



an insider look at city hall

# CITYWATCH EXTRA

**November 10, 2005  
Volume 3 Issue 17**

**CityWatch Today**—Some NC leaders believe that there is nothing more critical to the success of Neighborhood Councils than an effective NC Congress.

An issues, or deliberative, Congress of NCs is not a new idea. Many of the Charter Commissioners had that vision when they created Article IX for the new City Charter.

One group, an outgrowth of USC-facilitated workshops, has been working on a structure and format for an NC Congress since last January. Now complete, support for their proposed plan for an NC Congress is gathering momentum.

This CityWatch Extra is devoted to this issue: an NC Congress.

We hope you find it useful.

--Editor

## Say What?

*“Department of Neighborhood Empowerment ...duties and responsibilities shall include:*

*(c) Arrange Congress of Neighborhood meetings if requested to do so by recognized Neighborhood Councils.”*

--Article IX  
LA City Charter



### CityWatch Status Report

## NC Congress Gaining Traction

**Signed on: 14; On Upcoming Agendas: 8**

By Ken Draper

The effort to create a Neighborhood Council congress is picking up traction. Fourteen Councils have signed on to the proposed charter in the last two months with another eight saying that they have, or will, agendaize the issue for their boards to act on. The Councils that have ratified the Charter Proposal range geographically from Woodland Hills to San Pedro and from Bel Air to Atwater Village.



**LOS ANGELES  
NEIGHBORHOOD  
COUNCILS  
CONGRESS**

*NC's that have ratified the  
NC Congress Charter  
As of 11-9-05*

**Arroyo Seco  
Atwater Village  
Bel Air Beverly Crest  
Central San Pedro  
Coastal San Pedro  
Downtown LA  
Granada Hills North  
Historic Highland Park  
Mar Vista  
Mid City WEST  
Reseda  
Tarzana  
Winnetka  
Woodland Hills-Warner  
Center**



The idea behind this movement is that Neighborhood Councils have a Charter-right to run their own congresses and that NC congresses should be focusing on issues, networking and deliberation.

Last January, at a meeting facilitated by the USC Neighborhood Participation Project, a group of more than 35 Neighborhood Council representatives approved a “working group” and charged them with creating just such a congress. This fall, with more than 65 NC representatives, from more than 40 different Councils having participated in some part of the process, the working group ... known now as the Los Angeles Neighborhood Council's Congress (LANCC) ... approved a Proposed Charter for an NC Congress and distributed it to NCs throughout the City.

The NC Congress, as outlined in the Charter, calls for a Senate, to be made up of representatives from participating Neighborhood Councils (one per Council) to “review and discuss” issues and to “collect and tally the positions taken by individual NCs on issues.”

The Charter also envisions a 12-month-year Communications Center that would track issues, keep a master calendar and forward timely reports to the NCs. The Charter says that the purpose of the NC Congress is, among other things, to provide opportunities for NCs to communicate with each other on issues of common interest, to establish a structure for NCs to speak with a collective voice and to “develop and maintain expertise on City issues.”

**See Page 4. “NC Congress”**

## Insight NCs Maintain Independence

As one of the primary drafters of the proposed Charter for a Congress, I'd like to offer these thoughts:

The primary purpose of the Congress is not to have a "chosen few" become the spokespersons for Neighborhood Councils citywide. The purpose is to enhance the ability of NCs to work together on issues of common concern and to express their positions in a manner that maximizes their influence. I can basically carry a tune, and can sing pretty loud, but no one is ever going to pay attention to my singing. But if my so-so voice is combined with a lot of other so-so voices, we can make a pretty incredible choir. In my mind, the Congress is like a choir—far more powerful and harmonious as a group than as individuals. The synergy of 87 or 100 NCs working together can create a force far more powerful than 87 or 100 NCs working alone.

