

# CITY OF HIGHLAND VILLAGE CONTACT INFORMATION

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# CITY OF HIGHLAND VILLAGE 2015 LEGISLATIVE PROGRAM



# CITY OF HIGHLAND VILLAGE

## 2015 LEGISLATIVE POLICY STATEMENT

The Highland Village City Council desires to express their appreciation for the dedication of legislators serving Highland Village and the Denton County community. Because we serve and share the same constituents, we desire to partner with you for the betterment of our citizens and community.

We have prepared a list of concerns and issues impacting the City of Highland Village that are likely to be addressed during the 2015 legislative session. Many of these items are frequent annual concerns – their redundancy speaks to their continuing importance and not our lack of creativity. We will be particularly concerned about unfunded mandates and attempts to erode our local authority to determine local spending and taxing priorities.

### Local Taxing & Spending Decisions Should Be Made By Locally Elected Officials

The Highland Village City Council strongly opposes the enactment of state imposed spending or taxation controls or lids. The proposals create an arbitrary and capricious procedure for what should be an essential function of representative democracy: elected officials determining the appropriate spending and taxing policies of their community. Local tax and spending decisions should be made by locally elected officials – not by artificial limits in the state’s statutes or constitution. We support the current law which requires truth in taxation and allows a rollback election if the rollback rate is exceeded.

**Priority:** *Oppose legislation that would negatively expand appraisal caps, impose a revenue cap of any type, including a reduced rollback rate, mandatory tax rate ratification elections, lowered rollback petition requirements, limitations on overall city expenditures, exclusion of the new property adjustment in effective rate and rollback rate calculations.*

### Unfunded Mandates

The City of Highland Village opposes unfunded mandates from the State of Texas. These mandates drain limited resources from needed City programs and activities. State legislators know how federal mandates hamper the state's ability to respond to problems and issues. Similarly, the state should not impose unfunded mandates on local units of government.

**Priority:** *Oppose any bill that would redirect, reduce or reapportion municipal revenues, whether from taxes or fees for service, collected by cities that would fund a State or Federal mandate.*

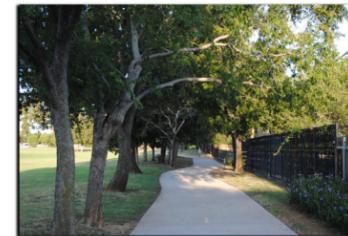
*Oppose additional state fees or costs on municipal court convictions or the requirement that municipal courts collect fine revenue for the state.*

### City Services

In conclusion, for around ten dollars per day our residents receive:



- Comprehensive administrative services
- A police department that cares about the community
- A fire department working to keep citizens healthy and safe
- A network of streets to navigate through our beautiful city
- Parks and recreation programs and activities that truly enhance the quality of life in Highland Village
- A reliable water system that will last into our future
- A park that will be the gem of our city
- A widely used trail system that brings our community together.



For the last 52 years we have worked hard to make Highland Village a destination point, a community our residents are proud to call home and where they have everything they could ever need or want. I believe we have done well with our tax dollars. It is our goal to provide above quality service to our residents.

## Utility Enterprise Fund

Our second source of funding comes from the rates paid by residents for water, sewer, drainage, garbage pickup, recycling, brush pick up and Waste Management's At Your Door Service. The rates paid are placed in the utility enterprise fund. What that means is all utility related services are solely funded by the rates residents pay for utility use. We do not subsidize this with money from the general fund. The average monthly utility bill in Highland Village is \$142.00 or about \$4.67 per day. Again, that is just slightly less than \$5 or the cost of an afternoon latte.



Highland Village  
Average Monthly Utility Bill  
\$142 per month or \$4.67 per day

For their \$5 per day, Highland Village receives three million gallons of water per day from the Upper Trinity Regional Water District and owns five water wells that produce 4.2 million gallons of water per day. The well water is used as needed to meet peak demand during the summer months. We recently completed a future water use study and determined the need to increase our water supply and storage. We are currently constructing a 1.4 million gallon ground storage reservoir at the site of the older existing tank on FM 407. This increase in our water supply and storage capacity will meet our water needs now and into the future. All this is funded through the utility enterprise fund with no rate increase to our residents for the last three years.

