

BOUNDARIES:

1. Use City Council districts.
2. Draw entirely new districts.
3. Use other existing districts.
4. Use existing districts, but modify their boundaries in order more accurately reflect community and neighborhood boundaries.

The use of existing districts would save time.

The use of Council districts would be supported by those who (1) believe that people identify more with Council districts than neighborhoods or other districts; and (2) are concerned about a single neighborhood being represented by more than one council member.

The use of Council districts would not be supported by those who (1) believe that people identify more with their neighborhoods and communities; (2) are concerned that Council district boundaries change at least every 10 years (next in 2001), and therefore would cause some people to be changed from one community to another; (3) believe that “government from the bottom up” means that the focus should be on the neighborhoods and not on the council members; and (4) believe that community empowerment must include giving the neighbors the ability to define their own boundaries.

The custom design of new districts was done in at least one city. City employees spent nearly a year canvassing neighborhoods and asking people where they thought their boundaries were. To the best of anyone’s knowledge, there doesn’t exist a complete list of city’s neighborhoods (certainly well over 100), or clear boundaries of the known neighborhoods.

Community planning districts were designed so long ago that there are few people who can clearly remember the process that was used, except that preserving communities of interest was primary concern, and there were originally 70 districts. No one can remember why the number was reduced to 35.

Other possible districts that divide the entire city include: police divisions, high school districts, and the service areas of the city’s libraries.

Assuming that each district would receive funding for offices, staff, equipment and other resources, the number of districts selected may be largely driven by budgetary limits.

If the number of funded districts is too large, the cost might become prohibitive. If the number is too

small, the people of the area may not feel connected with the district staff, and it may not be convenient for them to visit their local office. One possible “rule” is that no one should have to use a freeway to get to their local office.

The experience in other cities has been that if the selection of offices is done informally, it isn’t critical whether or not community boundaries overlap slightly. In one city, the boundaries in one area cross the city limits.

One Tier/Two Tiers:

Portland uses a two-tier system. The use of a similar system in Los Angeles has the benefits of (1) allowing every part of the city to be serviced by an office and their staff, and (2) permitting accurate cost estimates.

The problems with a single-tier system which identifies and funds neighborhood councils are (1) no one knows how many neighborhoods there are; (2) every part of the city is probably not within a neighborhood, or least might not be for a long time, and (3) estimating funding support would be extremely difficult.

Recommendation:

Announce that a top-tier of community councils will be created using community planning districts or other existing districts. Again, budgetary concerns and district size limitations will probably be the driving forces. Each of these community councils would have its own office and staff.

Make necessary obvious adjustments so that the districts are relatively equal in population.

Ask for public input to refine the boundaries. This could be done as the plan is being prepared for approval by the City Council, or afterwards when local leadership is being asked approach the City for recognition. There would be more public interest at the later date.

SELECTION OF LEADERS:

1. Formal election. Candidates qualify for the ballot and run for office like a City Council or Charter Commission candidate.
2. Appointment.
3. Self-selection. Stakeholders of the community or neighborhood determine their own way of selecting their leaders.

4. Some combination of 1-3.

A formal election (1) establishes an orderly process for electing leaders, and (2) might filter out those who aren't "serious" candidates for the position.

A formal election (1) would cost the city additional money to print ballots and conduct the election; (2) might discourage capable leaders from running as it did recently with the Charter Reform Commission elections, (3) would prevent a large number of people from running for office or voting because only registered voters of the area could participate, thereby making the system more exclusionary than inclusionary, and (4) might be the least effective way to ensure that the diverse interests of the community are represented.

Proponents of appointing the leaders argue that (1) this is the best way to ensure that the diverse interests of the area are represented, and (2) this makes it easier for policy decisions of the appointing authority to be carried out.

Opponents of appointment argue that (1) this just continues the status quo and is not "government from the bottom up," (2) appointees are often not able or encouraged to act independently from those who appointed them, and (3) it is not certain that the diversity will be represented effectively.

Self-selection, informal election, or caucus selection is supported by those who believe that (1) the public must be empowered with the ability to select their own leaders in whichever way they choose (as they do in St. Paul), (2) it is not possible to design a single system for the selection of leaders that will apply effectively in each area, and (3) the constant need for the leaders to be accountable to their constituents (all the stakeholders of their area), the need to maintain the credibility and power of their council, and the need to comply with terms of their agreement with the city, will be the best way to ensure that the diverse interests of the community are represented.

Recommendation:

Allow each community to select their own leaders in their own way. Ask those petitioning for city recognition and funding to detail how the leaders will be selected and how diversity will be ensured, in their petition.

In their petition, ask the the petitioners to detail which neighborhoods they plan to organize into neighborhood councils. These would receive no direct funding and have no offices, unless otherwise provided.

Once 60% of a community by population is organized into neighborhoods, represented by neighborhood councils, the leaders of the neighborhood councils would elect the leaders of the community council in order to ensure that an ownership interest in the entire system is rooted at the

neighborhood level.

CONGRESS OF NEIGHBORHOODS:

1. Charge the Office of Neighborhoods with organizing quarterly meetings of the leaders of the community councils so they can discuss issues of citywide concern.

Meeting quarterly may divert staff time from other duties. Planning for the next meeting might have to begin as soon as the last one ended. Community leaders may not want to meet that often, so an option would be to let the community councils decide when they want to meet.