

EMPOWER LA

The Los Angeles Department of

NEIGHBORHOOD EMPOWERMENT



***Celebrating A Decade of Civic Engagement
and Neighborhood Empowerment***



ANTONIO R. VILLARAIGOSA
MAYOR

April 10, 2013

Dear Friends:

As the Mayor of the largest city in the most populated state in the most powerful country in the world, I know first-hand that civic engagement is the foundation of a great city.

Los Angeles is America's safest big city, and over the last decade, crimes rates have dropped each year, in large part as a result of the focus on community policing. Neighborhood Councils have partnered with the LAPD to engage members of the community in making LA safer than it has been since the 1950's.

Los Angeles is leading the nation in transportation innovations, from building light rail lines that connect LA to supporting cyclists and pedestrians with sustainable streets that work for all transportation modes. From prioritizing projects to fighting for funding to implementing innovations, Neighborhood Councils have helped me to move LA forward.

Los Angeles has prevailed in the midst of several years of economic crisis, an accomplishment that has been advanced by the Neighborhood Council Budget Advocates. Each year, Angelenos gather for LA's Budget Day and then begin a journey that engages members of the community in the complex process of prioritizing the delivery of city services and exploring new funding ideas and efficiencies. Thousands of hours of earnest and thoughtful citizen involvement have helped the City through this tough time.

With 95 Neighborhood Councils that empower four million residents, I'm proud to stand as LA's leader and say "I Empowered LA!"

Very truly yours,

ANTONIO R. VILLARAIGOSA
Mayor



NEIGHBORHOOD EMPOWERMENT LEADERSHIP

Neighborhood Councils are fascinating, enlivening, educational and, often, FUN.

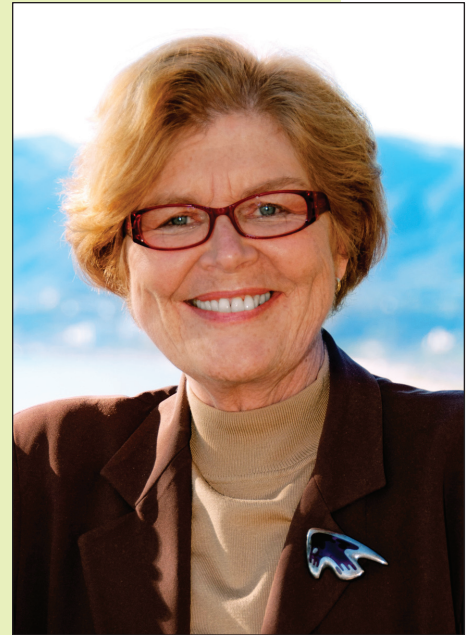
My experience is that civic engagement across the spectrum brings great fulfillment to life -- whether it is volunteering to help people in trouble at a nonprofit, voting or campaign involvement, or advocating to change a law.

The Neighborhood Council System in Los Angeles is unique, and it is a work in progress, so everyone's participation is a creative part of bringing democracy alive.

Neighborhood Councils are amazing spaces for connecting with neighbors, learning leadership skills and about civic issues, and, even influencing LA City's budget process.

I can tell you that folks in City Hall listen to Neighborhood Councils. I can tell you that Neighborhood Councils have a vibrancy that is unparalleled, and I can tell you that Neighborhood Councils are one great asset for the City of Los Angeles.

Torie Osborn
Deputy Mayor of Neighborhood and Community Services



"Unless someone like you cares a whole awful lot, Nothing is going to get better. It's not." Dr. Seuss said it, and I believe it. I also believe that Los Angeles is a better place because the people who make up Neighborhood Councils care a lot, a whole lot, and because they care, things continue to get better every day.

Neighborhood Councils are made up of local heroes that volunteer their time to make Los Angeles a better place and I'm proud to serve as the General Manager of the Department and to hear so many Angelenos stand up and proclaim, "I Empower LA!"

Most of all, I'm proud that over the last decade, Los Angeles has earned the title of America's Civic Engagement Capital!

Grayce Liu
General Manager of Neighborhood Empowerment



The Mission and Vision of NEIGHBORHOOD EMPOWERMENT

The mission of the Department of Neighborhood Empowerment is to promote increased citizen participation in government and make government more responsive to local needs through the creation of a citywide system of Neighborhood Councils.

