

UNIT 1:

WHERE DID OUR LOCAL GOVERNMENTS COME FROM?

“These Americans are the most peculiar people in the world. In a local community in their country, a citizen may conceive of some need which is not being met. What does he do? He goes across the street and discusses it with a neighbor. Then what happens? A committee begins functioning on behalf of that need. All of this is done by private citizens on their own initiative. The health of a democratic society may be measured by the quality of function performed by private citizens.”

These are the words of Alexis de Tocqueville, a Frenchman who toured and wrote about the new country of United States of America during the 1830s. His writings about America have endured because of his outsider’s insight into our unique society. While times have changed, we still take pride in the important role of the individual in our process of government.

At the beginning of the 20th century, 70 percent of the American population lived in rural areas, and most people lived their lives with little involvement with government. Today, over 80 percent of the population is cloistered in cities. As American settlements grew, common solutions were sought for common problems. For example, people living in close proximity naturally worked together to provide their communities with fresh water. To protect lives and private property from thieves and natural disasters, police and fire departments were created. Community cooperation did not stop with providing for basic needs only. People also worked together to found universities, symphonies, libraries, museums and other cultural institutions.

Our communities have become much more complex in the 21st century, and the informal cooperation between neighbors that defined our earliest communities has been replaced by a system of laws and governments. Democratic processes have been instituted to select local decision-makers, and governments we have formed now hire people to do the many jobs that must be done to make our communities run smoothly.

THE EARLY ROLE OF CITIES

When the United States was formed with the adoption of the Constitution in 1787, one important goal of our country’s founders was to limit the powers of the national government.


While some jobs, like forming an army and printing money, would be the responsibility of a central government in Washington, D.C., most other community functions were to be the responsibilities of individual states. Under the model of “federalism,” the states would, in turn, delegate local responsibilities to cities and towns.

NEW WORDS

The following are new words students will read in this text:

Agenda
 Amendment
 Ballot
 Budget
 City
 City Council
 County
 Expenditure
 Initiative
 Non-partisan
 Non-partisan election
 Ordinance
 Property Tax
 Public Meeting
 Recall
 Referendum
 Special District
 “Sunshine Laws”
 Tax

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American cities were quite small at the time of the Revolutionary War. Most of the 24 cities in the original 13 colonies were located on the eastern seaboard and contained a total of 100,000 people, or only about three percent of the nation's population. According to Thomas Jefferson's ideal, the "good citizen" would live on a farm or plantation, learning to be responsible through self-sufficiency. Jefferson's notion of agrarian democracy assumed that any person not owning property would have little interest in preserving an existing government and could easily be swayed by anyone seeking to overthrow the established order.

After the Revolutionary War, the former colonies reacted against the British custom of a strong executive by severely limiting the power of the governor when they wrote their new state constitutions. State legislatures were not only given the power to choose state officials, including judges and the governor, but they also provided strong direction to the formation and operation of local governments. Cities likewise reflected the prevailing opposition to a strong executive. The **city council**, rather than the mayor, exercised virtually all of the limited powers granted to cities by the state legislatures. It was common practice for state legislatures to pass special laws guiding the activities of every **city** in the **state**.

By the time President James Monroe left office in 1825, manufacturing and industrial centers were growing in the Northeast and along the Atlantic seaboard. The U.S. was gradually shifting from an agrarian nation to one with a more industrial economy. Even Thomas Jefferson conceded by this time that the wage earner should be considered the equal of the property owner.

MORE POWER TO THE VOTERS

This acceptance of the "common man" paved the way for the triumph of Andrew Jackson, the first president elected by a substantial portion of the population. Jacksonian government was based on an optimistic frontier theory that any man was the equal of his neighbor when voting or holding public office. Jacksonian government was government by the "common man." State legislatures were no longer responsible for the selection of public officials; that role was transferred to voters as state constitutions were adopted or amended to allow for elections of officials at all levels of government.

Women were not yet considered to be the "common man." After first allowing women to vote in 1869 when it was a territory, Wyoming became the first state to allow women to vote when it was admitted to the Union in 1890.

Universal women's suffrage did not become a reality until the passage of the 19th **Amendment** to the United States Constitution in 1920.

EARLY CALIFORNIA

California was still a distant territory in the Jackson Era, influenced more by Spanish settlers than by the young United States of America. Prior to European settlement along the Pacific Coast, California was a land of hundreds of villages inhabited by native Californians. Members of each tribe were assigned to hunt, gather and process food against the possibility of famine. Franciscan padres founded the first of their 21 missions in California in San Diego in 1769. Spanish soldiers built presidios at strategic points in their colony, and other settlers established pueblos and ranches. Of the various institutions introduced into California by the Spanish, the pueblo is the counterpart to the modern city.

The office of *alcalde*, a combination of mayor and judge, remained a respected title in cities in the southern portion of the state until the 1870s. Spanish institutions were replaced more rapidly in northern California as the Gold Rush brought thousands of people into the mining region.

After the Gold Rush and the admission of California into the Union in 1850, California's original 27 counties were established and eight cities incorporated. In 1851 the state legislature created 12 cities and, through a series of special acts, determined the type of government each would have, the method of choosing officials and the powers to be exercised in each city.

CORRUPTION IN GOVERNMENT

For a few short years while President Jackson captivated the American public's attention, the frequent elections and rapid turnover of public officials typical of the young nation's brand of democracy did not appear to cause a serious problem. However, the lengthy ballot, combined with the "spoils system," the right of victorious politicians to appoint government employees, soon made a mockery of responsible government. The ideals of Jackson seemed no longer to fit a nation coping with the Industrial Revolution, the post-Civil War Reconstruction and the absorption of millions of new immigrants who were unfamiliar with the traditions of American government.

The growth of urban centers, the ability of politicians to manipulate the vote of uninformed citizens, and the increasing complexity of the economy provided many opportunities for graft and corruption. In time, the flagrant abuse of the public trust at all levels of government

led to outraged demands for reform. The revelation of scandals and manipulations by the owners of the largest business operations, called “Robber Barons,” in the newspapers produced a growing desire for change. The secret ballot, as practiced in Australia at the time, was adopted throughout the country in the closing years of the 19th century. Some states passed laws requiring the full disclosure of campaign contributions and expenses. The National Short Ballot Association, the forerunner of the National Municipal League, conducted a nationwide campaign to eliminate long ballots and replace them with a “short” ballot containing only those few offices that truly required a public vote.

In California, cities were dependent upon the state for their powers, and legislators frequently went too far in meddling with local matters. During the first years of statehood, the legislature often repealed the statute providing government for a particular city and substituted a new law creating a brand new government for that city. More and more in those early years, there appeared to be collusion between local politicians and state legislators who saw an opportunity for personal gain. The legislature was accused of running the state for the benefit of railroads and other powerful companies. Mishandling of funds in the state treasury added to public discontent. The legislature’s lack of concern for responsible local government caused considerable resentment throughout the state, particularly in larger cities. As a result, demands for a Constitutional Convention were pressed in the late 1870s.

LOCAL CONTROL

Delegates to the convention were particularly insistent on restricting the great powers that the legislature had exercised so arbitrarily over local communities. They felt that the state laws affecting local government should be restricted to health and safety issues of statewide concern. State control should not extend to matters that affected only a single community or a few communities. Citizens wanted freedom to debate and decide local matters at the community level. Local matters included such issues as the hours and working conditions of city employees, how the land within the community could be used, the number of parks, the regulation of buildings and construction, and the types and levels of service to be paid for with local **tax** dollars.

The Constitution of the State of California of 1879 (our first Constitution was adopted in 1849) succeeded in limiting the influence of the state legislature. However, the political power of business monopolies in California

was not significantly curtailed. The public’s desire for sound regulation of utility and railroad companies was not achieved until many years later. The power of the Southern Pacific Railroad continued past the turn of the century. The railroad forced localities in California to pay subsidies for the privilege of having a depot built in their communities. When San Bernardino refused to provide such a subsidy, the Southern Pacific established the company town of Colton near its depot.

COUNTY STRUCTURES AND SERVICES

The basic provisions for the government of California counties are contained in the California Constitution and the California Government Code. A county is the largest political subdivision of the state having corporate powers. It is vested by the Legislature with the powers necessary to provide for the health and welfare of the people within its borders. The specific organizational structure of a county in California will vary from county to county.

Counties provide essential services to their communities on behalf of the state of California. A sample of services includes:

- Agriculture & Farming Services
- Assessor/Auditor
- Behavioral Health
- Child Support
- County Administration
- County Clerk/Recorder
- District Attorney
- Fire
- Libraries
- Probation
- Public Defender
- Public Health
- Public Works
- Sherriff
- Treasurer/Tax Collector
- Veteran Services
- Water & Resource Conservation
- Welfare

SPECIAL DISTRICTS DELIVER NEEDED SERVICES

The birth of the special district marked a quintessential moment in local control. Frustrated by the lack of reliable river water but optimistic about future farming opportunities, farmers in California's Central Valley hoped to bring prosperity to their community by working together. They agreed to contribute funding and elect local board members to oversee the expenditure of that revenue. These farmers formed California's first special district in 1887, the Turlock Irrigation District, and they transformed a vast, seasonably dry land into one of the world's most productive landscapes.

The formation of Turlock Irrigation District and the invention of special districts in California was made possible by the State Legislature's passage of the Wright Act named after a Modesto attorney who had been elected to office on a pro-irrigation platform. The Wright Act provided the legal foundation for the formation of water districts and, ultimately, the approximately 2,000 special districts that now deliver a wide range of services used daily by millions of Californians. And so, as is the case with much of California's history, water was fundamental to the shaping of our local government landscape.

In 1915, the Legislature created mosquito abatement districts because of widespread salt marsh mosquitos in the San Francisco Bay and high rates of malaria in rural counties. These districts continue to protect the public today from such a mosquito borne diseases as West Nile and Zika. Due to a lack of hospital beds after World War II, the legislature created hospital districts, now called healthcare districts, so that communities could create and manage their own healthcare needs. Similar stories led to the formation of fire protection districts, sanitation districts, recreation and park districts, utility districts, harbor and port districts, library districts, airport districts, levee districts, resource conservation districts, transit districts, veterans memorial districts, community services districts, and cemetery districts.

Throughout California's history, special districts have empowered residents to find local solutions to fit the needs of their community. It is this local approach that continues to make special districts a popular method of delivering essential public services and infrastructure in communities throughout the state.

THE PROGRESSIVES

The most significant period of reform in California was the Progressive Era, commencing with Hiram Johnson's election as governor in 1910. Most of the major changes enacted at that time remain in state law to this day. The Progressives believed that both political parties were dominated by the Southern Pacific monopoly. Thus, they went to great lengths to weaken California's political parties. They introduced the popular primary to California, which took the power to nominate candidates away from party bosses and gave it to the voters registered in the political party. The Progressives also allowed a candidate to run in more than one party primary (so-called cross filing), but this practice was eliminated in 1959.

Beyond the primary, Progressives did away with the party-column ballot, which made it very simple for voters to vote a straight-party ticket because all of a party's candidates appeared in the same column. California now uses the office-block ballot, in which a voter must read the names of all candidates running for one office before voting for that particular office and moving on to the next office block. This arrangement makes it easier for voters to "split their ballot," casting ballots for candidates of different parties for different offices.

The Progressives also introduced **non-partisan elections** in local government, judicial areas and school board elections. In non-partisan elections, no party label may appear next to a candidate's name on the ballot, nor can political parties endorse or financially support the candidate.

Progressives were chiefly responsible for changing many local elections to the "at-large" system, with all voters electing all representatives, instead of election by district. They instituted merit systems for public employment that required civil servants to demonstrate their competence on competitive examinations. Previously, political parties traditionally rewarded their campaign workers with jobs in local government, a process known as patronage. The Progressives also pushed for the hiring of professional managers to conduct the day-to-day operations of cities, believing that professional managers could more effectively implement policies adopted by the city council.

THE INITIATIVE

The Progressive movement also introduced the **initiative**, which allows voters to create a new law directly, bypassing elected representatives; the **referendum**, which nullifies a law passed by elected officeholders; and the **recall**, which can remove elected officials from office before the end of their term. To place any of these three measures before the voters, a petition with the required number of signatures of registered voters is required by Election Code.

The importance of the initiative process has grown dramatically in the past two decades as modern mass communication techniques have made it possible to reach large numbers of voters directly. The method and level of support for state and local governments was changed radically in 1978 by Proposition 13 which, among other things, cut local **property taxes** in half. A formula limiting state **budget expenditures** was enacted by Proposition 4 in 1979; and Proposition 98, passed in 1988, set aside a guaranteed share of the state budget for local elementary school, high school and community college districts. Proposition 140, enacted in 1990, established term limits for state legislators and executives. Voters relaxed these limits for state legislators in 2012 with Proposition 28, which allows longer terms in a single house.

State ballot propositions have also created systems of regulation that have had a big effect on city, county, and special district governments. The California Coastal Commission regulates the use of land along the state's coastline. The Fair Political Practices Commission, created via the Political Reform Act, regulates campaign fundraising and spending by candidates for all elected offices, and by supporters and opponents of ballot propositions.

The changes wrought by California's Progressive reforms are central features of local government to this day.

SUNSHINE LAWS

How can the affairs of public government be kept public? How can the public be certain that those elected to public office will serve the public first, and not use their office for personal gain? Two state laws ensure that public business is conducted in public, and that public servants are working for the public's best interest and not their own. These and similar laws are often called "**sunshine laws**" because they require that government business be conducted out in the open, under public scrutiny.

The Brown Act requires government legislative bodies like the city council, the board of supervisors, the special district board, or any other board or commission to conduct their business in open **public meetings**, with adequate public notice. Any time a majority of a body meets, even in social or recreational situations, and any kind of official matter comes up, the event can be construed as an official meeting. Closed session meetings are for pending legal actions or personnel matters, real estate transactions, and collective bargaining negotiations. Any actions that may result must be announced in public. The Brown Act also provides that action may only be taken on items that have been listed on the **agenda** posted for a prescribed period prior to the meeting. This is designed to prevent councils from bringing up and passing **ordinances** without an open and public debate of the issues.

The public has the right to look at and request copies of the public records kept by a city, county or special district due to the provisions in the California Public Records Act. The exceptions to the rule that all records must be made available for public inspection are generally limited to records that, if they were shared, could interfere with a person's right to privacy or pose threats to security. Exceptions also involve records that must remain confidential to allow the district to effectively conduct its business, such as records related to ongoing criminal investigations and legal proceedings.

Local governments are required to submit to annual, independent audits conducted by the county auditor or a certified public accountant. This information is filed with the State Controller's Office. Similarly, local agencies must also annually report financial transactions and information on annual compensation to the State Controller's Office, which makes this information publicly available.

The Fair Political Practices Act requires elected officials, commission members and key staff to disclose a broad range of information about their personal financial interests which could be materially affected by any actions taken in their official capacity. These laws also apply to spouses, children and any businesses in which a public official has an interest. The law requires officials to disqualify themselves from decisions in which they have a conflict of interest and could benefit financially.

State law also requires complete disclosure of all campaign contributions in amounts greater than \$99. The Fair Political Practices Commission makes information regarding these contributions available to the public.

The history of politics and government in California has been a story of constant efforts to make government, starting at the most local level, more responsive to the people it serves. These efforts date from the Constitutional Convention in 1879, through the Progressive Movement in the early 20th century, through the adoption of “sunshine laws” in the 1960s up to today’s struggles over reforming how political campaigns are financed. Thanks to the efforts of many individuals, the struggle continues to make government more accountable to the voters, and to bring the power of the ballot to all Californians.

California’s tradition of democratic reform and strong local government is particularly important as our state grows steadily more diverse in population, culture and economics. The increasing participation of women and minorities in our economy and in social and political life has helped to make local governments more representative of the communities they serve. The success of our government institutions in the future will depend, in large part, on their ability to adapt to social change.

UNIT 2:

HOW ARE LOCAL GOVERNMENTS ORGANIZED?

Backers of cityhood for Oak Forest got good news Thursday when a report to the county’s Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO) said the proposed city would be financially viable. The new city would be “in the black” even after paying about \$2.1 million to the county to make up the difference between revenues and services transferred from the county. “This should quell all doubts about us having to raise taxes,” said Martin Chen, chair of the Oak Forest Civic League, which is pushing incorporation.

TO INCORPORATE OR NOT TO INCORPORATE (IS THAT THE QUESTION?)

LAFCO must still decide the boundaries of the city, which services it should take over and whether including the Shoreline Community Facilities District would imperil repayment of \$94 million in bonds issued in the county’s name. Meanwhile, opponents complained that creating a new city would provide no new services to residents. “If we’re not going to get additional services, why do we need additional bureaucracy?” asked opponent Sondra Torres.

Torres argued that cityhood would actually force residents to give up control of many public service functions because a new city would have to contract for services such as law enforcement. The proposed new city would also allow the current Oak Forest Community Services District, a special district, to continue handling fire protection and parks.

