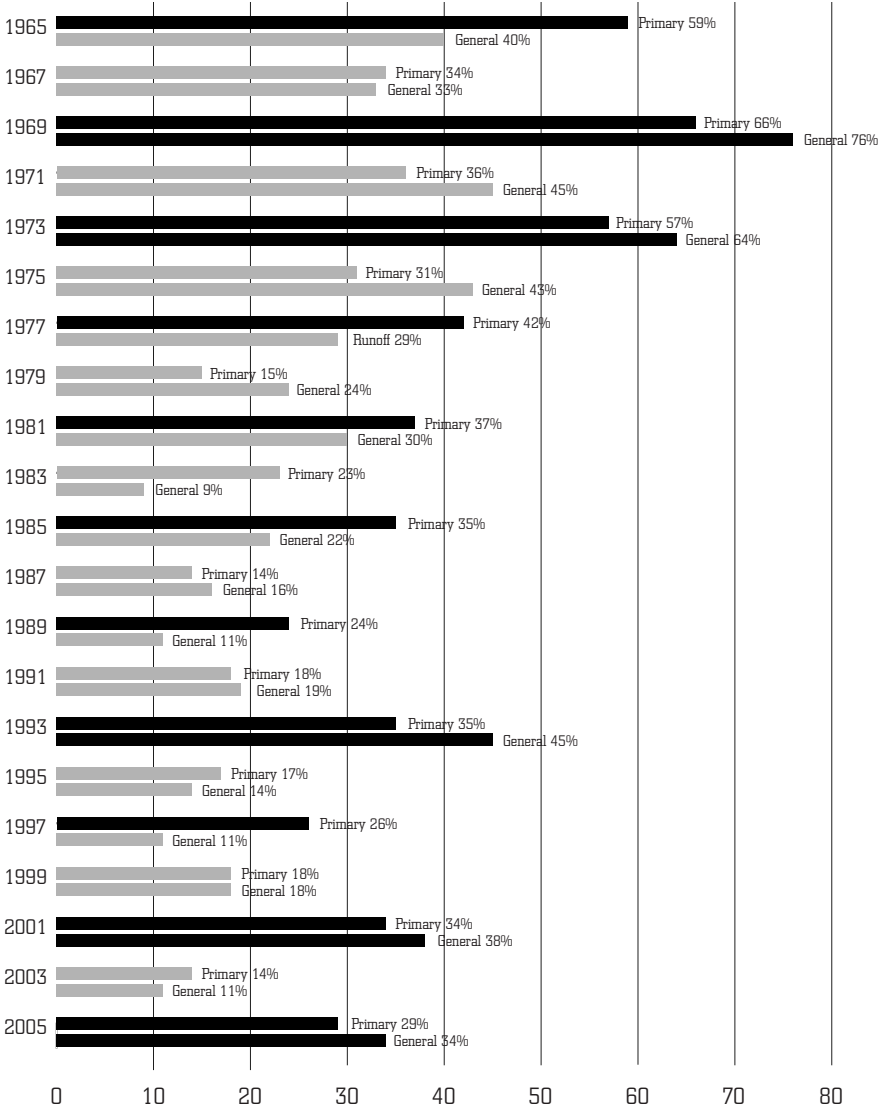
For elected officials, the recall process (*Charter Section 430-440*) begins with a petition signed by at least 15 percent of the registered voters. For appointed officers of the city government, the requirement is 20 percent of the entire vote cast in the race for mayor in the last preceding election. For elected school board members, the requirement is 15 percent of the registered voters of the district from which the individual member was elected.

Before circulating a recall petition, proponents must publish a Notice of Intention and a Statement of Reasons. The council may not change or alter the charges made against the officeholder in the petition.

# Voting Turnout in Los Angeles Municipal Elections 1965-2005

**Turnout:** votes cast as a percentage of registration

*Mayoral elections are shown with black bars*



Source: Chart created from data supplied by Los Angeles City Clerk Election Division

An elected official cannot be recalled if he or she has served for less than three months, if there are fewer than six months before the next election at which his or her term expires, or within six months after he or she successfully defeated a recall election (*Section 431b*).

The officer who is the subject of the recall may submit an Answer to the Statement prepared by those who organized the recall. Only after the target of the recall has had a chance to prepare an answer may the petition be circulated. The petition must include the Statement and the Answer, if one has been submitted. Then there are 120 days to get the required number of signatures.

If the city clerk certifies the petitions as valid, the council must call for a special election, or if either a primary or general election is imminent, it must place the recall on that ballot.

In most ways, the city's recall procedure resembles California's. The ballot has two parts: a choice of whether or not to remove the incumbent and a set of replacement candidates if the voters wish to remove the officeholder. In 2005, city voters passed a charter amendment to guarantee that voters would be able to vote for a replacement candidate even if they did not cast a vote on the recall itself.

One major difference between the state and city recall rules is that in the state system, the replacement candidate with the most votes (a plurality) is declared elected. With many strong replacement candidates, a governor could be recalled and a new governor could be elected who has received fewer votes than those who opposed the recall and presumably favored the incumbent governor. In Los Angeles, the replacement election requires a majority vote. If no replacement candidate receives a majority, a runoff election will be held between the top two candidates.

## **City Ethics Commission**

Established by a voter-approved ethics measure in 1990, the City Ethics Commission is charged with administering the city's campaign laws. Article VII of the charter is devoted to the Ethics Commission and to the Office of the Special Prosecutor.

Because of the great importance of the Ethics Commission and the weight its pronouncements can have in city government, its appointment method differs from that of other commissions. There are five members

of the Ethics Commission. Unlike other commissions, the members of which are appointed by the mayor, ethics commissioners are chosen by the mayor, the city attorney, the controller, the president of the council and the president pro tempore of the council. Each appointment must be confirmed by a majority of the city council.

It is harder to remove an ethics commissioner than any other city commissioner. The mayor can only remove a commissioner with a majority vote of the council. The council, by a two-thirds vote, may remove a commissioner. But unlike with any other commissioner, the removal of an ethics commissioner must be for “substantial neglect of duty, gross misconduct in office, inability to discharge the powers and duties of office or violation of this Article, after written notice of the grounds on which removal is sought and an opportunity for a reply” (*Charter Section 700e*). Replacement of a commissioner who has either been removed or has vacated the office is performed by the original appointing authority.

In addition to the normal restrictions on city commissioners, ethics commissioners may not hold any other public office, join or donate to a city election campaign or any city official’s campaign for another office, or employ or be employed by a lobbyist registered with the city. An ethics commissioner may not run for an office that has been the subject of a commission decision during his or her tenure for two years after leaving the commission. These restrictions also apply to the executive director.

The commission hires and may remove an executive director, whose position is exempt from civil service. He or she can be removed by the commission at will. The executive director, in turn, hires and may remove a professional staff also exempt from civil service.

The commission is charged with enforcing all city laws concerning campaign finance, lobbying, conflict of interest and governmental ethics. The commission receives and audits disclosure statements and campaign filing statements by city officials and candidates. The commission is also mandated to maintain a whistle-blower hotline. The commission cannot criminally prosecute violations but can refer those cases to the city attorney or to the district attorney. The commission can hold administrative hearings and fine violators.

In addition to these functions, the commission plays an educational role about ethics laws within the city government. As each department develops conflict of interest codes, the Ethics Commission is expected to assist. The commission also helps departments and citizens comply with



## The Brown Act

*“In enacting this chapter, the Legislature finds and declares that the public commissions, boards and Councils and the other public agencies in this State exist to aid in the conduct of the people’s business. It is the intent of the law that their actions be taken openly and that their deliberations be conducted openly.... All meetings of the legislative body of a local agency shall be open and public, and all persons shall be permitted to attend any meeting of the legislative body of a local agency, except as otherwise provided in this chapter.”*

Spurred by an investigative series by *San Francisco Chronicle* reporter Michael Harris, Modesto Assembly member and future Speaker Ralph M. Brown introduced legislation to force local governments to open their meetings to the public. In 1953, Governor Earl Warren signed into law the Ralph M. Brown Act, one of the most far-reaching open government measures in history.