EmpowerLA's vision is that by 2020 the Department of Neighborhood Empowerment will have fostered a robust and empowered Neighborhood Council System that enables meaningful civic participation for all Angelenos, and that serves as an effective voice for improving government responsiveness to local communities.

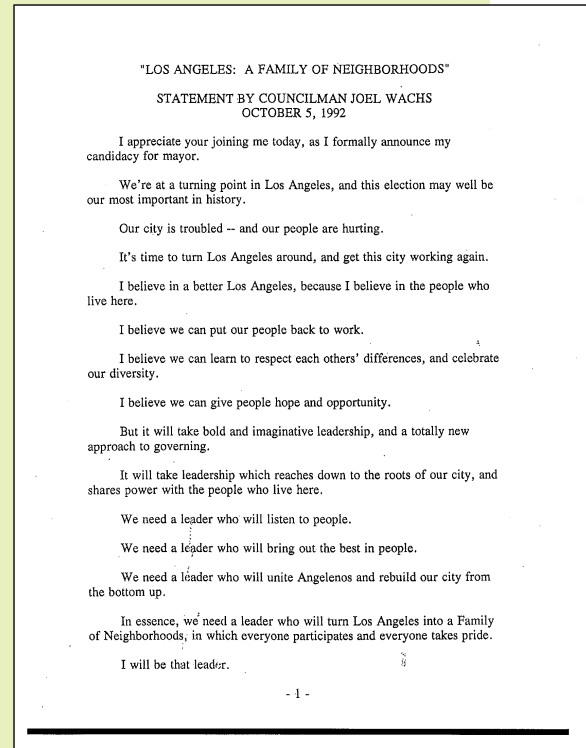
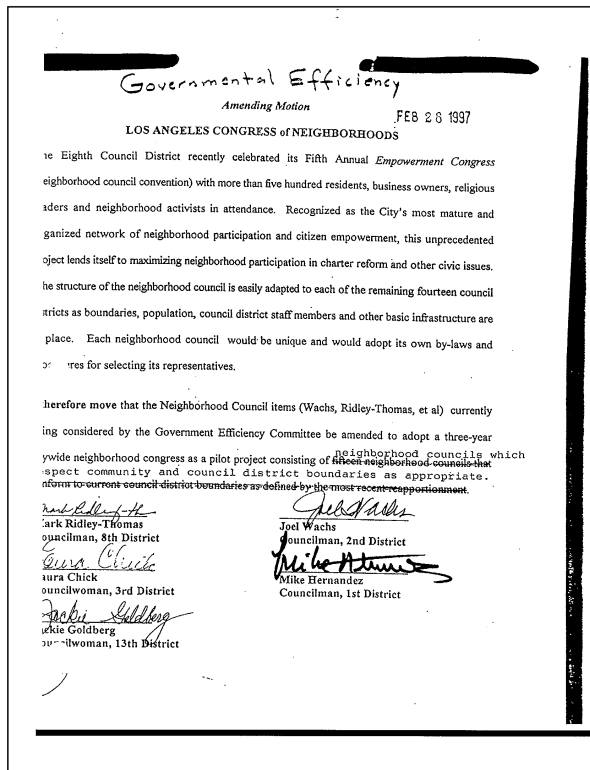
The City of LA's Charter established the Neighborhood Council System in 1999, which includes the Department of Neighborhood Empowerment, the Board of Neighborhood Commissioners and the Neighborhood Councils that now number 95.

The Plan for a Citywide System of Neighborhood Councils took the Charter mandate and brought it to life by establishing goals, policies, and objectives of the Neighborhood Council system.

The Origins of NEIGHBORHOOD EMPOWERMENT

As communities began to organize, sometimes on their own and sometimes with the support/encouragement of their City Councilmembers, the City of LA underwent comprehensive City Charter Reform, a process that saw two independent citizen's commissions formed, resulting in sweeping changes that started by tossing out the 1925 City Charter and replacing it with a new Charter that created a System of Neighborhood Councils.

When the Charter Reform dust of 1999 had settled, Los Angeles was on its way to becoming America's Capital of Civic Engagement.



For Angelenos, the 90's started with civil unrest that was followed by an earthquake which continued with governance reforms and a secession movement, then concluded with the voters adopting a new charter that created the Neighborhood Council System.

It was twenty years ago that City Councilman Wachs planted the seeds of empowerment, promising to turn LA into a Family of Neighborhoods.