GETTING ORGANIZED

In the scenario above, which groups do you think would be opposed to creating a new city? Who might be in favor of cityhood? Discuss how the schools in your area are structured. Do the elementary schools serve kindergarten through eighth grade? Kindergarten through sixth grade? Which grades are included in the middle schools and high schools? Just as schools have a structure, all local governments have structure. However, to somebody who has not yet studied it, that structure can appear to be confusing.

The local government organization formed to meet community needs of the 21st century has evolved since California became a state in 1850. To learn about local government is to learn about California’s fascinating history, and to learn much about the community in which you live today.

COUNTY GOVERNMENT


The entire map of California has been divided into 58 pieces of varying sizes and shapes. These are California’s 58 counties. You may or may not live in a city, but

NEW WORDS

The following are new words students will read in this text:

- Charter
- City manager
- Council-manager form
- Dependent special district
- Enabling act
- Enterprise revenues
- Fixed terms
- General law city
- General manager
- General purpose government
- “Home rule”
- Incorporation
- Independent special district
- Jurisdiction
- Limited purpose government
- LAFCO
- Mayor-council form
- Non-enterprise revenues
- Planning
- Property tax
- Public hearing
- Revenue
- Special tax
- Unincorporated area
- User fee

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either way, you do live in a county. Search for your county government online or in the library to learn more about its history and to find out what other counties surround yours.

In short, counties in California are the basic administrative regions for state government. For example, the state's welfare programs, the criminal justice and court systems, and public school financing are organized by county, and property taxes are collected at the county level.

Counties are governed by locally elected supervisors, and offer a wide scope and variety of services to meet diverse needs. Today, county government is the primary level of local government in many sparsely populated counties, particularly in Northern California, where there is only a handful of incorporated cities and where a few counties contain no cities at all.

Counties are governed by locally elected officials, called county supervisors, and offer a wide scope and variety of services to meet diverse needs. Today, county government is the primary level of local government in many sparsely populated regions, particularly in Northern California, where there are fewer incorporated cities and where a few counties contain no cities at all.

In other parts of the state, county government can become more complex as population has grown in **unincorporated areas** in parts of Los Angeles County and Sacramento County. Responding to the demands of voters, county governments have taken on many service responsibilities beyond just the administration of state functions. Refer to the organization chart on the next page for a typical county structure.

Like cities, counties may derive their legal authority to operate as a government either from a specific **charter** approved by the state legislature, or under government code provisions spelling out rules for county operations in general. Fourteen of California's 58 counties have elected to adopt their own charters. A charter permits a county to deviate from some of the state's general laws as local voters desire. Charters are more common for the larger counties than the smaller ones.

As population grows, however, the design of county government does not easily provide the greater degree of local control that individuals in different communities may desire. Today it is practically impossible to split an existing county. Forming a new county would require majority approval by voters in both the proposed new county and the remaining portion of the old county. By contrast, the process of forming a city within a county requires only the voter approval of those living within the proposed city's

boundaries. When cities are incorporated, they do not take territory from other cities, but because our 58 counties cover the entire land mass of California, forming a new county necessarily means taking territory from an existing county. For example, Orange County was carved from Los Angeles County, San Mateo from San Francisco County, and Imperial County from San Diego County. In fact, no new counties have been formed in California since 1907.

CALIFORNIA'S 58 COUNTIES

Alameda	Marin	San Mateo
Alpine	Mariposa	Santa Barbara
Amador	Mendocino	Santa Clara
Butte	Merced	Santa Cruz
Calaveras	Modoc	Shasta
Colusa	Mono	Sierra
Contra Costa	Monterey	Siskiyou
Del Norte	Napa	Solano
El Dorado	Nevada	Sonoma
Fresno	Orange	Stanislaus
Glenn	Placer	Sutter
Humboldt	Plumas	Tehama
Imperial	Riverside	Trinity
Inyo	Sacramento	Tulare
Kern	San Benito	Tuolumne
Kings	San Bernardino	Ventura
Lake	San Diego	Yolo
Lassen	San Francisco	Yuba
Los Angeles	San Joaquin	
Madera	San Luis Obispo	

CITY GOVERNMENT

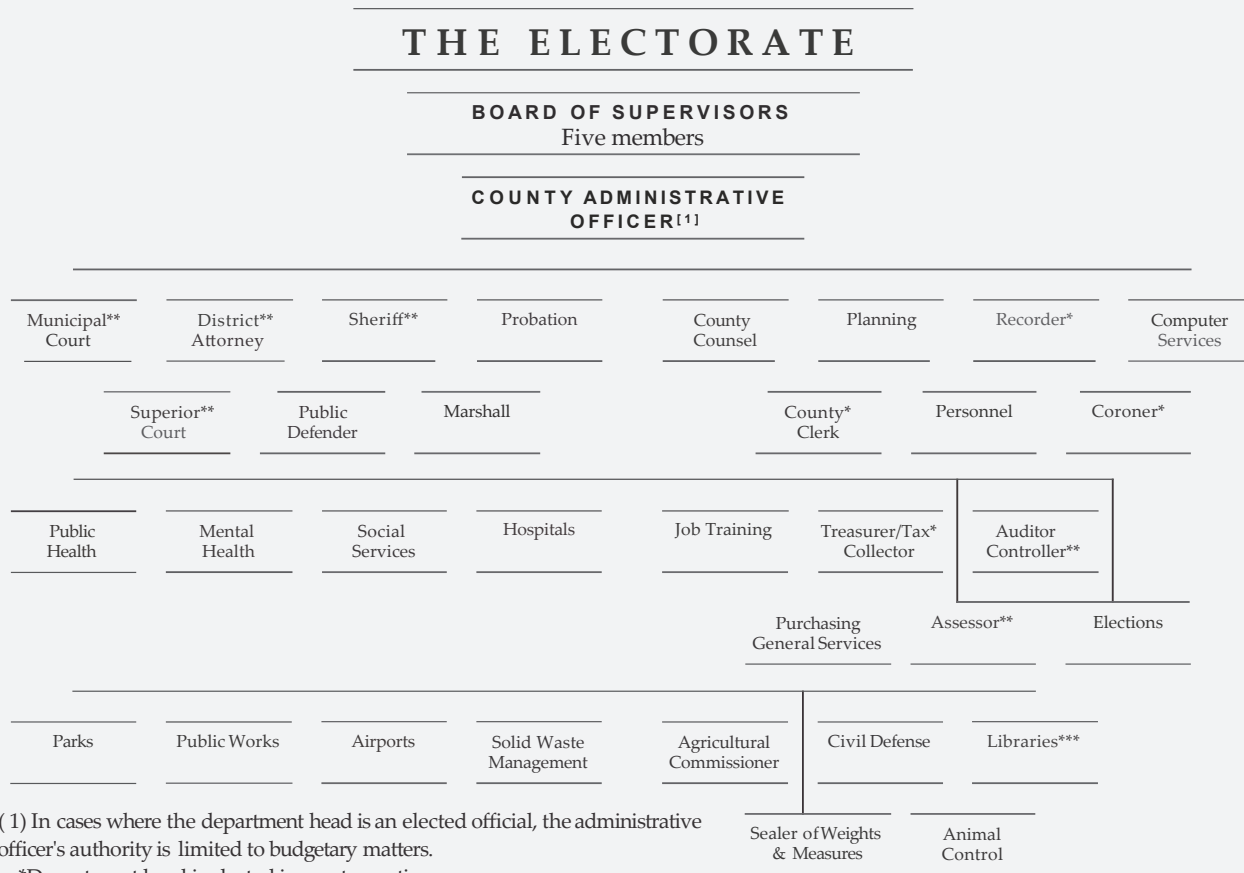
As California's population grows, more and more communities organize themselves into cities. The process of voting to become a city and forming a city government under state law is called incorporation. By 2019, California had 482 incorporated cities.

Why Do People Form Cities?

The people who want their community to incorporate as a city generally are looking for more "local control" or "**home rule.**"

Home rule is the authority granted to cities for self-government. Living under laws written by officials hundreds of miles away, or even 20 miles away in the county seat, may not be a serious problem when the population is sparse and there is little need for government services. But as a community grows, its residents may need to work more closely together.

TYPICAL COUNTY STRUCTURE



(1) In cases where the department head is an elected official, the administrative officer's authority is limited to budgetary matters.

*Department head is elected in most counties.

**Department head is elected in all counties.

***Often a county-wide special district governed by the Board of Supervisors.

Residents look at their community and see values and goals that are unique. They find they share an idea of the kind of environment they want for their community. By choosing their own form of government and electing people from their own community to run it, these residents can:

- **Preserve their community's identity and character.** The character of a community evolves over time. City government, through its powers to provide services, to set a budget, to raise taxes and to regulate land-use, gives people the tools they can use to determine what their community will be like and how it will develop. Often an unincorporated community shares borders with other cities and wants to avoid being "swallowed" up and losing control of its own affairs.

- **Provide better services.** The police, fire or street maintenance services available from the county may not be adequate for a growing and changing community. Cities frequently provide a higher level of services than counties are able to provide to unincorporated areas. A community may wish, for example, for its libraries to stay open longer hours on more days of the week; city residents may also be willing to pay for more public safety services than residents in other parts of the county.
- **Plan for future development.** How land is used and the kinds of buildings that are constructed have a tremendous effect on any community. Where should the new shopping center go? How closely together should new houses be built? Should a big apartment

building be built right next to your house? Would a park be better? Questions like these are raised every day in a community that grows larger and older. These decisions are made by the county government unless a community incorporates and hands this power over to a city council.

- **Control public spending and taxes.** Some people who vote for incorporation believe a city government can keep taxes low. By taking over services previously provided by the county, and potentially a number of special districts, incorporation may streamline administration. Under current law, cities receive revenue directly from the sales taxes collected within their boundaries. They also have limited authority to raise revenues in other ways. Because counties carry out programs mandated by state and federal government, they receive a greater share of their funding from state and federal taxes than do cities. Conversely, cities receive a larger share of their operating funds through service charges and **user fees** for the particular services offered to residents.

TYPES OF CITIES

There are two kinds of cities in California: Charter and general law cities. Unlike cities in many other states, both kinds of California cities have a broad range of powers and enjoy considerable freedom in their forms of government and the types of activities in which they may engage. The organization chart on the previous page is an example of a typical city structure. Of today's 482 cities in the state, only 121 are "chartered" according to the League of California Cities.

These cities were created and they operate today under a special state law that applies only to their own city. Although general law cities now have nearly equal powers, charters are adopted by cities where special conditions create needs that cannot be adequately met by the general laws. A charter city can tailor its organization and elective offices and provide for unique local conditions.

A city charter can only be changed by a vote of the city's electorate, not by a vote of the city council. Residents can establish the terms and number of council members and impose other limitations upon their city council through a charter provision.

In addition to the 121 charters, state law also contains provisions that govern **incorporation** in general. When a new city incorporates under these general provisions,

it is called a "**general law**" city. These laws have been subjected to judicial scrutiny and tested over the years, so there is relatively little legal confusion when proponents of incorporation follow them. City charters, by contrast, can be much more complicated and can raise many more questions about what can and cannot be done under state law.

One unique government system is San Francisco as it is both a county and a city government! The city takes up the entire county, so voters decided to combine the two governments into one. To date, it is the only example of city and county consolidation in California, although attempts to consolidate have been made in other areas, such as Sacramento County. There, voters as recently as 1990 turned down a proposal to combine the city and county governments.

HOW LOCAL AGENCIES ARE FORMED

Local Agency Formation Commissions (LAFCOs) are independent commissions, formed by the Legislature, that approve the formation, reorganization, and dissolution of cities and special districts in order to guide orderly development and growth of municipal services.

LAFCOs are responsible for the "big picture." Their goal is to make sure that the formation of new local governments makes sense and is orderly and that the services in the county and region are provided efficiently.

In addition to annexations, consolidations and incorporations of government agencies, LAFCOs are responsible for Municipal Service Reviews, or MSR. Every five years, LAFCOs complete a comprehensive study about existing and future public service conditions and evaluate organizational options for accommodating growth, preventing urban sprawl, and making sure that critical services are efficiently and cost-effectively provided.

A LAFCO is responsible for holding **public hearings** on proposals for incorporation land annexation, or consolidation of services. In the case of a new city being developed, the local LAFCO staff studies the borders proposed for the city, how services will be provided and the plan for financing the new city government. The LAFCO looks at the proposal not just from the point of view of those advocating for incorporation, but also from the point of view of neighboring communities and other agencies that could be affected if the new city were to be created.

LAFCOS AND SPECIAL DISTRICTS

Special districts are formed by local voters. Typically, special districts are organized when local residents or landowners notice a need in the community and determine the creation of a special district provides the solution. Signatures are gathered on a petition, which is then given to the Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO) for review. If the LAFCO approves the proposed new special district, then the question of whether to create the district must be put before the voters or landowners for final approval. Voters can override a LAFCO's determination in favor of creating a special district through what is known as a "protest hearing."

While special districts are most often created directly by the voters and residents they serve, on rare occasions they are created through special action of the State Legislature. Also, the formation of dependent special districts can be initiated by a city or county.

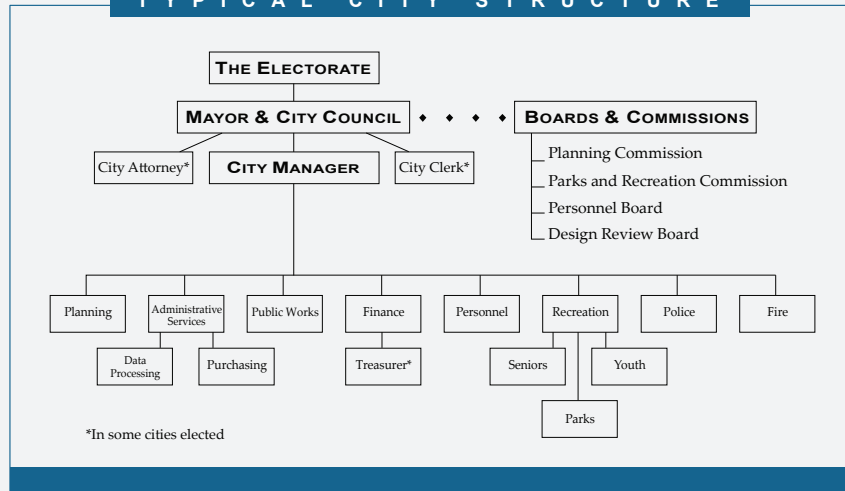
Voters, furthermore, must approve any new taxes that special districts receive. Proposition 218, which amended the California State Constitution in 1996, requires that new or increased special taxes be approved by a two-thirds vote. When new special districts are proposed, the LAFCO will often condition the formation of the district on the successful passage of a new special tax to fund the district. Thus, in practical effect, many proposed special districts require two-thirds voter approval for their formation.

HOW CITIES ARE FORMED

The first step in the process of incorporation is for community members to seek approval from the Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO) in their county. In general, two LAFCO members are appointed by the county, two by the cities that already exist within the county, two by special districts, and a representative of the public-at-large.

These LAFCOs are responsible for the "big picture." Their goal is to make sure that the formation of new local governments makes sense, is orderly and leads to a more efficient structure throughout the county and region. A LAFCO will hold **public hearings** on an incorporation proposal. It studies the borders proposed for the city, how services will be provided and the plan for financing the new city government. The LAFCO looks at the proposal not just

TYPICAL CITY STRUCTURE



from the point of view of those advocating for incorporation, but also from the point of view of neighboring communities and other agencies that could be affected if the new city were to be created.

After LAFCO approval, a petition signed by 25 percent of the registered voters living within the proposed city limits must be submitted to the County Board of Supervisors. The petition sets forth the desired boundaries of the proposed city, the number of residents and the reasons for incorporation. The Board of Supervisors holds a public hearing on the proposal and establishes the boundaries within which the incorporation election will be held.

A special election is then held in the area proposed for incorporation. The ballot asks voters to determine whether the area should become incorporated. It may also ask voters to select a city name, decide whether subsequent elections should be by district or at-large, etc. The names of candidates for the new city's first city council are also included on the incorporation ballot. If the incorporation passes, the candidates with the most votes assume the responsibilities of the new city.

SPECIAL DISTRICT GOVERNMENT

Special districts are public agencies created to provide one or more specific services to a community, such as fire protection, water, or parks and recreation. There are more than 2,000 special districts in California today, far more than all cities and counties combined. Although a city may not be in more than one county, special districts may cross as many city and county boundaries as voters approve. For example, the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California serves residents in six different

counties from Ventura to San Diego. Special districts generally are formed to provide a service that is not being offered by existing city or county jurisdictions, or to provide an enhanced level of service. Most special districts are governed by five-member boards, but some, like mosquito abatement districts or the aforementioned Metropolitan Water District may have over a dozen board members.