According to the California Attorney General’s summary, the Brown Act, which is now entering its second half century, includes, but is not limited to, the following provisions:

- Covers city councils, boards of supervisors, and district boards as well as subsidiary boards or commissions and standing committees of legislative bodies.
- Includes any gathering of a quorum of a body to discuss or transact business; no serial meetings (one member calls another member who calls another member...) are allowed.
- Teleconferences are only allowed under controlled circumstances.
- The public may comment on agenda items; time must be set aside for this purpose.
- The public may not be asked to register or identify themselves or pay fees in order to attend public meetings.
- Agendas that briefly describe each item to be discussed must be posted at least 72 hours before a meeting.
- Some items may call for closed sessions, such as personnel, public security, pending litigation.

*Source: California Attorney General, 2003. The Brown Act: Open Meetings for Local Legislative Bodies.*

the provisions of the law. Specifically, the commission conducts seminars for newly elected officials, commissioners, lobbyists and potential candidates, and develops reports and manuals on laws regarding city campaigns, ethics and lobbying.

The commission recommends to the mayor and council new laws regarding campaigns, ethics, and lobbying. In this task, the commission must rely on its moral authority, and it often has an uphill battle getting these laws through the legislative juggernaut. The commission can draw on the “good government” organizations of the community, such as the League of Women Voters, to make its case. The commission is well-suited to keep up with the rapidly-evolving nature of political campaigns. In 2005, for example, the commission planned to explore the impact of candidate-controlled ballot measures. Shortly after his election in 2005, Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa proposed a series of new laws regarding lobbying and city commissions. The commission proposed council consideration of a fully-funded “clean money” campaign finance system in 2005.

The commission is also an investigative body that can subpoena witnesses and compel their attendance, take evidence, and demand the production of documents. The charter mandates that its investigations be conducted confidentially. The commission works with the city attorney or the district attorney as appropriate on enforcement cases. If the city attorney determines that he or she has a conflict of interest, and therefore cannot prosecute or investigate a specific alleged violation, the commission may by a four-fifths vote appoint a Special Prosecutor.

The Special Prosecutor is named by a panel of three retired judges previously selected by the commission for this task. The charter requires the appropriation of \$250,000 every year for a Special Prosecutor. In 2005-06, this amount represented more than 10 percent of the commission’s annual budget of \$2.38 million. The commission alone may remove a Special Prosecutor, but only for serious cause.

Finally, in order to protect the independence of the Ethics Commission, the council must appropriate funds at least one year in advance of each fiscal year. This requirement is meant to ensure that the council cannot punish the Ethics Commission by withholding its expected budget.

## Neighborhood Councils

One of the most remarkable innovations in modern Los Angeles government is the system of neighborhood councils established in the 2000 charter. A long history of battles for citizen participation culminated in the creation of a new system of participatory democracy (*Pitt 2004*).

With its far-flung municipal boundaries, its small number of elected officials, and its history of annexation, Los Angeles has long been challenged to find more ways to connect neighborhood concerns to City Hall. Early proposals called for borough systems of government to link areas like Wilmington and San Pedro to the city.

Most such proposals made little progress through City Hall, and elected officials found their own ways to increase citizen participation. Mayor Tom Bradley hosted monthly open houses, at which any resident could ask questions or seek assistance. He increased the diversity of city commissioners so that City Hall would be more involved in the community. The Police Department developed Neighborhood Watch programs and a Senior Lead Officer program. Some council members established their own advisory neighborhood councils in their districts. Council Member Mark Ridley-Thomas went further and established the Empowerment Congress, devoting one-third of his office budget to make it work. But still no citywide policy or program emerged.

In 1996, Council Member Joel Wachs offered the first proposed ordinance to establish a system of neighborhood councils. Although the measure failed to make it to the council floor, Wachs remained a staunch advocate of neighborhood councils.

The dynamic of Los Angeles government changed dramatically with the rise of the secession movement in the San Fernando Valley in the mid-1990s. As Valley secession grew in force (with accompanying efforts in the San Pedro area and in Hollywood), the city began to seriously explore neighborhood empowerment. The two charter commissions decided to create neighborhood councils, and their inclusion in the new charter was a major advance.

There were major debates within the charter reform commissions about the powers such neighborhood councils should have. Some believed that elected, decision-making neighborhood councils should control land use. After examining neighborhood councils in other cities (in which all such systems were advisory), the commissions reached agreement that they should be advisory only. However, there was strong sentiment that these neighborhood councils should be fully integrated into the city's decision-making process, and that they should be heard in a manner that would allow them to be effective (*Bickhart 1998; Sonenshein 2004*).

The 2000 charter (Article IX) established a mandatory system of neighborhood councils for Los Angeles. The goal was for the system to become as broadly-based as possible. The charter specified that "neighborhood council membership will be open to everyone who lives, works or owns property in the area" (*Section 906*). Because participation in neighborhood councils is not limited to those living within the boundaries of the neighborhood council or those who are registered voters, non-citizens and other non-resident stakeholders can participate.

The funding for the neighborhood councils must be provided at least one year in advance, similar to the funding for the Ethics Commission. Unlike other portions of the new charter that were implemented on July 1, 2000, the provisions on neighborhood councils went into effect immediately upon voter passage of the charter in 1999.

The Department of Neighborhood Empowerment (DONE) was established in the charter. Advised by a seven-member Board of Neighborhood Commissioners (BONC), the department is charged with designing and running the system. The charter includes a prohibition against shifting powers from the DONE for five years. Without such a provision, Charter Section 514 would have allowed the mayor and council to shift even a charter-created department's powers and duties with a two-thirds vote of the council and the mayor's signature. Section 912 of the charter mandates that the city appoint a commission to review the neighborhood governance system seven years after its adoption. In 2006, the city established a Neighborhood Council Review Commission (nicknamed the 912 Commission) to evaluate the neighborhood council system.

The charter required that the city council adopt a plan and regulations to implement the system of neighborhood councils within one year of the establishment of the DONE and the BONC. An ordinance was

## Neighborhood Councils and the Brown Act

When Los Angeles adopted a system of neighborhood councils in 1999, the question arose whether or not these advisory bodies would be covered by the Brown Act. The city attorney's office determined that, as bodies created by the city government, neighborhood councils must comply with the open meetings provisions of the Brown Act.

The city attorney has a Neighborhood Council Advice Division to advise both the Department of Neighborhood Empowerment and the neighborhood councils. This division works with the department and the neighborhood councils on a host of legal issues, including Brown Act compliance, elections and certification.

Debate continues on whether or not the Brown Act, in its entirety, should apply to neighborhood councils, or whether a modified version of the Brown Act might be developed with the assistance of state lawmakers.

### **Neighborhood Council Highlights as of 2006**

*from the Department of Neighborhood Empowerment*

*Number of certified Neighborhood Councils: 86*

*Smallest: 7,323 residents*

(Elysian Valley Riverside Neighborhood Council)

*Largest: 103,364 residents*

(Wilshire Center-Koreatown Neighborhood Council)

*Largest board of directors: 51*

(Boyle Heights Neighborhood Council)

*First election: 4-17-02*

(Central San Pedro Neighborhood Council)

*Largest election turnout: 2,245*

(Greater Wilshire Neighborhood Council on 6-15-05)

## Where Do I Live?

Living in Los Angeles can be a bewildering experience for the resident who wants to become involved in government. Who represents me, and how can I contact them?

