

Valley Alliance of Neighborhood Councils

VANC

34 San Fernando Valley Neighborhood Councils

Established March 03, 2003 by Jill Banks Barad-Hopkins

Thursday, February 8, 2024 6:30-9:00p.m.

Via zoom: Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/98759241651>

Recording of this meeting can be found at www.VANC34.ORG

Note: VANC is an independent Alliance and is not required to follow the Brown Act. We are able to prevent individuals from participating in VANC meetings if they are disruptive, or sufficiently unrelated to VANC business.

Note: To be added to the email list, send your information to www.VANC34.org

HOUSING ELEMENT UPDATE by Maria Kalban of United Neighbors Yes, R1 is exempt!

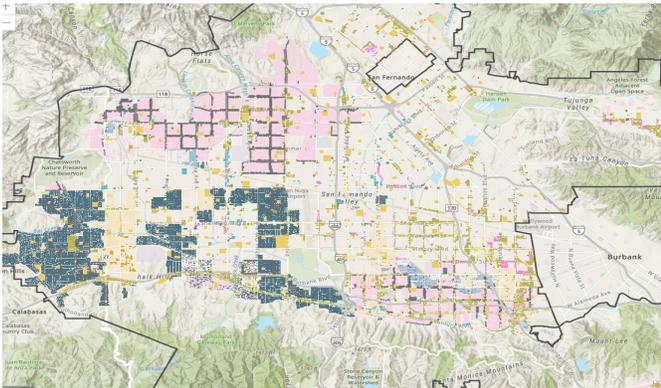
Reminder: VANC meetings are to discuss various topics so that you can educate your NC for further discussion and possible vote

Reminder: VANC agenda is posted at www.VANC34.ORG

Zoom attendees, please identify your NC along with your first name

AGENDA

- Welcome and Introductions:** Linda Gravani, chair VANC34.chair@gmail.com
- Guest Speaker – REMEMBER THIS?



Housing Element Update by United Neighbors, Maria Kalban.....

Yes, R1 is exempt! R1 Zones (Single Family) are **EXEMPT from any Overlays or rezoning** – NEW maps will be released this month. Congratulations to all who participated in voicing concerns to our elected officials, they heard us.

3. **PLANNING DEPT PROPOSAL AN INCREASE IN ALLOWABLE construction noise and vibration** than what is allowed by CEQA. No council file – **comments (until 19Feb2024) - should be sent to: Mindy.nguyen@lacity.org** Sherman Oaks NC forwarded the following: *“Sherman Oaks NC opposes the proposed update to the CEQA Thresholds and Methodology that would allow an increase in construction noise level and construction vibrations because the new thresholds are intended to better suited to the City’s urban nature. The impacts of these reductions of CEQA protections are unknown and the reasons behind the proposed changes are unclear.*

4. Qualified Candidates: 2 minutes no discussion

5. **BONC Commissioners – Keren Waters**, North Valley keren.waters@lacity.org
– **Len Shaffer**, South Valley

6. Saturday, Feb 3,2024 The Los Angeles Neighborhood Council Coalition (LANCC) met to discuss **CF23-1027**. See Hot Topics #2 for the DONE report and Hot Topics #1 for LANCC’s Concerns. Their recommendation was to forward a letter to the Ad Hoc Committee on City Governance Reform (the “Committee”) and copy all Councilmembers and the Mayor’s office and, for NCs to file a Community Impact Statement on CF23-1027 with those concerns.

7. **DONE:** Interim General Manager Vanessa Serrano or designee -

8. **Van Nuys City Hall has reopened for City Council Meetings, 1st Friday of Odd numbered months.**

9. Budget Advocates – Update www.budgetadvocates.org

SAVE THE DATE: Saturday 15JUN2024 8am IN PERSON at City Hall

10. **Congrats to Joanne D’Antonio** the CD2 representative at Community Forest Advisory Committee. Cd2cfac@gmail.com [Community Forest Advisory Committee | Department of Public Works \(lacity.gov\)](http://lacity.gov/CommunityForestAdvisoryCommittee)

11. **Pending from last month: Tarzana NC’s solution for catchall funding items.**

Resolved: The XXX Board adopts the recommendation of the Executive Committee to approve the payment of ongoing expenses as follows: For the fiscal year 2023-2024, the XXX authorizes its Treasurer or other designee to pay previously budgeted recurring monthly or periodic expenses, in small amounts, defined as those not to exceed \$75/day for each item and expense classification category. These expenses include, but are not limited to, supplies, copies and postage for committees, Board and committee meetings, officers, and committee chairperson expenses etc., and refreshments for meetings (other than Board meetings) etc. The recurring expenses are AppleOne, or other temporary staffing agencies for preparation of minutes or other clerical functions not to exceed ("NTE") \$400/meeting, Net Atlantic or other such company for mailing list maintenance and distribution NTE \$40/month and The Web Corner or other such company for web site hosting and maintenance NTE \$150 for each month’s services and the purchase of food and refreshments for Board meetings from any vendors NTE \$350 per meeting.