Special districts come in many varieties. Every special district is governed by an **enabling act** in state law. Most are created under a principal act in general state law governing special districts of a particular type, much like “general law” cities can be created.

INDEPENDENT AND DEPENDENT SPECIAL DISTRICTS

An **independent special district** is just as the name sounds, “independent” from other governments. They are directly accountable to the people they serve. Independent special districts are typically governed by a board of directors elected directly by the residents it serves; In some instances, board members are appointed to fixed terms by other local elected officials. Such board retain independence from the appointing board as they represent the community, not the appointing body, and cannot be replaced by the appointing body until the expiration of their “fixed” term, which is typically four years.

Dependent special districts are governed by other governmental entities. Such “dependent” districts operate much like a department within a county or city. A dependent special district’s board is named by a city or county government and serves at the pleasure of the appointing body. Its board members can be replaced at any time and, in some cases, the city council or county supervisors may simply stand in themselves as the board of the dependent special district.

WHAT SPECIAL DISTRICTS ARE NOT

It is important to understand the distinction between special districts and other forms of local government. Special districts are created by local residents, governed by local residents, and held accountable by local residents. To understand what special districts are and what they do, it is also helpful to understand what they are not and what they don’t do:

- **Independent special districts** are not the State government. Independent special districts operate via local control and answer to the residents, voters, and landowners they serve.

- **Independent special districts** are not county or city governments. County and city governments are general purpose governments and can provide a broad array of services. Independent special districts are limited purpose governments and can only provide services clearly outlined by law.
- **Independent special districts** are not school districts or community college districts. School districts provide public education services and receive significant revenue from the State government. Independent special districts can be confused with school districts because they both use the word “district.” However, special districts cannot provide K-14 public education.

Special districts are funded to provide essential services with specific benefits to the community through enterprise revenues, local property taxes, and/or a parcel (special) tax.

TYPES OF SPECIAL DISTRICT SERVICES

Most special districts are single service. California water districts, for example, provide residential, industrial, commercial, and agricultural water services only. Multi-function districts can provide a greater variety of services, though the services are often related. For example, irrigation districts provide water and infrastructure for irrigating agricultural land but can also provide electricity services to communities. This is because these districts might operate dams in order to irrigate land and these dams can also be used to generate hydroelectric power.

Community services districts or CSDs are the most complex special districts. They can provide over 30 different services ranging from water service, to fire protection, to recreation and parks. However, most CSDs are only authorized by their LAFCO to provide two or three of different services, depending on the needs of the community.

EXAMPLES OF SERVICES PROVIDED BY SPECIAL DISTRICTS:

- Airport districts manage airports that enhance local economies.
- Cemetery districts provide cost-effective burial services and preserve historical community information.
- Community services districts offer over 30 different types of services, such as police protection, garbage removal, road maintenance and street lighting.

- Fire protection districts protect homes, businesses, and the environment from fires and respond to medical emergencies.
- Harbor and port districts manage recreational, economic, and environmental coastal infrastructure.
- Healthcare districts promote the physical and mental health of communities, which may include preventative care, nutrition education, health clinics, traditional hospitals, or other services.
- Irrigation districts deliver water resources, as well as electric power to rural residents and agriculture.
- Library districts provide access to educational and informational resources, including collections of books, photographs, newspapers and videos.
- Mosquito and pest abatement districts control mosquito populations and reduce the spread of vector borne diseases.
- Reclamation and levee districts protect lives and property from the threat of flooding.
- Recreation and park districts provide parks, open spaces, and community programs to improve quality of life.
- Resource conservation districts identify local conservation needs and support land managers in implementing solutions.
- Sanitation districts treat and recycle wastewater.
- Transit districts provide public transportation services that connect regions.
- Utility districts supply a variety of services, which include water, power, and garbage.
- Veterans memorial districts maintain memorials to our veterans and provide other veteran services.
- Water districts deliver water to residential, commercial, agricultural and industrial areas.

SCHOOL DISTRICTS

School districts in California, unlike many other states, school systems have evolved independently of other local governments.

In California, unlike many other states, school systems have evolved independently of other local governments. They are not governed by city or county officials, but by their own elected school boards. Their borders often cross city and county lines.



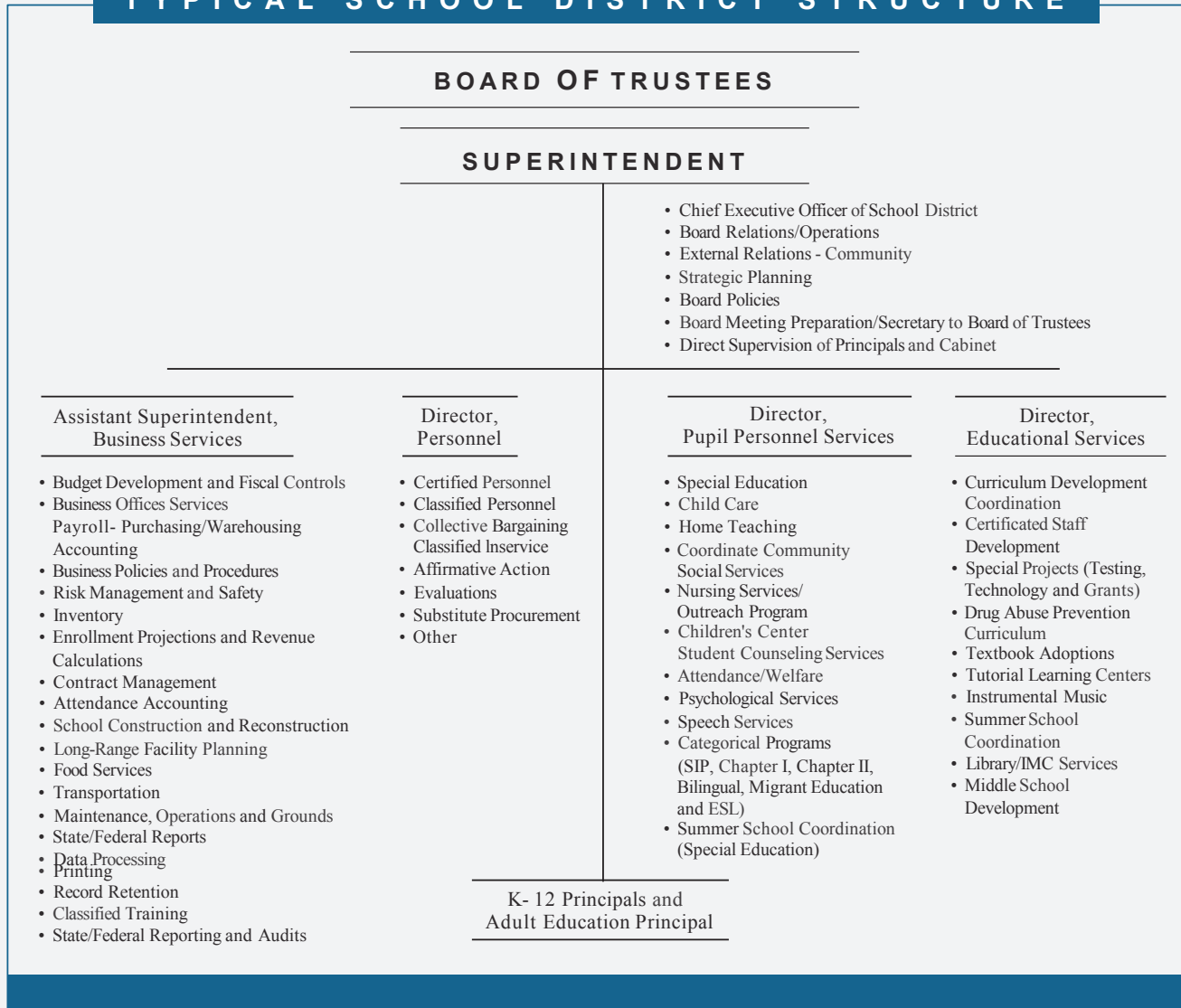
As of 2019, there are 977 separate school districts for grades kindergarten through 12. Some districts may run a single school in a rural area with fewer than 100 students; by contrast, the state's largest district, Los Angeles Unified, serves well over 700,000 students and employs nearly 30,000 teachers. In addition to these school districts, the state is also divided into 73 community college districts serving grades 13 and 14. These districts may also be drawn across both city and county borders.

School districts were among the first local government institutions founded with the settling of the West. Past efforts to streamline school administration in California yielded several waves of consolidation, merging neighboring small districts and unifying separate districts that served elementary and high school students in a given area. Recent tight budgets have encouraged further consolidation. As recently as 1990, there were almost 50 more school districts than there are today.

This complex history has yielded a variety of district types:

- **Elementary school** districts usually serve students from kindergarten through grades 6 or 8.
- **High school** districts operate only high schools, usually grades 9-12.

TYPICAL SCHOOL DISTRICT STRUCTURE



- **Union** districts resulted from a consolidation of two or more districts at some point in the past.
- **Joint** districts result when districts from two or more counties are consolidated into a single district.
- **Unified** school districts include elementary schools, middle schools or junior high schools and high schools, serving students through all grades, from kindergarten through grade 12.

Unified districts may be created serving grades K-12, or they may be the result of past consolidations. Which kind of school district is yours?

Each of the state's 977 school districts and the 73 community college districts are governed by elected boards of trustees, usually five or seven in number. Board members are elected in non-partisan races, and they select a board president from among their members. The school board sets district policy and appoints a district superintendent to manage the day-to-day operation of the system. The position of superintendent is similar to that of the city manager. The organization chart above is an example of a typical school district structure.

All 58 counties also have county offices of education with elected boards; 53 have elected superintendents and

the other five are appointed by their boards of education. These county offices provide specialized educational services to the school districts in their region, such as making highly trained specialists available to school districts that otherwise might not be able to afford them. For statewide programs, county offices are intermediary agencies between the California Department of Education and local school districts. They also review individual school district budgets and identify any problem areas before forwarding these spending plans to the state. Operations of school districts in financial difficulty can be assumed by county offices of education or the California Department of Education.

REGIONAL GOVERNMENTS

The effort to coordinate local government services in highly developed urban areas like the San Francisco Bay Area or the Los Angeles basin has led to the formation of “councils of government.” The Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG), the San Diego Association of Governments (SANDAG), and the Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG), among others, are voluntary associations that local governments may choose to join. These coordinating bodies exchange thoughts on mutual concerns, develop plans and undertake studies to address issues that impact all local governments within a region. However, they generally lack the authority to enforce decisions on member governments.

The state legislature has created a number of regional governments in the past two decades that do possess the power to enforce their decisions. The Bay Conservation and Development Commission (BCDC) in the San Francisco Bay Area, the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency (TRPA), the California Coastal Commission (CCC) and the South Coast Air Quality Management District (SCAQMD) are examples of regulatory regional bodies that cut across many units of local government.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT MANAGEMENT STRUCTURES

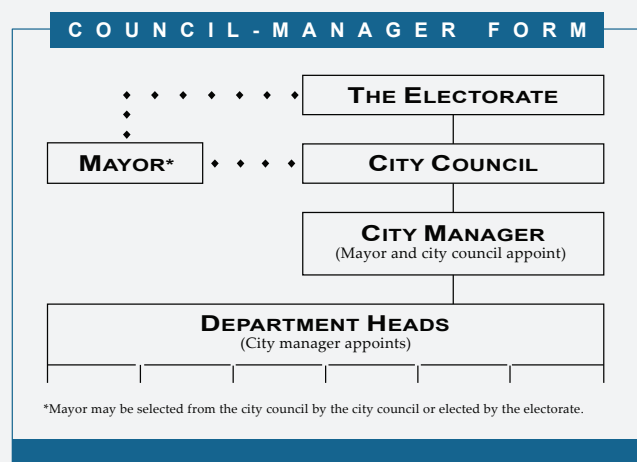
The options available for structuring local government can most easily be studied by looking at California city government. The California Government Code sections that give cities their legal authority provide for two different models of government: The **mayor-council** form and the **council-manager** form. Special districts follow a similar format to that of council-manager.

The Mayor-Council Form

In the mayor-council form, usually five council members are elected by the voters to enact local laws and to establish city policy. The mayor may be selected by the council from its own membership, or the mayor may be directly elected by the voters. When the council as a whole appoints the directors of the city’s departments, the city is said to have a “weak mayor system.” The council as a whole acts as the executive. Without a single executive, administration can be difficult and responsibility cannot be fixed upon any one person.

If the mayor, in addition to acting as presiding officer at council meetings, is also the executive or administrative head of city departments, the system is referred to as a “strong mayor” form. Executive power is vested in the mayor, who appoints department heads and executes council policy. The strong mayor-council system offers the advantage of clearly defined political leadership. A directly elected mayor with executive powers can be active in suggesting improvements or innovations in city policy.

Historically, California has not been known for strong mayor government, but San Diego, San Jose, Oakland and Fresno all strengthened the powers of office near the end of the 20th century. Most cities continue to operate under the council-manager system, in which day-to-day responsibilities are delegated to a professional manager. In Los Angeles and San Francisco, some departments report to an appointed chief administrative officer while other departments report to commissions appointed by the mayor.



The Council-Manager Form

While the strong mayor form of government may centralize administrative authority, there is no guarantee that the mayors and council members elected to office will have the necessary administrative skills and training or the time required to carry out their administrative responsibilities. Therefore, almost all California cities have selected the council-manager system, in which most administrative responsibilities are delegated to a professional manager. All special districts use this format as well, with the exception that they typically refer to their manager as a **general manager** instead of a city manager and call their governing body a board of directors versus a city council.

A council of five or more members is elected, occasionally by district, but usually “at large.” Many local governments are transitioning to district-based elections per the California Voting Rights Act. This means, that many local cities governance structure is changing to ensure that a representative on the council is from a defined geographic segment of the community. The goal of this is to ensure the organization reflects the voice, demographics and needs of the greater community.

The council enacts local laws, approves programs, adopts the budget and gives policy direction to a **city manager**. The council appoints, and may remove, the city manager, who is responsible for implementing city laws and directing the administrative operation of the city. City managers also act as technical advisors to the city council. City managers may learn professional municipal administration in graduate school or on the job.

Ideally, in a city run under a council-manager system, departments are coordinated, control is maintained and administrative actions are taken promptly, yet the entire organization is responsive to the elected representatives of the people, the city council.

The council-manager form of government is also the model for most school districts. Because of the specialized work involved with running a school system the superintendent is responsible for hiring of qualified teachers, recommending actions, providing expertise to the board members, while the elected board or trustees adopt policy, curriculum and budgets.

County Structure

With the exception of the city and county of San Francisco, which has an 11-member board, California’s counties are governed by five-member boards of supervisors. Supervisors are elected from separate districts in the county. A majority vote is generally required in county elections. If no candidate receives a majority in the primary, a run-off election is held between the top two vote-getters for the office. It is the supervisors’ responsibility to enact county ordinances, to impose taxes, to adopt an annual county budget, to select a chief administrative officer (CAO) or chief executive officer (CEO), who will hire heads of county departments that are not filled by election, and to appoint residents to a variety of county boards and commissions.

Several department heads may be elected county-wide, although their duties are largely administrative. Such offices include the county tax collector, assessor, sheriff and the county clerk.

The standard five-member board of supervisors may undergo some alterations in the future. With over 10 million residents and a very diverse population as well, suggestions have been made that the county of Los Angeles increase the size of its board of supervisors. A greater number of smaller districts would permit more individuals to serve on the board and improve representation.

UNIT 3:

WHO ARE THE PLAYERS IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND HOW CAN YOU GET INVOLVED?

MOVERS AND SHAKERS... OR MOVED AND SHAKEN

Enter a planning trend called “New Town.” Just buy a big piece of cheap agricultural land outside town, but not too far away, and then build a whole new city from the ground up. Developers put in the streets and water, sewer, gas and electric lines, and they make their money selling thousands of houses and the businesses that serve them.

So why has the new town proposed for eight miles outside our city become so controversial?

A whole new community of 24,000 people right next door will change our city and the entire area forever.

So everybody in town is fighting somebody on this issue. We have tenacious citizen groups fighting high-powered public relations firms. We have landowners who want to sell out fighting with their neighbors who want to stay. And we have some heavy-duty lawsuits. We had one election that ousted two of our county supervisors, and now we have a recall campaign that could put the issue to a vote again.

On the one side we have Inland Associates, whose financial resources include the Bank of Caltopia’s billions of dollars. They’ve already spent millions, most of that for the property for their planned city.

On the other side are some people who happen to live near the planned site. They like living there and don’t want to see things change. They are people who think growth and change are normal, but don’t want it all to happen overnight.

The problem is, if the new town is built, just about everybody in town will either make a lot of money or lose something important to them.

WELCOME TO LOCAL POLITICS

Take government, put it in the hands of real people, and you have “politics.”

Politics and government have at least one trait in common with professional sports: We love the game, but it is the players who make it interesting, and those players can be “regular people” as well as elected officials.


