



# Comparative Information on City Charters from California's Largest Cities

January 15, 2015

Committee on Charter Review

# City and County Charters Reviewed



- San Diego
- San Diego County
- Los Angeles
- San Jose
- San Francisco
- Fresno
- Sacramento
- Long Beach
- Oakland
- Bakersfield
- Anaheim
- Santa Ana



**2013 Population Estimate:** 1,355,896

**Current Charter Initiation Date:** April 1931

**Government Structure:** Mayor-Council

**City Attorney (elected or appointed):** Elected

**Charter Length:** 149 pages

**Number of Major Sections in Charter:** 15 articles

**Number of Adopted Charter Amendments:**

- 245 Chaptered Charter Amendments since 1931
- There have also been:
  - 8 Citizen Charter Review Committees
  - 105 ballot measures voted on by the public (79 approved)
  - 12 citizen petitions that qualified to amend the Charter (only 3 approved)

**Has the City's Charter been rewritten?** Yes.

- First freeholders city charter adopted in 1889.
- Original version of today's City Charter approved and enacted in April 1931.

## Major Sections of San Diego's City Charter

<i>Article</i>	<i>Title</i>
I	Corporate Powers
II	Nominations and Elections
III	Legislative Power
IV	The Mayor
V	Executive and Administrative Service
VI	Board of Education
VII	Finance
VIII	Civil Service
IX	The Retirement of Employees
X	Transfer of Police and Fire Dept. Employees into the Retirement System
XI	Fireman's Relief and Pension Fund
XII	Labor on Public Work
XIII	City Police Court
XIV	Miscellaneous Provisions
XV	Strong Mayor Form of Governance

# San Diego County



**2013 Population Estimate:** 3,211,252

**Current Charter Initiation Date:** August 21, 1978.

**Government Structure:** Board of Supervisors

**County District Attorney (elected or appointed):** Elected

**Charter Length:** 18 pages

**Number of Major Sections in Charter:** 11 major sections (including preamble and articles)

**Number of Adopted Charter Amendments:** In 17 elections between 1978 and 2010, 66 sections in the San Diego County Charter were amended, 20 were added, and 6 were repealed.

**Has the County's Charter been rewritten?** Yes.

- Original County Charter enacted in 1933.
- Revised, "Plain Talk" Charter enacted in 1978
- The new Charter:
  - Reorganized provisions
  - Restructured overly complex sentences
  - Did not make substantive changes to existing charter

## Major Sections of San Diego County's Charter

*Preamble*

*Article Title*

I Definitions

II Initiative, Referendum, and Recall

III County Powers

IV Board of Supervisors

V Powers and Duties of the Board of Supervisors

VI Elective Officers

VII Appointive Officers and Boards

VIII Budget and Accounting

IX Personnel System

X General Provisions

# Los Angeles



**2013 Population Estimate:** 3,884,307

**Current Charter Initiation Date:** Adopted  
June 8, 1999

**Government Structure:** Mayor-Council

**City Attorney (elected or appointed):**  
Elected

**Charter Length:** 352 pages, plus 40 pages  
listing section changes and amendments

**Number of Major Sections in Charter:** 14

**Number of Adopted Charter Amendments:**  
23

**Has the City's Charter been rewritten?** Yes

- First City Charter enacted in 1889
- Replaced in 1925 and 1999
- 2 attempts to replace the 1925 Charter in early 1970s, but both attempts failed
- Under pressure from succession LA used 2 commissions over 2 years to develop its revised charter (adopted in 1999)

## Major Sections of the Los Angeles City Charter

*Preamble*

<i>Article</i>	<i>Title</i>
I.	Incorporation and Powers
II.	Officers of the City
III.	Finance, Budget and Contracts
IV.	Elections
V.	Departments
VI.	Proprietary Departments
VII.	City Ethics Commission; Special Prosecutor
VIII.	Board of Education
IX.	Department of Neighborhood Empowerment
X.	Employment Provisions
XI.	Pension and Retirement Systems
Part 1	LA City Employees' Retirement System
Part 2	Water and Power Employees' Retirement Plan
Part 3	Fire and Police Pension Plan General Provisions



**2013 Population Estimate:** 998,537

**Current Charter Initiation Date:** May 1965

**Government Structure:** Council-Manager

**City Attorney (elected or appointed):** Appointed

**Charter Length:** 81 pages

**Number of Major Sections in Charter:** 18 articles, plus a legislative history

**Number of Adopted Charter Amendments:**

- In 30 elections between 1965 and June 2012, voters approved the:
  - Amendment of 122 sections
  - Addition of 29 sections
  - Repeal of 3 sections
  - Deletion of 2 sections

