

## COMMENT ON ARTICLE I

*The City Charter requires that the Plan set forth the goals and objectives of the Neighborhood Council system. The goals and objectives set forth in the Plan are based in part on provisions of the Charter itself and feedback received by the public. There was substantial public comment requesting that the Plan more clearly define the term “stakeholder”. There was also concern expressed that Neighborhood Councils not replace established homeowner, business and community organizations, but rather, serve to bring together said groups and other diverse interests within a community.*

### Article I

#### Goals and Objectives of the Neighborhood Council System

---

The goals and objectives of the Plan are to:

1. Promote more public participation in government;
2. Promote community input into the City’s decision-making process in order to make government more responsive to local needs;
3. Facilitate the delivery of City services to neighborhoods by helping to identify community needs and involving relevant City staff in achieving integrated problem-solving techniques with the Neighborhood Councils;
4. Ensure equal opportunity for all stakeholders in all communities to form and/or join Neighborhood Councils;

A stakeholder is defined as any individual who lives, works or owns property in a Neighborhood Council area. In addition, stakeholder status may be identified by participation in, among other things, educational institutions, religious institutions, community organizations or other non-profit organizations, block clubs, neighborhood associations, homeowners associations, apartment associations, condominium associations, resident associations, school/parent groups, faith based groups and organizations, senior groups and organizations, youth groups and organizations, chambers of commerce, business improvement districts, service organizations, park advisory boards, boys and girls clubs, cultural groups, environmental groups, codewatch, neighborhood watch, police advisory board groups, and/or redevelopment action boards.

5. Promote inclusiveness by representing the many diverse interests in communities and encouraging said diverse interests to work together in addressing community concerns; and
6. Promote and facilitate dialogue and collaboration among Neighborhood Councils in Los Angeles through collaboration on those issues of common concern to Neighborhood Councils and sharing resources and experiences.

## COMMENT ON ARTICLE II

*This part of the Plan explains that Neighborhood Councils are intended to be independent, self-governing and organized from within the community. The First Draft Plan suggested that Neighborhood Councils be incorporated as non-profit and/or tax-exempt entities. However, that proposal has been eliminated as a result of overwhelming public feedback. Under the recommended Plan, Neighborhood Councils will determine for themselves whether they wish to incorporate and/or obtain tax-exempt status. DONE will provide assistance in this regard upon request.*

### Article II

#### Desired Characteristics of Neighborhood Councils

---

**1. Organic Beginnings**

Community stakeholders shall organize and propose their own Neighborhood Councils so that they develop from the grassroots of the community.

**2. Inclusive Membership**

Neighborhood Councils shall be diverse, inclusive, and open to all stakeholders of the community.

**3. Transparent Operations**

Neighborhood Councils shall adopt fair and open procedures for the conduct of their business.

**4. Independent Entities**

DONE shall encourage Neighborhood Councils to be as independent, self-governing, and self-directed as possible. DONE shall assist Neighborhood Councils in exploring options including, but not limited to, tax-exempt status and/or non-profit incorporation to strengthen their independence. If a Neighborhood Council wishes to pursue these options, DONE shall provide ongoing technical assistance as requested by a Neighborhood Council. Tax-exempt status and/or non-profit incorporation will have no effect on a Neighborhood Council's eligibility for assistance, monetary or otherwise, from DONE.

## COMMENT ON ARTICLE III

*The issue of structure for Neighborhood Councils was the subject of substantial public comment with various points of view. Some have argued that the structure of all Neighborhood Councils should be the same citywide and established as part of the regulations of the Plan. Others emphasized the need for flexibility, contending that City Hall should not dictate how Neighborhood Councils will be organized or how they will function. In opting for the flexibility set forth in the Plan, the Commission was greatly influenced by the models of existing community councils (including but not limited to the 8th District Empowerment Congress, the South Robertson Neighborhoods Council, the Pacific Palisades Community Council, and others). These existing councils are organized differently, the selection of their governing bodies is not the same, and they operate in very different ways. Yet, each represents diverse community interests and is effective in providing a greater voice for the people in the respective neighborhoods they serve.*

