

City of Sunnyvale – Charter Review Community Survey

Sunnyvale's City Charter is the set of rules that guides how the City operates. Any changes to the Charter must be approved by a majority of Sunnyvale voters. To review and suggest updates, the City Council created a Charter Review Committee (CRC, which will collect ideas, gather public input, and make recommendations for possible changes that could appear on the November 2026 ballot.

This survey covers four potential charter revisions currently under discussion:

1. How City Council vacancies are filled
2. City Council and Mayor compensation
3. City Manager's authority to settle claims
4. City Manager Claim Settlement Authority

SECTION 1: Filling City Council Vacancies

Background:

When a Council seat becomes vacant, the City Council may appoint someone temporarily until the next general election. Another option is to allow special elections, which would fill vacancies faster but are more costly and may have lower voter turnout.

Question 1A: Should the Charter allow vacancies to be filled through special elections instead of only waiting for the next general election?

- Yes – Allow special elections
- No – Only fill seats at general elections
- Not sure—**Should we allow open comment?**

Question 1B: Currently, no more than two appointed Council members can serve at the same time. Should this be reduced to one?

- Yes – Limit to only one appointed member at a time
- No – Keep the current limit of two
- Not sure

SECTION 2: Council and Mayor Compensation

Background:

- The City Council and Mayor oversee Sunnyvale's \$780 million annual budget.

- Current pay: Council \$3,113.83/month (\$37,366 per year): Mayor \$4,151.83/month (\$49,822 per year).
- Time commitment: past council members and Mayors have stated that serving requires about 20-30 hours/week for Council and up 40 hours/week for the Mayor.
- Concern: current pay may discourage some people from running.

Question 2A: Do you think the current pay prevents some qualified people from running for Mayor or Council?

- Yes
 - If yes, why? (Open Comment box)
- No
 - If no, why? (open Comment Box)
- Not sure

Question 2B: Do you think the current pay is sufficient for the responsibilities and time required to serve?

- Yes
- No
- Not sure

Compensation Options

Question 2C: In 2025, the median earnings for full-time, year-round workers in Sunnyvale is \$152,093/year. Should council and mayor salaries be tied to this median income (as reported by the U.S. Census)?

- Yes – Use this model
- No
- Not sure

Question 2D: Would either of these pay models be reasonable to consider?

- Option 1: Council=50% median (\$76,047); Mayor=75% median (\$114,070)
- Option 2: Council = 75% median (\$114,070); Mayor = 100% median (\$152,093)
- ☐ Not sure

Question 2E: What do you think is a reasonable annual salary for serving on the City Council or as Mayor?

For Council Members:

- \$40,000–\$60,000
- \$60,001–\$80,000
- \$80,001–\$100,000
- Over \$100,000
- Not sure

For the Mayor:

- \$40,000–\$60,000
- \$60,001–\$80,000
- \$80,001–\$100,000
- \$100,001—\$120,000
- Over \$120,000
- Not sure

Question 2F: What should be most important when deciding compensation? (*Select all that apply*)

- Attracting a more diverse group of candidates
- Ensuring officials have time to do the job well
- Keeping costs low for the City
- Making pay fair compared to similar public roles
- Tying to pay median wages
- City Council members and the mayor should be able to afford to live in Sunnyvale
- Other (please specify): _____

Question 2G: Would you support automatically adjusting salaries each year based on: (*Select all that apply*)

- Changes to Sunnyvale's minimum wage
- Inflation or cost of living
- Changes in the City's median income
- No, I prefer salaries stay fixed unless reviewed or voted on
- Not sure

Question 2H: Are there other reasons that might discourage people from running for Mayor or City Council? (*Optional – open response*)

SECTION 3: City Manager's Authority to Settle Claims

Background:

By law, the City Manager may only settle claims up to \$50,000 unless the Charter allows a higher amount. Currently, any claim over \$50,000 must be approved by Council which can take additional time and staff resources. Some cities allow their Council to set this limit by ordinance, without requiring a Charter amendment.

Question 3: Should the Charter allow the City Council to set or update the City Manager's settlement authority by ordinance?

- Yes – Let the Council set it by ordinance
- No – Leave the Charter as-is
- Not sure

Section 4: Alternative Delivery Methods for Public Works Projects

Background: Currently, the City must bid separately for project design and for construction. Some cities allow combined bids ("design-build"), which can reduce costs and speed up larger public projects.

Question 4A. Do you support allowing alternative delivery methods for public works projects?

- Yes
- No
- Not sure

Question 4B. What factors should the City prioritize when selecting project delivery methods (select top two priorities)?

- Cost-effectiveness
- Timely completion
- Transparency
- Environmental sustainability
- Use of local workforce
- Community input during design

Optional demographic information

5A. How long have you lived in Sunnyvale?

- Less than 1 year
- 1–5 years
- 6–10 years
- Over 10 years

5B. What is your age group?

- Under 18
- 18–24
- 25–34
- 35–44
- 45–54
- 55–64
- 65+
- Prefer not to say

5C. Do you rent or own your home in Sunnyvale?

- Rent
- Own
- Other
- Prefer not to say

Your input helps the Charter Review Committee better understand community priorities.
To learn more or follow the process, visit [Charter Review Committee | Sunnyvale, CA](#)

Proposed CRC Engagement Plan

Tactics	Due Date	Use	Notes
Update Sunnyvale	9/19 10/3 (last day)	To advertise survey, announce meeting times, and provide website address/survey to readers.	Update as needed, scheduled every 2 weeks.
Insights	9/25	Educate staff about CRC, survey, and potential charter changes	
Survey	Launch 9/8 Keep open 30 days	Solicit community input about charter changes	CRC to give us questions, comms to develop survey Check in on 10/3 for results and decided if we should extend to 10/23
Email Subscription List Updates	Initial email: w/ survey launch in September	Share updates on survey, meeting reminders, other developments	*Can also email NA associations and forward to CRC to send to their contacts
Social Media: FB Instagram NextDoor	9/8	Announce survey Educate audience on what CRC is	*note we will cross collaborate with LRS newsletter
1 pager	Completed	Have overarching content explaining main messaging, details about messaging, and website direction	Content development will be important, will focus on 3 key messages
Council Announcement	9/9 9/30		
QR code	completed	Placed on 1 pager; leads to webpage	
Website updates	As needed	Update website with relevant meeting details, survey results, and other information.	
Postcard	Design and send out ASAP	Short mailer with digital address for more information, announcing survey and meeting dates.	Announce survey