12. **Items from the floor:**

13. **NC Anniversaries: CONGRATULATIONS!**

21 years North Hills West

14. THANK YOU for all **you do** for your communities and the city of Los Angeles and I appreciate your participation in VANC!

MARK YOUR CALENDAR
VANC VIRTUAL Meeting Thursday March 14, 2024

SepulvedaTransit.com / <https://www.metro.net/projects/sepulvedacorridor/>

Yusef K. Robb, Chief Strategist tk/Communications
www.tkCommunicationsLLC.com

*PlanCheck 10AM 2nd Saturday of the month, details www.plancheckncla.com
Educate yourself on City Planning and Land Use issues.

*LADWP MOU 1ST Saturday of the month, details at:
<https://www.ladwpnews.com/dwp-nc-mou-and-advocacy-committee-meetings/>

HOT TOPICS For February 8, 2024

1. Saturday, Feb 3, 2024 The Los Angeles Neighborhood Council Coalition (LANCC) met to discuss **CF23-1027** Their concerns are below:
 - a) Why all NCs and those involved in the NC system were not actively solicited to contribute input to such report BEFORE it was submitted to the Committee;
 - b) Why DONE would not have immediately requested that the Committee approach NCs directly or, at a very minimum, reached out for their input;
 - c) Furthermore that, while the report was requested by the Committee from DONE, why DONE and the report makes multiple reference to the collaborative approach of the NCs, would submit a report on Section IX of the City Charter without the basic courtesy of reaching out to the NCs and to BONC if only to advise them even if not obtaining their input;
 - d) Why the city Council would ask the Department designated to serve the interests of the NCs and their stakeholders instead of request input from the NCs and stakeholders directly; and
 - e) While Ms. Serrano made valid suggestions within the report, the broader input of those who have worked in the system for decades appears to have deliberately excluded including but not limited to the fact that other portions of the Charter require overhaul to better serve the needs of the NCs, specifically on interactions with the City Attorney, the City Clerk, General Services and others.

2. DEPARTMENT OF NEIGHBORHOOD EMPOWERMENT RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CHARTER AMENDMENTS; **CF 23-1027**

On December 12, 2023 the Los Angeles City Council approved a motion requesting that the Department of Neighborhood Empowerment, among other departments, report on recommendations for identifying and prioritizing sections in the Charter that would benefit from reform to modernize the City's organizational infrastructure and/or support more strategic Citywide policies.

Background:

The history of Neighborhood Councils (NCs) in Los Angeles is rooted in the late 1990s when the City responded to residents' growing desire for increased community participation and reduced centralized control. This led to the establishment of the Department of Neighborhood Empowerment (DONE) in 1999. The City Charter played a crucial role in creating a framework for the innovative Neighborhood Council system, introducing advisory councils in specific neighborhoods. The Charter recognized the importance of local empowerment and sought to decentralize decision-making, allowing communities to have a direct say in local governance. The establishment of Neighborhood Councils marked a significant step towards fostering civic engagement, collaboration, and responsiveness to the diverse needs of Los Angeles neighborhoods, as outlined in the City Charter's commitment to empowering local communities.

Collaborating closely with the Board of Neighborhood Commissioners, DONE ensures inclusivity, transparency, and responsiveness to the unique needs of each neighborhood, remaining a key component of Los Angeles' innovative approach to local governance.

In the present day, the collaboration between the Neighborhood Council system, the Department of Neighborhood Empowerment, and the Board of Neighborhood Commissioners continues to evolve. These councils actively engage with communities, influence local policies, and contribute to tangible impacts. The Department of Neighborhood Empowerment remains dedicated to fostering active civic participation and empowering residents to directly impact their communities.

As we transition to the next phase of our Department, it is essential to consider recommendations that align with the current needs of the Neighborhood Council (NC) system. Notably, the City Charter has remained unchanged since its last amendment in 1999. Therefore, incorporating these recommendations becomes imperative to ensure that our Department evolves effectively and remains responsive to the dynamic requirements of the NC system in the present day.