## 4B 1/2 Cent Sales Tax

And our third source of funding comes from the 4B sales tax. In 2003 Highland Village residents approved a half cent increase to our sales tax to fund a trail system and soccer fields. Looking at the DFW average spending per capita and doing the math on our five thousand homes, the average household contributes a little more than fifty cents per day to fund trails and soccer fields in Highland Village.

For their fifty cents per day we were able to purchase a piece of Highland Village history. Doubletree Ranch Park will open early this fall and will feature soccer fields, trails, a splash pad, pavilion and a natural habitat viewing area.

Also for their daily fifty cents we have been able to construct a trail system that spans the length of our city, connects to HOA trails, shoreline trails, retail centers, city facilities and our parks. We began constructing the trails in 2005 and have continued to build as funds became available. Most recently we were able to open the tunnel under FM 2499 to allow a safe passage. When our trail system is complete we'll connect to HOA trails, sidewalks, shoreline and primitive trails creating a 116 linear mile network of trails. That's pretty amazing for a 5.5 square mile community.



## Transportation Planning and Funding

We support transportation funding options for the highway infrastructure in Texas such as a motor vehicle sales tax, additional vehicle registration fees, a local option gas tax, or a new resident impact fee. We are committed to supporting regional efforts to address the mobility and air quality needs of our citizens now and in the future. Maintaining the aging highway infrastructure throughout Texas and expanding the highway system for statewide connectivity and maintaining urban mobility requires far greater investment in transportation infrastructure than is possible with current transportation revenues. We support the initiatives of the Denton County Transportation Authority "DCTA" to advance the development and funding of regional rail throughout the North Texas region.

**Priority:** *We support the discontinuation of the diversion of transportation revenues to non-transportation purposes and support appropriate revenues from highway user fees and taxes to fund transportation.*  
*We support providing additional funding to the Texas Department of Transportation for transportation projects that would benefit cities, so long as existing funding formulas are followed.*  
*We support providing the funding for phase II of the reconstruction of the Interstate 35Express project.*

## State Limits on Land Use & Related Activities

We oppose efforts to unnecessarily restrict the City's current authority to exercise eminent domain powers for public purposes and regulations that limit City's ability to maintain property values. Public infrastructure and community improvements sometimes require the condemnation of private property interests – these important powers should not be unnecessarily reduced.

**Priority:** *We support legislation that would enhance the ability of cities to enforce local ordinances intended to protect the health, public safety, and quality of life of local citizens.*

## Right-of-Way

Highland Village's ability to franchise utility companies and regulate its public rights-of-way must not be compromised. Private companies which use a public asset – such as locally owned right-of-way – should continue to be required to collect franchise fees for the use of public right-of-way and property. These utilities should also continue to be required to relocate in the right-of-way for public projects at their own expense – and not at the expense of local taxpayers.

**Priority:** *Oppose any bill that would decrease the authority of a city to be adequately compensated for the use of its rights-of-way and that would erode municipal authority over the management and control of rights-of-way.*

## Ensuring Adequate Water Supplies for Our Future

Because a good water supply is essential to the welfare and growth of the Highland Village community, the City Council has taken steps to assure continued quality water resources. The City opposes federal and state regulatory changes to quality standards that are not demonstrably related to public health unless adequate state and federal financial assistance is provided to meet such new treatment requirements. We oppose water transfers that will negatively affect Highland Village's current and future water supplies.

**Priority:** *Oppose any bill that would impose state "tap fees" or any other type of state charge on municipal water systems.*  
*Oppose state mandate on water conservation measures.*  
*The Highland Village City Council supports local controls of ground water resources for domestic water use only.*

## Public Safety - Homeland Security

The City of Highland Village urges an active partnership between state and local governments regarding issues of Homeland Security. The City's police department and our City/County fire and emergency medical services department are essential resources in providing security and safety to our community. These departments rely on funding resources that should be protected by our State legislature.