For the most part, the players in city, county, special district or school district government are not well known. Few people can even guess what a board member or city manager does as part of their function or why their jobs are important.

NEW WORDS

The following are new words students will read in this text:

Auditor
Board
Minutes
Planning commission
Zoning

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Local government is more interesting when you begin to understand how many different people are players in important decisions. Most local governments have a similar structure. What makes one community different from the next is the people who get involved. Most local governments are shaped much more by the personalities holding office, both appointed and elected, than by the offices themselves. Beyond those elected to office, everybody from the news media to local houses of worship, labor unions, neighborhood associations, and the League of Women Voters can get involved when really “hot” issues emerge.

IMPORTANT OFFICEHOLDERS

The Mayor

The mayor can be the single most influential person in an incorporated community, but this power in most cases is more a result of the individual’s personality and leadership qualities than of any legal powers ascribed to the office itself.

Some cities like Los Angeles, San Diego and San Francisco directly elect mayors whose functions are entirely executive and who are not also members of their city’s councils. In most cities, the mayor sits as a voting member of the city council, the first among equals, but with few powers beyond those of the other elected members.

In most cities, voters do not elect a mayor. Instead, the council selects one of its own members to serve as mayor. In some cases, the honor is rotated, while in others one person might retain the mayor’s position for many years.

The Elected Representatives

“Government of the people, for the people and by the people” means, first and foremost, that the people who make the rules must be elected by those expected to follow them. The legislative bodies of cities, counties, independent special districts and school districts are elected, and the people who serve in these offices naturally tend to wield the greatest degree of influence.

These elected councils and boards in California local governments usually consist of five or more members, each one elected “at-large” by all voters, or by the voters who live within the legislative district. When you have a problem or complaint, who do you call? Your city council member? Do you know who your member is? The fact is, you probably don’t have just one. You may have five, seven or more! No single board member has power by her or himself, the authority is invested in the board as a whole and a majority of that board is required to take action.

As of 2019, approximately 100 of California’s 482 cities elected council members by district and all other cities elect members at-large. While many cities are moving to district-based elections, the at-large system is still very common. At-large elections have drawn criticism because all five council members can, and sometimes do, reside in the same neighborhood of a city. Running for office citywide can be much more expensive and raising large campaign funds becomes more important, because you have to get your message across to all voters in a large geographic area, not just to people living in your neighborhood.

These shortcomings came to public attention in 1989 when a federal court ordered the City of Watsonville to create districts for its council elections. The court found that the city’s at-large system violated federal laws regarding minority representation and resulted in many people casting ballots that were, in effect, without meaning since none of the winners came from their part of town.

Running for election by district can open up the process to more potential candidates because they face lower campaign costs and can rely more on personal contact with the constituents in the district. On the other hand, some feel that election by district tends to discourage a citywide view on the part of council members. District council members have been accused of working for the benefit of their own district exclusively, without taking into account the overall needs of the city. In some smaller communities, district elections may also make it difficult to field candidates for local boards.

In several local agencies, candidates represent a legislative district and must live and be nominated in that district in a primary election, yet they are elected at-large by all of the voters, including those who live in other districts.

In California, all local government officials are elected on a non-partisan basis. The voter does not see the candidates’ political party affiliation on the ballot. While a candidate’s political party rarely remains a secret through a campaign, it is true that most local governments are shaped much more by the personalities holding office, both appointed and elected, than by political parties.

The Manager

The day-to-day administration of municipal government in California is handled by a manager, sometimes called a general manager, administrative officer or chief executive officer, hired by the local government’s board or council. The manager serves “at the pleasure” of the council and can be removed by a vote of the council. Managers have great influence over government because they

are responsible for organizing and staffing departments. Managers fill key positions such as police chief and directors of planning, public works and other important departments. They coordinate all of the departments, execute policies and enforce ordinances adopted by the board or council. The manager also prepares the annual budget for board or council consideration.

The Clerk

In some local governments the clerk is an elective office. In more and more local governments, the clerk is appointed by the board or council. The clerk's office is responsible for keeping all official records including the agenda, the meeting's minutes, and for processing and distributing legal documents and correspondence. As the local elections official, the clerk is responsible for the administration of local elections and also serves as the filing officer under the provisions of the Fair Political Practices Act, which requires all candidates, elected officials and senior administrators to file statements of economic interests and campaign finance reports. In some medium-sized and small organizations the clerk position is held by the manager or executive.

The Agency's Attorney

The attorney is a part-time or full-time appointed officer who advises agency officials, including the council or board, the manager, department heads and clerks, on legal questions and represents the agency in any legal action. Larger organizations may have elected attorneys. Attorneys may be contracted or work directly for the local government agency.

The Treasurer

In some cities and counties, a treasurer is elected and responsible for the custody and investment of all public funds. In a growing number of agencies this office has been made an appointed position and may be consolidated with the director of finance.

Boards, Commissions and Special Committees

Local citizens are often appointed by the board or council to advise or to perform advisory and regulatory functions, subject to appeal to the board or council, in one or more aspects of local government. Commissions are frequently relied upon to advise or help administer such functions as planning, parks and recreation, libraries and traffic. These appointed bodies are excellent settings for residents to participate in local politics. Individuals who ultimately become candidates for board or council seats often have had experience on one or more appointed commissions.

Whether it is a **planning commission** that considers **zoning** issues, a parks commission that deals with recreational matters, or a human relations commission that works to improve race relations, these volunteer bodies offer many residents a chance to participate in their local government. By involving more people, they also improve and expand the quality of discussion on local issues.

Residents interested in serving on a board or commission may view opportunities on agency websites or write to agency officials (clerk, board member, executive officer) to learn how to get started. A commission vacancy may be filled after an interview and formal recruitment process. Generally, such positions are appointed by a majority vote of the local agency's governing body.

The County Officials

With the exception of the combined city and county of San Francisco, county governments in California do not have an elected chief executive. The boards of supervisors select a member to chair the county board. Local customs vary. In some counties, the senior supervisor is given the gavel; in others, the chair rotates annually. Elsewhere, board members who have never had the chance to chair the body are given preference. Besides chairing meetings, this supervisor gains no additional powers beyond those of the other board members. In addition to the elected supervisors, a blend of elected and appointed officials administers county operations. Counties in California elect their sheriffs, coroners, district attorneys, **auditors**, tax collectors, assessors and, sometimes, the clerk is elected. Some counties consolidate certain offices, such as the sheriff and coroner, or the tax assessor and tax collector. The supervisors are responsible for appointing the remaining administrative leadership, beginning with the county administrative or executive officer (CAO/CEO). The CAO or CEO generally selects other key administrators, including the directors of departments like welfare, health, public works and parks.

School District Officials

Because of the importance of good schools and well-educated young people to a community's economic and social well-being, the trustees elected to the school board and the district superintendent can be very important players in their communities. They not only have authority over the school system, but they can also exercise considerable influence across the community. For families with children in school, the local school and school district may well be the most important local government of all. For example, the issue of what should be taught often brings many citizens to a public meeting.

School boards generally meet several times each month in the evening, and members serve part-time in addition to their regular jobs. This makes the role of the superintendent and the administration even more important.

COMMUNITY POWER STRUCTURES

In a government “of the people, for the people, and by the people,” the “people” naturally should play an important role in how their government operates. Both as individuals and as organized interest groups, many members of the community are significant players in local government and politics.

- **Large employers.** The owners and managers of the enterprises that employ most of the local labor force carry considerable weight in most localities. Important decisions must always take into account any effects on the area’s largest employers. How such employers are treated not only affects the jobs of many citizens, but it can also affect other businesses that may be considering a move to the area. If a community’s business climate is viewed negatively, companies may decide to relocate to another area. The interests of other major employers, like a university or a military base, are also considered and their managers consulted regularly.
- **Real estate developers.** No business is more directly dependent on the rulings and actions of local government agencies than the real estate development industry. If you want to build a warehouse, you need permits and approvals from a number of agencies, ranging from the planning department and planning commission to the city council or board of supervisors. Developers, therefore, work continually with elected and appointed local government officials, and naturally work as hard as they can to influence decisions that will favor their projects.
- **The business community.** Local business people in most areas have organized into groups such as chambers of commerce or Lions and Rotary Clubs. These groups often involve not only representatives of large corporations, but also small businesses, which employ many of the area’s citizens. In many communities, such organizations have influence on government issues that could affect them.
- **Labor unions.** The influence of unions varies widely across the state, depending on which industries are located in an area and the level of union membership. The most influential unions tend to be those representing local government employees. They are not just lobbying their government: They are also lobbying their boss. Employee unions can exert tremendous influence over local governments because their jobs are directly affected by decisions about pay and working conditions. While public employees are forbidden by law to work on political campaigns on the job, they can be a very powerful force in elections during their after-work hours and with campaign contributions.
- **Local newspapers, television news and social media.** How the media cover local government can have a big effect on legislation and administration. Often the influence is more a result of the media’s power to publicize an issue rather than a specific editorial stand taken by newspaper, radio or television management. In many parts of California there are too many local governments in any given major media market competing for coverage on television and radio. As a result, social media can have an unusual degree of influence. Local governments may work with media partners to present issues to the public and outreach to the community.
- **Faith leaders.** In many communities, local houses of worship are important meetings place for people. In recent years, faith-based groups have taken a more active role in mobilizing political support for social and moral issues of interest to their members.
- **Community groups.** Such groups may be neighborhood-based, or they may organize around specific causes, such as development projects, the environment or the arts. Members are passionate about their issue and may be familiar with local decision makers.

Making your voice heard

There may come a time when you will feel strongly enough about an issue that you will want to try to persuade a city council, special district board, or county board of supervisors to support your position. You may oppose or support proposed budget cuts to the police department; you may oppose or support proposed new taxes or transit fares. You may wish to make your views heard regarding a crosswalk, bike lane or hazardous condition near your school, home or job. You may want your recreation and park district to build a new skate park or soccer field. How can you put your best arguments forward?



- **Know your issue.** People who know what they are talking about always have more “influence” than those who do not. If you are opposing budget cuts or new taxes, you must know enough about the entire agency to discuss the consequences of not cutting the budget and not raising taxes. Decision-makers must consider all sides of an issue, so they are more likely to pay attention to people who can show that have considered all sides. Once you do learn all about your issue, you may be in for a surprise: Your view may have changed!
- **Present good information.** If you have done research on an issue, such as starting a recycling program, you have something valuable to share with done with the materials collected. The more you can back up your opinion with facts and figures, the more seriously your opinion will be considered. Explain all the likely effects, both good and bad, that may result from your proposal. Show how your idea will help the community. Prepare a brief fact sheet to highlight key points about your idea.
- **Make personal contact.** Politics is a people business. Clearly communicate about your issue by email or letter and then schedule an appointment with the elected official you wish to influence. Your arguments will be more persuasive when you present them personally so be willing to meet in person with the elected official. If you have established a good relationship with the decision maker before in other settings or on other issues, your meeting will be even more cordial and productive.
- **Meet with staff.** In larger government agencies, board members or council members may have a staff representative who helps analyze issues and makes recommendations. Be certain to share your information with agency staff as well as your elected representative. They may also be able to advise you on how best to proceed with your issue. While briefing staff is important, try also to meet with your elected representative, even if only for a brief time.
- **Engage the media.** It is important to educate the local media concerning the issues at stake. Reporters can easily be identified at most government meetings as the people with video and audio equipment. Share your point of view with them and share materials that will help them write their stories. You can also try to win the media’s support for your views by meeting with editorial boards and submitting letters to the editorial page.
- **Anticipate your opposition.** You can better represent your cause if you know who opposes your idea and what their arguments may be. One effective strategy is to go to meetings of groups known to oppose your view and speak with them directly. Ignoring your opposition can be a serious mistake.
- **There is strength in numbers.** Decision makers are more concerned with issues that affect many people. It helps to demonstrate the degree of support you may have by collecting names on petitions, by sponsoring rallies or by bringing large numbers of people to hearings and meetings. Encourage your supporters to write emails and letters and to make calls. Local officials do take note of the written notes and phone calls they receive. They know that for every person who contacts them there are probably several more who feel the same way, but have not bothered to call or to write.
- **Use good sense.** When you feel strongly about an issue, it is easy to go overboard. Think through the strategies you plan to use, and try to picture how they will be perceived by others, by your opposition, and by the decision makers you hope to persuade. The Golden Rule has its own application in political debate: “Don’t do unto others what you would not have them do unto you.” The system works best for those who respect it.

A DAY IN THE LIFE EXERCISE

You have read about some of the important jobs you can find in almost any city, county, or other local government. Jobs like “general manager” or “board member” are standardized titles, but the people who fill these positions can be very different from each other. What are these jobs like and what kinds of people fill them? How do their decisions affect your family’s life?

Take a moment to picture yourself in a job in your local city, county, special district or other local government agency. Whose job do you think might be the most exciting? What do you suppose they do during their work day? What kinds of people do they meet and work with? Why?

1. Pick the position in local government that you think might be the most interesting. Note: You may want to coordinate with your classmates so you don’t all choose the same position.
2. With what you know about local government, imagine what the work day might look like. Draw up a schedule from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. – or later! – and then fill it in with the meetings and appointments in which you can picture your chosen officeholder participating. These might be meetings with staff members, other agencies, community groups, and community social gatherings. Feel free to use your imagination.
3. Now it’s time for a reality check! Call the office of the person who currently holds the job you’ve been thinking about. Explain to the staff your assignment, and ask if you may have a copy of the officeholder’s schedule from a recent work day. Interview the staff member, either by telephone or in person. How does it compare to what you imagined it might be?
4. Prepare a written report about your interview or make an oral presentation to your class.
5. When you contact the office of the person whose job you are studying you should also ask if that office accepts youth interns. Volunteering as an intern is an excellent way to learn about what an agency does and how it operates. Campaigns are also eager to accept volunteers. If there is a candidate or issue about which you are passionate, consider volunteering for their campaign. Both can be opportunities to contribute to your community, and a great experience.

UNIT 4:

WHAT DOES LOCAL GOVERNMENT DO FOR US?

A PLAN IN TIME SAVES NINE

County supervisors Tuesday voted 3-2 to approve a controversial set of amendments to the general plan that could encourage a much larger population for the area in the future. The changes will rezone five tracts of farmland for construction of entire new towns.

Two board members said Tuesday's vote would make it impossible for the county to stay within the population cap envisioned in the general plan.

'We ought to change the name of the county to Urban Sprawl County,' Supervisor George Schneider said bitterly, drawing applause from some members of an audience made up of growth-control advocates and land developers.

The board majority, however, argued that concerns such as traffic, job balance and farmland preservation could still be accommodated.

'My main concern is that we avoid having an unplanned strip city grow up along the freeway through the county,' said Supervisor Lamar Wilkens, a key supporter of the general plan amendments. 'I'm convinced the only way we can do this is by rezoning separate areas for new communities, with lots of open space between them.'

The split vote, after an emotional three-hour meeting, also drew the wrath of Valleyville Mayor Elenor Lara, who said the supervisors had abandoned their agreement to continue to coordinate with officials of the incorporated cities within the county.

'Have you forgotten who will have to build the roads and sewers to these new areas?' she asked. 'Who will maintain the parks once they are built? Who will provide police and fire protection? Whose schools will serve the children from these new families?'

Supervisors Schneider and Dorothy Rodriguez argued that the plan changes, along with current zoning, could more than triple the county's population when built out. The two supervisors voting no also said they will lead a drive to put a referendum on the general plan on the ballot next June.


'We want to know how residents feel about rezoning over 30,000 acres of agricultural land for new houses,' Supervisor Rodriguez said.

NEW WORDS

The following are new words students will read in this text:

Annexation
General plan
Land use
NIMBY
Subdivision
Variance
Zone

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RUNNING YOUR COMMUNITY

Few subjects can stir up strong feelings like a debate about what our communities should look and feel like in the future. How can your community grow and change for the better, yet still feel like home to the people who live there?

You won't hear these issues debated in Washington, D. C. Nor are they to be found in news stories coming out of the state capital. The debates about how your community is run, the services provided to the public, and plans for the future, are conducted instead at the meetings of your local city council, special district board, and county board of supervisors.

All governments, federal, state or local, perform three core functions in our society:

Governments provide services. Government furnishes services ranging from waste removal and police and fire protection in your hometown to operating our national military forces and managing international relations.

Governments regulate our society. Government creates and enforces laws that set standards of quality for public resources like water and air, and regulate standards of behavior for a variety of matters from conducting business to educating young people.

Governments set public policy. Public policy is set in the chambers of our local school board, the city council, the county board of supervisors, our local special districts, the state legislature in Sacramento, and in the U.S. Congress in Washington, D.C.

We may discuss questions like, "Should we raise or cut taxes?" or "Who should be allowed to vote?" with our friends at home, through opinions on social media, or via television or radio shows. In the end, however, it is in the halls of our governments where questions are resolved into the laws that are binding for all.

