



Making Government Work

10 ways city governance can adapt to meet
the needs of Oaklanders

Why this report?



Definition of Good Government

- Clarity and Fairness
- Transparency
- Accountability
- Representation
- Effectiveness, Efficiency and Adaptability
- Leadership

Strong Mayor vs Council Manager

“Strong Mayor”:

Mayor is elected specifically to that office

Mayor has power to veto legislation

Power to carry out administrative functions

“Council Manager“:

Mayor function rotates amongst elected councilmembers.

Council hires/fires City Manager who carries out administrative function

Oakland Current Model: Hybrid System

“Oakland “Hybrid”:

- Mayor elected specifically to that position
- Mayor hires City Administrator with concurrence of Council, has ability to fire City Administrator with notification to Council.
- No veto power
- No direct administrative power (firing/hiring Dept heads)

Filter for Recommendations

- Focus on roles and systems, not current office holders
- Focus on structures embedded in City Charter and in other policy documents such Council's Rules of Procedure
- Develop structures and clarity where necessary
- Look to other cities for best practices
- Align with SPUR's definition of Good Government

Recommendations: Mayor

1. Give the Mayor veto power over legislation.
2. Give the Mayor line item veto over the budget.

Recommendations: City Council

1. Create term limits for City Councilmembers of three (3) four-year terms, with the ability to return after sitting out a term.
2. Raise the pay of both City Councilmembers and their staff.
3. Create more transparency and clarity around the legislative process.

Recommendations: City Controller

1. Establish a new independent office of the Oakland City Controller.

Recommendations: City Attorney

1. Clarify when the City Attorney represents the “People of Oakland” and when the City Attorney represents the City of Oakland as an entity.
2. Clarify the process by which and the circumstances under which the City Attorney hires outside counsel.

Recommendations: City Auditor

1. Establish a budget set aside to fund the City Auditor.
2. Require all initiatives or referendums to include additional funds for performance audits.

Recommendations: Annual Work Plan

1. Create a robust work priority setting process that the Council and Mayor adhere to, which will help the City Administrator's office focus resources.

skarlinsky@spur.org