**Has the City's Charter been rewritten?** Yes.

- First charter went into effect in 1850.
- Replaced several times, including:
  - 1915 (effective in 1916)
  - 1964 (effective in 1965)

## Major Sections of San Jose's City Charter

<i>Article</i>	<i>Title</i>
I	Incorporation and Succession
II	Powers of the City
III	Form of Government
IV	The Council
V	The Mayor
VI	Legislation
VII	City Manager
VIII	Administrative Organization
IX	Officers and Employees
X	Boards and Commissions
XI	Civil Service System
XII	Fiscal Administration
XIII	Franchises
XIV	School System
XV	Retirement
XVI	Elections
XVII	General Provisions
XVIII	Transitional Provisions

*Legislative History*

# San Francisco



**2013 Population Estimate:** 837,442

**Current Charter Initiation Date:** 1996

**Government Structure:** Mayor-Board of Supervisors

**City Attorney (elected or appointed):** Elected

**Charter Length:** 577 pages

- 154 pages for the preface, preamble, and articles
- 423 pages of appendices

**Number of Major Sections in Charter:** 28 major sections (includes preface, preamble, articles, and charter appendices)

**Number of Adopted Charter Amendments:** 81

- 111 amendments put before voters on 27 ballots since 1996
- 81 amendments passed, 30 failed

**Has the City's Charter been rewritten?** Yes. The

- Charter of San Francisco has been rewritten a number of times (including in 1851, 1854, 1855, 1900, and 1931)
- Latest version took effect in 1996

## Major Sections of San Francisco's City Charter

*Preface to the 1996 Charter*

*Preamble*

<i>Article</i>	<i>Title</i>
I	Existence and Powers of the City and County
II	Legislative Branch
III	Exec. Branch—Office of Mayor
IV	Exec. Branch—Boards, Commissions and Departments
V	Exec. Branch—Arts and Culture
VI	Other Elective Officers
VII	Judicial Branch
VIII	Education and Libraries
VIIIA	The Municipal Transportation Agency
VIIIB	Public Utilities
IX	Financial Provisions
X	Personnel Administration
XI	Employer-Employee Relations System
XII	Employee Retirement and Health Services Systems
XIII	Elections
XIV	Initiative, Referendum and Recall
XV	Ethics
XVI	Miscellaneous Provisions
XVII	Definitions
XVIII	Transition Provisions

*Charter Appendices*

A.	Employee Provisions
B.	Port Agreements
C.	Ethics Provisions
D.	Building Inspection Provisions
E.	Supervisory District Boundaries
F.	Authority and Duties of City Services Auditor



**2013 Population Estimate:** 509,924

**Current Charter Initiation Date:** Adopted on April 8, 1957

**Government Structure:** Mayor-Council

**City Attorney (elected or appointed):** Appointed

**Charter Length:** 55 pages

**Number of Major Sections in Charter:** 15

**Number of Adopted Charter Amendments:**

- Since 1977 (in 14 different elections):
  - 71 sections of the City's Charter amended
  - 5 sections repealed
  - 2 sections added

**Has the City's Charter been rewritten?** Yes.

- First City Charter adopted in 1899, and approved in 1901
- Original Charter rewritten in 1920
- Most recent Charter adopted in 1957

## Major Sections of Fresno's City Charter

<i>Article</i>	<i>Title</i>
I	Incorporation and Succession
II	Powers of the City
III	Elective Officers
IV	The Mayor
V	The Council
VI	Legislation
VII	Chief Administrative Officer
VIII	Officers and Employees
IX	Boards and Commissions
X	Civil Service System
XI	Retirement
XII	Fiscal Administration
XIII	Franchises
XIV	Elections
XV	General Provisions

# Sacramento



**2013 Population Estimate:** 479,686

**Current Charter Initiation Date:** Enacted in 1921

**Government Structure:** Council-Manager

**City Attorney (elected or appointed):**  
Appointed

**Charter Length:** 50 pages

**Number of Major Sections in Charter:** 19  
Articles

**Number of Adopted Charter Amendments:**

- Between 1933 and 2002:
  - 54 elections considered changes to the Charter
  - 111 of the proposed changes passed, 45 failed

