

DALLAS CITY CHARTER

The City of Dallas is a home rule city and operates pursuant to its charter. The city charter is to the City of Dallas what the federal and state constitutions are to the federal and state governments in that it provides the basic framework from which city government operates. In 1912, a constitutional amendment was adopted by the State of Texas which allowed cities with populations over 5,000 to hold elections to adopt or amend their charters. Under this constitutional amendment, cities with populations over 5,000 could include anything they wished in their charters as long as it was not inconsistent with the Texas Constitution or a state statute. A home rule city may amend its charter only once every two years by majority vote of its electorate. The Dallas city charter has been amended several times. The most recent amendments were by the voters on November 4, 2014.

The charter of a home rule city establishes its manner of governance. The City of Dallas operates under a council/manager form of government, which was set up by charter amendment in 1931. Under the council/manager form of government, the council is the legislative and policy arms of city government, with 14 members elected from single-member districts and the mayor elected at large. The city council appoints the city manager, the chief administrative and executive officer of the city, who is responsible for implementing the policies established by the city council. The city manager is also responsible for the daily administrative affairs of the city. Other officers appointed by and reporting directly to the city council are the city attorney, city auditor, and city secretary. Two other departments, Civil Service and Park and Recreation, report neither to the city manager nor the city council, but to the Civil Service Board and Park and Recreation Board, whose members are appointed by the council. Except as otherwise provided in the charter, all departments of the city are under the supervision and direction of the city manager, who also appoints and removes the directors of such departments. Under the council/manager form of government, council members are prohibited by the charter from interfering with removal or appointment of employees under the direction of the city manager.

In addition to setting up the framework of government, the charter lists 51 specific powers conferred on the City of Dallas. This list is not exclusive because the city can exercise additional powers as long as they are not inconsistent with federal or state law. The council exercises its powers and official actions primarily through the adoption of ordinances, resolutions or oral motions at public meetings, none of which can conflict with the charter.