During the same time, City Councilman Ridley-Thomas created the Empowerment Congress in the Eighth District, a network of neighborhood empowerment and civic engagement.

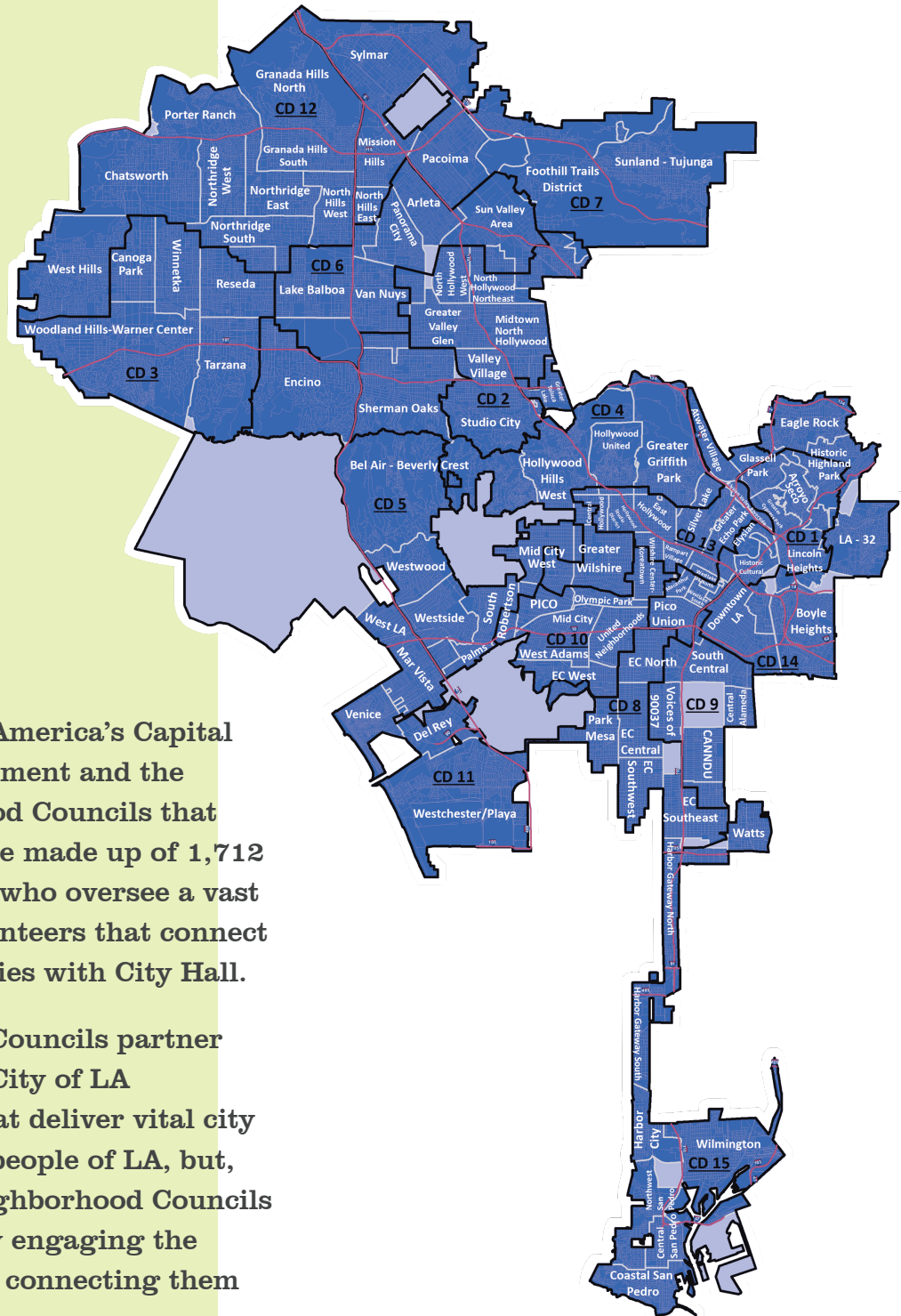
Raphael Sonenshein, former Executive Director of the Los Angeles Appointed Charter Reform Commission, recalled of Ridley-Thomas' Congress: "A lot of people said it would never amount to anything. Occasionally, he would invite me to speak to the Empowerment Congress, and I would look out an audience that had 600 people, and I would say, 'I think this has amounted to something.'"