Municipal governments have legal authority to exercise what our state constitution calls "police powers" to preserve the order and ensure the safety of the community. Note that the word "police" in this context is not a reference to law enforcement, it is derived from the Greek word "polis," meaning "city." This authority allows local government to plan and control how land may be used and to require payment for essential services like law enforcement, street maintenance, parking and traffic control, sewage treatment and refuse collection, nuisance abatement and fire protection.

PUBLIC SERVICES

Local services may be provided directly by a city, county or special district. To provide the services its residents want, local governments are usually organized into various departments. In some cases, an agency may contract with a private company to provide services on behalf of the government. For example, most local agencies contract for the removal, collection and recycling of solid waste. In some areas, it is beneficial for one local agency to contract with another local agency or partner together, such as through a joint powers agreement. Some cities will contract with a special district for fire protection or recreation services. Others may contract with a county for public safety services. These arrangements are made when it is not economically sound for a local government to have its own department or when another agency is able to provide those services at a better price.

The following services are typically delivered by local governments either through city or county departments or through special district services. While many districts provide specialized services, cities and counties may have departments for water treatment, libraries, animal control, personnel, risk management (for handling insurance and liability claims), communications, and building maintenance. Some cities and counties may have dedicated departments to operate airports, harbors, bus systems and electric utilities; these public services may also be provided by an independent or dependent special district. The LAFCO ensures that these local services are not overlapping or redundant by approving which local agencies provide services in any given area.

Law Enforcement

A police or sheriff department's job is to protect residents and their property. Peace officers and sheriff's deputies patrol communities to prevent crime and to find and arrest suspected criminals. In addition to patrols and investigation of crimes, law enforcement provides community services, such as crime prevention and school safety programs. Some cities hire the county sheriff's department for patrols instead of establishing their own city police department. The county sheriff also provides law enforcement in unincorporated areas. Additionally, the county provides public safety and criminal justice system services such as operating the jails. Officers and deputies today are required to attend an intensive pre-service academy as well as regular in-service training programs to help them meet the changing needs of our rural, suburban and urban communities.

Fire Protection

The primary role of a fire department or fire protection district is to prevent and extinguish fires, but hazardous waste spills and other public emergencies increasingly occupy the time of those we call “fire fighters.” Generally, fire protection within city limits is provided from fire stations strategically located to provide quick response to any call for help. City fire departments, county fire departments and fire protection districts usually have mutual-aid agreements for initial response; the first and closest fire units will respond regardless of the jurisdiction. Modern fire prevention programs include inspection, investigation and public education. Communities with successful prevention programs tend to have lower fire insurance premiums than those without. In addition to fire-related services, some fire departments and fire protection districts provide ambulance services for their community.

Public Works

Responsibilities include:

- **Construction of public facilities.** The public works director or engineer is responsible for the plans, specifications and estimates for constructing a community’s streets, highways, storm drainage, sewers and other public works. Cities and counties, as well as special districts specializing in public works services, inspect projects built under contract by utilities or private construction firms.
- **Maintenance of public streets.** Cities and counties, as well as some special district agencies, are responsible for erecting and maintaining street and traffic signs, painting traffic stripes on streets, sweeping streets and making needed street repairs.
- **Operation of the sanitation, garbage, recycling and sewer systems.** Many cities, counties and special districts maintain systems and services that provide essential public health benefits, including:
 - » Storm and sewer systems,
 - » Water and wastewater treatment plants,
 - » Refuse collection services, and
 - » Recycling and landfill facilities.

Parks and Recreation

Local governments may provide recreational programming for their communities, and they may also design, develop and maintain recreational facilities and parks. In some communities, parks and recreation services are a department within a city or county or these types of services are provided by a special district for a defined geographic area. Local governments have an environmental focus since they are the major landholder of open space, trails and parks on behalf of the community.

Community services provided by these departments or districts may include organized youth and adult sports, games and crafts, as well as social and cultural events for the enjoyment of all age groups. Many departments or districts are engaging in providing services that support human service needs and in partnership with community-based organizations or schools.

Finance

Each local government has a finance department responsible for planning and directing the fiscal operations of that agency. This department keeps the administrator or manager informed of the agency’s financial condition, continuously monitors revenues, expenditures, investments of cash balances and its outstanding bonds and other indebtedness. Finance departments generally have divisions or staff dedicated to the agency’s accounting, purchasing, data processing, payroll and business services such as licenses or permits.

County Services

California’s counties provide certain services that are unavailable from cities and special districts. For example, health and welfare services like immunizations, mental health and aid to families with dependent children consume large portions of county budgets. County hospitals are a major provider of health care for low-income residents. Counties also operate the trial court systems and the jails.

County governments also provide law enforcement, fire protection, road maintenance and sanitation for all areas within their boundaries, except for those communities that have formed cities or special districts to provide these services on their own. Counties, as well as cities, through partnerships with non-profit organizations or schools may also address human services needs such as homelessness and poverty.

Counties are responsible for collecting all local property taxes in California, but they keep relatively little of what they collect. A complex system of state laws distributes

property taxes to the school districts, cities and special districts, as well as counties themselves.

COUNTY SERVICES

Agricultural Education	Local Agency Formation Commissions
Agricultural Protection	Mapping Services
Air Pollution Control	Mental Health Services
Ambulance Services	Personnel Services - Civil Rights Act
Animal Control	Planning - Land Use (Subdivision Zoning Laws)
Assessment of Property	Probation Services
Auditing-Controlling	Process Serving (Civil and Criminal)
Bailiff Services	Public Defender
Bridge Construction	Recording Public Documents
Bridge Maintenance	Road Construction Maintenance
Care in State Hospitals	Snow Removal
Civil Defense	Solid Waste Disposal
Communications - 911	State Correctional Schools (Local Responsibility)
Coroner	Surveying
Detention and Correction (Adult and Juvenile)	Tax Collecting
District Attorney	Treasurer
Drug Abuse-Prevention	Weights and Measures
Elections	Welfare Administration
Engineering Service (Roads)	Welfare Assistance Services
Family Support	Welfare Categorical Aids
Flood Control	Welfare General Relief
Fire Protection	Workers' Compensation and Safety Training
Health Services	Workforce Development
Hospital Care	
Judicial - Superior Court System	
Juvenile Delinquency Prevention	
Labor Relations	
Law Enforcement	
Legal Counsel	

LAND USE REGULATION

Perhaps the most complicated and politically charged function of city and county governments is **land use**, planning and regulation. Local officials must contend with the fact that some necessary land uses, the placement of jails, low-income housing, sewage treatment plants or mental health treatment facilities may be unpopular. The acronym **NIMBY** (not in my back yard) was coined to refer to people who know such facilities are needed, but don't want them located in their neighborhood. The acronym

NIMTO (not in my term of office) may describe the kind of support NIMBYs win from elected officials!

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Planning and Building Departments

A municipal planning department provides staff support to a planning commission, the administrative officer or manager, and the board or council. Routine planning activities are processed within the planning department. Proposals requiring board or council action, such as zone changes, variances, conditional use permits, **subdivisions** and plot plans are usually reviewed first by the planning commission. Membership on a planning commission is an important and prestigious appointment. Decisions on growth and development of great financial consequence are acted upon by this commission.

The building department regulates building construction and electrical, plumbing and sewer installations on private property. Periodic inspections are performed during construction to assure all work is done in accordance with state and local building codes, which regulate quality of materials, use, occupancy, location and the maintenance of all buildings and structures within the jurisdiction's limits.

General Plans

If everybody built whatever they wanted to, wherever they wanted to, the results could be disastrous: Houses mixed in with noisy factories or under an airport flight path and inadequate roads and sewers to serve either homes or industry.

To prevent unbridled, chaotic development, California state law requires that every city and county draw up a "general plan" spelling out how all the land within the city or county will be used as the area develops. The purpose of the general plan is to encourage local governments to consider what kind of community they wish to become, and to anticipate the problems that may arise as they grow. The general plan serves as a guide for the community's land use, circulation, environmental, economic and social goals and policies. General plan documents must be made available to the public, and amendments to the plan cannot be adopted without public hearings.

The state itself does not decide how land is to be used within the boundaries of local governments, but it does establish the procedures that cities and counties must follow in making such decisions for themselves. Local governments are given a great deal of flexibility in

determining the content and format of their general plans, provided they follow the state's procedural guidelines.

General plans must cover all areas within the city limits, as well as areas outside municipal boundaries known as "spheres of influence." If it is likely that a city will expand its borders through annexation, the planning document must address how adjoining spheres of influence will be provided with government services in the future.

The state does urge that these plans protect open-space and prime agricultural land while avoiding urban sprawl. The following seven elements must be covered in every general plan:

1. **Land Use.** The plan must show the location of areas designated for different uses like type of housing, retail business, manufacturing, agriculture, parks and open space. It must also project the locations of public facilities like schools, other public buildings, parks and recreational facilities and waste disposal sites.
2. **Circulation.** The development of a transportation network must be included. Where will the roads be built? Which ones will be two-lane, four-lane or even six-lane? The locations of rail lines, bus lines, passenger terminals and parking facilities must be shown. The transportation element must be consistent with the projected land use.
3. **Housing.** General plans must address the community's present and future housing needs. Housing is to be made available for all economic sectors of the community.
4. **Conservation.** The use or preservation of such resources as agricultural land, water, timber and minerals must be discussed in general plans.
5. **Open Space.** Planning for areas not to be developed can be just as important as planning for development. Which lands will remain undeveloped, which farm lands will be kept and where will large public use areas be located? This element frequently is consolidated with the conservation element to assure consistency.
6. **Noise.** Sources and intensities of noise pollution, such as major freeways or airport flight paths, are identified in general plans, together with methods for distributing noise problems within the jurisdiction.
7. **Safety.** The effects of potential emergencies such as earthquakes, floods, chemical and radioactive contamination and forest fires are analyzed, and response plans are included to protect the public from serious harm.
8. **Environmental Justice.** Cities and counties that have identified disadvantaged communities are required to have a general plan element on this matter. This element identifies objectives and policies to reduce pollution exposure, improve air quality, promote public facilities, improve food access, advance access to housing, and increase physical activity.
9. **Air Quality.** Policies and programs that reduce impacts to air quality may be addressed in the general plan. Cities and counties within the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District' jurisdiction are required by state law to include air quality measures in their general plans. This includes local government agencies within the counties of: San Joaquin, Stanislaus, Merced, Madera, Fresno, Kings, Tulare and Kern.
10. **Optional/Additional Elements.** Each community can determine whether it adds additional elements of local interest to its general plan. This may include: Capital improvements, bicycle plans, community design, healthy communities, economic development, energy, water, etc.

The general plan initially is drafted by the staff of a city or county planning department. After appropriate notice in online, print and social media, hearings are held to gather public comments. After revision by the planning commission, made up of members appointed by the supervisors or city council, the general plan is formally adopted by the legislative body. Thereafter specific land use decisions, such as subdividing open land into smaller housing lots, must be shown to be consistent with the approved general plan, or the general plan must be revised.

Zoning

Whereas general plans are comprehensive and long-range documents, zoning ordinances are more immediate and specific. In accordance with the general plan, local ordinances determine which zones will permit residential, commercial, industrial or agricultural uses. Local zoning laws determine the minimum size lot upon which a structure may be built, the maximum height of buildings and how far construction must be set back from property lines.

If a particular piece of property is an odd shape or is on a steep slope, local governments can bypass the rules

and grant zoning “**variances**” to allow improvements to take place that ordinarily would not be acceptable. For example, a residential **zone** may require the homes to be set back at least 30 feet from the front border. On your lot, however, there is a large hill on the back that doesn’t leave enough room for your house and the 30-foot setback. You may ask for a variance to allow your home to be closer to the street. In return, the local planning department may require you to landscape with trees or other plants to provide a visual barrier between your house and the street.

When owners want to use their property for a slightly different purpose than for which it is zoned, a “conditional use” permit may be granted. These permits contain precise conditions concerning how such a parcel of land may be used. For example, your neighbor may start a small hair salon business in his or her back room. While operating a business in a residential zone is usually not allowed, your neighbor may ask for a conditional use permit that might limit hours of operation and the number of customers that could be served.

Should a property owner’s proposal stretch the zoning ordinances too far, for example, by asking to locate an industrial park in a residential zone, the appropriate action would be to consider rezoning instead of issuing a conditional use permit. Property owners in the area are notified of public hearings and input from the public is solicited on all zoning variance, conditional use and rezoning decisions. Are there exceptions for conditional use permits in your city (i.e., bus shelters)? Who would you contact to find out?

Environmental Impact Reports

How developments affect the environment has received a lot of attention from the public, the media, the courts, and the state legislature since laws requiring environmental impact studies were first passed in 1972. Under state and federal law, local governments must prepare an environmental assessment on any project or decision that may cause significant environmental impacts. Where impacts are identified, local government must also say whether they can be reduced or mitigated, and explain why particular mitigation measures are chosen or rejected. These reports must be presented at public hearings, where interested citizens can comment on the environmental impacts and the choice of mitigation measures. While Environmental Impact Reports or EIRs, are sometimes controversial and have been used to delay development in some situations, there is little question that

the overall effect of the laws requiring these studies and reports has helped make development in California more environmentally sound.

Other Land Use Regulators

Although most land use decisions are made locally, under some circumstances approval may also be required from state or regional agencies. Development of the coast requires a permit from the California Coastal Commission and nothing can be built in the Lake Tahoe watershed without a permit from the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency. Any land use that emits pollutants into the atmosphere must obtain a permit from the California Air Resources Board, and any land use which discharges pollutants into bodies of water requires a permit from the Water Resources Control Board. Mobile home parks must be approved in advance by the California Department of Housing and Community Development, and pipelines and power plants must be approved by the Public Utilities Commission. As is the case for all local deliberations of rezoning proposals or amendments to general plans, public input and participation is welcomed during the review process for specialized permits.

UNIT 5:

HOW DO WE PAY FOR GOVERNMENT SERVICES

YOU GET WHAT YOU PAY FOR

City manager Larry Jackson told the city council Tuesday that the state's revenue shortfall will likely mean a drop in city revenues that could approach 20 percent.

"I am not certain we can avoid cutting meat and bone out of the city budget this year," Jackson said.

Last year's budget crisis led to a round of cuts that included slashing library hours in half, charging admission to all city parks and play fields, deferring needed street and sewer system repairs, and a freeze on new hires in all city departments, including the police and fire departments.

The council's reaction to the report was mixed.

"I, for one, am ready to take a look at ways we can raise some new revenues," said Council Member Lorene Picone. "My constituents tell me public safety is their number one priority, and I think we have to look at expanding our police department, not cutting it still more."

Council Member Bill Yee said he would never support any new taxes. "I didn't get elected to raise people's taxes," he said. "There are plenty of places where we can cut out some waste and inefficiency."

The council, having already rejected new taxes on hotel rooms and tickets to sporting events, ordered city staff to identify city services for which fees could be charged.

"We can't afford to pick up everybody's lawn clippings for free anymore," said Council Member Than Nguyen from the Old Town area. "If people want that service, they're going to have to pay for it."

HOW LOCAL GOVERNMENTS COVER THEIR COSTS

The average citizen and the student of local government will agree on one thing: How local government is financed can seem complicated. Services are paid for in different ways, by different people, at different times.


If local governments were like any other business, they would produce their products and then sell their products at the highest price the market would bear in order to yield the maximum amount of profit. But much of what our local governments do for us does not follow this model. It is not the intent of local government to make a profit. Most local services are mandatory, not optional. Many services are not paid for by those who use them, but by the public-at-large. Public schools, for example, are

NEW WORDS

The following are new words students will read in this text:

Ad Valorem
Assessed Value
Deficit
Franchise
Franchise Tax
General Fund
Operating Budget

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open to all children, regardless of their family's income, and state law requires that all children attend some kind of school through age 18. Also, as a matter of public health, garbage collection services are legally mandated by most communities. And what would happen if you only paid for fire protection or law enforcement services when you needed them?

Because local governments provide a variety of services, the way they are paid for can vary widely. Just as each community provides different services and “feels” different to live in, cities, counties and special districts are funded in many different and complex ways. Much of this complexity can be traced back to two factors: local traditions and propositions.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Local Traditions

Paying for local services, like providing those services, has evolved in different ways in different locales over many years. For example, some cities send residents a bill for picking up the garbage; other cities do not, but instead they are paid for out of general tax revenues.

Propositions 13 and 218

California voters in 1978 adopted a constitutional amendment freezing property tax rates at one percent of the property's assessed value in 1976. Although Proposition 13 gave tax relief to homeowners, in effect, the largest single source of tax income for California local governments was cut in half. Any property that has changed hands since 1976 has been valued at its actual sale price. Homes that are new or partially remodeled are valued using a formula based on square footage and the date of completion.