*The Los Angeles Neighborhood Councils: An Option Report prepared by the League of Women Voters describes alternative types of structures for Neighborhood Councils, including how they could fit into a mandated citywide structure. The Commission's vision is that any formalized mandated citywide structure should not be dictated by City Hall. The Commission believes that Neighborhood Councils should be self empowered, self-organized, self-selected and self-directed with assistance and training from DONE, other City officials and agencies.*

*Essentially three different viewpoints were expressed concerning proposed boundaries for Neighborhood Councils. The First Draft Plan suggested a minimum size of 25,000 residents per area without any exceptions.*

- 1. In response to the First Draft Plan, some criticized the minimum size of 25,000 residents and a diverse range of non-residential stakeholders per Neighborhood Council area as too small. This view argues in favor of fewer numbers of Neighborhood Councils with a larger population size of 50,000-75,000 residents each. This would be equal to approximately 40-50 Neighborhood Councils encompassing larger areas and including a broader diversity of ethnic, socio-economic and other interests. Those who favor this approach believe that having more than 40 to 50 certified Neighborhood Councils will be unmanageable and/or will not receive sufficient resources.*
- 2. Another viewpoint, which had the most public support, favored a reduction or elimination of the minimum size requirement. This view is based on the perception that particular communities would be precluded from organizing a Neighborhood Council because there exists a residential population of less than 25,000 in a given area.*
- 3. Others support the DONE staff recommendation of a minimum size of 25,000 residents and a diverse range of non-residential stakeholders as a practical balance in achieving manageability over a citywide system of Neighborhood Councils. Those who prefer this option suggest that the Commission consider*

*providing criteria for exceptions to the size requirement and allowing those areas with less than 25,000 residents and a diverse range of non-residential stakeholders an opportunity to seek certification.*

*Research by DONE staff indicated that many of those who opposed the 25,000 minimum as "too large" did not actually know the correct population figures for the areas referenced. For example, at one public hearing, most speakers opposed the 25,000 minimum because they felt it would preclude their area from having a certified Neighborhood Council. Further research revealed that the population of the area (based on the boundaries proposed by speakers at the hearing) exceeded 41,000. In other parts of the City, there was substantial public opposition to the 25,000 minimum because it would preclude long-established communities such as Lake View Terrace, Shadow Hills, La Tuna Canyon and others from seeking certification. However, with the flexibility that the Plan now offers, these areas will have the opportunity to organize themselves as a Neighborhood Council.*

*In its final deliberations, the Commission believed that having a minimum size of 20,000 residents and a diverse range of non-residential stakeholders and including criteria for exception to the minimum size requirement would provide the maximum opportunity for smaller neighborhoods to organize and qualify for certification. Although it was and is difficult to formulate objective criteria for areas to seek certification under the 20,000 minimum, the Commission felt that some flexibility was necessary.*

## **Article III**

### **Certification of Neighborhood Councils**

---

1. **DONE responsibilities.** After the Neighborhood Council Plan is adopted, DONE shall:
  - (a) Announce and inform the public of the Neighborhood Council certification process citywide;
  - (b) Seek potential Neighborhood Council applicants actively throughout the City, giving emphasis to those areas and stakeholders with traditionally low rates of civic participation;
  - (c) Provide certification application materials in a timely manner to all stakeholders who request them;
  - (d) Facilitate and encourage collaboration among competing applicant groups and discussion on how to move forward on a unified certification application, if more than one application is submitted for a Neighborhood Council area;

- (e) Actively assist organizing activities in Neighborhood Council areas where leadership has not emerged; and
- (f) Provide technical assistance and dispute resolution services to applicants, as needed, to gain consensus on a unified certification application.

2. **Requirements for Certification Applications.** A certification application shall include the following:

- (a) Identification of Neighborhood Council boundaries in accordance with Article III, Section 3, and
- (b) A proposed mission statement, by-laws, system of financial accountability and code of ethics that meet the *Criteria for Responsible and Inclusive Community Representation* in accordance with Article III, Section 4.