**Has the City's Charter been rewritten?** Yes.

- First city charter enacted in 1850
- Current charter dates back to 1921

## Major Sections of Sacramento's City Charter

<i>Article</i>	<i>Title</i>
I	Introductory
II	Powers
III	The City Council
IV	Mayor
V	City Manager
VI	Other Appointive Officers
VII	Civil Service
VIII	Certain Departmental and Personnel Provisions
IX	Fiscal Administration
X	Elections
XI	Initiative, Referendum, Recall
XII	Board of Education
XIII	Franchises, Licenses, Permits, Leases and Sales
XIV	Public Contracts and Supplies
XV	Boards, Commissions and Agencies
XVI	Provisions Miscellaneous
XVII	Sacramento City Employees' Retirement System
XVIII	Impartial and Binding Arbitration for Police Department Employee Disputes
XIX	Impartial and Binding Arbitration for Fire Department Employee Disputes

# Long Beach



**2013 Population Estimate:** 469,428

**Current Charter Initiation Date:** 1921

**Government Structure:** Council-Manager

**City Attorney (elected or appointed):** Elected

**Charter Length:** 56 pages

**Number of Major Sections in Charter:** 24 major sections

**Number of Adopted Charter Amendments:** 63

**Has the City's Charter been rewritten?** No.

Of note:

- City Council has a standing Charter Amendment Committee
- It is the only Council committee made up of the entire Council
- It is responsible for presenting/considering reforms to Charter that:
  - clearly delineate responsibility
  - improve accountability
  - provide flexibility and transparency

## Major Sections of Long Beach's City Charter

Article	Title
I.	Incorporation, Organization and Powers
II.	City Council
III.	City Manager
IV.	City Clerk
V.	Officers and Employees
VI.	City Attorney
VII.	City Prosecutor
VIII.	City Auditor
IX.	Parks and Recreation Commission
X.	Planning Commission
XI.	Civil Service
XIA.	Citizen Police Complaint Commission
XII.	Harbor Department
XIII.	Management of Oil Properties
XIV.	Water Department
XV.	Department of Public Utilities
XVI.	Franchises
XVII.	Finance
XVIII.	Contracts
XIX.	Nominations and Elections
XX.	Initiative, Referendum and Recall
XXI.	Retirement System
XXII.	Education
XXIII.	Miscellaneous

# Oakland



**2013 Population Estimate:** 406,253

**Current Charter Initiation Date:** Adopted November 5, 1968; Effective January 28, 1969.

**Government Structure:** Mayor-Council

**City Attorney (elected or appointed):**  
Elected

**Charter Length:** 95 pages

**Number of Major Sections in Charter:** 19  
active Articles

**Number of Adopted Charter Amendments:**

- Sections of Charter amended, added, or repealed over 230 times (in over 20 different elections between 1971 and 2008) since it went into effect in 1969

**Has the City's Charter been rewritten?** Yes.

- Oakland's Charter rewritten several times, including in 1910 and 1968

## Major Sections of Oakland's City Charter

Article	Title
I	Powers and Form of Government
II	The Council
III	The Mayor
IV	City Officers
V	The City Manager
VI	Administrative Organization
VII	Port of Oakland
VIII	Fiscal Administration
IX	Personnel Administration
X	Franchises, Licenses, Permits, Leases and Sales
XI	Elections
XII	General Provisions
XIII	Kids First! Oakland Children's Fund
XIV	Police Relief and Pension Fund
XV	Firemen's Relief and Pension Fund
XVI-XIX	<i>Do Not Exist</i>
XX	Oakland Municipal Employees' Retirement System
XXI	Miscellaneous
XXII-XXV	<i>Do Not Exist</i>
XXVI	Police and Fire Retirement System
XXVII	Off-Street Vehicular Parking

# Bakersfield



**2013 Population Estimate:** 363,630

**Current Charter Initiation Date:**

Enacted on January 23, 1915

**Government Structure:** Council-Manager

**City Attorney (elected or appointed):**  
Appointed

**Charter Length:** 21 pages

**Number of Major Sections in Charter:**  
16 active sections (including Charter Approval, Articles and Addenda)

**Number of Adopted Charter Amendments:** 32

**Has the City's Charter been rewritten?** No.

## Major Sections of Bakersfield's City Charter

*Charter History*

*Charter Approval*

*Article*

*Title*

I.	Name of Boundaries
II.	Political Subdivisions
III.	Legislative Department
IV.	Officers and Employees
V.	Finance and Taxation
VI.	Department of Public Welfare
VII.	Elections
VIII.	Judicial Department
IX.	Public Utilities
X.	Public Works and Supplies
XI.	<i>Repealed on March 3, 1981</i>
XII.	Miscellaneous
Add. 1	Relief and Pension Fund for Members of the Fire Dept.
Add. 2	Civil Service for Officers and Employees in the Misc. Depts.
Add. 3	Civil Service for the Police Department
Add. 4	Certification Appearing in Original Charter Which Included Sections 1-164 Inclusive

