

Date: June 29, 2005
To: Neighborhood Council Leaders
From: Greg Nelson, General Manager
Subject: CONGRESS OPINION SURVEY RESULTS

CONGRESS OPINION SURVEY RESULTS

At the June 25, 2005 Congress of Neighborhoods, we offered attendees the opportunity to respond to several questions on a survey that we regularly provide. The number of returns was very low this time, probably because we accidentally made it too difficult to return the survey.

1. Were you an active part of a group in trying to influence governmental decision-making or improving your neighborhood before you got involved in Neighborhood Councils?

55% (12) = Yes

45% (10) = No

2. The state's Brown Act (the "open meetings law") applies to Neighborhood Councils, and the City Charter requires that Neighborhood Councils do their business in an open and fair manner. There is a state bill that proposes to exempt some Neighborhood Council activities from the law. Which best reflects your feelings about the law?

30% (6) Keep it the way it is. Don't touch a word of it.

20% (3) Exempt the Neighborhood Councils from it totally.

50% (10) Change or eliminate certain parts that apply to NCs.

1% (3) Don't Know/No Opinion

3. Are we better off or worse off with Neighborhood Councils?

69% (18) Better

0% (0) Worse

12% (3) Same

19% (5) Don't Know/No Opinion

4. Are you being offered the training you feel you need?

38% (8) = Yes

24% (5) = No

38% (8) = Don't Know/No Opinion

5. Have you attended any of our training sessions at the Congress or through our Empowerment Academy?

64% (14) = Yes
36% (8) = No

6. Is this the first Congress you've attended?

50% (11) = Yes
50% (11) = No

7. There is a proposal that would require the City Council to create an official Council file, and refer it to committee, if a Neighborhood Council passes a motion suggesting that the City Council discuss a specific regional or citywide issue. How do you feel about this idea?

64% (14) Go for it!
10% (2) Forget it!
10% (2) Depends
20% (4) Don't Know/No Opinion

8. Do you think that Neighborhood Councils are ready to meet together as a citywide Congress or Senate of Neighborhoods and, through their representatives, discuss and take positions on key issues?

66% (12) = Yes
17% (3) = No
17% (3) = Don't Know/No Opinion

9. Can you give a letter grade, like in school, to:

Department of Neighborhood Empowerment.	B-
Board of Neighborhood Commissioners.	C+
City Council.	B-
Your Neighborhood Council.	B

The following are the comments that were written on the surveys:

[Regarding the question about how to improve the training program:](#)

“There should be a general site on the Internet for information about training sessions.” (Response: There is. Our website is www.LACityNeighborhoods.com and if you click on Training you'll find what you need.)

"Training classes should be closer to me." (Response: We used to provide training just at the Congress. A year ago, we shifted most of the training to our new Empowerment Academy which provides most of the classes at various locations around the city so that nobody has to travel far.)

"Community Youth Groups." (Response: You had to have been impressed with the two workshops at the Congress that were attended by more than 100 youths. This is just the beginning.)

"Writing correct and comprehensive bylaws." (Response: We've learned a lot since those first Neighborhood Councils wrote their bylaws. Soon you will be seeing an increase in the help that we will be providing to the Neighborhood Councils in improving their bylaws. This would also be something that Neighborhood Councils could help each other do – share their best practices and experiences.)

Regarding the answer to one question, which offered as the two choices "Go for it!" and "Forget It!" instead of "Yes" and "No":

"Come on ... little professionalism." (Response: At our department, we try and do everything in an exceptional way, keeping in mind that our goal is to increase public participation in government. That often involves thinking out of the box, not doing things the way everyone before us has done it, and, in the process, redefining what professionalism is.)

"Outreach." (Response: This will be a big area for us in the months to come. In the meantime, our website includes the transcripts from eight different workshops that have been presented at the Congress of Neighborhoods regarding outreach. To view them, go to our website, click on Training>Workshop Transcripts, or [click here](#).)

"Political strategy." (Response: Many of our classes have included training on political strategy, but we are anxious to design a classes that is very specifically on point and very blunt.)

Regarding the question about which things, if any, you'd like Neighborhood Councils to be required to do:

"Attend ethics training class." (Response: We're going to be making it easier for board members to understand the ethics rules, but if it were a requirement to attend the classes, would that mean that we'd have to suspend an NC's ability to conduct business until all board members took the training?)

"Attend a mandatory class about city departments and their work." (Response: We're also going to provide more information on this.)

“Attend mandatory classes on the Brown Act and the Community Impact Statement.” (Response: We’re going to make it easier for board members to learn about these laws and programs too, but if these too are to be mandatory, how long will it take each board member to attend each of the required training sessions?)

“Neighborhood Councils should adhere to the same requirements as the City in regards to elections.” (Response: The City Charter expressly guarantees a Neighborhood Council the ability to determine its own way of selecting or electing its leaders. The Charter reform commissioners felt that “one size couldn’t fit all. And there is a question about how many people would be willing to hire those new bureaucrats to enforce those laws.)

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