

LOS ANGELES TIMES

Hahn Unveils Plan to Bring City Services Closer to Residents

Mayor says the 10 ideas are designed to counter frustrations that helped fuel secession drives.

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Los Angeles Mayor James K. Hahn announced a package of proposals Tuesday aimed at bringing city services closer to residents.

The 10-point plan, which could take years to fully implement, is intended to shorten the distance between City Hall and seven major areas of the city, the mayor said. His proposals would ease access to a broad array of such basic services as building permits, sidewalk and street repairs, trash pickup and graffiti cleanup.

Hahn, who helped defeat secession efforts in the San Fernando Valley and Hollywood, used that campaign to talk about making city government more efficient. He launched several initiatives -- a pothole repair program, traffic officers at critical intersections, among others -- during that time aimed at proving that City Hall could be responsive to residents' needs, particularly in the Valley.

Aides said he listened closely as residents throughout the city complained over the last year about the inaccessibility of City Hall. The mayor addressed that issue head-on Tuesday in an afternoon news conference in Van Nuys, in front of the Marvin Braude Constituent Service Center, a \$34-million city building under construction.

Hahn said the secession movements sent a clear message that residents want

City Hall to change. "People care about services," Hahn said. "They want better services, they want more services. We don't think you should have to take a graduate course to try to understand how city government works."

Facets of the new program, dubbed "TeamWork LA," include:

- * Creating "neighborhood service councils" composed of representatives from city departments that receive the most requests for services. The staffs would coordinate services in the North and South Valley, West Los Angeles, Central Los Angeles, East Los Angeles, South Los Angeles and the harbor.
- * Establishing neighborhood "city halls," such as the Braude Center, in those areas so residents can take care of most city-related business closer to home. These would be staffed by "neighborhood specialists" who would help residents obtain services.
- * Beginning a computerized tracking system, called L.A. Stat and based on the police model for tracking crime, to determine the level of services provided throughout the city and to enable officials to improve services where needed.
- * Directing the city's existing neighborhood councils to develop plans to help city departments determine priorities for those areas.

Hahn created the plan with the aid of a consultant who headed former Vice President Al Gore's "reinventing government" project. It contains proposals similar to several made by Councilman Tom LaBonge, who was among the City Council members on hand Tuesday.

LaBonge said he is pleased that the mayor took the lead in improving city government: "We're empowering the city to do more."

Hahn did not specify what the program would cost, beyond noting that he will keep costs low by staffing the program with current employees and using existing city offices. The city budgeted and spent \$170,000 on the L.A. Stat system.

The mayor said he wants to let neighborhoods tell City Hall how to function better. "No neighborhood should feel neglected," Hahn said. "Neighborhoods should drive the priorities of city government."

City Council members Janice Hahn, Wendy Greuel and Dennis Zine praised the program and said it will go a long way toward addressing constituents' concerns.

Greuel indicated that it is only a first step and more needs to be done. She said a system of boroughs that she and others offered during the secession campaign as an alternative to separation is also intended, like the mayor's plan, to bring city services closer to residents.

"For me, everything's on the table," Greuel said. "But this is a recognition by the mayor and the council and our departments that we do need to change."