

## Smaller councils favored

NoHo panel move may influence others

By Dan Laidman, Staff Writer

LA Daily News, Saturday, January 28, 2006

A North Hollywood neighborhood council has become the first to move formally toward breaking into smaller groups - a development that could encourage similar efforts elsewhere in the city. This month's vote by the Mid-Town North Hollywood Neighborhood Council would shrink its boundaries to allow for a total of three community groups to eventually sprout within its current limits. The council currently represents almost 69,000 people - significantly more than many of the city's 120 other councils, which get \$50,000 each, regardless of size.

"You've got different people from different areas fighting for the same amount of resources," said Diann Corral, treasurer of the council and a supporter of the split. "We just thought it made more sense for smaller neighborhood councils to get the maximum amount of services for our areas." "It would eat up two-thirds of our budget just to send out a newsletter monthly to everyone in our community," Corral said.

Greg Nelson, general manager of the city Department of Neighborhood Empowerment, said the effort could encourage such shifts in South and East Los Angeles, as well. "This would be setting a precedent and we're excited about it," said Nelson. DONE now must examine city rules to determine how a split would work. The boundary change also needs the approval of the Board of Neighborhood Commissioners.

And, as with most neighborhood council issues, the split has not come without some discontent. Some Mid-Town North Hollywood members, including the council's current president, object to the process. "It came down so quickly I don't believe anyone was prepared," said Cary Adams, the head of the council. Adams also worries that some areas may suffer under the proposed setup. The Mid-Town council would shrink to an area south of Burbank Boulevard, and Adams said there is no guarantee new councils would develop in the two areas to the north, especially the less-affluent area closer to the Burbank border. Leba Marquez, a board member from that area, also worries about her neighbors losing their voice. "I'm concerned that we had a viable system working that seemed to somehow disappear without community outreach," she said.

But Corral said the move to shrink the boundaries was properly agendized so those who follow council activities would know about it. And she said she believes people will come forward in the two areas to the north to create new councils. "I feel confident that it's going to go smoothly. There's strong leadership in each area," she said.

Councilwoman Wendy Greuel, who represents most of the area, said her office also would assist. "We will help fill that gap if there is one," she said. "I think the existing Mid-Town Neighborhood Council is committed to the entire community even if they do want to split it up into the three areas." Nelson, who was involved in the genesis of the neighborhood council system, said early advocates believed larger councils resembled small cities and could not effectively communicate with stakeholders. "My feeling is the ideal size would be so everything that was discussed at the meetings would be of interest to everyone in the area," he said.

Dan Laidman, (213) 978-0390, [dan.laidman@dailynews.com](mailto:dan.laidman@dailynews.com)