Proposition 13 also shifted control over local property taxes to the state legislature. At the time, the state enjoyed a substantial budget surplus, part of what motivated the so-called tax revolt that led to the passage of Proposition 13. The legislature initially used this surplus to mitigate the effects of Proposition 13 on local governments. However, in the 1990s, when the state faced an economic downturn and budget shortfalls, the legislature used its authority to divert property taxes away from local governments to backfill state funding of schools and community colleges. This diversion of about 20 percent of local property tax revenue is known as the Educational Revenue Augmentation Fund or ERAF and it continues to this day.

In 1996, voters passed Proposition 218, another significant restriction on local government funding. Proposition 218 placed limits on the property related fees local agencies can set. Property related fees include fees for services such as residential water delivery and wastewater disposal. Local governments cannot set a fee that is greater than the cost of providing the service to the property. New or increased fees are subject to procedural requirements, including majority protests, created by Proposition 218. Fees may also be reduced or repealed by a popular vote.

Ballot initiatives like Proposition 13 and 218, and legislative actions such as ERAF have rendered most local governments more dependent on taxes collected at the state level. The most important state taxes are the personal income tax, sales tax, and business tax. By and large, these taxes are established by state law and cannot be adjusted locally unless there is a vote by the community.

Prior to Proposition 13, local governments determined the need for services and then set their local property tax rates to meet those needs. Today things have turned around: instead of fitting taxes to public needs, a local government more likely will adjust its services to fit its revenues.

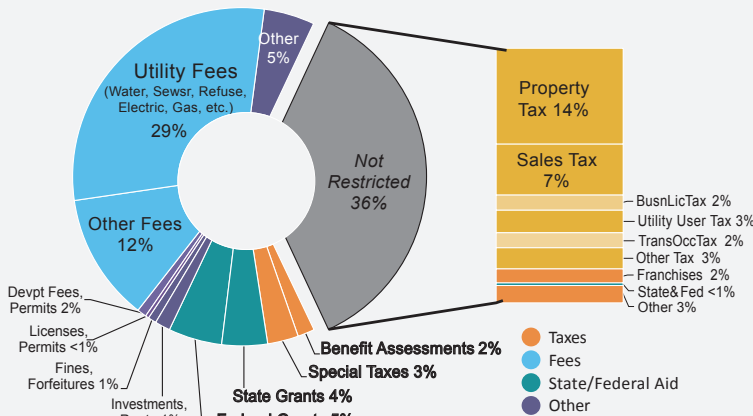
The revenues received by cities, counties, special districts and school districts may be divided predominantly into two types:

1. Fees collected for specific services, commonly referred to as enterprise funds
2. Taxes which are placed into a **general fund** and budgeted, commonly referred to as non-enterprise funds or governmental funds

**SHOW ME THE MONEY:
Typical Revenues and Expenditures for Cities, Counties and Special Districts**

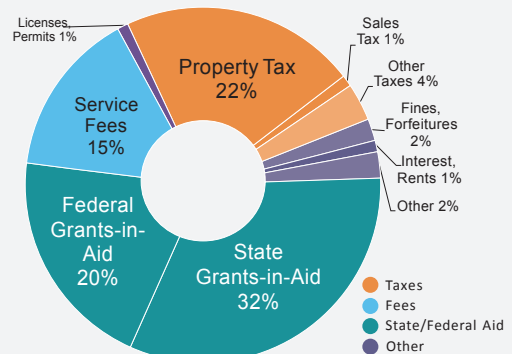
Displayed below are charts showing typical revenue and expenditures for cities, counties and special districts. Revenues sources for local government include federal and state grants, property taxes, user charges and fees and other taxes.

California City Revenues



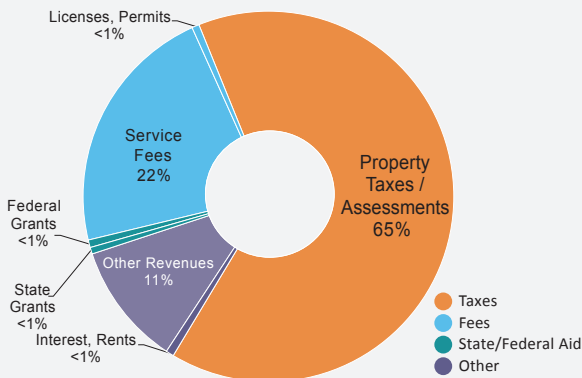
This is a statewide mash-up of city revenues. Individual cities vary.
 Source: Author's computations from data from California State Controller 2014-15.
 Does not include the City/County of San Francisco.

California County Revenues



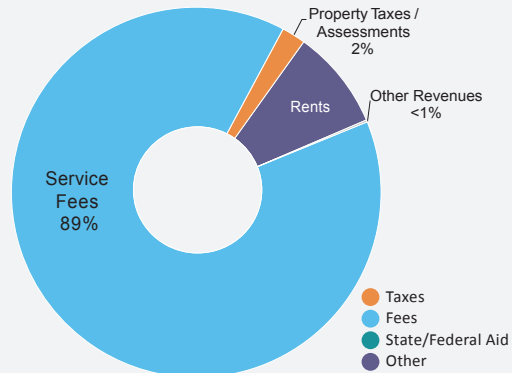
Source: Author's computations from data from California State Controller 2014-15.
 Includes the County/City of San Francisco.

**California Special District Revenues
Typical District (fire) Providing Non-Enterprise Services**



Source: Author's computations from data from California State Controller 2014-15.

**California Special District Revenues
Typical District (water) Providing Enterprise Services**



Source: Author's computations from data from California State Controller 2014-15.

PROPERTY TAXES

Traditionally, the tax on real property, land, and the permanent structures built on it was the backbone of local government finance. In theory, services connected to property, such as police protection, garbage collection, or local schools, would be paid for with a tax on property. Supervisors, city councils, school boards and special district boards determined their budgets for the coming year and then set the tax rate to meet those expenses. Every piece of property was “assessed” by the county assessor, who assigned a taxable value to it. Each local agency set its own tax rate that applied to the property. If one person owned more property than a neighbor, or if that property was considered to be more valuable, he or she would receive a higher tax bill than the neighbor.

That all changed in California in 1978 when voters approved Proposition 13, limiting the property tax to one percent of the “assessed value” of property as of 1975, and to one percent of a property’s actual sale price for properties that change hands after 1975. Unless the property is sold, assessed value increases are limited to two percent per year of the 1975 value.

As a result, recent home buyers generally pay much higher property taxes than people who bought their homes 40 or more years ago. For example, two identical houses, next to each other in the same neighborhood, could have radically different tax bills if the first was purchased for \$50,000 in 1978, and the second was purchased for \$250,000 in 1992. The first house started with a property tax of \$500; by 1992, the two percent annual increase would have raised the tax to about \$660. The second house, although identical in every way, would pay \$2,500 in 1992, or almost four times as much as the house that hadn’t sold since 1978.

The disparity in property taxes charged to new homebuyers is exacerbated by another ballot initiative, Proposition 58 passed in 1986. Proposition 58 allows parents to transfer a residence to their children without it being reassessed for property tax purposes, even if the children choose to rent the residence out or operate a business from the home, rather than live in it. This means that a parcel may never be reassessed, so long as it continues to be passed along. What are the implications in terms of revenue for local services? Does this policy place a higher burden upon new homebuyers, immigrants, or foster children? Should our state support the ability of its citizens to keep property in the family and for parents to leave a legacy for their children?

Another consequence of Proposition 13 is a growing disparity over time between the assessment of residential property and commercial or business property. Similar

to the concept of a family that passes along a home for multiple generations as an inheritance, many businesses that own property are able to retain majority ownership of that property for decades. This is because, unlike people, business can live forever. As a result, some commercial property may never be reassessed. Over time, what is the effect on the collection of local revenue? If a new comic book store opens up across the street from a long-standing comic book store, should the new store be required to pay a higher property tax rate? Is it important for businesses to have a predictable tax rate from year to year that is not subject to large spikes?

In addition to its limit on property taxes, Proposition 13 also requires that any special tax win approval by a two-thirds majority of the voters, instead of the traditional simple majority of 50 percent plus one. Special taxes are charged to property owners on a per property or “parcel” basis whereas traditional property taxes are charged based on value, known as **ad valorem**. A two-thirds majority has proven very difficult to achieve. Even Proposition 13 did not win by a two-thirds majority and new taxes have been rare since 1978.

Proposition 13 expressly forbids new taxes based on the relative value of property. A subsequent ballot initiative did permit one exception: Local governments may place a tax on the value of property to pay for bonds for certain construction projects, but these bonds and taxes must also be approved by a two-thirds majority. Such bonds are called general obligation bonds. This threshold was lowered to 55 percent for school districts by Proposition 39 in 2000.

The Sales Tax

A sales tax is collected on the sale of all items except groceries, prescription drugs, diapers, feminine hygiene products and some services. Because of the limits and restriction on property taxes placed into the state constitution by Proposition 13 in 1978, the sales tax has become a very important tax for cities and counties. The Department of Tax and Fee Administration collects the sales tax and then returns a portion to the city or county where the sale was generated.

Because the location of the sale determines who gets the revenue, cities and counties tend to compete with each other and among themselves for the right to receive the local portion of the sales tax.

County governments may oppose the formation of a city because they do not wish to lose the sales tax receipts generated within the boundaries of the proposed city.

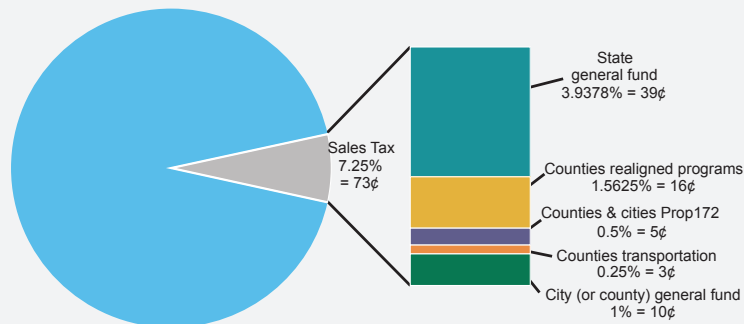
Cities and counties will do what they can to encourage an automobile dealer or the developer of a shopping center to locate in their jurisdiction, because the retail sales would have a big effect on the funding of the local government

As of April 1, 2019, Californians pay between 7.25 and 10.5 percent sales tax depending on the county. The sales tax you pay at the store is made up of several components:

- **The state sales tax rate in California currently is six percent.** Of that, 0.5 percent was passed as part of the state’s budget for 1991-92, aimed at overcoming a very large drop in state revenues and a potential budget **deficit**. A measure on the November, 1993, ballot to maintain the 6 percent sales tax was approved by the electorate. Despite more recent budgetary deficits, the state has not since changed the sales tax rate.

- **The “uniform” local sales tax.** Since 1967 a standard 1.25 percent sales tax has been imposed in all counties. Every city and county in the unincorporated area receives 1 percent based on the level of retail sales occurring within its boundaries. The remaining 0.25 percent is allocated to the county transportation fund for mass transit and highway programs.
- **Optional local sales taxes.** As of 2019, 34 of California’s 58 counties levy at least one additional, optional sales tax. In many of these counties, an optional sales tax is for transportation projects. Four counties collect optional sales taxes for general or other specific purposes. State law limits optional sales taxes to 3 percent, which would amount to a total sales tax of 10.5 percent. Only the City of Santa Fe Springs, in Los Angeles County has reached this limit.

**PURCHASE POWER:
How much of a sales tax goes to state and local governments?**



Rates effective January 1, 2017 after the expiration of the 0.25% Proposition 30 temporary rate. In addition to the base, statewide rate of 7.25 percent, local voters may authorize additional “transactions and use tax” rates. These additional rates raise the total effective rate to as much as 9.75% in some locations.

HOW TAXES FOR CITIES, COUNTIES, SCHOOLS, AND THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA ARE APPROVED

	TAX- General	TAX- Parcel or Special (earmarked)	G.O. BOND (w/tax)	Fee / fine / rent
City / County	Majority voter approval	Two-thirds voter approval	Two-thirds voter approval	Majority of the governing board*
Special District	n/a	Two-thirds voter approval	Two-thirds voter approval	Majority of the governing board*
K-14 School	n/a	Two-thirds voter approval (parcel tax)	55% voter approval**	Majority of the governing board*
State	For any law that will increase the taxes of any taxpayer, two-thirds of each house of the Legislature – or approval of majority of statewide voters.		Statewide majority voter approval	Majority of each house

* Additional procedures apply for property related fees.

** Per Proposition 39 (2000), maximum tax rate limits and other conditions apply for a 55% threshold school bond or threshold is two-thirds.

LICENSES AND PERMITS

Cities and counties collect fees in the form of licenses and permits from special users of general government services. Most cities and counties issue business licenses for businesses operating within their jurisdictions on the theory that the city incurs many costs as a result of commercial activity. Services needed may include additional traffic signals, wider streets and increased police patrols. The business license is a means by which companies can contribute toward the cost to the city of providing these necessary services.

Other permits and licenses are issued to reimburse the city for costs incurred in regulating various activities. These include filing fees charged for processing zoning changes, engineering fees charged for processing a subdivision map and permit fees collected for building construction. Pet licenses and bicycle licenses are also common.

How much can a city, for example, charge for a building permit? If the city needs the money, why not charge a lot? Other than political considerations, there was little to prevent a city or county from doing just that before Proposition 13. However, Proposition 13's restrictions on new taxes also prompted a new look at municipal fee structures.

Some local governments did attempt to boost their fees to make up for lost revenues, but those increases were over turned in the courts. As a general rule, local governments were not permitted to raise their fees beyond the cost of providing the services which the specific fee supported. To raise fees any higher would be the equivalent of a new tax, and that would require a two-thirds vote of the people.

However, fees could be raised to recover the actual costs of the services, and in many cases they were. In general, local governments became much more careful about accounting for their costs. Building permit fees, for example, were tied more directly to the city's actual cost of processing the fees, conducting the inspections, and enforcing the building code. Developers, when they came in with zoning change proposals or subdivision maps, could be charged for their share of the cost of running the entire planning department. In most cases, fees were raised, because in the past, governments had not recovered the actual costs of services.

Court fines and forfeitures

Fifty percent of fines and forfeitures for law violations occurring within the city are remitted to the city. The remaining 50 percent goes to the state general fund to help fund the courts which are administered by the county. Cities do administer and receive all parking citations within the city limits.

Service Charges

Most local governments derive a considerable amount of revenue from charges for such services as trash collection, fee-based recreation programs, use of facilities and copies of records or maps. Examples of services where local agency charge a fees, include:

- Weeding vacant lots,
- Sheltering animals,
- Filing subdivision maps,
- Playing on golf courses, and
- Docking boats in municipal harbors.

As with permits and licenses, tight budgets create pressures to raise the fees for local services. Again, the guiding rule has been to limit the fee to the true cost of the service.

REVENUES COLLECTED BY THE STATE

More than 500 individual local governments collect taxes in California across 58 counties. With so many cities, towns, villages and counties, the state is in a better position to more efficiently levy and collect taxes on behalf of these public agencies. These revenues are called state "subventions." Two of the most important are:

- **Motor Vehicle "In Lieu" Fees.** These fees are paid by owners of cars and trucks for vehicle license plates. The state collects and returns money to cities and counties after administrative costs have been deducted. These motor vehicle fees are levied by the state "in lieu of" the personal property tax that local government used to levy and collect. The state can administer this tax more efficiently because the Department of Motor Vehicles must register all vehicles for regulatory purposes anyway. Cities and counties get the money because local governments provide most of the facilities used by autos.

- **Gasoline Tax.** The state collects taxes on vehicle fuels (gasoline and diesel) and a percentage is returned to cities and counties to be spent on construction and maintenance of arterial streets and roads that serve as the collector system for state highways.

Utility Franchises

Privately owned public utilities like telephone, natural gas, electric utilities and internet providers normally pay a franchise tax calculated as a percentage of their annual sales within the city. They pay the franchise tax in exchange for the exclusive right to serve the citizens in that area, while using the public rights-of-way such as public streets and property to carry out their business. Because they pay a franchise tax, utilities are usually excluded from the requirement that they pay for a business license.

Operation of Utilities

Nearly 60 percent of the cities in the state operate city-owned water utilities. About 20 operate a city-owned electric power distribution system, and a few distribute gas. About 60 cities, and most counties, operate airports, bus systems, harbors or hospitals. These “proprietary functions” of local governments are usually managed separately, with their own financial accounting and records.

Independent special districts carry out these functions throughout other parts of the state, with about 340 water districts serving California. Sewer and water recycling services are provided by approximately 100 sanitation or sanitary districts. Many Californians also receive water, sewer or electricity services from one of about 90 irrigation districts, five municipal utility districts and 50 public utility districts. Many of the state’s approximately 320 community services districts provide water or sewer services.