3. **Establishment of Neighborhood Council Area Boundaries**

- (a) Any stakeholder group that wishes to apply for certification shall identify boundaries for their Neighborhood Council area. This process is designed to capture the spirit of community where it is strong, support community where needed, and leave open avenues for change in the future.
- (b) In accordance with the principles described below in subsection (c), Neighborhood Council applicants are encouraged to use:
  - (i) Census tracts to count resident population and as a reference in order to benefit from demographic information and the wide acceptance of census tracts as a basic geographic building block; and
  - (ii) The following non-exhaustive list of tangible symbols of a community or neighborhood:
    - Geographic features (natural geography such as rivers and hills)
    - Historical identity
    - City service and planning areas
    - Institutions such as schools, churches, or other commonly recognized community symbols
    - Physical features, especially landmarks (as well as streets and freeways)
- (c) **Principles for Identifying Neighborhood Council Boundaries:** The inaugural Neighborhood Council area boundary shall be the limits of the City of Los Angeles. An application for certification of a Neighborhood Council shall include a proposal for the establishment of new boundaries in accordance with the following principles:

- (i) Neighborhood Council areas will be comprised of a minimum of **20,000** residents and a diverse range of non-residential stakeholders. Areas that have less than **20,000** residents may be considered for certification providing they meet the following criteria:
  - (A) The proposed area is separated from adjacent communities by significant geographic or other features; or
  - (B) The proposed area is identified by name within any of the 36 adopted Community Plan Areas of the City Planning Department; or
  - (C) The proposed area represents an historic, identifiable neighborhood or community and includes local City service providers such as a public library, park or recreation center, fire or police station and a public school; and
  - (D) The certification application must satisfy all other requirements of the Plan, including but not limited to, reflecting a diversity of interests, which include non-residential stakeholders; and
  - (E) Notwithstanding the above, certification of a Neighborhood Council's proposed area that is comprised of less than 20,000 residents shall not be approved unless a finding is made that DONE will be able to provide the assistance, training, and resources as required in the Plan.
- (ii) Community stakeholders within an area shall collaborate in setting boundaries. DONE shall:
  - (A) Facilitate collaboration among stakeholders, and
  - (B) Assist applicants in making boundary determinations.
- (iii) Boundaries shall maintain historic and contemporary community and neighborhood boundaries to the maximum extent feasible.
- (iv) Neighborhood Council areas may be permitted to have overlapping boundaries where two or more Neighborhood Councils share use of neighboring commercial or public resources. No overlapping boundaries shall be permitted without the approval of all affected Neighborhood Councils and the Commission.

(c) **Process for Identifying Neighborhood Council Boundaries**

As part of their certification as a Neighborhood Council, applicants shall:

- (i) Describe the proposed boundaries and provide a rationale for the choice of boundaries;
- (ii) Identify stakeholders in the proposed area;
- (iii) Describe the processes used for outreach to stakeholders and involvement of stakeholders in determining proposed boundaries.

4. **Criteria for Responsible and Inclusive Community Representation**

An application for certification as a Neighborhood Council shall fulfill the *Criteria for Responsible and Inclusive Community Representation*. These criteria include the following elements:

- (a) **Mission Statement:** The Mission Statement shall be a clear, concise statement with the name of the organization, what it does, for whom and where, and be consistent with the goals and objectives stated in the Los Angeles City Charter for Neighborhood Councils.
- (b) **By-laws:** Neighborhood Councils shall draft by-laws with the assistance of DONE (upon request). The following information shall be included:
  - (i) Name of organization
  - (ii) Membership criteria
    - (A) The by-laws shall state that the Neighborhood Council membership is open to all stakeholders.
    - (B) The by-laws shall include a method for selecting the governing body that will reflect the diversity of stakeholders to the greatest extent feasible.
  - (iii) A list of offices of the governing body
  - (iv) Meeting procedures – These procedures shall include, at minimum:
    - (A) A requirement that Neighborhood Councils shall meet at least once per calendar quarter.
    - (B) Open Meeting Procedures – In addition to the requirements under State open meeting law, Neighborhood Councils shall at minimum: post notices in generally accepted public places. DONE shall assist Neighborhood Councils in identifying acceptable public places. In addition, a copy of notices for all meetings shall be provided to DONE, which shall provide notices to the City Clerk’s Office.
    - (C) A method of addressing grievances and resolving disputes within the Neighborhood Council.