The first complication is that the county of Los Angeles includes the city of Los Angeles within it. The county largely handles social services, but also includes the Sheriff's Department. The sheriff serves those areas of Los Angeles County that are not incorporated as cities, and also those cities that contract with the county for law enforcement services. The city of Los Angeles, of course, has its own Police Department. Los Angeles County is by population the largest in the United States, with more than 10 million people. It is governed by a five-member elected board of supervisors. Every Los Angeles city resident is within one county supervisorial district. Every resident of Los Angeles city is also within one of 15 city council districts.

There are independent cities that are surrounded by the city of Los Angeles. This can be quite confusing. Beverly Hills, Santa Monica, Culver City and San Fernando are separate from Los Angeles city and have their own elected officials. If you live in those cities, you cannot vote in Los Angeles city elections.

If you are a resident of the city of Los Angeles, no matter what neighborhood you live in, you are represented by three citywide elected officials: the mayor, the city controller and the city attorney; you are also represented by one of the 15 city council members who are elected by district.

The city of Los Angeles website ([www.lacity.org](http://www.lacity.org)) provides an easy way to find your local city council member, as well as your state and federal officials, your neighborhood council, and even your zip code. Just put your address into the box for "My Neighborhood."

[www.lacity.org](http://www.lacity.org)

"My Neighborhood"

adopted, effective August 30, 1999, and placed in the Administrative Code (Chapter 28), which set forth the duties of the DONE and the Board of Neighborhood Commissioners. The plan for a citywide system of neighborhood councils and the accompanying regulations in ordinance format (Ordinance Number 174006) were adopted by the city council in May 2001.

The ordinance clarified the role of the commission, which had been vague in the charter, specifying that the general manager is the head of the department. The commission has seven members, with an emphasis on diversity. The board has policy authority but no management responsibility. The ordinance delegated to the department the development of a formal plan, a detailed early notification system, and the linkage of that system with the Information Technology Agency.

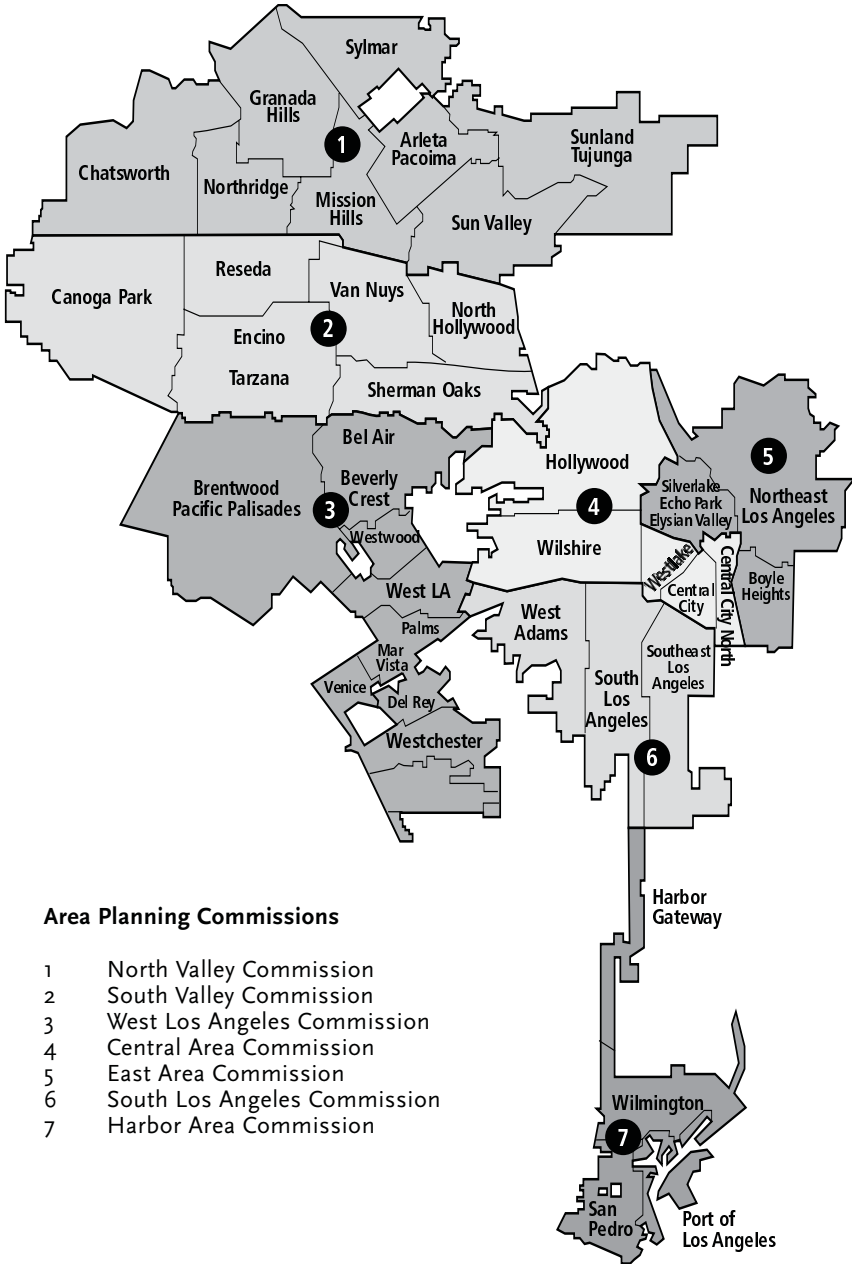
The new system is built around the principle of “self-selection.” Neighborhoods generate their own proposals for neighborhood council certification that specify their process of selecting officers and making other decisions. This proposal is presented to the department and then to the Board of Neighborhood Commissioners for certification.

In practice, potential neighborhood councils are required to prepare an application for certification, proposing in most cases to represent an area no smaller than 20,000 stakeholders. They are free to propose their own boundaries as long as they do not overlap with other councils. Applicants are required to gather between 200 and 500 signatures from local stakeholders.

Each council proposes a method of selecting officers, with the limitation that no single community stakeholder group can comprise a majority of a certified neighborhood council’s governing body. Furthermore, no person may serve more than eight consecutive years in office. Applications for certification first go to DONE staff for a recommendation, and then to the commission. A rejection at that level may be appealed to the city council, which must place the item on the council agenda and can by a two-thirds vote overturn the rejection. There is a process for decertification of a neighborhood council. DONE’s recommendation to decertify would be taken to the commission. A neighborhood council may also ask to be decertified.

Once certified, neighborhood councils are to have access to an early warning system to receive notification of upcoming decisions by governmental bodies, including the city council and city boards and

## Area Planning Commissions and Community Planning Areas



### Area Planning Commissions

- 1 North Valley Commission
- 2 South Valley Commission
- 3 West Los Angeles Commission
- 4 Central Area Commission
- 5 East Area Commission
- 6 South Los Angeles Commission
- 7 Harbor Area Commission



commissions. Formal opportunities for input are to be created before such decisions are made and before the mayor's budget is submitted.

An early notification system was developed by DONE and the Information Technology Agency (ITA) built around the city's website. Residents can place themselves on a list for email notification of agendas of various government bodies. By inputting an address, residents can also find out which neighborhood councils are active in their area.

By 2004, certification had been received for 85 out of 97 proposed neighborhood councils, covering 3.1 million of the city's nearly 4 million residents. Neighborhood councils had already taken an active role in city debates over home burglar alarms and DWP utility rates.

## **Area Planning Commissions**

The neighborhood council system does not have formal decision-making authority over land use. However, the charter commissions did make a significant change to take some land use authority out of City Hall, through the creation of Area Planning Commissions (APCs).

Under the previous charter, only the city council, the City Planning Commission, and the staff of the Planning Department were involved in land use approvals. Appeals of even relatively small land use matters would have to be taken to City Hall.

