



*Chapter 12*  
**Governance**

# Overview of Chapter

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This chapter of the General Plan describes the system of governance in the City and provides goals and policies to continue being a properly-functioning, responsive and participatory government. The City recognizes the critical importance of public participation and promoting diversity in the approach of governance.

Topics covered in this Element include:

- Statutory Requirements
- Transparency
- Community Engagement
- Racial and Economic Equity
- Fiscal sustainability
- Partnerships
- Key Issues and Opportunities
- Goals and Policies

## Statutory Requirements

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State law does not require that a City's General Plan specifically address governance. However, Thousand Oaks' residents' involvement in local government is fundamental to the community character of the City. A Governance Element was included in the General Plan, along with goals and policies, to strengthen the community as a whole through public participation and equal representation of all community members in the City processes.



*Thousand Oaks City Hall*



# Local Government Structure

As a general law city administered with a council/manager form of government, the City Council is the policy-making body, appointing the City Manager who is responsible for carrying out City Council policy. Since incorporation, this form of governance together with an enduring emphasis on the importance of public participation, has enabled Thousand Oaks to grow and evolve into a community its residents can be proud of.

The City's mission statement, "Extraordinary service to the citizens we serve is our purpose," embodies its strong commitment to residents. The City's customer service philosophy further exemplifies its sense of commitment of responsibility to residents to provide exceptional community services in a fair, efficient, and responsive way. City officials are dedicated to making decisions that balance environmental quality and economic vitality. The City's strong governance, high prioritization on public engagement, deep commitment to extraordinary, fair, efficient, and responsive service delivery, as well as its dedication to a balancing of environmental quality and economic vitality goals, has earned Thousand Oaks recognition as one of the most desirable places to live.



*City staff team building exercise*

## City Council

The community elects the five-member City Council to create policy, enact legislation, and provide overall leadership on behalf of the City. The City Council also appoints the City Manager, who is responsible for carrying out City Council policy. Council members serve four-year staggered terms, with elections held in November of even-numbered years. The City Council annually selects a mayor who serves as presiding officer during City Council meetings. Besides appointing a City Manager and policy-making functions, the City Council is also responsible for appointing a City Attorney and City Committees/Commissions members and adopting a two-year budget.

## City Manager

The City Manager is the administrative head of the City, and oversees the City's day-to-day operations, including guidance, personnel management, and support to all City departments. The City Manager is also responsible for overseeing the implementation of policies, citywide goals, and performance measures, as established by the City Council.

## Commissions

City Council appoints members of the Commissions in Thousand Oaks. The Commissions meet on regular schedules to consider issues within their areas of responsibility, make decisions on matters within their purviews and make recommendations to City Council. Commissioners are residents who volunteer their time and work to serve their communities interests. Commissions have been formed to address topics including land use, arts and culture, businesses, matters regarding older adults, public safety and traffic needs, and the youth.

The Planning Commission is a permanent commission of the City. It is the only Commission that is required to be enacted under State law. The Planning Commission reviews and decides on applications for commercial, residential, industrial, and other development projects, and applications regarding just and reasonable return for rental spaces in mobile home parks. The Planning Commission also makes recommendations to the City Council on matters related to the City's General Plan, zoning ordinance, and other City planning policies and regulations.

## Community Representation

The City has several committees and advisory boards focused on various community issues, interests and perspectives. These bodies are made up of individuals who represent unique opinions, organizations, and positions within the community. These bodies make recommendations and/or decisions that guide City policy and actions. Through their participation, hundreds of residents volunteer their time to ensure local government represents the citizens it serves. The City Council also forms ad-hoc committees as needed to address specific issues, and then once resolved, are disbanded.

## City Departments

The City departments bring policy, programs, and services to life and each department oversees a number of City functions and programs. The City of Thousand Oaks is comprised of ten individual departments, including City Manager's Office, City Attorney's Office, Finance, Strategic Communications and Public Affairs, Library Services, Cultural Affairs, Human Resources, City Clerk, Community Development, Public Works.

## Regional Partnerships

Part of the City's decision-making process involves having strong partnerships and relationships with outside agencies and organizations. This is due to a desire to have good relations with the City's neighbors and out of necessity, since the City is bordered by other jurisdictions and receives some services from outside agencies.