California is served by 10 airport districts, nearly 20 transit districts, a dozen port and harbor districts and nearly 80 healthcare districts.

In addition to local governments, corporations known as investor-owned utilities provide most of California’s electricity services and some of its water services. These utilities are granted monopolies by the state and regulated by the California Public Utilities Commission. Unlike local governments, investor owned utilities earn a profit. Their board of directors is chosen by private investors rather than elected by voters living in the community the utility serves.

BENEFIT ASSESSMENT DISTRICTS

Laws passed in the 20th century allow a government to form a “benefit assessment” district to provide a needed service. The district can charge its costs directly to those whose property benefits from it. For example, a benefit assessment district could be formed to build dams for flood protection, and all property owners within the protection zone would be assessed to pay for it. Benefit assessment districts have also been used for street lighting, street construction and other infrastructure.

More recently, tight budgets have given some local governments an incentive to create benefit assessment districts for improvements that have already been made. For example, a neighborhood may already have street lights or city parks, but a city council could establish a benefit assessment district to pay for the maintenance and operation of these facilities that had previously come out of the general tax fund. By asking property owners to pay these costs, the general fund can be freed up for other uses.

OTHER SOURCES

Some cities and counties, because of their unusual circumstances, rely on less customary sources of revenue. Among the revenue sources used by some cities and counties:

- An admissions tax charged on tickets to racetracks or other large amusement facilities and events.
- A hotel/motel tax charged on the room rental bills of those staying in local hotels.
- A utility tax collected on the bills paid by customers of such utilities as the electricity, gas or cable television companies serving the community.

SCHOOL FINANCE

The major source of funding today for education in California for grades kindergarten through community college is the state general fund. In the 2018-19 school year, the state general fund accounted for 58% of K-12 funding. Property taxes and other local revenue sources account for about 32% and federal funds account for 9%. One of the consequences of Proposition 13 was increasing the role of state funding in K-14 education.

In 2013, California revamped its school funding formula, implementing the Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF). Under LCFF, California moved away from a complex system of 50 funding categories to a formula that directs funding to schools and districts that serve high-need students. Districts receive a base amount tied to their Average Daily Attendance (ADA), defined as the average number of students either in school or validly absent each day. Districts then receive a 20% supplement for each high-need student, defined as students learning English, in poverty, and/or foster care. Districts with high concentrations of high-need students receive extra funding.

As of 2015, state support for school operations averaged a just over \$10,000 per student. Adjusted for the high cost-of-living in California, K-12 funding ranks 41st of the 50 states. In addition to the LCFF funds for school operation, schools may also receive the following funds:

- **Developer fees** may be charged per square foot of new construction in a community to help pay for new construction and temporary housing of students in “portable” classrooms. This helps school districts with growing population serve the increased number of students. In addition to schools, cities, counties and special districts also charge development fees on new projects.

- **The California State Lottery** was established in the mid-1980s. Today, the lottery accounts for less than one percent of the **operating budgets** of California public schools.
- **Categorical programs** have been created at the state and local levels to provide funding for specific purposes such as special education or college readiness. By law, such funds cannot be used for any other purpose.

PROPOSITION 98

California voters passed a constitutional amendment to protect the level of funding of the state’s public school system in 1988. The measure, “Proposition 98”, guarantees schools a certain percentage of the state budget or the same level as the previous year with adjustments for inflation and enrollment growth. While education spending has not kept up with inflation in recent years, funding for schools has not been reduced at the same level as other state and local functions.

UNIT 6:

YOUR GOVERNMENT: YOU MAKE THE CHOICES

CONGRATULATIONS TO THE STUDENTS OF CITY HIGH SCHOOL

The city council Tuesday adopted a resolution congratulating the efforts of City High School's government class on its project, "Reinventing City Government." The class of 32 students, guided by teacher Tom Gorski, presented its project to the city council last week in a special council session held at the high school.

"I am not at all embarrassed to say that these young people know a lot more about how our city is run than I did when I first ran for office," said Mayor Serena Williams. "I'm not sure these kids realize how much this city has changed in the last 20 years, but I feel confident they will be able to handle the changes that are still to come."

The project was the result of a course at City High that teaches students about local government by having them "build" a new city government on paper.

Students met on several occasions with city staff members in the Planning, Finance and Human Services Departments, and they expressed their gratitude for the staff's assistance in their research.

The resolution singled out the students' willingness to give every aspect of city government a new look. The students' report, presented by Kiera Chan, Carey Cruz, Heidi Felderstein, Jason Johnson, Tran Nguyen and Arnsi Sandhu, featured a new general plan for the city, a preservation plan and an all-new tax structure. While the students called for a better public library, they included a plan for organizing a youth community service project to help in the library.

"Frankly, I found myself wishing that our town looked more like what these students described than what we actually have today," said Council Member Mary Yamata. "Maybe we need to think about why it isn't more like that!"

This city has paid a lot of money to consultants whose reports weren't as thorough and helpful to us as this student project," said Council Member Lan Truong. "I fully expect to see some of them sitting up here as members of this council someday soon."

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IT'S YOUR TURN

The government of the city or county where you live is the result of many years of choices and decisions made by the people who have lived there and actively involved themselves in the affairs of their community.

As a student, it may sometimes seem to you that all the decisions that shape your world have already been made. Think again! Democratic government always welcomes energetic, involved people. The legacy to make the choices that impact our communities will always be passed down to a younger generation.

You and your class, by looking at your community and by thinking about the descriptions of government in this book, can take a fresh look at these decisions. What type of city would you like to live in? What customs and traditions would you like to preserve? To whom will you delegate the authority to make day-to-day decisions? What types of services will your city provide its residents?

To begin, your entire class must first decide on a vision for your city. The goal is to express in a few words what your city should try to be like. This "mission statement" will direct the overall development of your city, and should be worded carefully.

Your class will then be divided into five committees, each responsible for researching and planning one element of your city. Each committee will select:

- A chairperson who will meet regularly with the other committee chairpersons to coordinate the class effort.
- A committee reporter to record group progress.

The class will assemble a city planning binder that contains the final plan from each committee, supported by drawings, charts or graphs. Notes from each group will also be included in the binder to demonstrate the preparation and progress of each group.

Committee One

PRESERVING OUR CULTURAL HERITAGE

What is it about your community that you want to preserve, to keep from changing while the rest of the world changes all around us? What can your city do to preserve its history, culture and traditions?

Using what you know about the past, you can preserve the best of your community's cultural heritage, building on that knowledge to create a rich and dynamic future. Group One will identify the special places, events and traditions that make your city unique. You will decide which of these qualities to retain, replace or enhance, and then propose ways to make sure that your choices are, in fact, preserved.

Brainstorm

Your team could conduct an in-person or online survey to ask a variety of questions:

- What events take place in your city that make it special?
- To which places would you take an out of town guest to show off your city?
- What historically significant places and people make your city unique?
- What cultural activities, in art, music, drama or other form, enrich your city?
- What recreational events and activities does your city sponsor?
- What kinds of ordinances could a city council pass to preserve special places and events?
- Are there actions that city departments could take to preserve special places and events?

List Your Information Sources

Where would you go to get information about your city? Consider the following:

- Parents, neighbors or other community members can tell you about what drew them to the area. Ask them what they would like to see preserved in the future.
- Look through library files of past newspapers to identify some of the annual or seasonal events that take place in your city.

- Check the city and county government sections in the telephone directory for agencies that deal with historical, social and cultural places and events.
- Contact a representative of the historical society in your city.
- Older adults and long-time residents can tell you how the city has changed over their life time. What would they like to have seen preserved? What would they preserve in a city of the future?

Gather Your Information

Investigate or interview as many of your listed information sources as you can. Each member of the group should investigate at least one source from the list and carefully record what they learn.

In preparing your final report, you will not only talk about what should be preserved, but also why. For example, if you feel that a building should be preserved because of its historical significance, explain why it is significant.

Try to present all sides of your issue. If you feel that an event should be continued, explain why. Does it improve the quality of life for the community? Why? Does it attract tourists, and therefore money, to the city? What kind of revenue is produced? What kind of services are impacted by the event? What is the impact on the environment? Who might object to your plan, and how might their concerns be addressed?

Write A Preservation Plan

Decide as a group which are the five most important events, places and qualities you would use city resources to preserve. Keep in mind the mission statement your class worked out for your city.

Write a one-page proposal for each of your group's top five priorities. Each essay should:

- Be written as a persuasive speech to convince the committee that each of these events, places or activities is essential to your community.
- Be addressed to a city council and/or a specific budget or finance committee.
- Describe the event, place or quality that is the goal of your preservation effort.
- Explain why the proposal is important.
- Lay out a detailed preservation strategy, including an estimate of costs.

Committee Two

CHOOSING A GOVERNMENT STRUCTURE

What kind of structure would you choose for your city to provide services efficiently and to be responsive to resident's needs? How should your government be arranged to encourage the broadest participation of residents in making decisions? The city and county structure charts outlined in Unit 2 may be helpful.

Group Two will study how these decisions could affect your city and then present its recommendations for the type of government organization that will reflect your thoughts and conclusions.

Brainstorm

The following are some of the decisions that must be made in the process of selecting a structure for your local government:

- Should your community be incorporated into a city? Is your city government doing things that could be done better by a different agency or a private company? Could money be saved by not having a city administration with separate departments for police, fire, public works, parks and other services?
- Should your city be large or small? What does your group think would be an ideal size for your city? What are the advantages and disadvantages of large or small cities? How could your city slow down its rate of growth? How could it grow more quickly? If you could divide the city where you live into smaller units to match your ideal size, what parts of town would your group place into your new city and why?
- How should representatives be elected? Should elected officers represent a specific section of the city, or should they represent the city at-large? Where should they live? How would it make a difference if you wished to run for city council? What if you wanted to talk to your representative about a serious problem in your neighborhood?
- Who should run the city? Who should be responsible for hiring city staff? Who should be responsible for drawing up the city budget? Should executive power be held by an elected mayor or by an appointed city manager? What should be included in the job description of the city manager? Should public boards and commissions of residents be named to oversee certain important city departments?

List Your Information Sources

When making important decisions, it always helps to find out what others may think. Who are some people who might have thoughts and ideas about these questions? Consider interviewing the following:

- Professors of government at a local community college or university.
- Community organizations such as an historical society, a taxpayers' association and chambers of commerce usually have strong opinions on questions of municipal organization.
- Newspaper reporters who cover city and other local government issues.
- The head of a special district in your area.
- Members of the city council.
- Directors of any city departments you may be interested in. Your city attorney could be particularly helpful.

Gather Your Information

For each issue, choose at least two informed outside sources to consult for information and opinions. Each member of the group should interview at least one source from your group list and keep detailed notes as part of your group's record.

Discuss your interviews as a group, and decide which thoughts and opinions are the most important in developing your plan.

Write An Organization Plan

Your group will set the ground rules for giving your city government a complete makeover. Your organization plan will consist of a position paper on the four key issues of city organization:

- Should your community be incorporated into a city?
- Should your city be large or small?
- How should representatives be elected?
- Who should run the city?

Each position paper should clearly state the issue and your group's recommendation. It should explain the factors affecting your decisions and your group's reasoning for coming to its conclusions.

Committee Three

PROVIDING CITY SERVICES

What services are absolutely essential for a safe, orderly, livable and healthy community? What other functions might a city provide to improve the quality of life?

Imagine starting your city government from scratch, without any pre-existing obligations to provide any services to anybody. What work would need to be done for the public's health and safety? Does your city's mission suggest doing the absolute minimum in the interest of keeping costs down, or is your city willing to spend more to do things that are important to its residents?

Group Three will take a look at the services that cities provide their residents, weigh their relative importance and consider other possible services that might benefit your community. You will then draw up a community service plan for your city that reflects what you want your local government to do for its residents.

Brainstorm

What services are provided by local governments to help your family maintain its home, whether in an apartment or in a single-family house?

- What services are currently being provided by your city, county, or special district that you feel might be better provided in some other way, either through private agencies or other public agencies?
- In your city, what functions do you feel people should take responsibility for doing themselves?
- What are some things currently done by the city, county or special district where you live that you feel you could live without?
- If cost were not an important consideration, what do you imagine could be done with tax resources to make your life easier or more interesting?
- What services might be especially important for different groups within your community, such as children, retirees or minorities?

List Your Information Sources

Your group will want to gather as much information as it can about the services already being delivered to your community and about problems and unmet needs in which city government should take an interest. Some places to look for sources of information and opinions:

- Your city manager's office should be able to provide a complete list of what is currently being done for your community by the existing departments.
- Neighboring cities probably do things differently from what is currently done in your city. They may be able to give your group some interesting ideas.
- Your elected representatives may already be interested in some potential services for which financial or public support has not yet been fully developed. They may have some ideas to share. Your local United Way office can provide a list of the public service agencies funded by the United Way in your area.
- Using the United Way's list, you should be able to find some public service agencies that do the kind of work you may be considering for your service plan.
- What other community groups have you heard of in your area? Groups like the Urban League, the League of Women Voters, and service groups like Kiwanis, Lions or Rotary may have some interests that could fit into your plan.
- This is your opportunity to include some of your special interests in your plan. Consider anything and everything, from skate parks to public wifi to libraries open 24 hours. Groups supporting similar kinds of activities could also be included on your information source list.

Gather Your Information

Decide collectively which sources are the most important to contact. Your group will assign each member to contact and research at least one of the sources on your list. Each member should keep detailed notes as part of your group's record.

Discuss your interviews and research as a group, and decide which thoughts and opinions are the most important in developing your plan.

Write A Community Service Plan

1. Assemble an organizational chart for your city, the way you would like to see it organized. To promote efficiency, allow yourselves only five city departments altogether. The chart will show which departments your city will include, and who will report to whom. For example, if you choose to have a planning department, will its staff report to a planning commission of appointed community members, to the city manager, or directly to the elected city

council? When you have completed a draft chart, meet with the members of Group Two to see if there are any conflicts in your plans.

2. For each department, prepare a one-page summary of the services it will provide. Describe:
 - » What the department's responsibilities will be.
 - » Why the department's activities are important to the well-being of the community.
 - » How the department will accomplish its tasks? For example, if the task is garbage pickup, will the city hire a refuse company or will it perform the task itself, hiring staff and buying trucks?
3. No city can do everything, and yours will be no exception. The third element of your plan will be a priority list for future funding. What activities must your city put on hold right now, but will take up again in the future when more funding becomes available?

Committee Four

PLANNING LAND USE

Most communities are eager to have new industries/businesses move in to help stimulate the local economy and provide new jobs. But where should the new business enterprise be located? How much land should be set aside for parks and recreation? Should your community include space for farms? Where should new homes be built, and where is a logical place to put apartment buildings?

These are some of the most basic questions that face decision-makers in any community.

Group Four will create a plan to assemble the basic building blocks of a modern city into a structure that is the kind of place where you would like to live, work and play.

Brainstorm

- **Problems:** What are some of the problems that face your community? What are the things that you don't like about where you live?
- **Causes:** Of these, which can be traced to how your community is laid out? Which are results of how the land is used in different places?
- **Tools:** Based on your studies, what are some of the things that a city government can do to influence how land is used?
- **Solutions:** How would you change things around your town?

List Your Information Sources.

To prepare your land use plan, your group will collect information about your city's current plans and challenges, and information and opinions about how plans for the future might be different. In preparing a contact list of individuals' names, you may wish to consider these possible sources of information:

- Professors of "urban planning" or "urban design" at local colleges and universities.
- Planning department staff members.
- Members of the local planning commission.
- Large landowners, developers or land use attorneys.
- Large local home building companies.
- Construction trade groups.
- Organizations, like Sierra Club, conservation or air quality groups.

Gather Your Information

Decide collectively which sources are the most important to contact. Your group will assign each member to contact and research at least one of the sources on your list. Each member should keep detailed notes as part of your group's record.

Discuss your interviews and research as a group, and decide which thoughts and opinions are the most important in developing your plan.

An important part of your plan will be the picture you draw of it. That picture will be in the form of a map. To prepare the map:

- Meet with the members of Group Two to learn how large your city will be. They may have chosen to work with the city where your school is located, or they may have decided to subdivide and incorporate a section of it into a separate city.
- Using a street map for your city, your group will draw a simplified copy onto a large piece of poster board. Select one person to do the drawing. You will not need to copy any streets onto your rough version, but you should indicate the following:
 - » Rivers, lakes or seacoast
 - » Railroads
 - » Freeways and the largest highways

Write A Land Use Plan

4. Your group will draw a land use map for your city. Using the map of your area you have already drawn, fill in enough information to give people an idea of where the important facilities and development will be. You may consider where some of these items are actually located, but you are also free to place them wherever your group would prefer to see them.

