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THE VALLEY

## **City Begins Issuing Debit Cards to Neighborhood Advisory Councils**

By Patrick McGreevy, Times Staff Writer

Mayor James K. Hahn provided a debit card to the Reseda Neighborhood Council as the first step in a plan to give advisory bodies throughout Los Angeles \$50,000 annually for operating expenses.

Hahn said 65 neighborhood councils have been certified by the city. When the councils elect a board of directors, each will be given what the mayor called a "Stored Value Card" they can use to purchase office supplies, publicize meetings and cover other incidental expenditures.

These cards will give our neighborhood councils more independence and more resources to help improve the quality of life in our neighborhoods," Hahn said during a news conference at the Office Depot store in Van Nuys, where members of the Reseda council bought their first supplies.

Each neighborhood council must send a treasurer to city training sessions on the proper use of the cards, and each card is programmed to prevent inappropriate purchases. The city is also limiting spending by putting \$12,500 in each card's account every three months.

The neighborhood council system was approved by voters as part of adopting a new City Charter in 1999 and is meant to provide residents with more ability to participate in government by voting advice on local issues.

"We're thrilled," said John Fitzpatrick, chairman of the Reseda council. "We are going to begin to realize those dreams and plans we put together on a grass-roots level in our community."