

City Governments

What do you love about your city or town? It's parks? Library? Public transit? What do you dislike about your city or town? Lack of affordable housing? Permit fees? City taxes?

You, as a resident voter of your city, can effect all of these issues by voting for city council members and, if your city or town has an elected mayor, by voting for the mayor whose vision most closely matches your own for your city.

Cities and towns in Washington State can be organized under one of two forms of government: Mayor/City Council (Chapter 35A.12 RCW) or City Council/City Manager (Chapter 35A.13 RCW or Chapter 35A.18 RCW). Both types of government are represented in Kittitas County: for example Cle Elum is governed by a Mayor/City Council while Ellensburg is governed by a City Council/City Manager.

Regardless of which form of government, the City Council's job is primarily legislative and policymaking. Under the City Council/Manager government, the council also appoints the city manager. The manager acts as the CEO of the town or city, responsible for city administration, overseeing city personnel, preparing budgets, giving policy advice to the council, and managing daily city operations. The City Council may also select a member from its ranks to act as a mayor for ceremonial services and to preside over council meetings.

Under the Mayor/City Council government, the elected mayor is the city's CEO. Elected mayors and city council members serve 4 year terms of office, in typically nonpartisan positions.

What are the duties of a mayor elected by citizens?

According to RCW 35A.12.100, The mayor is the CEO "and administrative officer of the city, in charge of all departments and employees, with authority to designate assistants and department heads. He or she shall see that all laws and ordinances are faithfully enforced and that law and order is maintained in the city, and shall have general supervision of the administration of city government and all city interests. He or she shall prepare and submit to the council a proposed budget. The mayor shall have the power to veto ordinances passed by the council."

What are the duties of a city or town council?

Regardless of governance type, city councils do not administer city affairs - that is the purview of the mayor under Mayor/Council government or the city manager under Council/Manager government.

No matter which type of city government, the council sets city policies through passage of city ordinances or resolutions. Analyzes the city's needs, alternatives, and available resources in crafting ordinances and resolutions, and approves the city budget.

Under Council/Manager type government, the city council appoints, evaluates, and if necessary, removes the city manager.

What is the city's service area?

The area within the city limits. While city amenities such as parks, public transit, etc. may be enjoyed by non-residents, it is those within the city limits whose taxes fund the majority of city amenities. Only registered voters within the city limits may vote for a city council member and mayor.

What services do cities provide?

Depending on the size of a town or city, it may provide any or all of these:

- parks, trails, and greenspace
- libraries, community centers, performance spaces
- policing & municipal courts
- fire fighting
- utilities (such as power (electricity, gas), sewer, water, telecommunication, cable/internet, garbage, recycling, etc.)
- public transit
- affordable housing
- medical & mental health services
- much more

How are cities funded?

1. Permit & service fees
2. Taxes, bonds, levies
3. State & federal funds
4. Grants

Your vote matters

Your vote for mayor and city council member will help shape not only what services your city provides, its fees or taxes, but the very future of the city itself.

Due to typical low turnout for these elections, your vote for a mayor or city council member will count more than almost any other election. Be an informed voter. Learn about the candidates and their goals in serving your city or town. Make an informed decision in November.

Not registered? Go to [VoteWA](#) to register online.

Vote. It matters.