

ISSUES FOR ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATION

***CITY COMMISSIONS
AND
REGIONAL AND NEIGHBORHOOD ISSUES***

**CITY OF LOS ANGELES
CHARTER REFORM COMMISSION**

Wednesday, September 23, 1998

ISSUE TWO: WHAT CHANGES AND/OR ADDITIONS, IF ANY, SHOULD BE MADE TO THE COMMISSION'S RECOMMENDATIONS ON NEIGHBORHOOD COUNCILS?

REVIEW OF COMMISSION ACTIONS

- ✓ Create a Department of Neighborhoods, and mandate the creation of a citywide system of neighborhood councils, but leave to ordinance details concerning specific boundaries, specific powers of neighborhood councils, the selection method for governing boards, and the procedures by which neighborhood councils will provide input.
- ✓ Set criteria in the Charter for the system of neighborhood councils, including:
 - Boundaries should be set with respect to neighborhoods and not council districts
 - Neighborhood councils should be given an opportunity to provide input on issues that potentially affect their neighborhood or area residents, before such decisions are made.
- ✓ Mandate review of the Neighborhood Council system by a commission within 5 years of implementation.

During the Commission's discussion of neighborhood councils, some Commissioners favored creating neighborhood councils in more detail in the Charter. Other Commissioners have favored allowing neighborhood councils to develop by ordinance, and to reduce detail in the Charter. The Commission's decision, reflected above, was to create the framework of a neighborhood council system in the Charter, but to leave details, in most part, to be developed by ordinance or implementing regulations of the Department of Neighborhoods. Some Commissioners suggest augmenting the Commission's decision by adding more specifics into the Charter. Among the elements that could either be specified in the Charter, or left to ordinance, are the following:

- Number of Neighborhood Councils to be created
- Boundaries of Neighborhood Councils
- Specific Powers and Duties
- Selection method for Neighborhood Council membership
- Procedure by which Neighborhood Councils will provide input.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that the Charter retain flexibility for the neighborhood council system to be developed by ordinance. However, if the Commission feels that more Charter detail is necessary, staff recommends that the strongest case for inclusion involves the boundaries of neighborhood councils.

Using community planning areas as the basis for neighborhood councils would have the advantage of preventing long and possibly divisive debates about boundaries. This debate could slow down the creation of a system of neighborhood councils. The Director of Planning has indicated support for making neighborhood council boundaries coincide with community plan areas. He also confirms that some adjustment of the plan boundaries could be feasible to reduce the size of some of the larger planning areas.

Staff does not recommend adding other details to the Charter's framework for neighborhood councils, such as how neighborhood council members should be selected. A citywide neighborhood council system is new to the City. Staff recommends that the Charter leave flexibility for the system to be created, to evolve, and to be fashioned to fit public wishes in different part of the City.