The Charter for the Congress was carefully drafted to ensure that Neighborhood Councils are not ceding one iota of their power or "sovereignty" to the Congress. Each NC gets to sing out as loud as it wants to, but it gets to join with other voices. Dissenting voices will not be stifled, either. The NCs in the "minority" on any issue will also have their voices amplified by all the other NCs who share that

position. Even in a room mostly made up of tenors, the basses can be heard better if they join together.

See Page 3. "Insight"

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### On: 20% Ratification Triggers Congress

Any Neighborhood Council that is worried that some other set of 18 councils is going to steal power from the whole 87 has a simple solution available to it: Join.

Then that council will be a member of the 19 councils. Then of the 20 councils, and then of the 30 and the 50 and the 70. We need to communicate that 20 percent is neither the limit nor the goal, but merely the first threshold among many.

Or, to put it really simply, the counter-argument about the 20 percent figure is to recruit lots more NCs as members, so that 20 percent becomes a distant memory.

--Bob Gelfand  
Coastal San Pedro NC

**Contact LANCC**  
[WWW.LANCCongress.org](http://WWW.LANCCongress.org)  
Charter • Members • Events • Background

## CITYWATCH

The E-Newsletter for LA's NC's

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**Volume 3 Issue 17**

**EXTRA**

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CITYWATCH is published to encourage grassroots civic engagement through information, ideas and perspective.

CITYWATCH the E-Newsletter is published weekly on Tuesdays. Share it with your Neighborhood Council and other activists.

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**BONC**  
**Meeting**  
**November 15 (5:30 p.m.)**

City Hall  
Room 1060

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## *The History*

The idea of Neighborhood Councils forming a congress for the purposes of networking, issues and deliberation is not new. It was in the visions of many of the Charter Commissioners when they crafted Article IX for the new Charter.

In **June of 1999**, city voters overwhelmingly approved the new City Charter which mandated Neighborhood Councils. Among other things, Article IX required the Department of Neighborhood Empowerment (DONE) to “arrange Congress of Neighborhood meetings if requested to do so by recognized Neighborhood Councils.”

Until **December 2001**, there were no certified Neighborhood Councils, so it fell on DONE to organize and run the congresses.

In the **spring of 2004**, some Neighborhood Council leaders began urging DONE to create issues, networking and deliberative congresses. DONE General Manager Greg Nelson’s response, at the time, was that he would “when the Councils are ready.” Nelson is on record as saying that he supports issues congresses and would arrange such congresses when asked by a representative and recognized group of Councils. It was Nelson who scheduled the NC Congress Workshop, facilitated by the USC Neighborhood Participation Project, at the **October, 2004** Congress.

The NC Congress Working Group, known now as the Los Angeles Neighborhood Council Congress (LANCC) was ultimately an outgrowth of the **October** USC NC Congress Workshop.

At that workshop, interest in an NC Congress was sufficient to prompt a second meeting of Council leaders. It was held at USC in **January of this year**. The Council representatives at that meeting voted to facilitate their own meetings and formed the NC Congress Working Group, or LANCC, craft a congress blueprint and a plan for creating and organizing an NC Congress ... or a Congress to be directed and managed by Neighborhood Councils.

Over the nine months since the January meeting at USC, more than 65 different NC representatives, from more than 40 different Neighborhood Councils participated in some way in the LANCC process.

**This fall**, the LANCC Working Group approved a “Proposal to Create a Charter for a Citywide Congress of Neighborhood Councils” and distributed it to Councils for ratification. To date, 14 Neighborhood Councils have approved the Proposal. ■

## CityWatch FUTURE ASSIGNMENTS

### ■ Special Election Winners

*An NC POV*

### ■ File # Issue Finally Makes E&N Agenda *Report on how it happened*

### ■ A Look at the New BONC

*The reformers, the conformers, the undecided*

**Coming Nov 17  
To a Computer Near You!**

## Insight-From Page 2

Because the purpose of the Congress is to enhance the ability of NCs to work together on issues of common concern, I do not understand the concern about the role of the “Stakeholder.” Any stakeholder has as much right to participate in the workings of the Congress as he or she does to participate in the workings of their Neighborhood Council, or the City Council (of which he/she is also a stakeholder). The purpose of the Congress is not to provide a forum for self-appointed representatives of the stakeholders; it is a place for the stakeholders’ chosen representatives—their neighborhood councils—to work together.

