

To: Elected Charter Reform Commissioners  
From: Greg Nelson 213.473.5820  
Re: Neighborhood Councils

Following Monday night's meeting, Councilman Wachs and I discussed the issue. The single concern that he has with the direction of events is one word -- but it's one big word.

His concern is that the tactic of pitting a formally-elected system of community councils versus a informally-elected system of neighborhood councils. He feels strongly that the voters shouldn't be limited to having to choose because one is a proposal to change that part of the system that determines who makes decisions, and the other proposes to create a new system that determines who influences the decision-making. One decentralizes decision-making, and the other empowers neighborhoods. The two compliment each other.

The current plan appears to be calling for the election of seven members at large from districts as large as city council districts, which would be 250,000 people and growing. That's hardly anything that could be called "neighborhood councils." That's the size of many of the cities that are nearby Los Angeles. Glendale has "only" 200,000 residents. Pasadena's population is 137,000. And we don't think of them as neighborhoods. We would hate to see the concept of neighborhood empowerment abandoned.

Therefore, Joel and I are trying to determine which commissioners are truly wed to maintaining the word "instead" in the proposal, and how many are open to or desirous of allowing the voters the choice of having both systems, as they have in the other cities that have become models for successful neighborhood empowerment.