Under the new charter, the city was directed to create at least five APCs in regions of the city. By ordinance, the city council expanded the number of APCs to seven.

The members of these commissions are appointed by the mayor, confirmed by the city council, and may be removed by the mayor alone. Each commission has five members, all of whom must live within the region served by the APC.

The powers of the APCs include hearing appeals of land use decisions made by city planning staff, such as variances from zoning regulations. Previously, such appeals would have gone to the Board of Zoning Appeals, which was eliminated in the new charter. Decisions of APCs can be appealed to the City Planning Commission or the city council, but not to both. The APCs may also exercise additional powers granted to them by the city council.

Some advocates of boroughs (self-governing entities within the city) hope that the Area Planning Commissions will someday become the template for such a decentralized system of land use governance.

## **Community Access Television**

When cable came to American cities some decades ago, the federal government sought to guarantee adequate public information and community access. Access channels were to be provided by cable providers (who often have monopolies granted by city governments) in negotiations with cities. There are three categories of access channels, referred to as PEG: public, education and government. In Los Angeles, public access is regulated by the cable companies themselves. Government access is provided by Channel 35, which is operated by the Information Technology Agency (ITA). Channel 35 televises council meetings and other activities of government.

The education side is operated by a non-profit organization, the Los Angeles Cable Television Access Corporation (LACTAC) and broadcasts on Channel 36. Channel 36 covers local election campaigns and debates and can range farther afield than Channel 35, which is the government broadcaster of record. As a non-profit organization, it can raise additional funds and also collects program and production service fees. It works closely with local universities and with the League of Women Voters, and even covers state and national elections. Channels 35 and 36 are widely watched by the city's cable audience, which in 2004 included roughly 640,000 homes.

Both channels get most of their revenues from the same source: payments to the city treasury by cable franchises. The city takes five percent of the gross revenue of all cable operations in the city. Of these funds, roughly 40 percent goes into the Telecommunication Development Account, which pays both for regulation of cable and for Channels 35 and 36. The 15-year agreements that the city negotiated with most of the cable operators ran out in 2002, and the city's cable system has been operating on extensions since then. The franchises must be negotiated by the Board of Information Technology Commissioners and then approved by the city council. Renegotiation of the cable franchises will provide an opportunity to incorporate new technology into the system.



the city government  
as an employer

In addition to delivering services to the residents of Los Angeles, the city is also an employer. Thousands of people work for the city, and they have rights and obligations that are enshrined in the charter, the Los Angeles Administrative Code, civil service rules, labor agreements known as memoranda of understanding (MOUs), and other ordinances. Furthermore, city employees have protections in state and federal laws.

There are two primary elements that currently govern the city as an employer: the civil service system and the labor relations program authorized under the Employee Relations Ordinance. These elements are intertwined.

The city workforce is more than 45,000 strong (see table below), divided among general civilian and sworn employees, and employees of the proprietary departments. Of the total number of employees, approximately 97 percent are represented by 23 unions in 50 different bargaining units.

### **City Employment, 2005-06**

General Civilian	22,324
Sworn – Police	10,215
Sworn – Fire	3,562
Proprietary – Airports	3,237
Proprietary – Harbor	858
Proprietary – Water and Power	8,575
<b>Total</b>	<b>48,771</b>

*Source: 2005-06 Proposed Budget, Detail of Positions and Salaries*

## **Personnel Department and Civil Service Commission**

The new city charter was revised and reorganized so that employment provisions would be easier to find in one place. Many of the duties of the Personnel Department are outlined in Volume II of the charter, entitled “Employment Provisions” (*Sections 1000-1630*). Charter Sections 540-542 establish the Personnel Department to carry out the rules and regulations set by the Civil Service Commission.

The department recruits and examines applicants to obtain the best possible city employees. It also administers a number of other employment programs, such as position classification, employment opportunity and training, safety, workers' compensation, medical services and employee benefits.

The city's civil service system was created in 1903, through the centralization of the city's personnel functions under a Civil Service Department. The Civil Service Department was completely reorganized in 1939. The department was formally renamed the Personnel Department through a charter amendment passed in 1967. In 1971, the city's Equal Employment Opportunity/Affirmative Action program was assumed by the department.

The vast majority of city employees are covered by the civil service system. Civil service is a pillar of local government in the United States. The purpose of civil service is to prevent political patronage from dominating decisions on city employment. Without a strong civil service system, city jobs that ought to be allocated on the basis of qualifications might instead go to those who have political connections.

The civil service system is based on the idea that the city government should search for those people with the skills and experience to do each city job. A system of examinations and other measures of skill and experience is central to civil service. In addition, employees are to be protected from arbitrary suspension or firing.

The protection of employee rights sometimes appears inconsistent with other goals of good government, such as efficiency and responsiveness. One area of reform has been to increase the number of exempt employees who are not subject to the provisions of civil service and can be fired at will. Usually reserved for the top positions of city government, these exemptions apply to employees who are directly accountable to public officials and manage civil service employees who carry out most of the functions of government.

Los Angeles voters were long reluctant to increase the ranks of exempt employees, fearing that Los Angeles might become like one of the traditional "machine" and "patronage" cities of the East and Midwest. Mayor Tom Bradley tried unsuccessfully on several occasions to win voter support for an executive service, which would increase the ranks of top-level exempt employees. In 1995, voters finally passed a measure sponsored by Mayor Richard Riordan to exempt department heads from civil

service and to vest their hiring and firing in the mayor, the commissions, and the city council.

The 2000 charter reform refined this change by increasing the exemptions to include many assistant department heads, and by allowing the mayor and council to increase the overall percentage of exempt positions. In addition to these changes, the charter continues to exempt the following positions from civil service:

- Staff of elected officials
- All positions in the office of the city attorney (although, with the exception of the city attorney and some deputies, the employees of this office are covered by their own civil service provisions)
- Executive Director of the Board of Police Commissioners and the Inspector General
- Executive Officer and non-clerical personnel of the City Ethics Commission
- Assistant directors in the CAO's office
- Traffic Manager and Port Warden of the Harbor Department
- Crossing guards
- Physicians and psychologists
- Election officers
- Election-day workers employed by the city clerk

The charter also allows the city to exempt individuals with management, professional, scientific, or expert skills under a procedure that involves approval by the mayor and council. The mayor must send a letter to the council recommending the creation of an exempt position, which only a two-thirds vote of the council may reject. The council may by a two-thirds vote increase the maximum number of exempt positions in this category up to one percent of the city workforce.

Additional exempt positions are made available in the charter to the proprietary departments: 15 for DWP, and 10 to be shared between Airport and Harbor. The charter also exempts certain unskilled laborers, part-time employees, and limited-term grant-funded positions. Despite the increased number of exempt positions, the vast majority of city employees continue to enjoy civil service protection.

The Board of Civil Service Commissioners creates rules for the civil service system, without review by the city council. These rules address

examinations, leaves of absence, transfers, layoffs, and other important aspects of the workplace. As a general principle, all entry level city positions are filled by open, public, competitive examinations, with an emphasis on practical skills actually required for the job (*Section 1005*). With the exception of fire and police positions, age may not be used as a reason to prevent an applicant from taking an examination for city employment. To the greatest extent possible, vacancies are expected to be filled by promotion.

The city of Los Angeles must at times suspend or discharge civil service employees. The rules for termination are different for probationary and non-probationary employees. For entry level and management employees, the probationary period may be up to one year, and for police recruits, it is up to 18 months. Many promotions to new positions require a six-month probation. A probationary employee may be terminated by delivering a written notice setting forth the reasons for termination.

A city employee covered by civil service who has completed probation may be suspended or discharged only for cause, stated in writing. The written notice must be filed with the Board of Civil Service Commissioners, which holds a hearing upon application by the terminated employee. If the board finds that the suspension or termination was not warranted, it may reinstate the employee. However, if the suspension or termination results from a lack of funds or work in a department, it is considered a layoff and is not subject to board review.