The City contracts with the Ventura County Sheriff's Office for its police services, and the Los Angeles County Animal Services for animal control. The City receives fire protection as part of the Ventura County Fire Department. Conejo Recreation & Park District (CRPD) provides recreation and parks services in the Conejo Valley, including the City and the unincorporated communities within the City's planning area. The Conejo Open Space Conservation Agency (COSCA) is a joint powers agency formed by the City and the CRPD for the purpose of protecting and managing open space.

In addition, a variety of agencies and organizations are actively involved and provide services to the City's residents and businesses. These include the Area Housing Authority of the County of Ventura (AHACV), Conejo Valley Unified School District (CVUSD), and the Ventura County Transportation Commission (VCTC). Elected officials and City staff are also actively involved with the Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG), and other regional agencies.



*Ventura County Sheriff's Office connecting with residents at a Halloween Trunk or Treat event*



# E-Governance

The City recognizes and supports the need to maintain a high level of service to the community. It further recognizes the need to pursue and engage various information technologies to make communications more efficient and accessible. The City’s Department of Strategic Communications & Public Affairs is responsible for coordinating citywide communications, media relations, community relations, and emergency communication, which also includes the use of local government access television, social media, photo-sharing, and other technologies as they evolve.

In order to continue to improve the ease of doing business, the City also uses an enhanced and integrated virtual service system called TO/24 Virtual Land Use Service for property owners, residents, and businesses seeking authorization from City departments for a range of activities relating to residential and commercial development and business operations. TO/24 provides an overall positive customer experience when seeking City land use approvals by streamlining processes, providing access to real-time status updates, and better preserving historical records.

# Civic Engagement

Civic engagement describes how individuals become involved in their community to improve their quality of life and develop knowledge, skills, values, and motivation to make that difference. When citizens are engaged, they exchange ideas, express their voices, and become more invested in their communities to make positive changes. The City is committed to actively seeking public participation and treating all individuals with respect and dignity.



*“TO24 Virtual Land Use Service” logo*



*Example of a civic engagement activity as part of the General Plan update*

# Key Issues & Opportunities

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This section identifies the key issues and opportunities facing the City, relative to governance-related topics. This list was developed from the public engagement phase to address issues facing the City now, and in the future, and the opportunities for positive change. The topics inform the overall direction identified in the goals and policies in the following section.

## Transparency

Thousand Oaks has a long history of promoting transparency in its decision-making processes through committees and commissions, and community engagement related to major City decisions, including updating the General Plan. Continuing and expanding upon this tradition of “open government” is essential to the long-term success of the City.

## Fiscal Sustainability

Thousand Oaks provides a high quality of public services and well-maintained public facilities. This is due to the City’s diverse land uses and strong, revenue-generating businesses, including auto dealers and the biotech industry. However, a declining retail sector and changes in the biotech industry could negatively impact the City’s long-term fiscal health. The City is well-positioned to bolster fiscal sustainability by expanding biotech uses, supporting existing businesses, recruiting new businesses to locate in Thousand Oaks, and using vacant and underutilized land (especially aging retail establishments) for revenue-producing uses. The City incorporates long-term financial forecasting as part of its fiscal sustainability efforts through its financial strategic plan. This enables the City to proactively prepare for potential economic downturns and ensure the City can continue to provide a high level of services and maintain quality infrastructure.

## Community Engagement

Thousand Oaks strives to have an active and engaged citizenry who desire involvement in the City’s decision-making process. Therefore, it is important to continue to involve residents through inclusive and robust community engagement. This should go beyond just communicating to the public about decisions; it should involve allowing citizens to express their ideas before decisions are made and actively working to ensure that all residents can participate equally. Engagement can and should occur at many levels of government and involve many activities. These include the Community Attitude Survey (which occurs every few years), community engagement for major projects (such as the General Plan and the City’s budget), and communications materials such as the project website and newsletters.

## Racial and Economic Equity

Supporting racial and economic equity provides opportunities for all residents regardless of race, ethnicity, gender, ability, or economic status is a critical function of the City government. An opportunity exists for the City to continue its commitment to equity by actively offering all residents a chance to engage in decision-making and taking steps to ensure equal representation in government.