Section 900 - Purpose

Recommendation: Clarify and strengthen the language around the purpose of empowerment. Emphasize inclusivity, community engagement, and the promotion of local democracy. Align the purpose with contemporary challenges and opportunities.

Justification: *This recommendation advocates for clarifying and strengthening the language around the purpose of neighborhood empowerment, emphasizing inclusivity, community engagement, and the promotion of local democracy. By changing the term "citizen" participation to "civic" participation, the intention is to foster a more inclusive environment that recognizes and embraces the diversity of individuals contributing to community development. This adjustment acknowledges that participation in local governance extends beyond citizenship, ensuring that stakeholders, regardless of their status, are actively encouraged to engage in the democratic process. The call to align the purpose with contemporary challenges and opportunities reflects the dynamic nature of communities, emphasizing the need to address evolving needs and embrace innovative approaches to neighborhood empowerment. In essence, this recommendation seeks to create a more inclusive, community-driven, and responsive framework for neighborhood empowerment that reflects the diverse and changing demographics of the city.*

Section 901 - Department of Neighborhood Empowerment

Recommendation: Enhance the role and resources of the Department to better support neighborhood councils. This includes increased staffing, streamlined processes, and improved coordination with other city departments to facilitate smoother implementation of neighborhood empowerment initiatives.

Justification: *The recommendation aims to enhance the Department of Neighborhood Empowerment's support for neighborhood councils through various strategies. This includes increasing staffing, streamlining processes, and improving coordination with other city departments. Additionally, there is a focus on outreach and inclusivity,*

suggesting targeted strategies to engage underrepresented communities in the Neighborhood Council formation process. The proposal also includes expanding training programs, facilitating resource sharing, implementing regular assessment systems, exploring innovative communication channels, and conducting periodic reviews of duties to ensure relevance and effectiveness. These comprehensive recommendations aim to strengthen neighborhood empowerment initiatives and adapt to evolving community needs.

Section 903 - General Manager

Recommendation: Define the qualifications and expectations for the General Manager. Encourage the appointment of individuals with a strong background in community development, leadership, a demonstrated commitment to community empowerment, and a comprehensive understanding of the infrastructure and workings of the Neighborhood Council system. Consider mechanisms to involve community stakeholders in the selection process, such as seeking input from Neighborhood Councils, to enhance community representation and confidence.

Justification: *The recommendations focus on optimizing the role of the General Manager within the Department of Neighborhood Empowerment. They propose clearly defining qualifications, emphasizing community development, leadership, and commitment to empowerment. To ensure inclusivity, an open appointment process involving community input, especially from Neighborhood Councils, is encouraged. The suggestions include expanding the General Manager's responsibilities for community engagement through initiatives like town hall meetings and forums. Ongoing professional development and training programs are recommended, emphasizing community development and collaboration with Neighborhood Councils. To enhance accountability, this recommendation advocates for clear performance metrics transparently shared with the public. Additional recommendations include encouraging staff diversity, fostering collaborative decision-making, engaging in strategic planning and innovation, establishing regular communication channels with Neighborhood Councils, emphasizing community-driven decision-making, and implementing a continuous improvement framework within DONE.*

Section 909 - Annual City Budget Priorities

Recommendation: Enhance the involvement of Neighborhood Councils in the annual city budgeting process. Facilitate meaningful participation, prioritize community-driven projects, and establish mechanisms for transparent budget allocation. Further study of a possible Charter amendment is recommended to determine the best method to reach meaningful participation from all Neighborhood Councils, with an emphasis on Neighborhood Councils in communities of low civic-participation.

Justification: *This recommendation advocates for enhancing the involvement of Neighborhood Councils in the annual city budgeting process, reflecting a commitment to inclusivity, community-driven initiatives, and transparent governance. By facilitating meaningful participation, it aims to prioritize community-driven projects and ensure that budget allocation aligns with the diverse needs of neighborhoods. The call for a further study on a possible Charter amendment demonstrates a proactive approach to exploring mechanisms that would foster meaningful participation from all Neighborhood Councils, with a specific emphasis on those in communities of great need. This reflects an awareness of the unique challenges and needs in different communities, acknowledging the importance of tailoring strategies to ensure equitable representation and engagement. Overall, this recommendation seeks to strengthen the democratic process by actively involving Neighborhood Councils in budget decisions, fostering community-driven priorities, and promoting transparency in the allocation of resources.*

Section 910 - Monitoring of City Services

Recommendation: Strengthen the role of Neighborhood Councils in monitoring city services. Establish mechanisms for regular feedback, reporting, and collaboration with relevant city departments to address service gaps and improve responsiveness.