As for the authority for the Congress, the City Charter specifically provides for a Congress of Neighborhoods to be called by Neighborhood Councils. Thus, the proposed Congress is “part of the (city chartered) NC system.” Perhaps not quite as the Charter commissioners envisioned it, but I also am not aware of any charter commissioner who opposes the current Congress proposal as inconsistent with the Charter or their vision.

In any event, nothing in the Charter prevents Neighborhood Councils from working together on issues of common concern, which is the primary purpose of the Congress. There are a variety of groups that do this now—the Alliance of Neighborhood Councils, the Valley Alliance, the Citywide Issues Group, and the others listed in the most recent issue of CityWatch. Neighborhood councils work with homeowners’ associations, chambers of commerce, schools, PTAs, CPABs, park advisory boards, etc., on issues of common concern.

--Jeffrey Jacobberger  
Mid City WEST CC

## NC Congress-From Page 1

The NC Congress plan has sparked its share of questions for some Councils. Some are concerned that they will lose their independence regarding issues and some are concerned by the Charter rule that allows the NC Congress to begin work after 20% of LA's certified councils ratify.

Members of the Working Group, however, note that because positions on issues are reported out with all NC opinions and views included, the independent views of individual councils will only be enhanced. Also, nothing about the charter, prevents any council from taking any stand or action as it does now. As for the 20% ratification that activates the Congress, the answer is to sign on and participate. Do your part to increase the percentage.

As far as timelines go, one Working Group officer thinks the needed 20% will be reached before the end of the year and that the new Congress will be ready for its first full-blown citywide meeting by May of next year.

The next meeting of the LANCC Working Group is Saturday, November 15. *(For information on how your Council can join the NC Congress, to read and download the Proposed Charter, for an updated list of NCs that have ratified the Charter or for LANCC contact information: [www.LANCCongress.org](http://www.LANCCongress.org).)* ▣

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### Next Meeting LANCC

*Los Angeles Neighborhood Councils Congress*



**Saturday  
November 12 (10 a.m.)  
DWP (Portland Room)  
Hope & First Streets**

***All Neighborhood Councils  
Welcome!***

**CITYWATCH: KNOWMORE**

## Make Contact!

### To Reach CityWatch

*Email*

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[lacityneighborhoods.com](http://lacityneighborhoods.com)

[CityWatchLA.com](http://CityWatchLA.com)

*Call*

**323.937.0504**

### Neighborhood Councils IINVITED

*Join the Commission on the Status of  
Women on Thursday, November 17  
At the National Council of Jewish Women  
543 N. Fairfax from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m.*

*Event is free. On-site parking is free.*

*Also present: representatives from LAPD's  
Narcotics and Vice Divisions, the Fire  
Department, the FBI, the District  
Attorney's Office and Councilmembers  
Jack Weiss and Tony Cardenas.*

*Info: 213.978.0300*

### LADWP Budget Workshop for Neighborhood Councils

On Saturday, November 19, 2005, beginning at 1:00 p.m., LADWP management will be holding its Fall Budget Workshop for the Neighborhood Councils.

It will be held at the John Ferraro Building located at 111 N. Hope Street, Downtown Los Angeles. The meeting will be in the LADWP Auditorium located on A-level. Free parking will be provided.

At this Fall Budget Workshop, LADWP will present information about its future multi-year financial plans / budgets and its adopted budget for the current fiscal year. LADWP's current 2005-06 fiscal year began on July 1, 2005 and will end on June 30, 2006