## **Labor Relations in the City of Los Angeles**

*It is the purpose of this chapter to promote full communication between public employers and their employees by providing a reasonable method of resolving disputes regarding wages, hours, and other terms and conditions of employment between public employers and public employee organizations....Except as otherwise provided by the legislature, public employees shall have the right to form, join, and participate in the activities of employee organizations of their own choosing for the purpose of representation on all matters of employer-employee relations. (Myers-Milias-Brown Act, 1968)*

In 1936, President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed one of the pillars of the New Deal, the National Labor Relations Act. The NLRA established the right of collective bargaining and made it possible for unions to seek to represent employees throughout the nation. This right of collective bargaining, however, did not extend to state and local government. It was up to the individual states to decide whether they would follow Roosevelt's lead and guarantee representation to local government employees. It was more than three decades before the state of California enshrined similar rights for the employees of its local governments. In 1968, the state legislature passed and Governor Ronald Reagan signed the Myers-Milias-Brown Act (MMBA). The MMBA granted public employees the right of collective bargaining, and set forth in detail the procedures by which classes of employees could select union representation.

### **Employee Relations Board**

In January 1971, the Los Angeles City Council adopted the Employee Relations Ordinance (ERO), in accordance with the Meyers-Milias-Brown Act. The ordinance established policies and procedures for the administration of employer-employee relations in city government and created the Employee Relations Board to oversee its provisions. The ordinance provided for the formal recognition of employee organizations that represent city employees and for meeting-and-conferring with these organizations over wages, hours and other terms and conditions of employment. The agreements are known as memoranda of understanding (MOUs). The ordinance also established procedures for the resolution of disputes arising out of meeting-and-conferring or interpretation of the labor agreements.

Meeting-and-conferring is the mutual obligation of representatives of city management and employee organizations to personally meet within a reasonable time period to exchange information and proposals to reach agreement on matters within the scope of representation. The key difference between meeting-and-conferring and private sector negotiations is that the agreements reached by representatives must be approved by the "determining body," which in most cases is the city council.

The Employee Relations Board (ERB) has five part-time members, all of whom must be qualified neutrals with expertise in the field of labor-management relations. Its powers are similar to the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) and the California Public Employee Relations



Board (PERB). Members of the board are nominated jointly by city management and employee organizations, appointed by the mayor and confirmed by the city council. They serve terms of five years. The board's staff is headed by an executive director.

Other features of the city's employee relations include the following:

- *Executive Employee Relations Committee (EERC)*. Provides bargaining instructions to the city's negotiator and makes recommendations to the city council. The five member committee consists of the mayor, the president of the city council, the president pro tempore of the city council, and the chairs of the council's Finance and Personnel Committees.
- *Council Ratification*. All MOUs negotiated between the city's management representative (the CAO) and the unions must be approved by the city council. Prior to the current charter, compensation matters in the MOUs were also implemented by ordinance adopted by a two-thirds vote. Under the new charter, compensation is implemented solely by MOUs adopted by a majority vote of the council. (For non-represented employees an ordinance adopted by a majority vote is still required.)
- *Impasse Procedures*. The Employee Relations Ordinance provides for two options when the parties cannot reach agreement during the meet-and-confer process: (1) mediation, which is normally conducted by a neutral party from the State Mediation Service; and (2) fact finding. Fact finding is a formal administrative hearing process conducted by a neutral third party selected jointly by the union and the city's negotiator through a process of eliminating names. The report of the fact finder is not binding on the parties.
- *Strikes*. Most city employees have the right to strike. Strikes by city employees may be blocked only if the city demonstrates in court that the strike would result in an imminent threat to the public health and safety, leading a judge to grant a temporary restraining order. However, state law expressly forbids firefighters from striking. While there is no comparable state law forbidding police from striking, courts have generally ruled that strikes by police officers (including sickouts) are illegal.
- *Grievance Procedure*. The ERO requires all MOUs to have a grievance procedure to resolve disputes over interpretation of the MOUs or

other working rules. The final step in the procedure is arbitration by a neutral third party. The report of the arbitrator is binding for all council-controlled departments. For proprietary departments, the report is advisory unless their commissions agree to binding arbitration.

- *Agency Shop.* Authorized under the MMBA, the majority of city MOUs contain an agency shop provision. It requires represented employees, even if they are not union members, to pay a fee to the union if they are members of the bargaining unit.

The CAO is the city's management representative on all matters within the scope of representation of the council and mayor. As management representative, the CAO:

- Negotiates MOUs. On a regular basis, the city negotiates multi-year MOUs with each bargaining unit. It also conducts special negotiations on issues such as changes in retirement benefits, separation pay plans, payroll system modifications, work schedule changes, or impact of reorganizations and new programs.
- Leads or participates in joint labor-management committees on flexible benefits, employee parking, and workers' compensation and safety.
- Advises departments on handling grievances and unfair labor practice hearings.
- Monitors the implementation of Fair Labor Standards Act requirements.
- Issues Employee Relations Bulletins to assist departments in understanding employee relations issues.
- Conducts surveys of salary and benefit practices.
- Recommends salaries for new classifications, and establishes and approves pay grade requests.

Over the years, many employee benefits have been adopted by the council, and since adoption of the Employee Relations Ordinance, such benefits have been negotiated prior to submission to the council. City employees and their dependents and/or domestic partners receive health, dental, life, and disability insurance benefits and access to dependent care reimbursement accounts. They receive compensated time-off bene-

fits including sick, vacation, military, family and bereavement leave. A major element of the employee benefit package is retirement, described below.

## **Retirement and Pensions**

There are three pension and retirement plans for city employees. The Los Angeles City Employees' Retirement System (LACERS) covers civilian employees in all departments except the Department of Water and Power, which has its own system known as the Water and Power Employees' Retirement Plan. Firefighters and police officers are covered by the Fire and Police Pension Plan. The Fire and Police Pension Plan has five tiers, depending on the year in which an eligible employee joined the force. Four of the tiers cover current active employees, and the first tier now includes only retired employees.

The city charter includes considerable detail on pensions. Each of the three pension systems is governed by a citizen commission: the Board of Administration of the Los Angeles City Employees' Retirement System; the Board of Administration of the Water and Power Employees' Retirement Plan; and the Board of Fire and Police Pension Commissioners.

The members of each commission or board have a fiduciary duty to properly oversee the operation of the plan and its investments to ensure that the promised pensions will be provided. The California Constitution in Article XVI, Section 17 (popularly known as Proposition 162) gives the boards sole and exclusive responsibility over the assets of the funds and the investments of those funds. This provision was put in place by a statewide vote to protect against raids on the funds for other purposes. There are important differences (*Charter Section 1104*) between the retirement and pension commissions and other city commissions. A key distinction is that the retirement and pension commissions include elected employee and retired members. Another difference between these commissions and others is that the council may not veto their decisions under Section 245. This provision helps insulate the boards from political pressure.

The Fire and Police Pension Commission has nine members. Five are appointed by the mayor and confirmed by the council. One is an active firefighter elected by the members of the Fire Department. One is

an active police officer elected by the members of the Police Department. One is a retired firefighter elected by the retired members of the Fire Department, and one is a retired police officer elected by the retired members of the Police Department.

The LACERS board has seven members. Four members, one of whom must be a retired member of the LACERS system, are appointed by the mayor. Two members are active employees in the LACERS system, elected by their peers. One is a retired member of the system, elected by retired members.

The Water and Power Pension Board also has seven members. Three members are active employees elected by their fellow employees. Three are ex officio: the general manager of the department, the chief accounting employee of the department, and one member of the Board of Water and Power Commissioners selected by that board. The Board of Water and Power Commissioners also appoints a retired member.

