

Citizen empowerment

The new year looks bright for Van Nuys Neighborhood Council
It's been a tough year for the residents of Van Nuys.

They spent 2004 unable to start up an effective neighborhood council after infighting, eyebrow-raising antics in the 2003 elections and manipulations by the Department of Neighborhood Empowerment meant a partial disbanding of the group.

But 2005 could be the year that everything turns around for the community panel and it loses the reputation as the ultimate example of what *not* to do.

Neighborhood councils were created as part of the 1999 city charter reform and were intended to offer grass-roots-level empowerment to the city's many neighborhoods. Not a lot of empowering of Van Nuys citizens went on in 2004.

Many community members are optimistic about the new vote and say the community is determined not to make the same mistakes. If that happens, it's likely Van Nuys will finally get the neighborhood council it deserves.