



# **Legislative Platform and Policies**

**\* Approved by the City Council on  
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## **INTRODUCTION**

### **Sparks VISION Statement**

Be the city of choice for residents, businesses and visitors.

### **Sparks MISSION Statement**

By establishing financial stability and an effective work environment, the City of Sparks provides a safe environment, economic development, special events, cost-effective sustainable services, and opportunities for citizen involvement.

### **About the City of Sparks**

The City of Sparks is located just east of Reno, NV, at the base of the Sierra Nevada mountain range. World-renowned Lake Tahoe is less than a one-hour drive away. Sparks is in a high desert climate at an elevation of nearly 4,500 feet with four seasons and sunshine 80 percent of the year. It is the fifth largest city in Nevada with a population of 96,928 (2017). Reno/Tahoe International Airport, five minutes away, serves Sparks.

Sparks is known as the premiere special events venue for northern Nevada, a place where there is always something happening - with attractions on our Victorian Square which bring hundreds of thousands of visitors to such annual events as the 39 North Market Place, Hot August Nights, Best in the West Nugget Rib Cook-off, and Sparks Hometowne Christmas. The city's newest destination includes the Outlets at Legends, a premiere shopping, dining and entertainment experience at the Sparks Marina.

Sparks is filled with more than 50 beautiful parks that provide the backdrop for countless recreation programs. The City's landmark gem includes the unique Sparks Marina, eighty acres of water providing swimming, boating, fishing, scuba diving, paddle boarding and picnicking facilities, with breath-taking views of the nearby mountains. Events are always happening at the Marina such as the US Open of Watercross, the International Dragon Boat Festival races, and the Scheels Turkey Trot held annually on Thanksgiving Day.

Golden Eagle Regional Park Sports Complex features 1.4 million square feet of artificial turf and serves as host to hundreds of softball tournaments, baseball tournaments, and sporting events annually. This unique sports facility generates over 50,000 room nights and contributes to over \$20 million dollars in economic benefit to the northern Nevada region. Sparks' Rock Park offers an exciting whitewater attraction on the river geared for family fun, accented with pools for kayaking, tubing and rafting for all abilities. These and dozens of other parks and a regional trail system in Sparks provide picturesque settings for the many fun and exciting activities enjoyed by residents and visitors.

Sparks is part of the beautiful Truckee Meadows and is surrounded by scenic foothills. Whether walking, running, or biking, there are abundant opportunities to experience the great outdoors year-round. The City's rich past and railroad history can be experienced at the Sparks Heritage Museum.



The City's Community Services Department and Sparks' partner the Economic Development Authority of Western Nevada work closely with current business owners and new developers to provide a "business friendly" environment within which to pursue responsible economic activities.

The Sparks industrial area provides many opportunities for large and small businesses to open or expand their operations in western Nevada. Road service, including I-80, U.S. 395 and Nevada 580, coupled with Union Pacific rail yards, and air cargo serviced through Reno/Tahoe International Airport provide superior transportation within close proximity to the region's vast industrial and residential customers.

The City provides a full-range of municipal services including police, fire, public works, wastewater treatment, legal division, municipal court, code enforcement, business licensing, parks and recreation, special events, and much more.

Come experience Sparks, Nevada for yourself. It's happening here!



## Sparks Mayor and City Council



(L-R): Councilman Donald Abbott (Ward 1), Councilman Ed Lawson (Ward 2), Councilman Paul Anderson (Ward 3), Mayor Ron Smith, Councilwoman Charlene Bybee (Ward 4), Councilman Kristopher Dahir (Ward 5)

**SPARKS CITY ATTORNEY**  
**CHET ADAMS**



**MUNICIPAL JUDGE**  
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**JIM SPOO**



The Sparks Legislative Team representing the Sparks City Council includes Mayor Ron Smith, Councilman Ed Lawson, City Manager Steve Driscoll, Assistant City Manager Neil Krutz, Legislative Liaison Katy Clewett and Rocky Finseth of Carrara Nevada.

**CITY MANAGER  
STEPHEN W. DRISCOLL**



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# SPARKS STRATEGIC PLAN – (2018 - 2023)

## Strategic Goals and Fiscal Year 2018 – 2023 Objectives

The City’s Vision and Mission are supported by six strategic goals: Managing Growth, Connectivity, Community Facilities and Services, Community Character, Resiliency and Sustainability, and Housing and Affordability.

