

Neighborhood-panel changes urged

By Dan Laidman, Staff Writer
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A City Council panel introduced a sweeping review Wednesday of the neighborhood council system, calling for the community groups to help set their own agenda.

The Education and Neighborhood Committee asked the advisory groups to comment on the Neighborhood Council Review Commission, a body that will convene next year to gauge how well Los Angeles' system of institutionalized grass-roots democracy is working.

"I want the process to be inclusive," said Councilman Bill Rosendahl, the committee's chairman. "I want every neighborhood council and stakeholder to come forward and be a part of this process."

The City Charter calls for the mayor and City Council to appoint a commission that will review the effectiveness of the neighborhood council system and recommend possible changes by 2007.

A report by the council's chief legislative analyst recommends a commission with 17 members including two mayoral appointees and one from each council member.

The commission should meet for 12 months and hold special forums to gather public comment in addition to regularly scheduled public meetings, the report recommends.

Speakers said Wednesday that the commission should include neighborhood activists and that it also should examine how well city departments are working with the community councils.

"We need to get people involved in this and not just the attorneys saying this is what you can do and this is what you can't do," said Donna Schwalm of Van Nuys.

Brady Westwater, president of the Downtown Neighborhood Council, said the review can serve as a recruitment campaign.

"I think it's an excellent opportunity for us to reach out to people that aren't part of Neighborhood Councils now," he said.

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FOR MORE INFORMATION

Information on the neighborhood council review process is available at www.lacityneighborhoods.com.