**Priority:** *We support amending the Water Safety Act (Chapter 31 of the Texas Parks and Wildlife Code) to allow municipal courts to retain portion of a fine under that chapter.*

### Police Services - \$1.46

Highland Village continues to be one of, if not the, safest city in Texas. We attribute this to the people behind the badge and those in our community who volunteer with the department. Our new police chief, Doug Reim, recently received an international award for the department's Operation Shield program. Operation Shield is designed to deter and prevent business burglaries through the installation of a metal "shield" on doorways for reinforcement. Highland Village police and civilian auxiliary members furnish and install the shields at no charge to the business. All our police officers wear body cameras and have since 2011. And of course Highland Village is known in the industry as the standard for Community Policing. Our officers spend 76% of their time out in the neighborhoods not just reminding residents to close their garage door but developing relationships.



### Fire Services - \$0.87

Fire services in Highland Village have come a long way since our volunteer fire department days. We now have a paid, full-time staff that provides high level emergency medical care, fire suppression, prevention and inspections as well as emergency management and disaster preparedness. Chief Glover and his crew were recently awarded the International Association of Fire Chiefs HeartSafe Community Award for their work in improving the cardiac health and survivability of our community. Our fire department considers it their sacred duty to protect our residents, visitors and the employees. The department conducts weekly senior healthcare checks at the local senior center and delivers Vial of Life information throughout the community to improve the delivery of medical services. They offer CPR and First Aid courses to teach families how to care for themselves and others, install child safety seats to protect our youngest citizens when in vehicles and monitors weather and public health threats at all times to ensure our safety and security.



### Streets - \$0.41

One of the unique characteristics of Highland Village is our curving streets and rolling hills. Our Street department maintains and manages 200 lane miles of concrete and asphalt streets. Public works director Scott Kriston and his street crew ensure our roadways are safe for the travelling public at all times and maintain their unique attributes, like the pavestone crossings found on Highland Shores Boulevard.

### Parks and Recreation - \$0.65

The Parks and Recreation department serves thousands of individuals by providing parks and open space, recreation and leisure programs and activities. The philosophy of parks director Linda Cornelius and her staff is to maximize the use of your tax dollars by strategically and comprehensively planning parks, open space and recreational programs that meet the needs and interests of our residents. Our park crews feel high maintenance standards are imperative to protect the investment in our parks and facilities. New play structures have been installed at Lions Club Park and Turpin Park. Kids Kastle wood fencing was just replaced with open, iron fencing to keep your children safe as they play in our most popular park. Linda's staff continues to grow our recreation programs, adding an all day Fall Festival last year with kids activities, dog races, and an art component in conjunction with the city's Public Art Advisory Board.



## Administrative Services - \$1.61

Administrative services take up the majority of the \$4.76 and include a wide array of services. These are the services we provide at City Hall.

### City Secretary

Our City Secretary administers elections, supports Council, legal services, manages our boards and commission application process and facilitates open records requests. Diane Callahan and her staff do this quite well as proven by the high grade received by the Dallas Morning News government transparency study.



### Human Resources

Our Human Resources department focuses on the support of the people who provide our service. We have a low turnover rate in Highland Village and consistently hear from our employees how much they enjoy working for our residents in Highland Village. Martha Butz and her team put their emphasis on employee development through internships that give back to the community. Several interns have begun their career with Highland Village after graduation – most recently our GIS intern moved into a combination GIS and IT full-time position and our video production intern started full-time this year. Martha and her team are committed to staff development and training with over 50% of our employees earning advanced certifications and education.



### Municipal Court

Our Municipal Court is managed by court administrator Barbara Osborne. Several years ago a young man had to appear in Highland Village Municipal Court. When he first talked with Barbara he came with an attitude of disrespect. Barbara called him out and explained to him that kind of attitude would not be tolerated and an attitude adjustment would serve him well. He didn't immediately respond, but through the court process Barbara saw something in this young man. She went out of her way to work with him and encourage him. He eventually took her advice and turned his life around. Today he is an Airman First Class in the Air Force, stays in contact with Barbara and openly credits her involvement in his life for the success he's achieved.

### Geographical Information Systems

Also part of our administrative services is GIS or geographical information systems. Sunny Lindsey is our GIS administrator and her skill in gathering data and developing maps has significantly improved the way all departments serve our community. Sunny's initiative also saved a lot of residents' money on their flood insurance premiums. She recently implemented a project in a flood plain area in Highland Village and submitted to FEMA. Thirty-five homes were removed from the existing flood plain area. This resulted in an average \$1200.00 annual savings in homeowners insurance for these residents. And when applied over a 30 year mortgage, it is a savings of about \$36,000.00.