- 1. Managing Growth: Proactively plan, manage and maintain the City’s current “small town feel” by focusing development in existing areas while protecting open spaces and parks.**
- 2. Connectivity: Support fast and efficient connections – transportation and communication systems – between neighborhoods, recreation, schools, shopping areas, and City facilities.**
- 3. Community Facilities and Services: Deliver and maintain responsive community services and facilities that support the safety and wellbeing of our residents and visitors.**
- 4. Community Character: Ensure that Sparks’ physical environment, services and amenities make it a city of choice for residents and businesses.**
- 5. Resiliency and Sustainability: Ensure the City’s ability to absorb disruptive change while retaining or restoring our environmental, social and economic health.**
- 6. Housing and Affordability: Provide solutions to housing needs for all economic segments of the community, while promoting economic growth and ensuring financial sustainability.**

## LEGISLATIVE PLATFORM

The Legislative Platform is maintained by the Sparks City Council in support of its legislative program for a defined time. The Legislative Platform serves as a guidance document regarding the city’s advocacy position which serves to assist the Mayor, Council, City Manager and Government Affairs function in providing prompt and accurate responses to proposed legislation during the legislative process. This is particularly important during the state legislative process where time is often very short between a bill’s drafting and publishing and determining when a position is required by Sparks. Often it is impossible for the Council to meet and deliberate in a public forum to provide direction to the city’s lobbying effort.

The matrix below is a prioritized list of platform issues derived from state legislative discussions, as well as council priorities and citywide strategic goals.

<b>LEGISLATIVE PLATFORM ISSUES</b>	
<b><u>FINANCIAL STABILITY</u></b>	
<b>1.</b>	<b><u>General Government:</u></b>
	a. Support legislation that enhances local government’s ability to control the community it is elected to lead.
	b. Oppose state legislation that requires the local entity to provide a service or benefit without appropriate, full funding or the ability to enact a funding source (no unfunded mandates).
	c. Support legislation that would allow for a local preference in government purchasing.
	d. Support legislation that provides local authority over raising revenue when supported by local electorate.
	e. Support legislative efforts to review and improve state revenue restructuring that does not negatively impact local government.
	f. Support legislation that protects local government revenues from state action.
	g. Oppose legislation that requires regional consolidation of services.
	h. Support public utility regulations that:
	i. Maintain local control over rights-of-way.
	ii. Provide compensation for the use of rights-of-way and overseeing public service standards.
	iii. Ensure public, educational, and governmental access is available and affordable.
	iv. Provide free access for public information services and announcements.
	i. Support measures that provide funding for community park facilities, open space, and recreation programs.
	j. Support state and federal funding and legislation for the arts that benefit local communities.
	k. Support legislation that would enhance the efficiency of the Open Meeting Law and the electoral processes.



<b>LEGISLATIVE PLATFORM ISSUES</b>	
l.	Oppose legislation that limits the city’s ability to grow services as demanded by the citizens (i.e., voter approved initiatives).
m.	Oppose legislation that rolls back property tax assessment levels resulting in limiting the city’s ability to maintain or grow services as demanded by the citizens (i.e., a Nevada version of California Proposition 13 and the Nevada Tax Restraint Initiative).
<b>2.</b>	<b><u>Regional and State-wide Issues:</u></b>
a.	Support efforts that reinforce local entity governance.
b.	Maintain a leadership position in mandated regional governance boards and commissions.
c.	Support efforts to stabilize the state tax environment.
<b>3.</b>	<b><u>Local Government Finance:</u></b>
a.	Oppose state legislation that requires the local entity to provide a service or benefit without appropriate, full funding (seek self-determination and more local authority).
b.	Support measures that safeguard existing revenue sources from pre-emption by the state or county governments.
c.	Oppose any change by the state or county governments in revenue allocations (current or future) that would negatively affect local government, including the redistribution of taxes or fees.
d.	Oppose any measure that would limit local entities’ ability to issue or use voter-approved proceeds.
e.	Support measures that provide fiscal independence for cities and the retention of all existing local revenue sources.
f.	Support legislation that allows the city to maintain and/or control revenues related to franchises (i.e., gas, water, sewer, garbage, telecommunications, etc.).
g.	Support legislation that makes funds available to support the building, operations and maintenance of public facilities (i.e., facilities, parks, open space, etc.).
h.	Support legislation that provides greater accountability on the part of counties for unincorporated residential services.
i.	Support greater local authority for tax exemptions and incentives for purposes of economic development.
j.	Oppose legislation that creates surcharges for state oversight of mandated programs.
k.	Support legislation for local governments to maintain and expand the use of special improvement districts.
l.	Oppose legislation that would further exempt or reduce revenue from fees and taxes of for-profit or non-profit organizations within special improvement districts.