## Community and Regional Partnerships

The City maintains excellent partnerships with regional agencies. The City should continue to capitalize on existing partnerships and create new partnerships that improve the quality of life for residents, employees, and visitors and support a thriving local economy.

# Goals and Policies

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The following section includes goals and policies for the Governance Element. In addition, governance-related topics and policies are integrated throughout the General Plan including the land use, mobility, and arts and culture elements. Related implementation actions are included in Chapter 13: Implementation.

## Community Engagement

### **Goal G-1: Engage and empower all members of the community to participate in the City’s decision-making process.**

#### **1.1 Communication.**

Expand communications with residents about City initiatives through a new City website, newsletters, social media, “State of the City” address, and other methods. Track the usage and effectiveness of communication methods and focus resources on the most impactful methods of reaching community members.

#### **1.2 Diverse engagement.**

Hold diverse in-person and virtual community engagement activities (e.g., community workshops, focus groups, pop-up workshops, etc.) to gather community input into future planning processes and other decision-making activities. Hold these community meetings in locations and at times that are convenient for community members.

#### **1.3 Education and capacity building.**

Take creative steps to educate community members about the City’s decision-making process.

#### **1.4 Translation at public meetings.**

Provide live translation services as feasible and if requested for City sponsored public workshops and hearings.

#### **1.5 Meeting and event accessibility.**

Provide accessibility for members of the public with special needs or disabilities at all City meetings and City-sponsored events.

#### **1.6 Increase outreach.**

Partner with local organizations and institutions, such as religious institutions, non-profit organizations, and community-based organizations, to increase outreach opportunities.

#### **1.7 Utilize communication channels.**

Use digital platforms and traditional communication channels to notify community members of important meetings, events, policies, and actions before decision-making bodies.

#### **1.8 Community Attitude Surveys.**

Use Community Attitude Surveys on a regular basis to determine the public’s satisfaction with City services.



## Equitable & Welcoming Community

**Goal G-2: Create a more equitable, accessible, safe, welcoming, and inclusive government and community regardless of race, color, ethnicity, religion, gender, physical or mental ability, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, age, language, education and/or socioeconomic status.**

### 2.1 Racial and social equity. ❤️+

Seek opportunities to increase racial and social equity within the City's organizational structure.

### 2.2 Equity trainings. ❤️+

Create equity trainings for all City staff, elected officials, and appointed officials.

### 2.3 City staff diversity. ❤️+

Strive to ensure that City staff's diversity reflects the City's diversity and Ventura County region.

### 2.4 Boards and commissions diversity. ❤️+

Strive to ensure that the City's boards and commissions reflect the diversity of backgrounds, races, ethnicities, physical abilities, gender, sexual orientation, and ages of Thousand Oaks residents.

## Transparent & Responsible Government

**Goal G-3: Provide municipal government leadership that is open and responsive to residents and is characterized by ethical behavior, stability, and transparency.**

### 3.1 Customer service.

Prioritize a high level of customer service responsiveness and accessibility to the community.

### 3.2 Hybrid public meetings. ❤️+

Hold hybrid model public meetings (with in-person and online options) that allow for greater participation in decision-making.

### 3.3 Public involvement in budgeting.

Implement methods to encourage public participation in the budget process. Proactively seek input from demographic segments of the community that are traditionally underrepresented in decision-making, including individuals with language barriers and disabilities.

### 3.4 Service evaluations.

Periodically solicit service evaluations from the community and utilize feedback to improve the City's policies, ordinances, programs, and funding priorities.

**Goal G-4: Operate City government in a fiscally and managerially responsible way to ensure that the City of Thousand Oaks remains one of California's most desirable places to live, work, visit, recreate, and raise a family.**

### 4.1 Diversify fiscal sources.

Consider new and diversified fiscal sources to maintain the City's long-term fiscal health.

### 4.2 Infrastructure financing tools.

Consider the use of available infrastructure financing tools such as Tax Increment Financing, Public Assessment districts, and other public-private partnerships.

### 4.3 Economic development best practices.

Support and coordinate economic development by following 'best practices' to maintain a balanced budget with flexibility to provide both sufficient ongoing operational revenues and maintain prudent level of reserves to meet economic uncertainties.