### Community Services

Community Services works with our business community from the time of application to the certificate of occupancy. Autumn Aman, Billy Spencer and their staff work quickly and efficiently to ensure the developer meets Highland Village's high standards. In looking at our most recent large business opening, Whole Foods, the time frame from application to building permit took about nine months. Community Services also serves our residents through permits, code enforcement and inspections.



## General Legislative Priorities

*Allow a city the option of selecting either an official newspaper or an official Web site for the publication of official notes required by law.*

*Exempt candidate forums from the definition of a "meeting" in the Texas Open Meetings Act.*

*Oppose any bill that would eliminate any of the current uniform election dates.*

*Oppose the establishment of model rules relating to municipal regulation of gas wells, gas pipelines, or other gas-related equipment, unless the legislation or rules apply to only county regulation in the unincorporated area of the county.*

*Increase future local parks funding.*

*Oppose any bill that would lengthen or broaden the scope of the current sales tax holiday.*

*Oppose any bill that would expand election requirements for issuance of any city debt or that would impose a petition/election procedure where none currently exists.*

*Enhance the penalty for hacking into a government-owned computer.*

*Oppose any bill that would erode existing municipal authority relating to sex offender residency restrictions, or create a state standard that preempts current or future municipal sex offender residency restrictions.*

*Oppose any bill that would erode municipal authority to require utility companies to pay the costs of relocating their facilities in a timely manner as required by current law.*

*Oppose any bill that would limit city authority over employee benefits.*

*Oppose any bill that would, whether at the state or federal level, make "meet and confer" mandatory or expand the current "meet and confer" law.*

*Oppose any bill that would, whether at the state or federal level, make collective bargaining mandatory or impose expanded collective bargaining rights.*

*Create a new council-option city sales tax for property tax relief that may exceed the two-percent local cap.*

*Expand the use of public, educational, and government (PEG) fees to include operational and related costs associated with PEG channels.*

*Enact beneficial amendments to the Texas Open Meetings Act that relate to the use of social media and the discussion of public business.*

## Working for Our Citizens

In Highland Village, it is our goal to be responsible with the taxpayer's money, transparent in how their money is spent and conscientious of ensuring they receive the best service and amenities their money can buy. The Dallas Morning News recently revealed the findings of a year-long study of transparency in public entities. I am proud to say that Highland Village received an A. We can go one step further and report that our citizens, businesses and customers consistently tell us Highland Village takes customer service above and beyond the normal standard of service.



As with any public entity, business or corporation there is a cost for service. In Highland Village the funding for city services generally comes from three components; property tax, utility rates or our enterprise fund, and sales tax, or specific to our city, the 4B sales tax. While there are other factors to consider such as smaller revenue streams, taxes paid by non-residents and the expense of debt service – for the sake of simplicity, these three components represent our major sources of revenue.

The next few pages go a little deeper and represent to you the services and programs our residents receive for their tax dollar. Highland Village city staff, council and I all believe wholeheartedly that we work for our residents, visitors and business community. The credit for our success is the people behind the numbers and the passion they have for serving our community. They make Highland Village what it is today.

Thank you for your service to our community. We look forward to working with you in the success of Highland Village, North Texas and all of Texas.

Charlotte Wilcox  
Highland Village Mayor

## Property Tax

Highland Village has maintained the same property tax rate for the last fourteen years. And the city didn't raise the rate fourteen years ago, but rather the rate was decreased. The majority of the city growth and expansion of services took place during this fourteen year time period as well.

Today the average Highland Village home is valued at \$304,903.00 and at our \$.56963 property tax rate per \$100 the annual property tax bill is about \$1,737.00 or about \$4.76 per day – about the cost of your morning latte.



Highland Village  
Average Home Valuation  
\$304,903 @ \$.56963 per \$100 = \$1737 per year

OR



\$4.76 per day  
(Cost for daily latte)

What do our residents receive for \$4.76? Their basic city services are paid for by their property tax.