The new charter changed the method of appointment of the general managers of the Department of Fire and Police Pensions and LACERS. Whereas previously the mayor had appointed and removed the general manager with the consent of the city council, the boards now appoint the general manager with the confirmation of the mayor and council, and remove with the approval of the mayor. A fired general manager may appeal the removal to the city council in the same manner as other general managers.

The DWP Pension Board has a different structure than the other two pension boards. It is actually a part of the Department of Water and Power. Its chief administrator is the Plan Manager, appointed and removed by the general manager of the Department of Water and Power. Unlike the administrators of the other two pension plans, the Plan Manager is subject to civil service and is not considered a general manager of a city department.

The charter allows the city council, by ordinance, to develop provisions for civilian employees who are members of LACERS. The details of the plan are contained in the Los Angeles Administrative Code. The Board of Water and Power Commissioners adopts the provisions for its plan. Most of the provisions of the Fire and Police Pension Plans are specified in the charter, although there are some benefits (such as retiree health subsidies) that can be implemented by ordinance.

[ 12 ]

LOOSE ENDS:  
los angeles government  
in the 21st century

The challenge of Los Angeles government has been to build and sustain a city government that will be efficient, effective, and responsive. In 1999, Los Angeles voters passed a new city charter supported by the League of Women Voters of Los Angeles that increased the authority of the mayor and created new institutions to enhance public participation. The new charter has moved Los Angeles forward in the direction of greater participation. The city is consolidating and absorbing these major changes. But further progress is likely to be needed both within the halls of city government and within the community.

The struggle to build the best possible governance structure for Los Angeles will continue well into the 21st century. What are the loose ends to which such civic organizations as the League of Women Voters of Los Angeles will give close attention in the years to come? What are the reform ideas of tomorrow?

An effective democracy depends on a well-designed governance system and a well-informed and engaged citizenry. The political culture of Los Angeles is one of limited political interest, and there are no political party organizations to mobilize voters. Neighborhoods are hard to define and boundaries are fuzzy. With some notable exceptions, the media provide relatively little attention to local public affairs. How can participation be increased and how can the connection between residents and their city government be enhanced?

### **A Larger City Council?**

General law cities in California have five-member city councils. The voters of a charter city, by contrast, can set the size of their city council. The Los Angeles City Council consists of 15 members elected by district. In a city with a population nearing four million, each member represents roughly 270,000 people. These are the largest city council districts of any city in the nation that elects the council by district.

A small city council in a large city means that council members require field offices and staffs to serve their constituents. Large council districts may also disadvantage neighborhoods and groups that are too small to dominate a large district. Asian-Americans, for example, have had their political success limited in Los Angeles by being scattered among several large council districts. The harbor area does not have a

large enough population to have its own council member.

These considerations led the two charter reform commissions to recommend that the council be expanded to either 21 or 25 members. The ballot that contained the new city charter featured measures to give the voters these options to expand the council. Both council measures were defeated by large margins.

Nevertheless, the idea that the Los Angeles City Council should be expanded is likely to reappear. As long as the city can afford to provide field offices for council members, the problem may be less acute. After all, residents make great use of the field offices and council field deputies. If, however, field offices are cut back, the residents may then feel the impact of having large council districts.

At the same time, there are advantages to a relatively small city council. New York City's 51-member and Chicago's 50-member councils are most likely far too large to be effective as governing institutions. The question will be how to balance the advantages of a relatively efficient council with the needs of constituent representation.

## **Local-State Fiscal Reform**

Over the past two decades, cities like Los Angeles have seen their responsibilities grow at the same time that their control over revenues has declined. Proposition 13 (1978) shifted authority over the property tax from cities to the state. Since 1978, cities have seen their revenue bases fluctuate as the state has struggled to solve its own fiscal problems. Through several statewide initiatives, the voters have dramatically limited the revenue and spending options available to local government. Fiscal problems are compounded by the aging of infrastructure. Cities often are forced to defer repairs to aging streets, buildings and sewage treatment facilities in order to maintain traditional service levels.

While taxes for general governmental purposes of a city require a majority vote in a city election, taxes for specific purposes now require a two-thirds vote. Proposed city tax and bond measures often fail despite receiving well over a majority of the vote, but less than the required two-thirds.

Moreover, no property-related fee or charge may be imposed or increased without majority approval by the property owners subject to the

fee or charge or, at the option of the local agency, two-thirds voter approval by the electorate residing in the affected area.

Following the passage of Proposition 13, state and county finances were stretched thin. To partially address its own financial problems, the state shifted funds from cities to other levels of government (e.g., parking fines to counties and property taxes to schools); eliminated traditional sources of city revenues like liquor license fees and the tax on highway users; allocated to counties the penalties associated with property tax collections; and required cities to pay the counties for administering the property tax function and for the booking of prisoners in county jails.

With the decline of property tax revenue, cities have become increasingly reliant on other forms of revenue such as the sales tax. But cities may also be seeing a gradual long-term decline in their sales tax bases as commerce shifts to electronic and catalog sales.

As cities have come to rely more on sales tax as their major controllable revenue source, there has been a growing competition for what amounts to a finite amount of sales tax. In Los Angeles County, there are 88 incorporated cities. So it is common for residents of one city to make retail purchases in a neighboring city and thereby generate sales tax revenue for that city. This has prompted some cities to compete for “big box” retail stores by offering incentives to the retailer in order to generate additional sales tax for their cities. This phenomenon has been called the “fiscalization of land use.” Cities may opt for the big box retail store over other alternatives for available land such as parks, open space and libraries. In recent years, Los Angeles has been an exception, as it has generally “locked out” big box stores. But there remains an incentive for cities to use eminent domain to tear down good housing in order to create space for sales tax producing businesses.

The continuing struggle to balance the state budget has led governors and state legislators to view local budgets as cash cows. As revenue sources are preempted by the state, local taxpayers pay the price in declining services. As California’s largest city, Los Angeles has lost millions of dollars when the state has raided the city budget.

As the state government contemplates its long-standing budget problems, some consideration must be given to reforms that will allow local governments to finance the public services their residents expect and demand.



## **elections**

In 1990, Los Angeles voters approved one of the most innovative and strongest campaign finance laws in the nation, not only implementing voluntary spending limits but also providing public funds for candidates who accept the limits. An Ethics Commission was created to supervise the system and to provide oversight and accountability for the conduct of political campaigns. The League of Women Voters of Los Angeles strongly backed the creation of the campaign finance laws and the Ethics Commission.

Because the U.S. Supreme Court, in its 1976 decision *Buckley vs. Valeo*, excluded self-financed campaigns from the strictures of campaign finance laws, it was only a matter of time before wealthy candidates would make even a progressive publicly financed system like that in Los Angeles fight for its relevance. Furthermore, court decisions have made it difficult for the city to regulate campaign expenditures by independent committees.

Independent expenditures by outside interest groups are becoming a more significant part of Los Angeles elections. Such expenditures skew the playing field in ways that are hard to regulate.

The next generation of campaign reform will have to consider how publicly financed systems like that in Los Angeles can compete with wealthy self-financed candidates and independent committees. Can the public financing system offer sufficient attractions to keep candidates within the system? And how can the city regulate campaign finance within the boundaries of court decisions?

### **Voting Mechanisms**

Increasing interest is being shown in new forms of voting. Voting systems that allow the voter to rank choices among candidates and then to allocate votes proportionately (such as Instant Runoff Voting, or IRV) are gaining increasing attention. In 2004, San Francisco conducted its municipal elections using the instant runoff. This innovation has particular relevance to Los Angeles elections, in which a majority is required in order to avoid a runoff months later. Voter turnout is often lower in the runoff than in the primary. There could be significant advantages to the instant runoff in Los Angeles. On the other hand, the current runoff

system allows a greater focus on the two leading candidates who have qualified for the general election.

