

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~~ **name is** confidential, and ~~it~~ **the survey** 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.

Circle the appropriate letter response.

Part 1 — Your experience with city government

Brandon's Rationale: 1a. is a qualifier to weed out potential county responses. 1b. is the original question with answers that are consistent with other municipalities so that we can compare to other data sets if applicable. 1c. adds the “lifelong” question separately to avoid confusion with the 20+ years option in the preceding question.

1a. Are you currently a full-time resident of the City of Santa Fe?

- a. Yes**
- b. No**

1b. About how long have you lived in Santa Fe?

- a. Less than 2 years**

- b. 2 to 5 years
- c. 6 to 10 years
- d. 11 to 20 years
- e. More than 20 years

1c. Are you a lifelong resident of the City of Santa Fe?

- a. Yes
- b. No

2. Which part of the city do you live in? (Council district if you know it, or your neighborhood)

3. Overall, how well does city government respond to your community's needs?

- a. Very well
- b. Somewhat
- c. Not very well
- d. Not at all
- e. Not sure

4. What is working well about how the city serves your neighborhood?

5. What is not working, or gets in the way of Santa Fe being a good place to live?

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?

- a. Mostly the mayor.
- b. Mostly the city council.
- c. The mayor and council together.
- d. 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 **responsible for carrying out the direction of elected officials?** ~~in charge of running the city's departments day to day?~~

- a. The elected mayor.
- b. A professional city manager.
- c. Either could work well.
- d. Not sure.

8. Thinking about the mayor's role, which comes closest to your view?

- a. A strong elected executive with ~~real~~ authority over how the city is run.
- b. ~~Mainly~~ **An elected executive** leader who sets the tone, represents the city, and presides over the council, while day-to-day ~~power~~ **administration** sits with a professional manager. ~~and the council~~
- c. **An elected executive with only ceremonial authority.**
- d. Not sure.

9. When the council votes on city business, the mayor should:

- a. Vote on all matters.
- b. Vote only to break a tie. ~~(as is currently the case)~~
- c. 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~~

~~What type of experience is preferred?~~

- ~~a. City Management experience.~~
- ~~b. Local government experience.~~
- ~~c. Relevant experience.~~
- ~~d. Doesn't matter.~~

The city manager serves as Santa Fe's chief administrative officer, overseeing daily operations, city staff, and implementation of the budget.

Which types of professional experience would you consider acceptable for someone in this role? Select all that apply.

- a. Prior service as a city manager, deputy city manager, or equivalent chief administrative officer in another municipality
- b. Senior leadership experience elsewhere in government or public administration — county, state, federal, or a public agency such as a school district, utility, or transit authority
- c. Executive leadership experience running a large, complex organization in any sector, including private business, nonprofit, healthcare, higher education, or the military
- d. Substantial management experience of any kind — supervising staff and administering budgets — regardless of the size, sector, or complexity of the organization
- e. Not sure (selecting this option disables multiple-selection)

11. Who should hire the city manager?

- a. The mayor.
- b. The mayor, ~~with~~ and council together. Approval
- c. The mayor only with city council approval.
- d. The city council only.
- e. Not sure.

12. Who should the city manager ultimately answer to?

- a. The mayor.
- b. The mayor and council together.
- c. The city council.
- d. 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

Where should **short-term (3-5 year)** goals be set and measured?

- a. In the city Budget.
- b. In a city Strategic Plan.
- c. In the city General Plan.

~~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~~

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

~~☐ Yes ☐ Maybe ☐ No ☐ Not sure~~

- ~~a. Use it regularly.~~
- ~~b. Use it periodically.~~
- ~~c. Use it for specific topics.~~
- ~~d. Would not use it at all.~~

Brandon's Alternatives:

- a. To follow progress specific initiatives
- b. To hold city officials accountable.
- c. To understand how tax dollars are being used.
- d. I would not use it.

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

16. Who should prepare the city budget, and should the public be able to weigh in?

Part 4 — Elections and council seats

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

- a. Keep their council seat.
- b. Be required to give up their seat.
- c. Not sure.

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

- a. The mayor appoints someone.
- b. The council appoints someone.
- c. Hold a special election.
- d. Not sure.

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

- ~~a. Keep the current structure (Two city councilors per district).~~
- b. One **city councilor** per district.

- ☐ ~~Add an at large council position to use as a tie breaker~~
- c. **Add a fifth district with 1 councilor in that district.**
- d. 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?

(Perhaps make this two questions??)

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

21. Your council district or neighborhood.

22. Age range. ACS compatible options. ACS is The American Community Survey — the Census Bureau's ongoing survey that replaced the old long-form census.

- a. 18 to 24
- b. 25 to 34
- c. 35 to 44
- d. 45 to 54
- e. 55 to 64
- f. 65 to 74
- g. 75 or older
- h. Prefer not to say.

23. Primary language spoken at home.

- a. English
- b. Spanish
- c. Both
- d. Other
- e. Prefer not to say.

24. ~~Do you rent or own your home?~~

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

24. Race or ethnicity. (optional)

Which of the following describes you? Select all that apply.

- a. American Indian or Alaska Native
 - b. Asian
 - c. Black or African American
 - d. Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin
 - e. Middle Eastern or North African
 - f. Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander
 - g. White
 - h. Prefer not to say.
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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.