Justification: *This recommendation underscores the importance of empowering Neighborhood Councils by enhancing their role in monitoring city services, reflecting a commitment to localized governance and community engagement. By establishing mechanisms for regular feedback, reporting, and collaboration with relevant city departments, the recommendation seeks to create a more responsive and accountable system. This approach not only allows Neighborhood Councils to actively participate in shaping local policies but also ensures that community needs are accurately identified and addressed. Strengthening the role of Neighborhood Councils in monitoring city services promotes transparency, encourages civic participation, and fosters a sense of community responsibility. Ultimately, this recommendation aligns with the principles of promoting collaboration between communities and city departments to enhance the quality and effectiveness of services tailored to the unique needs of each neighborhood.*

Section 911 - Appropriation

Recommendation: Explore the feasibility of establishing an independent budgeting process for the Department of Neighborhood Empowerment, as is currently being discussed for the Ethics Department under CF 23-1010. This proposition is rooted in the provisions outlined in sections 900 and 901 of the charter, which entrust the department with the crucial responsibility of aiding Neighborhood Councils in fostering greater responsiveness of local government to community needs.

Justification: *By developing an independent budgeting process for the Department of Neighborhood Empowerment, the City Council can enhance the department's capacity to fulfill its mandate effectively and ensure that resources are allocated in a manner that prioritizes and addresses the unique requirements of diverse communities within Los Angeles. This initiative aligns with the spirit of community empowerment and collaborative governance, fostering a more responsive and inclusive local government.*

Section 1001.a. - Exemptions

Recommendation: Recommend the inclusion of exempt, full-time positions within the Department of Neighborhood Empowerment as categorically exempt from Charter Section 1000 - Civil Service provisions. Currently, these positions (Project Assistants, Project Coordinators, Senior Project Coordinators, and Principal Project Coordinators) are designated as exempt under Section 1001.a.18 as Officers of Election, which is the most fitting category to describe the nature of their work in supporting the bi-annual Neighborhood Council elections.

Justification: *As part of a comprehensive review of the Charter, it would be highly advantageous to independently classify and categorize these positions based on the full scope of their responsibilities in supporting the Neighborhood Council System. These exempt positions play a crucial role in ensuring government accountability to the communities they serve. By categorizing them independently, the City Council can better acknowledge and address the unique functions these positions fulfill, fostering a more streamlined and efficient organizational structure that aligns with the department's overarching goals of empowerment and responsiveness.*

Conclusion

While these are our recommendations, which we believe will bring the Charter into alignment with current needs, we feel it is beneficial to get Neighborhood Council feedback and have their opinions heard. Engaging Neighborhood Councils in the process ensures that their unique perspectives and insights are considered, enhancing the inclusivity and relevance of the proposed changes. These recommendations collectively aim to strengthen the framework of neighborhood empowerment, fostering a more collaborative, transparent, and impactful relationship between communities and local government. Implementation of these suggestions, with input from Neighborhood Councils, will contribute to the overall success of the Department of Neighborhood Empowerment and enhance the vibrancy of Neighborhood Councils within the city. This collaborative approach reflects our commitment to democratic governance and active community participation, aligning with the principles of transparency and responsiveness in local decision-making.

Respectfully,
Vanessa Serrano, Interim General Manager
Department of Neighborhood Empowerment

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3. City Charter Sections for Neighborhood Councils:

L.A.City Charter Sec. 907 Early Warning System

“establish procedures for receiving input from neighborhood councils prior to decision by the City Council, City Council Committees and boards and commissions.”

- Go to: LACity.gov/government
 - Go to: Subscribe to Agenda Notifications
 - Go to: Select the Council, Committees, Boards and Commissions
- You want to monitor. Have you committee members monitor along with your stakeholders.
Forward your own public comments along with your authorized Community Impact Statements As Soon As Possible

L.A.City Charter Sec. 909. Annual City Budget Priorities.

Each neighborhood council may present to the Mayor and Council an annual list of priorities for the City budget. The Mayor shall inform certified neighborhood councils of the deadline for submission so that the input may be considered in a timely fashion.

See The Budget Advocates White Paper reports

L.A.City Charter Sec. 910 Monitoring of City Services

“Neighborhood councils shall monitor the delivery of City Services in their respective areas”

Is your NC advising your Council Member on what services you need?