

# Paolo Kespradit

**Management Specialist, City of West Hollywood  
Representing MMASC**



## **What is your role at the City of West Hollywood?**

I am the Management Specialist for the City of West Hollywood. I work in the City Manager's office coordinating interdepartmental initiatives that impact the community at large, including economic development, strategic planning, special projects, and most recently, the City of West Hollywood's response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

## **What leadership qualities do you think are important for local government officials at this moment in our history?**

Empathy is the single-most important quality for local government leaders to embrace. The City of West Hollywood recognizes, in its mission, that we must be proactive in responding to the unique needs of our diverse community. Our city also has a core value of respect and support for people. The year 2020 highlighted in so many different ways -- from the COVID-19 pandemic to the Black Lives Matter movement -- that social, economic and racial inequities continue to take root in our communities. We must work to overcome these inequities. We're all shaped by different cultures, experiences, and norms and, in our work at the local government level, we must develop empathy — the ability to understand and share the feelings of others and see something from a new perspective. Authentic leadership is built on mutual respect, thoughtfulness, and compassion.

## **As a local government leader, how do you feel about the role of Democracy, Civility, Civic Engagement and Good Governance?**

During the inaugural address by President Joe Biden, I was struck by his call to action that we must “end this uncivil war.” The last four years has divided our nation with public trust in government falling to all-time lows and misinformation adding to the mix with confusion and discord aimed at every level of government. I’m encouraged, though, by the high turnout in the recent elections — I believe that’s because people want their voices to be heard. As local government leaders, we have a responsibility to continually work to engage our constituents and strengthen trust. In the City of West Hollywood, we hold ourselves accountable to our community members by committing to active public participation. We promote public processes, develop opportunities for engagement, and respond to community needs while balancing interests and opinions. Democracy begins at the local level and good governance is built on two-way communication with civility, transparency, and diverse inclusion.

## **What advice do you have for the next generation and for diverse candidates currently working in public service or looking to serve?**

My advice is: cultivate curiousness and never stop asking questions. Local government tackles a tapestry of topics and there's always something new to learn. To be effective as local government leaders, we must all continue to learn, ask questions, and grow. The saying “there's no such thing as a stupid question” reminds us all to keep seeking knowledge. Asking questions allows those in the next generation to learn by gaining a deeper understanding and developing an informed perspective. The more questions you ask, the more answers you will find — all the better to solve problems and build solutions.

## **What advice or inspirational quote has resonated with you over the years?**

**“Continuous improvement is better than delayed perfection.”**

-- Mark Twain

This quote, for me, is especially relevant now. As local government leaders, we are often called to pursue perfection in our work. But, perfection is subjective and the quest for it can sometimes impede us and create roadblocks. I've found that timely incremental improvements can have better outcomes than delaying something because it's not perfect. Continuous improvement is a wonderful pursuit for local government leaders.