(D) The establishment of a system through which the Neighborhood Council shall communicate with stakeholders on a regular basis and in a manner that assures that information is disseminated to Neighborhood Council stakeholders fairly.

(c) **System of Financial Accountability:** An application for Neighborhood Council certification shall include a description of a system of financial accountability, which shall include the following principles:

- (i) Neighborhood Councils shall keep a book of accounts according to Generally Accepted Accounting Principles for the type of entity established;
- (ii) Neighborhood Councils shall, if the City grants direct funding, submit their books to the appropriate City agencies for review. Refusal to submit their accounting books in a timely manner shall subject a Neighborhood Council to de-certification by the Board of Neighborhood Commission as defined in Article V, Section 4 of this Plan;
- (iii) At minimum, each Neighborhood Council shall discuss its finances at one regular business meeting each year; and
- (iv) Neighborhood Council books of accounts shall be open to all stakeholders of any Neighborhood Council.

(d) **Code of Ethics:** Neighborhood Council applicants, with the assistance of DONE, shall develop a code of ethics for the proposed Neighborhood Council, which include both a pledge and methodology for:

- (i) **Obeying the Law:** All applicable laws of federal, state and local government define the minimum ethical standard for Neighborhood Councils, their leaders and stakeholders.
- (ii) **Achieving High Standards:** These standards will include fair and open procedures for conducting business and a system for financial accountability of funds.

## COMMENT ON ARTICLE IV

*The First Draft Plan recommended that the General Manager of DONE certify Neighborhood Councils. In response to overwhelming public comment, the Commission changed the First Draft Plan provision outlining certification authorizing the Commission to hold public hearings and make final decisions on certification of Neighborhood Councils.*

### Article IV Certification Process

---

1. DONE shall review and make an evaluation of the certification application to determine if it:
  - (a) Identifies Neighborhood Council boundaries based on goals stated in Article III, Section 3;
  - (b) Demonstrates that it will be capable of creating a Neighborhood Council for its community that will follow the *Criteria for Responsible and Inclusive Community Representation* as provided in Article III, Section 4;
  - (c) Demonstrates collaboration with other stakeholder groups in the community, particularly those that have contacted DONE for certification materials, and a good faith effort to work with other stakeholder groups seeking certification within the same area;
  - (d) Works cooperatively with adjacent Neighborhood Councils to finalize boundaries, if applicable.
2. If DONE receives more than one application for certification in the same area, DONE shall notify all applicants in an effort to consolidate their applications into a unified application. Applicants shall have 30 days from the date of notification by DONE to develop a unified application. This time may be extended by DONE at the request of all certification applicants for said area. If no consensus is reached within the 30 days, DONE shall proceed to evaluate all remaining/pending applications.
3. DONE shall evaluate a certification application based on the above criteria and make a recommendation to the Commission within 60 days of receipt of the application. After receiving the recommendation of DONE, the Commission will hold a public hearing and take action on the certification application within 30 days. The time period may be extended upon mutual consent of the applicant and the Commission.

## **COMMENT ON ARTICLE V**

*The evaluation and success of Neighborhood Councils and the system through which they form will depend on the ability of Neighborhood Councils to assess themselves, grow, adapt and, in some instances, amend their initial certification application. This part of the Plan provides guidance on a process of determining the success of individual Neighborhood Councils, the adjustment of Neighborhood Council boundaries, for addressing complaints and problems with Neighborhood Councils, and for de-certification.*

*An important role of the Commission and DONE is to ensure that Neighborhood Councils comply with the Plan for a Citywide System of Neighborhood Councils. The preceding articles address steps needed to certify and comply with the Plan. This section addresses the possible ramifications for Neighborhood Councils if found in non-compliance with the Plan.*

### **Article V**

#### **Assessment, Boundary Adjustment, Complaints Concerning Neighborhood Councils and De-Certification**

---

##### **1. Self Assessment**

Each Neighborhood Council shall, with the assistance of DONE, survey its stakeholders on a periodic basis to assess the success of their organization in meeting applicable goals set forth in the Charter, the Goals and Objectives section of this plan, and the Neighborhood Council's own goals and objectives. Specific criteria for self-review shall be created by DONE in conjunction with each Neighborhood Council. The results of the self-review shall be made public and posted on DONE's website.

