

Community Survey on Santa Fe City Government — Draft

A plain-language, neutral public survey built from the resolution's Questions A–F and Commissioner Gould's suggested questions

For the commission: This draft is deliberately neutral — it is meant to test the commission's emerging recommendation against what residents think, not to presuppose it, so every structural question can express a strong-mayor, a council-manager, or a hybrid answer with equal ease. The administration question (Q7) is worded plainly, and the mayor's-role question (Q8) states both options fairly. “Who should set the city's direction?” (Q6) and “Who should run the city day to day?” (Q7) are asked as two separate questions, since a resident may want a different answer to each. The survey asks the plain-language versions of who hires and who oversees the city manager (Question F), which residents can answer.

Before use: professional Spanish translation, a pilot test, and pairing with in-person sessions.

THE SURVEY

The City of Santa Fe Charter Review Commission wants to hear from you. The City Charter is Santa Fe's basic rulebook, a kind of constitution for city government. It sets how the mayor and city council share power, how the city is run day to day, and how decisions get made. Every so often, a citizen commission reviews the charter and recommends updates to the Mayor and City Council.

This survey asks how you think city government should be organized. It takes about 10 minutes, your answers are confidential, and it is available in English and Spanish. Most questions include a “Not sure” option (please use it any time you don't feel you have enough information to answer.) There are no wrong answers, and knowing which topics people want to learn more about helps us, too.

What this is for: The commission works on the structure of city government (the charter), not day-to-day service requests. For a specific issue like a pothole or streetlight, please contact the city directly, but we do want to hear from you in Part 1 below, what is working and what isn't, because it helps us understand what a good structure should deliver. We will share what we hear and how it shaped our recommendations.

Part 1 — Your experience with city government

1. About how long have you lived in Santa Fe?
 - ☐ Less than 2 years
 - ☐ 2–10 years
 - ☐ More than 10 years
 2. Which part of the city do you live in? (Council district if you know it, or your neighborhood)
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3. Overall, how well does city government respond to your community's needs?
 - ☐ Very well
 - ☐ Somewhat
 - ☐ Not very well
 - ☐ Not at all
 - ☐ Not sure
 4. What is working well about how the city serves your neighborhood?
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5. What is not working, or gets in the way of Santa Fe being a good place to live?
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Part 2 — How the city should be run

Today, Santa Fe has a full-time elected mayor who runs the city's day-to-day operations, an eight-member city council, and a professional city manager. In recent years voters have adjusted the balance among these roles. These questions ask how you think the responsibilities should be arranged going forward. A few of them separate two different things: who should set the city's direction, and who should run it day to day.

6. Who should set the city's overall direction and policy — its goals, laws, and budgets?
 - ☐ Mostly the mayor
 - ☐ Mostly the city council
 - ☐ The mayor and council together
 - ☐ Not sure
7. The city's day-to-day operations can be led either by the elected mayor or by a professional manager the city hires for the job. Who should be in charge of running the city's departments day to day?
 - ☐ The elected mayor
 - ☐ A professional city manager
 - ☐ Either could work well
 - ☐ Not sure
8. Thinking about the mayor's role, which comes closest to your view?
 - ☐ A strong elected executive with real authority over how the city is run
 - ☐ Mainly a leader who sets the tone, represents the city, and presides over the council, while day-to-day power sits with a professional manager and the council
 - ☐ Not sure
9. When the council votes on city business, the mayor should...
 - ☐ Vote on all matters
 - ☐ Vote only to break a tie (as is currently the case)
 - ☐ Not sure
10. How important is it that the city's top administrator (the city manager) be a trained professional with management experience, rather than a political appointee?
 - ☐ Very important
 - ☐ Somewhat
 - ☐ Not important
 - ☐ Not sure
11. Who should hire the city manager?
 - ☐ The mayor
 - ☐ The mayor, with council approval
 - ☐ The city council
 - ☐ Not sure
12. Who should the city manager ultimately answer to?
 - ☐ The mayor
 - ☐ The mayor and council together
 - ☐ The city council
 - ☐ Not sure

Part 3 — Planning and budgeting

13. How important, if at all, is it that the city adopt clear goals and priorities for the next three to five years (a strategic plan)?

- ☐ Very important
- ☐ Somewhat
- ☐ Not important
- ☐ Not sure

14. How important is it that the city’s budget be tied to those goals, with regular public reporting on progress?

- ☐ Very important
- ☐ Somewhat
- ☐ Not important
- ☐ Not sure

15. If the city published an easy-to-read online “dashboard” showing progress on its goals, would you look at it?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ Maybe
- ☐ No
- ☐ Not sure

16. What should the city’s top two or three priorities be over the next few years?

Part 4 — Elections and council seats

17. If a sitting city councilor runs for mayor and loses, should they...

- ☐ Keep their council seat
- ☐ Be required to give up their seat
- ☐ Not sure

18. When a council seat becomes empty in the middle of a term, who should fill it?

- ☐ The mayor appoints someone
- ☐ The council appoints someone
- ☐ Hold a special election
- ☐ Not sure

19. What should the structure of the four city council districts look like?

- ☐ Keep the current structure (two city councilors per district)
- ☐ One per district
- ☐ Add an at large council position to use as a tie breaker
- ☐ Not sure

Part 5 — Anything else

20. What is the single most important element of our city’s governance model that should be protected or redesigned to better reflect the community values and improve how decisions are made?

About you (optional and confidential — helps us hear from every part of the city)

21. Your council district or neighborhood

22. Age range

- ☐ Under 25
- ☐ 25–44
- ☐ 45–64
- ☐ 65+
- ☐ Prefer not to say

23. Primary language spoken at home

- ☐ English
- ☐ Spanish
- ☐ Both
- ☐ Other
- ☐ Prefer not to say

24. Do you rent or own your home?

- ☐ Rent ☐ Own ☐ Other ☐ Prefer not to say

25. Race or ethnicity (optional)

Thank you. Your answers will help the commission recommend how Santa Fe’s government should be organized. We will publish a summary of what we heard and how it shaped our recommendations. Learn more at [commission web page].

NOTES FOR THE COMMISSION

Design principles used

- **Neutral by design** — the survey tests the commission’s emerging recommendation rather than presupposing it; every structural question can express a strong-mayor, council-manager, or hybrid answer, and each carries a “Not sure.”
- **Plain language** — technical terms are translated into everyday phrasing, and a short neutral note explains the current structure.
- **Two separate questions, not one** — “Who should set the city’s direction?” (Q6) and “Who should run the city day to day?” (Q7) are asked separately, because a resident may want a different answer to each. The mayor’s-role question (Q8) states both options fairly.
- **Kept at the right level of detail** — the survey asks the plain-language versions of who hires and who oversees the city manager (Question F), which residents can answer, and leaves the procedural fine print — exact veto-override thresholds, removal standards, confirmation vote counts — to the commission’s deliberation and the ballot.

Before it goes out:

- Have it **professionally translated into Spanish** (and offered on paper as well as online), and check reading level.
- **Pilot-test** with a handful of residents to catch confusing wording, then adjust.
- **Distribute widely and pair with in-person sessions** — combine the online survey with pop-ups and partner-hosted events, and keep it open long enough to reach working residents.
- **Disaggregate results by district** so the commission can see whether every part of the city — including the south side — is represented.