### **Term Limits**

In 1993, Los Angeles voters chose to limit elected officials to two terms. As term limits receive heightened scrutiny in California after a decade of experience, the League of Women Voters and other reform organizations will continue to examine their effectiveness.

### **Vote by Mail**

As the core of volunteers willing to staff election polling stations ages, new generations of election workers are not being recruited in sufficient numbers to replace them. In time, it may be difficult to conduct elections with widespread use of polling stations.

For that and other reasons, all-absentee elections may receive enhanced consideration. In an all-absentee election there are no polling places. All registered voters are sent ballots by the elections official, and they cast their votes by mail. Signatures are verified upon receipt of the ballots. The state of Oregon has long conducted its elections by mail vote only and has been rewarded with much higher voter turnouts.

In Los Angeles, the charter would have to be amended to implement this system. Before all-absentee elections can be developed, the public will require assurances that the system is secure from fraud and abuse.

## **Commission System**

The commission system in Los Angeles has defied most efforts to redefine and reorganize its functions. Originally, citizen commissions were designed to draw high-status volunteers into city government.

The new city charter enhanced the authority of the mayor over city commissions. Previously, mayors had to seek the support of a majority of the city council to remove a city commissioner. The new charter gave the mayor the authority to remove most city commissioners unilaterally. The tendency to view commissioners as members of the mayor's administration and not as independent citizen activists has therefore only grown stronger.

The trend over time in Los Angeles has been to reduce the governing authority of citizen commissions and to vest more authority in the elected officials. Yet some commissions, such as those that govern proprietary departments, retain governing authority and the power to issue large contracts. In order to improve the city's system for contracting, it may be valuable to examine the role of commissions in the four departments that let the largest contracts: the three proprietary departments and the Department of Public Works. In particular, the full-time status of the Board of Public Works may be revisited in the future.

## **Contracting**

With increased interest in private-sector contracting as a method to increase the efficiency of city services, considerable discussion has emerged about the best governmental structure to make certain that all city contracts are awarded to the best, most qualified applicants.

The mayor, city commissioners, the city council, the controller, the city attorney, and city departments have the authority to award some contracts depending on type, value and duration. Where should accountability be lodged? Keeping authority in the hands of elected officials has virtues but also problems. Vesting authority over contracts in commissions or in bureaucracies raises issues as well. Reformers will be likely to explore comprehensive reforms, including the establishment of disinterested contract review boards to protect the city's interests in the area of contracts.

## **School District Governance**

Public interest in the school system is always intense, but in recent years there have been increasing calls for a closer relationship between the city government and the school district. Reform proposals have emerged regarding the school district. Some are administrative reforms, such as the district's decentralization program to create area superintendents with some autonomy. Others have called for the breakup of the LAUSD, an idea that was blocked by the state Board of Education.

Mayoral control of the school district has emerged as a possible reform to be developed either through a change in state law or by a local charter amendment. Discussion of school district governance is likely to continue with the consideration of these and other possible governance reforms.

## **A New Regional Government?**

Los Angeles city is a colossus in Los Angeles County. Yet for all its immensity and power, Los Angeles is only one of 88 independent cities in the county. The city must deal with its neighbors on the major decisions that will determine the success of many city programs or policies on airport expansion, air quality, transportation, and even on whether the city will itself break up through secession.

When regional governance has worked well in Southern California, it has scored some major victories. One example is the remarkable success of the South Coast Air Quality Management District (SCAQMD) in reducing levels of pollution in the region. Airport planning, by contrast, has been a disappointment, leaving Los Angeles International Airport overcrowded and its plans to expand capacity criticized and blocked.

Reformers will continue to seek ways to create regional solutions to the great challenges all cities face.

## **Decentralizing City Government**

The secession movements that rocked Los Angeles in the late 1990s forced the city to ask whether Los Angeles can be both large and responsive. City leaders beat back the challenge of secession partly by implementing reforms that decentralized some of the functions of the government and that provided greater neighborhood input into city decisions.

As neighborhood councils and Area Planning Commissions take root in the political culture of Los Angeles, the questions of whether and how to decentralize further are likely to arise. Some have proposed that governing functions over neighborhood matters should be formally decentralized into a system of boroughs, in which local areas have significant governing authority, particularly over land use.

However the city's residents choose to pursue decentralization, the challenge remains of creating and sustaining the responsiveness of government while enjoying the advantages that a large city offers its residents.

## **Expanding Public Awareness**

All proposed reforms of Los Angeles government will benefit from a knowledgeable community with sufficient information about the government to make wise choices. Improvements in the city government's website, the resources of Channels 35 and 36, active citizens' organizations with newsletters and websites, and intrepid reporters who cover Los Angeles city government are all making a contribution to the level of public information.

More needs to be done to make certain that the issues of daily life for residents of the city become part of the ongoing public debate and that media coverage of these matters is increased. With neighborhood residents more and more active, with greater and greater access to governmental information, there is much reason to hope for an engaged citizenry that will expand Los Angeles democracy in the 21st century.