##### **2. Adjustment of Boundaries**

A Neighborhood Council may petition the Commission to adjust its boundaries. All such petitions shall remain in accordance with Article III, Section 3. Reasons for boundary adjustment may include, but are not limited to:

- (a) Including an uncertified adjacent community;
- (b) Incorporating new development projects;
- (c) Reconfiguring based on population decrease or increase;
- (d) Reducing size to increase effectiveness and efficiency.

Petitions shall be reviewed by DONE with a recommendation to the Commission within 30 days of receipt. Upon receipt of DONE's recommendation, the Commission shall approve or deny the petition within 30 days.

**3. Amendment of By-Laws**

Any Neighborhood Council that has amended its by-laws shall, within one week of adoption of the amendment, submit to DONE said amendment in writing, together with notices that were provided to Neighborhood Council stakeholders concerning the by-law amendment, and the minutes of any meetings at which the amendment was adopted. If DONE determines that the by-law amendment affects the ability of the Neighborhood Council to comply with the Criteria for Responsible and Inclusive Community Representation, it shall follow the procedures set forth in Section 5 of this Article.

**4. Complaints Concerning Neighborhood Councils**

Should DONE receive complaints of a violation of the *Criteria For Responsible and Inclusive Community Representation* by a Neighborhood Council, including but not limited to, a violation of open meeting procedures, a failure to comply with the diversity goals of this Plan and/or violations of the Code of Ethics, DONE shall notify the Neighborhood Council of these complaints and take steps to resolve the complaint with the Neighborhood Council. Efforts to achieve compliance with the *Criteria For Responsible and Inclusive Community Representation* shall be made by DONE prior to initiating an action to de-certify a Neighborhood Council due to a violation.

**5. De-Certification of a Neighborhood Council by the Board of Neighborhood Commissioners**

Before initiating de-certification of a certified Neighborhood Council for failure to comply with the *Criteria For Responsible and Inclusive Community Representation*, DONE shall first make efforts to seek voluntary compliance with the *Criteria* from a Neighborhood Council in accordance with Article III, Section 4. If DONE finds that efforts to encourage the Neighborhood Council to comply with the *Criteria For Responsible and Inclusive Community Representation* have failed, DONE may recommend to the Commission that the Neighborhood Council be de-certified. The Commission shall make a decision on the recommendation within 45 days of the submission of the recommendation to the Commission. DONE shall recommend de-certification of a Neighborhood Council if it finds that the Neighborhood Council has failed to demonstrate, to the satisfaction of DONE, the willingness or ability to comply with the *Criteria For Responsible and Inclusive Community Representation*.

**6. De-Certification of a Neighborhood Council – Self Initiated**

A Neighborhood Council may petition to the Commission for de-certification. A de-certification application shall include the following:

- (a) Evidence of the processes used for outreach to stakeholders and the involvement of stakeholders in the decision to de-certify;
- (b) Evidence that stakeholders in the Neighborhood Council area have been surveyed on de-certification;

- (c) Evidence that the Neighborhood Council governing body has widely publicized its application for de-certification in its Neighborhood Council area;
- (d) Evidence that the Neighborhood Council governing body has given a 21 day public notice and agendized the de-certification application at a duly noticed regular meeting of the Neighborhood Council governing body; and
- (e) Evidence that  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the governing body consents to the de-certification of a Neighborhood Council.