Shade in those portions of your map where your group plans to locate the following land uses:

- » Open space (OS)
- » Residential, single homes on large lots (R-1)
- » Residential, duplex and very small single-family homes (R-2)
- » Residential, apartment buildings (R-3)
- » Commercial (C)
- » Industrial (I)

On your map, mark the location of:

- » A water treatment plant
 - » A sewage treatment plant
 - » A city hall
 - » A sports stadium
 - » Schools
5. Your group will write a general plan to guide growth and development in your community for the future. While most general plans in cities today tend to be very complicated, yours will be honored for its simplicity! Conforming to state requirements, your plan will include a one-page essay to cover each of the following six elements:
- » Land use
 - » Circulation
 - » Housing
 - » Conservation and open space
 - » Noise
 - » Safety

Each element will include:

- » A statement of purpose: What is the element trying to accomplish?
Example: Is the goal of the circulation element simply to get people to work on time? Or is the goal to get people to work with the least reliance on automobiles?
- » A brief description of the biggest problems and challenges must be overcome.
Example: Air pollution is a growing problem, while parts of your area will soon need to have more transportation facilities.
- » A list of actions, both active and passive, to be followed to achieve the element's goal.
Example: Construction of bike lanes or carpool lanes; more living units closer to downtown.

Committee Five

PAYING FOR IT ALL

While Groups One through Four have been thinking up the things they would like to see their city do for their community, Group Five will have the responsibility for finding the money to pay for it all. Who should pay for the services provided by local government? How can enough money be raised while still maintaining the support of the public that is essential to any democratic government?

Brainstorm

- What do you think the advantages are of each of the revenue sources generally available to local governments? What are their disadvantages?
- Are there any taxes or fees currently collected that you hope to reduce or eliminate? Which ones? Why?
- Which services outlined by Groups One, Three and Four could have charges tied to them? Which services does your group strongly feel should be provided without charge?
- What will it take to raise or lower the taxes and fees you might consider? A vote of the council? A special election?
- What sources of government revenues are established by other authorities beyond the power of your city to increase?
- What new ideas does your group have for raising funds for the services your class wants to see in its remodeled city?

List Your Information Sources

To prepare your finance plan, your group will collect information about the revenue sources currently in place and about the possible costs of any new programs your class wishes to write into its new city plan. Some sources to consider to obtain information:

- Your city and county finance offices
- The finance offices of other cities
- Local taxpayer's associations
- Local media
- Chamber of Commerce

Gather Your Information

Decide collectively which sources are the most important to contact. Your group will assign each member to contact and research at least one of the sources on your list. Each member should keep detailed notes as part of your group's record.

The results of your group's basic research will yield:

- **A total budget amount.** Based on the estimated population of your new city as determined by Group Two, your group will choose a dollar figure to represent your city's annual operating budget. This figure, which will be in the millions of dollars and should have some tie to real city budgets. For example, if your class decides to keep the same boundaries as the city in which you live, you can use its annual budget. An example could be \$200 million but you can research sample budgets online. If your new city is planned to be larger or smaller, use a fraction of that amount, or use the budget total for another city of the same size.
- **Typical property tax collections.** This would be the amount collected by the county and returned to the city in which you live (or a different city with a population close to that of your planned city).
- **Typical sales tax receipts.** Again, this would be the amount collected by the city in which you live, or a different city with a population close to that of your planned city. Your group will need to work with the planning group to discuss the number of businesses there will be, which will determine how much sales tax may be collected.
- **Information about other possible revenue categories.** If you plan to include user fees or other taxes, your group will need some basic information about how many people might use a service, how much can be charged and how much money could be raised altogether.

Write A Finance Plan

1. Given your group's goal of raising enough money to fund its annual budget, you will prepare a finance plan including the following information:
 - » **A revenue goal.** Explain what your group used as a base figure and any special additions for special services that may have been added.

- » **Property Tax Revenue.** Explain what you used as a base figure for a city your size and any strategies you propose for increasing the base amount.
 - » **Sales tax revenue.** Explain what you used as a base figure for a city your size and any strategies you propose for increasing the base amount.
 - » **Other tax revenues.** List which additional taxes you propose to collect and how much revenue each is likely to produce. Explain your assumptions and calculations. For example, how much would a 10 percent utility tax yield? Figure the typical household to have three people. Thus, a city of 30,000 would have 10,000 households. Make certain your numbers are plausible. For example, if the typical gas and electric bill is \$50, and your city added a 10 percent tax, your city would receive about \$5 per household, or \$50,000 total per month, or \$600,000 annually.
 - » **Service and user fees.** List those services for which your city plans to charge and collect revenue. Explain your assumptions and calculations for each fee, including how much a service would cost, how many people would pay and how much revenue would be raised.
2. Illustrate your finance plan by producing a pie chart showing how much of your city's revenues will come from each major category.

Presenting your city plan

Your class has now invested a lot of thought and effort in the blueprint for your new city. You have a complete plan that includes everything from the preservation of important buildings and events to the funding mechanisms that will pay for everything your city does. Your final challenge in your study of California local government will be to present your class plan to the people in your community who might be interested in your thoughts and observations.

1. Prepare a presentation. Each one of your five groups should practice presenting the element of your city's new plan. You should rely on your written reports as much as possible, without resorting to a lot of outside material. Each member of the group should be responsible for at least one part of your group's presentation. Determine how much time each group will have, and practice working your group presentation down to the time allotted. Think about the portions of your plan that are very different from how your city is set up today. Will people understand the importance of the changes you propose? Do these differences require special explanation? Finally, discuss what single message you would like to leave in the memory of your audience.

2. Prepare audio-visual aids. Audiences always retain more of a presentation when they have something to look at while they listen. Each group should work on a presentation aid, such as a slide or two, a webpage or short video that helps explain your group's work and point of view. Also give some thought to how you can record the event for future reference. A recording of your presentation will help future classes with similar projects and will be something you can enjoy in the future.

3. Plan your event. As a class, you have some important decisions to make:

- » Where to present? Where you present your work may have some effect on how it is received. Why not ask to use the council or supervisors' meeting chamber at your city hall or county building? You may want to ask to be placed on your council's agenda. Most local governments are very interested in working with students, and they will be interested in what you have to say. If it is not possible to be placed on the regular agenda, a special meeting could work. Are

there alternative sites that would work better for your class?

- » Whom to invite? As a courtesy, you will want to invite members of the community whom you have interviewed in the course of your research. You may also want to consider:

- Local elected officials
- Appointed local government staff, including city managers, county executive officers, general managers and department heads
- Developers active in your area
- Your school board and administration
- Representatives of community interest groups such as United Way, the League of Women Voters or Chamber of Commerce
- Your local newspaper, radio and television stations

4. Prepare to discuss your plan. Allow time to answer questions from your audience following your presentation. Some of the most important things you learn can come from the questions of people who first listen to what you have to say and then react to you. Remember to listen as well as speak. Your class may also want to designate one person to explain the plan to the press.

Your Keys to City Hall

If you and your class have taken the time to read each of the units and participate in at least some of the activities suggested, you should have some new ideas about government and about the government agencies closest to home in your community.

But What Good Is This Knowledge

If you have not already, you will soon reach the voting age of 18 in California. You will see that many offices and issues for which you cast your ballot will have to do with local government agencies - your city, county, school district, or community services, fire or other special district. Some knowledge about these important agencies makes your vote more meaningful.

Perhaps you will choose to lead your community and bring issues that you believe in before local legislative bodies; perhaps you will someday consider becoming a candidate for public office yourself.

As you watch television and read news blogs in the future, you will see and hear references to local government. Often, the news items on local government are so brief that they can be more confusing than enlightening to many people. Your background will not only help you make sense out of the news, but will also give you some perspective and, perhaps, motivation to encourage your local media to improve their coverage of local government.

Perhaps most important, you will be better prepared to evaluate what other people tell you about government. There are many individuals and interest groups who spend a lot of time, money and effort to persuade others of their point of view. Your background will help you evaluate this confusing deluge of fact and opinion and will give you the power to make decisions about government that reflect your own thoughts and opinions about how things should be run.

Think of your knowledge as a set of keys, not to your home or to a car, but to your community. Your knowledge is your set of keys to the chambers of city hall, the board of supervisors or the boards of your local special districts.

After all, your local government belongs to you.

Glossary

ad valorem tax - A tax based on the relative value of property.

agenda - A list of items to be brought up at a meeting.

amendment - A change or addition which changes the meaning or scope of an original formal document, usually laws or regulations, but can include plans or specifications.

annexation - The process by which a municipality, upon meeting certain requirements, expands its boundaries.

assessed value - A valuation set upon real estate or other property by the assessor as a basis for levying taxes.

auditor - One who examines the financial activities of an agency and prepares a report based on such examination.

balanced budget - A budget in which estimated revenues equal estimated expenditures.

ballot - Any material on which votes may be cast for candidates or measures.

bi-partisan - Representing two parties, primarily Democrats and Republicans.

board - Advisory and policy-making body appointed by boards of supervisors or city councils. Boards provide community member's input on many issues.

budget - A comprehensive financial plan to sustain agency municipal operations during a given year with related explanation.

charter - A written instrument that creates and defines powers, rights and privileges for a specific jurisdiction or organization.

city - A local unit of government formed by its residents in order to provide services such as public safety, land use control and recreation.

city council - The policy-making and legislative body for a city. Councils pass ordinances which determine public policy. Election is usually for a term of four years on a non-partisan basis.

city manager - Trained professional hired by city council to implement council policy and run the city on a day to-day basis.

civil service - Competitive process for selecting employees. Appointments governed by competitive selection process.

condemnation - The process of taking private property for public use through the power of eminent domain.

consent agenda - A policy of the governing body to approve, in one motion, routine and/or non-controversial items, which can be determined prior to the meeting.

council-manager form - City organizational structure in which the city council appoints a professional manager to handle day-to-day affairs of the city and implement council policy.

county - A geographical area which is a subdivision of the state for local administration of government.

deficit - The excess of expenditures over revenues for a fiscal period.

executive session - The only type of meeting of a legislative body that may be closed to the public. Sessions must deal with contract negotiations, personnel matters, or litigation.

expenditures - The spending of money by the municipality for the programs and projects included within the approved budget.

fiscal year - A 12-month budgetary period which, for most cities and counties, runs from July 1st to June 30th.

franchise - A privilege conferred by government approval to an individual or firm to market goods or services in a particular area, generally for an extended period.

franchise tax - A percent of profit to grantor of franchise.

general fund - The general operating fund of the municipality used to account for all financial resources except those required to be accounted for in a special fund.

general law city - Legal structure of most cities. Powers of the city are detailed under state general law provisions.

general plan - Comprehensive plan detailing the physical and social development of a city or county.

home rule - Exercise of power at the local government level to determine local affairs of government, upon acceptance of the terms set by the state legislature.

jurisdiction - The range of authority of an administrative unit.

incorporation - The legal process of creating a city as a separate, self-governed entity within a county.

infrastructure - The facilities and systems shared or used by all residents such as schools, water supply, waste water, solid waste disposal, gas and electric service, and roads.

initiative - The people's right to initiate a measure, issue or question to be voted on by the people.

LAFCO - Acronym for "Local Agency Formation Commission," the appointed body responsible for reviewing requests for incorporation of new cities or creation of new special districts. LAFCO approval of a request places the measure on the local ballot for voters to decide.

land use - Designating city or county land for specific purposes, such as housing, industry, commercial or open space.

mayor-council form - A city organizational structure with no professional administrator and with the city council appointing department heads.

minutes - A summary of action taken at a meeting and the vote on each item.

NIMBY - Acronym for "not in my back yard," an argument made by property owners who support public services, but oppose the location of public facilities near their own property.

non-partisan - Representing no political party.

non-partisan election - Elections in which candidates have no political party designations, and parties do not participate. All local government elections are of this type.

operating budget - A financial plan which presents proposed expenditures for the fiscal year and estimates of revenue to finance them.

ordinance - An enforceable municipal law, statute or regulation which applies to all residents within that municipality; penalty provisions may apply.

planning - The process of designing and regulating the physical development of a community to meet the economic, social, and recreational needs of the area.

planning commission - A planning agency authorized by law to prepare and recommend plans for the development of physical, social, economic and cultural resources and facilities within a unit of government.

political action committee (PAC) - A committee formed to support or oppose any candidate, measure, issue or question.

property tax - A tax levied on the assessed value of real property.

public hearing - Provides residents the opportunity to express their position on a specific issue, both pro and

con, as mandated by either statute or by order of proper authority after due notice.

public meeting - Any meeting of a governmental body at which public business is discussed or decided or policy formulated.

recall - Procedure to remove elected officials from office by vote of the electorate.

referendum - The right of the people to refer laws passed by a legislative body to a vote of the people in an election.

resolution - A non-binding statement of position adopted by a legislative body.

revenues - Money received by a government from taxes and other sources.

special districts - A local government unit often established to provide a single service. These districts often cross city or county lines.

subdivision - The division of a single tract or other parcel of land into two or more lots.

"sunshine laws" - Laws which require that government business be conducted out in the open, under public scrutiny.

tax - A payment required of all residents or property within a government's jurisdiction to fund government operations.

unincorporated areas - Areas not a part of an incorporated city which fall under the jurisdiction of the county.

user fees - Source of revenue collected from the user of various municipal services.

variance - The granting of an exemption from the requirements of a zoning code. A special hardship to a property owner is the usual basis for a variance request.

zone - A specifically delineated area or district in a municipality within which there are regulations for the use, placement, size and other development standards.

zoning - The legal regulation of land use for cities and counties. Zoning regulations can regulate elements such as density, heights, parking, building locations and the like.

Pathways to Public Service:

MATCHING PERSONAL INTERESTS TO LOCAL AGENCY CAREERS

The table below can help frame job and career opportunities in local public agencies and public service in a way that young people can easily relate to and understand. This table can be used as a handout and as the basis for a discussion with youth about the options suited to an individual’s various interests, talents and abilities. The next steps may be for youth to discuss these roles with staff members with local cities, counties or special districts. Local agency staff may also visit the classroom to share about their pathway to public service.

If you enjoy or are interested in:	You might like working in this area:
Helping people solve problems and find solutions	Community development Economic development Elected leader’s office staff Housing Human resources Human services Law enforcement Management or administration Neighborhood services
Operating heavy machinery	Fleet maintenance Parks and recreation Public works or engineering Urban forestry
Managing money and investments	Accounting or finance Auditing Budget operations Revenue services
Crime-solving and crime investigation	City Attorney’s or County Counsel’s Office Criminal justice Coroner’s Office Law enforcement
Repairing and maintaining cars, trucks and vehicles	Fleet maintenance and services Public works or engineering Transportation or transit
Solving complicated math problems	Accounting or financial management City or County Clerk’s Office Information Technology services
Extreme sports	Emergency services Firefighting Recreation
Working with computers	Geographic Information Services (GIS) Information Technology
Gardening	Landscaping or parks maintenance

If you enjoy or are interested in:	You might like working in this area:
Working with children and young people	Community services Health services Library services Parks and Recreation Social services Teaching Volunteer services
Writing articles and working with the media	Public Information Office
How communities, facilities and buildings (such as parks, schools, libraries and cities) are planned, designed and built	Engineering and construction Geographic Information Services (GIS) Law enforcement (Crime Prevention through Design) Landscape Architecture Parks and Recreation Planning Department or Building Department
Doing research	Administrative office staff City Attorney's Office County Counsel's Office District Attorney's Office Elected leader's office staff Law enforcement
Driving a truck or bus	Parks and Recreation Public Works Transportation or Transit
Elections and how they work	City or County Clerk's Office City Attorney's Office County Counsel's Office Elected leader's office staff
Website design and maintenance	Geographic Information Systems (GIS) Information Technology Services Library Services Public Information Office
Traffic systems and how traffic is managed	Geographic Information Systems (GIS) Public Works
Alternative fuel vehicles	Fleet management
Renewable energy and energy efficiency	Facility Construction Planning and Building Departments
Environmental protection and sustainability	Planning and Building Departments
Being outdoors	Community Services Parks and Recreation Physical Education Public Works

If you enjoy or are interested in:	You might like working in this area:
Working with adults, seniors and the aging population	Community Services Health and Human Services Library Services Parks and Recreation
Preparing for emergencies	Elected leader's office Geographic Information Services (GIS) Human Resources Manager's or Chief Administrator's Office Planning Department Public Works
Landscape design and maintenance	Community Services Grounds and Facilities Parks Public Works
Medical issues and health care	County hospitals Health services
Management and general administration	Manager's or Chief Administrator's Office
Nature, natural resources and the environment	Parks Planning Department Public Works
Energy efficiency	Planning Department Public Works Utility Department or District
Water	Environmental Health Public Works Utility Department or Utility District
Recycling and solid waste	Public Works Engineering Environmental Health
Working with animals	Animal care services Animal control Law enforcement (K9, Mounted Patrol) Public Works
Working with people with special needs	Adaptive Services Health and Human Services Human Resources Library Services Parks and Recreation School Construction
Food Services and Nutrition	County Health Offices Health and Human Services Parks and Recreation School Facilities