### 4.4 Strategic infrastructure investments.

Promote strategic infrastructure investments to support sustainable economic growth, leveraging State and Federal resources.

### 4.5 Fiscal policy review.

Conduct thorough and frequent reviews of fiscal policies in order to maintain balanced tax and fee structures, and to respond to changing fiscal policies at broader governmental levels.

## Regional Leadership & Partnerships

**Goal G-5: Foster partnerships with other regional and local agencies to ensure residents have access to high quality parks, recreation, education and leisure programs and services.**

### 5.1 Leadership appointments.

Proactively seek appointments to regional and state committees/boards and continue to advocate for state legislation that positively impacts City services and future City objectives.

### 5.2 Regional planning and governance.

Participate in regional planning and governance activities to advocate for policies and programs that benefit Thousand Oaks and the region as a whole.

### 5.3 Collaborate with neighboring jurisdictions.

Work closely with adjacent jurisdictions on topics of mutual importance, including transportation, sustainability and climate change, open space, and land use/development decisions.

### 5.4 Parks and open space partnerships.

Partner with agencies and organizations that preserve and expand parks and open spaces within and around Thousand Oaks, including COSCA, CRPD, Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy, and others.

### 5.5 Expand hospitality.

Work with the Conejo Valley hospitality sector to market Thousand Oaks as a unique tourist destination, which can create jobs and support fiscal health as new tax revenues are generated.

### 5.6 Local employer partnerships.

Collaborate with existing and future employers, local institutions, and business groups on programming and marketing the City.

### 5.7 Regional economic partnerships.

Strengthen relationships with regional economic development entities (e.g., Greater Conejo Valley Chamber of Commerce, Ventura County Economic Development Collaborative, Ventura County Economic Development Association) to support business attraction and retention.

### 5.8 Institutional partnerships.

Strengthen partnerships with regional academic institutions (e.g., California Lutheran University, CSU Channel Islands, and Moorpark College) and industry representatives to craft workforce development strategies and other educational programs that serve City objectives.

### 5.9 Local workforce training.

Collaborate with California Lutheran University, Moorpark College, CSU Channel Islands, Workforce Development Board, and major employers within the region to create internship and apprenticeship opportunities and mid-career training.

### 5.10 Environmental leadership.

Demonstrate environmental leadership through continued investment in open space, clean and renewable energy, and sustainability, and seek to minimize environmental impact of actions.

## City Identity & Branding

### **Goal G-6: Support and promote a City brand and identity that represents a multigenerational, diverse, welcoming, and innovation-driven community.**

#### **6.1 Promote livability.**

Promote Thousand Oaks as an attractive place to live and work for a variety of groups, including young professionals, families, and seniors.

#### **6.2 Promote inclusivity and diversity.**

Promote Thousand Oaks as an inclusive, diverse, and safe place for all people including those who identify as LGBTQIA+, those with intellectual, physical and/or developmental needs regardless of ethnicities, race, age, gender, sexual orientation, religion, and socio-economic status.

#### **6.3 Digital infrastructure.**

Support high-quality digital infrastructure and promote shared and co-working office facilities to capitalize on the “work from anywhere economy.”

## General Plan Implementation

### **Goal G-7: Implement the 2045 General Plan and regularly update the plan to respond to new opportunities and challenges.**

#### **7.1 Workplan tied to the General Plan.**

Utilize departmental workplans to address the goals, policies and implementation actions of the General Plan.

#### **7.2 Annual Goal Setting.**

Reference the General Plan as part of the City Council’s annual goal-setting sessions.

#### **7.3 Phasing and financing.**

Adopt phasing and financing strategies to implement the General Plan targets. The City’s biennial process and Capital Improvement Plan should be consistent with the General Plan implementation timeframes.

#### **7.4 Routine General Plan modifications.**

Conduct review and minor updates to the General Plan every five years to reflect changes in State regulations, new technologies, and new opportunities and challenges.

#### **7.5 Comprehensive General Plan Updates.**

Conduct a comprehensive, citywide visioning effort and update to the General Plan no later than 15 years after the adoption of the 2045 General Plan.