## LEGISLATIVE PLATFORM ISSUES

### **4. Labor Relations:**

- a. Oppose state legislation that requires the local entity to provide a service or benefit without appropriate, full funding (no unfunded mandates).
- b. Support legislation that improves access to and/or reduces the cost of healthcare for public employees.
- c. Oppose any measure that mandates the granting of new employee benefits which pose burdensome costs to the city (without forcing the issue to the bargaining table).
- d. Support any measure granting employee benefits that mandate personal accountability components. (changes to the Heart and Lung benefits or PTSD). Mandated personal accountabilities should include exclusion from the benefit for non-compliance.
- e. Oppose legislation that increases worker’s compensation benefits without providing for concurrent cost controls or appropriate, full funding (no unfunded mandates)..
- f. Support legislation that limits the ability of employees to receive worker’s compensation benefits for occupational injuries and illnesses that result from stress, disciplinary action performance evaluations, or consultations.
- g. Support legislation limiting employer liability if injury occurs due to employee negligence.
- h. Oppose changes to mandatory bargaining laws that negatively impact local government by adding costs or limiting management rights.
- i. Oppose legislation to include subjective complaints of pain in determining partial disability awards.
- j. Support changes in the Nevada Revised Statutes (NRS) or Nevada Administrative Code (NAC) to increase the ability to pay provisions from 8.3 to 16.6 percent

### **5. Tort Reform:**

- a. Support measures to reform Nevada’s tort system to reduce or limit liability exposure for public agencies and restore ability of public agencies to obtain affordable insurance.
- b. Support legislation that recognizes or broadens immunities for public agencies.
- c. Oppose legislation that attempts to limit or restrict existing immunities for public agencies.
- d. Oppose legislation that limits local entities’ ability to properly use eminent domain.

### **6. Public Safety:**

- a. Support legislation that strengthens local law enforcement.
- b. Support measures that provide a greater share of seized assets to localities and increased latitude for local spending.
- c. Support legislation that allows local agencies to recover costs from guilty parties for public property and services in accidents involving driving while

<b>LEGISLATIVE PLATFORM ISSUES</b>	
	impaired and/or under the influence of alcohol and/or drugs.
d.	Support legislation granting immunity to governmental entities and their employees for purposes of liability for those entities and employees who provide emergency medical services, instructions or treatment as a part of their public safety job duties.
e.	Support legislation that provides the delivery of local emergency medical service to its citizens if no other regional delivery system is available.
f.	Support state homeland security legislation that assists in safeguarding the homeland as well as provides direct funding to cities and high-threat regions with populations less than 700,000.
g.	Oppose any broadening of access to law enforcement records.
h.	Support legislation that requires parents or legal guardians of minors to pay the cost incurred by offenses of those minors.
i.	Oppose legislation that directly or indirectly prohibits a law enforcement or fire department from providing additional services to the public.
j.	Support enabling legislation that provides expanded utilization of non-sworn officers to issue nuisance citations.
k.	Support enabling legislation that provides local authority to impose mandatory court assessments to defray administrative cost of municipal courts.
<b><u>REDEVELOPMENT AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT</u></b>	
<b>7.</b>	<b><u>Redevelopment:</u></b>
a.	Support legislation that maintains and enhances redevelopment efforts.
b.	Oppose legislation that prohibits or limits the establishment of new redevelopment project areas or expansion of existing project areas.
c.	Oppose legislation that limits or reduces the power of local entities to properly use eminent domain.
d.	Support legislation that enhances redevelopment agency authority and financing capabilities.
e.	Support changes in redevelopment legislation that provides greater flexibility to redevelopment agencies to finance and participate in redevelopment projects.
f.	Oppose legislation that diverts future revenues from redevelopment agencies to other public entities or mandated programming (homelessness or housing subsidy)..

## LEGISLATIVE PLATFORM ISSUES

### **8. Economic Development:**

- a. Support legislation that facilitates economic development efforts and encourages businesses to locate or remain in Sparks.
- b. Support legislation that facilitates expansion of Free Trade Zones (FTZs) in Sparks.
- c. Oppose efforts to limit tax incentives that benefit the City and the State.
- d. Support legislation that assists in diversifying the economy of Sparks.
- e. Support legislation that reinforces regional efforts to recruit and establish new businesses and industries in Sparks.
- f. Support regional legislation that aids efforts by local and state tourism agencies to expand the opportunities for visitor activities.
- g. Explore legislation that provides for international economic efforts.
- h. Explore legislative opportunities to bring technology to assist the city in economic recruitment (i.e., WiFi, fiber optics, broadband cable, voice over IP, etc.).
- i. Support legislation that provides for retention of room tax revenue for local utilization in promotion and capital improvements.
- j. Oppose legislation that restricts a local entities ability to manage Qualified Opportunity Zones within local land use requirements.