## **COMMENT ON ARTICLE VI**

*Although the Los Angeles Administrative Code sets forth the duties and responsibilities of DONE, there was substantial public demand for the Plan to clearly set forth the specific types of assistance that will be provided to those involved in organizing and operating Neighborhood Councils. The items set forth in the Plan include duties required by Ordinance and other assistance in response to public comment. The intent is for DONE to provide resources, education, training, outreach and other assistance – not for DONE to be another layer of bureaucracy separating the public from City departments. It is envisioned that Neighborhood Councils will communicate directly with the City Council, City Council committees, City boards and commissions on issues of concern.*

*In addition, a paramount concern expressed in Article IX of the Charter and in public comment heard by the Commission, is that all areas of the City have an equal opportunity to form Neighborhood Councils. DONE's responsibilities, as stated in this Article, include a focus on areas of the City that historically have not organized or been involved in the civic process and to assist those communities in organizing.*

### **Article VI**

#### **Responsibilities of the Department of Neighborhood Empowerment**

---

As defined by the Los Angeles Administrative Code, DONE shall:

1. Implement and oversee compliance with City ordinances and regulations relating to a system of Neighborhood Councils.
2. Assist neighborhoods and Neighborhood Councils with public education, outreach and training.
3. Assist neighborhoods in preparing petitions for recognition or certification, identifying boundaries that minimize the division of communities and organizing themselves in accordance with the Plan.
4. Help Neighborhood Councils meet together on a citywide basis and facilitate these meetings if and when requested to do so by recognized Neighborhood Councils.
5. Assist Neighborhood Councils with the election or selection of their governing body.
6. Facilitate the sharing of resources, including office space, equipment and other forms of support, and assist in communication with stakeholders and Neighborhood Councils.

7. Arrange training for Neighborhood Councils, such as training in leadership, cultural awareness, dispute mediation, civics, communications, equipment utilization and any other training necessary to achieve the goals set forth in Section 22.801 of the administrative code.
8. Create and maintain an internal and external information and communication network, including a citywide database of neighborhood organizations and similar information, that will be available for public use.
9. Help coordinate the relationships between existing and newly created advisory committees and Neighborhood Councils.
10. Ensure operation of the Early Notification System.
11. Facilitate meetings of the Congress of Neighborhood Councils upon request from a majority of certified Neighborhood Councils. To facilitate this, DONE shall poll all certified Neighborhood Councils bi-annually to determine if a majority of certified Neighborhood Councils request the convening of a Congress of Neighborhood Councils, consistent with Charter Section 901(c).
12. Provide operational support subject to available funding for, but not limited to, the following:
  - Meeting and office space
  - Office equipment
  - Mail and communication
13. **Fund Projects/Special Needs.** If sufficient funding is allocated to DONE for community projects or special needs, DONE may fund projects or special needs identified by certified Neighborhood Councils based on specific criteria and processes to be determined by DONE and approved by the Commission.
14. **Assure Equal Opportunity to Form and Develop Neighborhood Councils.** DONE shall aid groups and stakeholders seeking Neighborhood Council certification by:
  - (a) Providing targeted assistance to stakeholders and areas of the City with traditionally lower rates of participation, subject to resource availability, as follows:
    - (i) Assistance with mitigating barriers to participation, such as the need for:
      - translation services
      - childcare services
    - (ii) Capacity-building training in the form of
      - community organizing
      - leadership development

- (b) Helping communities understand the process and procedures for establishing a Neighborhood Council;
- (c) Providing guidance and training to aid in the development of the certification proposal; and
- (d) Identifying opportunities for collaboration between groups and stakeholders interested in certification.

## 15. Review and Evaluation of Neighborhood Council System

- (a) **Needs Assessment:** Within one year of the final approval of the Neighborhood Council Plan and at least every 3 years subsequent to initial approval, DONE shall present a report to the Commission regarding the size and geographic scope of the Neighborhood Council Areas, the economic and demographic conditions of areas without Neighborhood Councils, and anticipated needs for targeted technical assistance to areas that face obstacles in organizing Neighborhood Councils. Based on this report, the Commission may recommend changes to the Neighborhood Council Plan Ordinance to the Mayor and City Council, and reassess the adequacy of resources available for Neighborhood Council organization.
- (b) **Boundaries Assessment:** DONE shall assess boundaries on a periodic basis to ensure that adjacent Neighborhood Councils are not excluding small areas between them.

