



**85<sup>th</sup> Texas Legislative Session  
Priority Legislative Issues  
January 2017**

# **GENERAL LEGISLATIVE POLICY**

## **STATEMENT OF PRESERVATION**

As a general policy, the City of North Richland Hills seeks to preserve its current authority to govern the city, its citizens, and its property. Thus, the City will oppose any legislation that could harm the health, safety, and welfare of its citizens.

## **STATEMENT OF SUPPORT**

Likewise, the City supports any legislation that advances its authority to conduct the public's business or that improves the health, safety, and welfare of its citizens. The City supports legislation designed to responsibly and fairly provide revenues to pay for needed services or to reduce the cost of providing services or maintaining a strong municipal workforce. Lastly, the City supports legislation that responsibly promotes and increases economic development or that is designed to improve the economy or create jobs.

## **COALITIONS & PARTNERSHIPS**

When necessary, the City will form strategic partnerships with other cities and counties in the Metroplex. The City will also work with other local political subdivisions including the hospital district and the school district when commonalities exist. Additionally, the City will work in coordination with organizations such as the Texas Municipal League, North Central Texas Council of Governments and Tarrant Regional Transportation Coalition when their adopted positions are in line with the legislative objectives and goals of the City. The formation of strategic partnerships and coordinated efforts is intended to provide the City with a stronger presence in the legislative process.

## **GOALS OF THE CITY'S LEGISLATIVE ACTIVITIES**

The fundamental goal of the City of North Richland Hills' legislative activities is to produce positive outcomes for our citizens. Numerous proposals considered by the Texas Legislature will have the potential to seriously impact the ability of the City to carry out its mission. By taking a proactive role in the legislative process, the City is accepting its responsibility to ensure that the citizens of North Richland Hills can continue to enjoy the quality of life they deserve, have come to expect and are willing to support financially.

Throughout the history of Texas, our legislators have enacted laws that greatly affect the administrative and political decisions of municipalities. As the next legislative session begins, the City officials of North Richland Hills believe it is beneficial to state their position on some of the issues they expect will be addressed. This document is intended to provide those positions along with a short background and reasoning for these positions.

The City of North Richland Hills uses four guiding principles in developing its positions on legislative issues. These are:

1. We will vigorously oppose any legislation that erodes the authority to govern our own local affairs.
2. Cities represent the level of government closest to the people. They bear primary responsibility for the construction and maintenance of capital infrastructure and for ensuring citizens' health and safety. Thus, they must be provided a predictable and sufficient level of revenue.
3. We will oppose the imposition of any state mandates that do not provide for a commensurate level of compensation.
4. We will support any legislation that enhances the quality of life for our citizens.

Other issues will arise as the legislative session progresses. If an issue arises that is not addressed in this document, the City urges legislators to keep these four guiding principles in mind as they make important decisions concerning our future.

## **SUMMARY OF PRIORITY LEGISLATIVE ISSUES**

### **1. Preserve Cities Ability to Govern Their Own Affairs**

Texas communities are not homogenous and each has unique issues and considerations. Decisions at the local level need to be made by the people who live within the community, not by the State. Local citizens should be entrusted with the ability to make decisions within their own communities on what they would like their communities to be. Local elected officials are elected to govern the affairs of the cities they represent and should be granted the ability to govern these affairs as directed by the local community.

### **2. Preserve Local Control of Land Use Planning and Zoning**

Zoning regulations and land use planning are important and historic tools used by cities to protect the health and safety of residents, as well as to maintain residents' investment in property. Land use planning and zoning provide stability to a community so that current and future property owners know they can invest in a community with some assurance that conditions will not significantly change without some form of due process. It is imperative that cities retain their authority to manage development and to zone parcels of land within their city limits.

### **3. Preserve an Equal, Fair, and Uniform Property Tax System**

Revenue caps 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, or legislation that lowers the rollback rate do not allow for fair and equitable taxation, particularly during periods where market value growth exceeds the artificially established tax cap. Additionally, property tax caps applied only to residential property essentially shift the tax burden to businesses, which can serve as a deterrent to economic development. Further, property tax caps ignore the differences between Texas cities. While caps hurt all cities with a property tax, they are especially hard on cities that have little or no sales tax base.

### **4. Preserve Local Revenue Sources**

Cities are responsible for providing services that allow residents to feel safe, secure, and to enjoy their quality of life. Cities already face challenges providing all the services that residents expect and demand. It is vital that cities have reliable sources of revenue in order to provide these services. This includes the closing of the "dark box" loophole being used by some large retailers to artificially devalue commercial properties for tax purposes. Additionally, the ability to collect sales tax from out of state vendors benefits cities as well as local businesses.

### **5. Preserve the Ability to Use Debt Financing for Capital Projects**

Cities are responsible for the construction and maintenance of infrastructure within our city limits. These projects are often large and costly whereby it is not feasible to cash fund them. It is critical that cities have the ability to finance these types of projects using the issuance of debt.

**6. Public Safety**

Legislators should resist all efforts to erode a city's ability to effectively maintain the safety of its citizens. Public safety is a fundamental service cities provide their residents, and goes beyond just fire and police protection. When unnecessary mandates and limitations are imposed, they present undue hardships on a city's ability to protect its citizens.

## CONTACTS

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