### **9. Housing and Community Development:**

- a. Support legislation that provides homeowner assistance in maintaining their mortgages against foreclosure by lending institutions.
- b. Support legislation that provides incentives (tax benefits, grants, loans, credits for affordable units) to local agencies, private developers, and non-profit groups to rehabilitate residential units and commercial properties without using existing local government resources.
- c. Support the streamlining of state reporting (i.e., electronic storage and transfer).
- d. Support efforts to develop state participation, financial support and incentives (tax benefits, grants, loans) for programs that provide adequate, affordable housing (home ownership or rental opportunities for first-time home buyers assistance) for all economic segments of the community including the elderly, veterans, handicapped and low-income persons.
- e. Support legislation that provides additional funding for rental subsidy assistance programs (such as Section 8) via more vouchers or certificates.
- f. Support state participation in funding innovative housing solutions for low-income, elderly, and handicapped individuals.
- g. Support legislation that provides incentives for maintaining cultural resources, including historic building and housing stock.
- h. Support streamlined procedures for annexation of land within a city's sphere of influence.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. Support legislation that maintains city’s control over the construction of facilities and/or structures within its sphere of influence (i.e., cellular towers, well heads, power lines, maintenance yards, etc.)</li> </ul>
<p><b>LEGISLATIVE PLATFORM ISSUES</b></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>j. Support legislation that encourages energy conservation (green building) design standards that do not overburden state and local governments with tax waiver incentives.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>k. Support legislation that ensures financial institutions or holding/asset management firms are responsive to code enforcement issues on bank owned properties.</li> </ul>
<p><b><u>INFRASTRUCTURE and HIGHWAYS</u></b></p>
<p><b>10. <u>Transportation:</u></b></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Support measures that increase the ability of local agencies to finance local transportation facilities and infrastructure.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>b. Support measures to finance local and regional transportation facilities and improvements, including alternative modes of transportation and traffic management systems.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>c. Support legislation that provides for effective and efficient transportation alternatives.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>d. Support legislation that provides for long-term planning and acquisition of rights-of-way (i.e., interchanges, connectors, frontage roads, etc.).</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>e. Support legislation that encourages emerging employment centers with the end goal of reducing commute miles.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>f. Support legislation that provides funding sources for highway and transportation projects.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>g. Support measures that safeguard our community and transportation networks from hazardous and toxic materials.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>h. Support legislation to relocate and expand rail yard operations to enhance the local economy (economic development issue also).</li> </ul>
<p><b>11. <u>Public Works:</u></b></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Support legislation that provides greater flexibility regarding public works projects and funding sources (i.e., new funding mechanisms utilizing existing state and federal revenues as well as new sources).</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>b. Support legislation that provides for well-planned, cost-effective infrastructure.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>c. Support legislation that maintains city control over its rights-of-way.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>d. Support legislation that coordinates and/or preserves a local entities land rights to place public facilities (i.e., city hall, police stations, fire stations, corporate yards, parks, trails, etc.).</li> </ul>
<p><b>12. <u>Flood Control/Water Management:</u></b></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Advocate federal, state, and local sources of on-going revenue to fund completion of the Truckee River Flood Management Project.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>b. Support legislation for flood control management to mitigate loss of property and life.</li> </ul>

- c. Support legislation that retains control over local water supply, distribution, and reclamation.

**LEGISLATIVE PLATFORM ISSUES**

**13. Regional Planning**

- a. Support legislation that maintains local control through policies governed by the Truckee Meadows Regional Planning Governing Board (TMRPGB).
  - i. Seek potential amendments or revisions to existing TMRPGB legislation to clarify role, functions, addresses costs to local governments, and/or moves legislative mandates to local agency level.
- b. Explore more effective methods for funding regional planning that does not take away from existing local government resources.
- c. Explore alternative models for regional planning implementation.
- d. Maintain a strong working relationship with the Pyramid Lake Paiute Tribe and the Truckee River Operating Agreement (TROA).
- e. Support state legislative review of current state department programs for environmental and wildlife preservation to improve responsiveness and reduce unnecessary regulations.