## COMMENT ON ARTICLE VII

*The City Charter requires that the Plan establish procedures for an “Early Warning System” by which Neighborhood Councils will receive notice and have the opportunity to provide comment concerning issues before decisions are made by the City Council, City Council committees, City boards and commissions. The Plan goes beyond the traditional form of postal communication by establishing a computer-based system that will allow for electronic notification and feedback.*

*Neighborhood Councils will be provided access to a computer and the internet for more immediate notice of matters pending before City decision-making bodies and give Neighborhood Councils a greater opportunity to voice their concerns before decisions are made.*

*Both the Charter provision and the Plan’s proposed regulations concerning the Early Notification System (ENS) procedures elicited comments expressing conflicting concerns. City officials have expressed concern that the ENS not cause delays in decisions, particularly on urgent matters. Public comment has almost uniformly focused on the difficulty of a Neighborhood Council becoming informed and providing feedback within a short period of time. The reality is that with few exceptions involving emergency actions, virtually all decisions made by the City Council, its committees, City boards and commissions are adopted after undergoing substantial review and analysis by City staff. In the case of City Council actions, almost all matters are first referred to a City Council committee for recommendation. Since the City Charter and the Plan require that Neighborhood Councils have the opportunity to receive notice “as soon as practical”, it is envisioned that the ENS will provide immediate notice of matters as they make their way through the public process with the goal of affording Neighborhood Councils sufficient time to obtain all relevant information, hold discussions with their membership and governing bodies and then, if desired, provide comment before decisions are made.*

*It is also expected that the Plan will help change the process by which decisions are made, particularly in affected communities. For example, a City department contemplating a project in a particular area will frequently elicit the feedback of the local City Council member and/or Mayor’s Office very early in the process. It is expected that City departments will now actively seek to provide information and get feedback from a certified Neighborhood Council at that same stage. This would provide the improved connection between communities and City government.*

## **Article VII**

### **Early Notification System Procedures**

---

DONE shall create an Early Notification System (ENS) in accordance with City Charter Section 907. The ENS will supplement, not replace, current state and local law regarding public notification. Any Neighborhood Council may still request notification by mail. The ENS will operate according to the following procedures:

1. All certified Neighborhood Councils shall be provided access to a computer and to the Internet. DONE shall ensure that certified Neighborhood Councils receive any necessary technical training.
2. The City's Information Technology Agency (ITA) shall develop an ENS website that shall be the repository for the information being made available to Neighborhood Councils by City Council, City Council committees, and City boards and commissions.
3. Certified Neighborhood Councils shall be able to access the website or subscribe to receive electronic mail notifications regarding updates to the information on the ENS website.
4. Information from City Council, City Council committees and City boards and Commissions shall be provided to certified Neighborhood Councils as soon as practical so that certified Neighborhood Councils may have a reasonable opportunity to provide comment before decisions are made. Notification of matters to be considered by the City Council and City Council Committees shall be made available to certified Neighborhood Councils by the City Clerk through the City Council's Referral Memoranda or other similar system. Notification of matters to be considered by City boards and commissions shall be made available to certified Neighborhood Councils by such boards and commissions.
5. Certified Neighborhood Councils shall be able to provide comment and feedback electronically to City Council, City Council committees, and City boards and commissions via the ENS. All comments from certified Neighborhood Councils by electronic mail shall be printed and placed into the public record. Certified Neighborhood Councils may also provide comment and feedback by mail, facsimile and/or testimony in person.
6. City Council, City Council committees, boards and commissions will designate a representative or representatives to coordinate and facilitate implementation of the ENS and communications with certified Neighborhood Councils.
7. DONE shall provide education, guidance and assistance to certified Neighborhood Councils in developing additional strategies for providing comment and feedback to City Council, City Council committees, and City boards and commissions.
8. DONE, at its discretion, may coordinate additional information for distribution through the ENS from entities public or private, other than those specified in the

Charter provided that they are subject to the same regulations and requirements as stated above.

9. The time frame for the implementation of the ENS Procedures shall be as follows:
  - (a) Upon City Council approval of a Plan for a Citywide System of Neighborhood Councils and City Council authorization of the 2001/2002 budget for DONE, ITA will initiate development of the ENS website. The time frame for website development and implementation is dependent upon authorized budget allocations and will be determined upon adoption of the DONE 2001/2002 budget.
  - (b) A certified Neighborhood Council shall receive access to a computer and to the Internet within 45 days of its certification as a Neighborhood Council.