# Anaheim



**2013 Population Estimate:** 345,012

**Current Charter Initiation Date:** January 14, 1965

**Government Structure:** Council-Manager

**City Attorney (elected or appointed):**  
Appointed

**Charter Length:** 50 pages

**Number of Major Sections in Charter:** 15

**Number of Adopted Charter Amendments:** 59

**Has the City's Charter been rewritten?** No.

- In May 2013, City Council established a 7 member Charter Review Committee to conduct a comprehensive review of the Charter
- Since adopted in 1964, Charter has been comprehensively reviewed 5 times
- Prior to 2013, it had been more than 10 years since its last review

## Major Sections of Anaheim's City Charter

<i>Article</i>	<i>Title</i>
I.	Name of City
II.	Boundaries
III.	Rights, Liabilities and Succession
IV.	Powers of City
V.	City Council
VI.	City Manager
VII.	Officers and Employees
VIII.	Left Blank Intentionally
IX.	Appointive Boards and Commissions
X.	Personnel System
XI.	Retirement
XII.	Fiscal Administration
XIII.	Elections
XIV.	Franchises
XV.	Miscellaneous

# Santa Ana



**2013 Population Estimate:** 334,227

**Current Charter Initiation Date:** 1952

**Government Structure:** Council-Manager

**City Attorney (elected or appointed):**  
Appointed (but currently contracted out)

**Charter Length:** 54 pages

**Number of Major Sections in Charter:** 15  
articles and a Charter Comparative Table

**Number of Adopted Charter**

**Amendments:** Between 1952 and 2012:

- 76 charter amendments placed on ballot
- 57 of those approved by voters

**Has the City's Charter been rewritten?** No.

- In 1946, Santa Ana voters given opportunity to adopt a city charter, but measure was defeated
- Next attempt at a city charter: 1952. This time it passed.

## Major Sections of Santa Ana's City Charter

<i>Article</i>	<i>Title</i>
I.	Incorporation and Succession
II.	Powers of the City
III.	Form of Government
IV.	City Council
V.	City Manager
VI.	Revenue and Taxation
VII.	Officers and Employees
VIII.	Board of Education
IX.	Appointive Boards and Commissions
X.	Civil Service
XI.	Miscellaneous Provisions Relating to Officers and Employees
XII.	Elections
XIII.	Franchises
XIV.	Retirement
XV.	Legal Provisions

*Charter Comparative Table*



# Comparative Charter Matrix

City	2013 Population Estimate	Current Charter Initiation (year)	Government Structure	City Attorney (elected or appointed)	Charter Length (pages)	Number of Major Sections in Charter	Number of Adopted Charter Amendments	Has the Charter been rewritten?
San Diego	1,355,896	1931	Mayor-Council	Elected	149	15	245	Yes
San Diego County	3,211,252	1978	Board of Supervisors	Elected	18	11	92*	Yes
Los Angeles	3,884,307	1999	Mayor-Council	Elected	352	14	23	Yes
San Jose	998,537	1965	Council-Manager	Appointed	81	18	156	Yes
San Francisco	837,442	1996	Mayor-Board of Supervisors	Elected	577	28	81	Yes
Fresno	509,924	1957	Mayor-Council	Appointed	55	15	78	Yes
Sacramento	479,686	1921	Council-Manager	Appointed	50	19	111	Yes
Long Beach	469,428	1921	Council-Manager	Elected	56	24	63	No
Oakland	406,253	1969	Mayor-Council	Elected	95	19	230*	Yes
Bakersfield	363,630	1915	Council-Manager	Appointed	21	16	32	No
Anaheim	345,012	1965	Council-Manager	Appointed	50	15	59	No
Santa Ana	334,227	1952	Council-Manager	Appointed**	54	15	57	No

\*Reflects the number of sections of the city charter that were amended, added, or repealed, and may not reflect the actual number of charter amendments used to make these changes.

\*\* The City Attorney is appointed, but currently the City of Santa Ana contracts out for City Attorney services.