ROBERT QUEZADA

*Appendix A:*  
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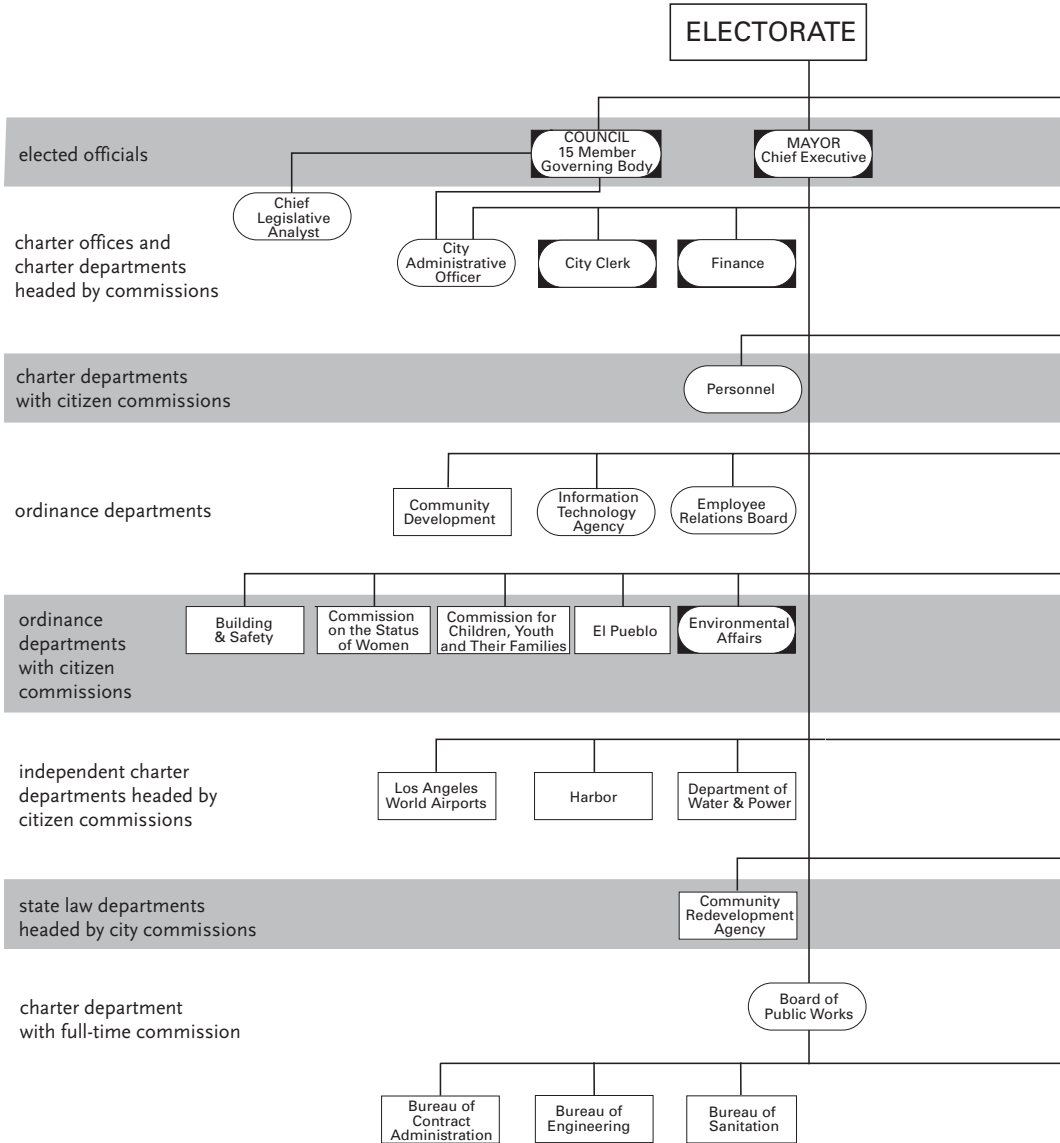
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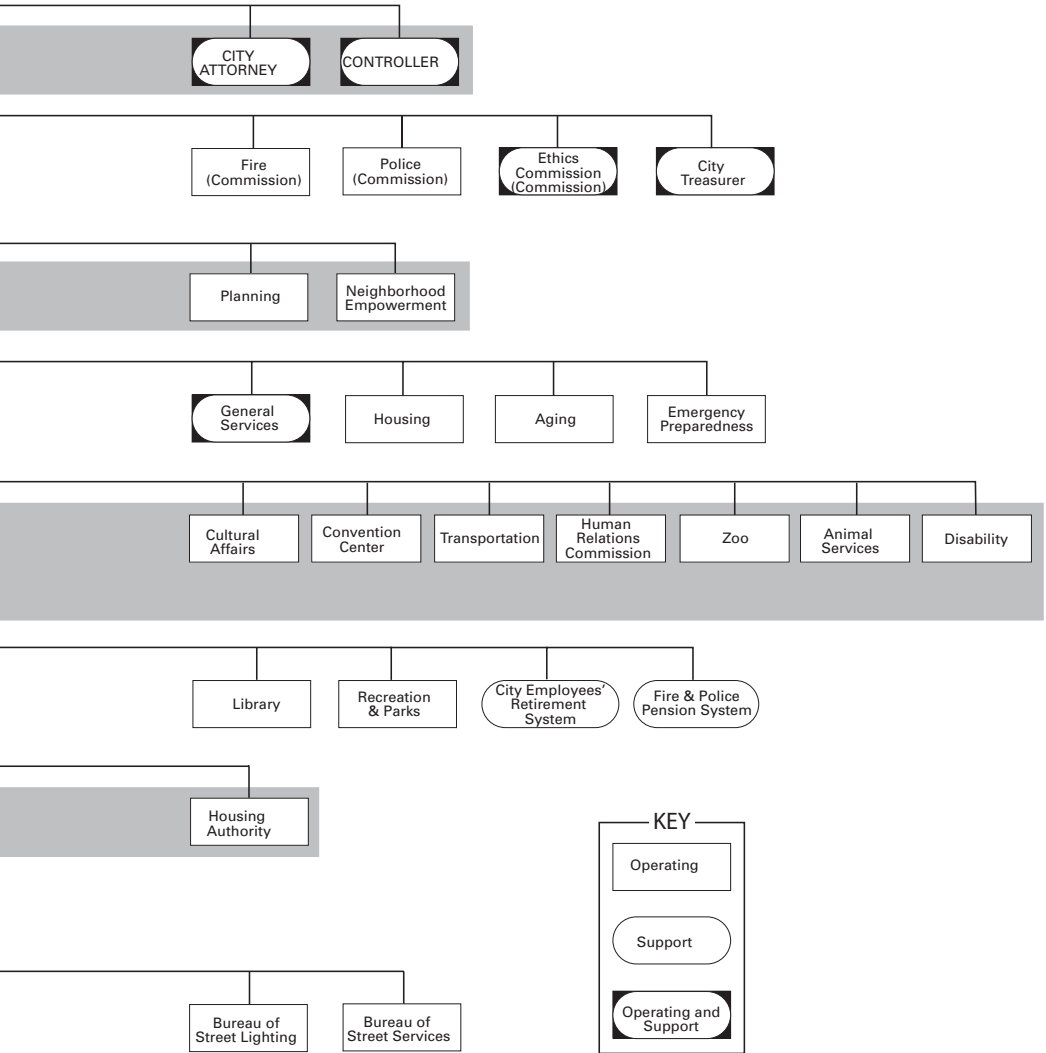


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Appendix B:

# City of Los Angeles Organizational Chart





Source: CAO website

*Appendix C:*  
**CONTACT INFORMATION**  
**for City of Los Angeles**

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**City web site** [www.lacity.org](http://www.lacity.org)

*(contains general city information and links to city offices). To find your council district and other information tied to your address, click on My Neighborhood on the city web site.*

**Citywide toll free number** 311  
*for information and non-emergency services*

**Citywide number for emergencies** 911

**City Hall**

200 North Spring Street  
 Los Angeles, CA 90012

Downtown (213) and (323)	485-2121
San Fernando Valley	818-756-8121
San Pedro	310-548-7721
Westside	310-575-8321

**CITY DEPARTMENTS**

**Fire Department**

*use 311*  
[www.lafd.org](http://www.lafd.org)

**Police Department**

1-877-275-5273  
*(non-emergency police response)*  
[www.lapdonline.org](http://www.lapdonline.org)

**Department of Public Works**

*Variety of phone numbers for different bureaus; use 311*  
[www.lacity.org/DPW](http://www.lacity.org/DPW)

**Planning Department**

213-482-7072  
<http://cityplanning.lacity.org>

**Recreation and Parks Department**

888 LA PARKS  
[www.laparks.org](http://www.laparks.org)

**Department of Water and Power**

1-800-342-5397  
[www.ladwp.com](http://www.ladwp.com)

**ELECTED OFFICERS**

**Mayor** 213-978-0600  
[www.lacity.org/mayor](http://www.lacity.org/mayor)

**City Controller** 213-978-7200  
[www.lacity.org/ctr](http://www.lacity.org/ctr)

**City Attorney** 213-978-8100  
[www.lacity.org/atty](http://www.lacity.org/atty)

**City Council**

*(Individual office numbers listed below)*

[www.lacity.org/council/cd\\_](http://www.lacity.org/council/cd_)  
*(enter the proper council district number after "cd")*

District #1	213-473-7001
District #2	213-473-7002
District #3	213-473-7003
District #4	213-473-7004
District #5	213-473-7005
District #6	213-473-7006
District #7	213-473-7007
District #8	213-473-7008
District #9	213-473-7009
District #10	213-473-7010
District #11	213-473-7011
District #12	213-473-7012
District #13	213-473-7013
District #14	213-473-7014
District #15	213-473-7015

**LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS**

**League of Women Voters of Los Angeles**

3250 Wilshire Boulevard, Suite 1005  
 Los Angeles, CA 90010-1512  
 (213) 368-1616  
[www.lwvlosangeles.org](http://www.lwvlosangeles.org)

**Smart Voter**

[www.smartvoter.org](http://www.smartvoter.org)  
*(Contains non-partisan election information, including your personalized ballot, candidate profiles, and ballot measures)*

*Appendix D:*  
**INDEX of NAMES and TERMS**

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**LOS ANGELES: STRUCTURE OF A CITY GOVERNMENT**

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