THE NEIGHBORHOOD COUNCIL SYSTEM



Los Angeles is America's Capital of Civic Engagement and the 95 Neighborhood Councils that Empower LA are made up of 1,712 Boardmembers who oversee a vast network of volunteers that connect their communities with City Hall.

Neighborhood Councils partner with the many City of LA departments that deliver vital city services to the people of LA, but, most of all, Neighborhood Councils Empower LA by engaging the community and connecting them with City Hall.



THE BOARD OF NEIGHBORHOOD COMMISSIONERS

The Board of Neighborhood Commissioners (The Commission) was established by the City Charter in 1999 as a policy-setting and oversight commission for the Neighborhood Councils and the Department of Neighborhood Empowerment.



**Commission
President
Paul Park**



**Vice President
Len Shaffer**



Karen Mack



Daniel Gatica



Linda Lucks



Doug Epperhart

Paul Park, President

“Working through Neighborhood Councils is the most effective way to make a tangible impact on your local community. Neighborhood Councils serve as the vital conduits between the City’s government and its people. By engaging residents of Los Angeles at the grassroots, neighborhood level with the elected officials and agencies that serve them, Neighborhood Councils ensure the proper and effective functioning of democracy in the City.”

Len Shaffer, Vice-President

“As Neighborhood Councils have matured they have learned the art of engaging their stakeholders. In doing so, they have been able to educate those stakeholders regarding their primary purpose: “To promote civic engagement in government and make government more responsive to local needs.”

NEIGHBORHOOD

Partner with the Fire Department to ensure that local communities are prepared for emergencies.



Partner with the Police Department to make our neighborhoods safer and more livable.

Partner with Street Services and Transportation to improve traffic and make our streets safer for motorists, mass transit passengers, pedestrians, and cyclists.

Partner with City Planning to ensure that the personality and character of local communities is reflected in community plans and local development.



Partner with local community groups on neighborhood improvement campaigns that result in community gardens, parklets, beautification projects, school partnerships, cultural events, concerts in the parks, outdoor movie nights, local economy commitments, historical celebrations, holiday parades, and all of the little things that have a big impact on the quality of life in Los Angeles.

COUNCILS:

Entered a new decade of advocacy as **55 Neighborhood Councils** throughout the city celebrated their **10 year anniversaries in 2012** and **22 celebrate 10 years in 2013**

Came of age as a citywide voice with **LA's Congress of Neighborhoods**, made up of 36 leadership workshops and an **Action Session** that went standing-room-only in City Council Chambers

Embraced participatory democracy and the electoral process by holding the most successful **Neighborhood Council elections** in the history of the Neighborhood Council system



Participated in the **Mayor's Budget Day** and engaged 36 Neighborhood Council Budget Advocates who are kicking off another year of advocacy on the City's budget and on the delivery of city services

Contributed to making Los Angeles the **Empowerment Capital of America** by investing their talent and their time in civic engagement

Created value and generated results with a significant financial impact on the City of LA's operating budget, conservatively estimated to be worth **\$8.64 million to the City of LA in labor**, but more appropriately valued as priceless when evaluated based on the improvement to the quality of life in Los Angeles



MORE CANDIDATES! MORE VOTERS! MORE EMPOWERMENT

EMPOWER LA'S 2012 NEIGHBORHOOD COUNCIL ELECTIONS

In May of 2012, the Los Angeles City Council passed Ordinance #182128, authorizing the Department of Neighborhood Empowerment to conduct the 2012 Board elections for LA's Neighborhood Councils. Within three months the first round of elections was held in the Valley and three months later, the last election was held in Downtown Los Angeles.

2012:

95



NEIGHBORHOOD COUNCILS

*led by 417 Executive Officers
composed of 1712 Boardmembers*

ENGAGING 3,819,702 ANGELENOS



75 NEIGHBORHOOD COUNCIL ELECTIONS

9 Town Hall Selections

5 Board Affirmations

3 Loss of Quorum

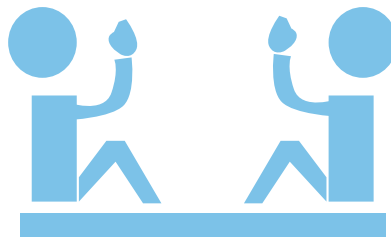
3 NCs with no Elections until 2014

MORE CANDIDATES:

1,703 Candidates threw their hats in the ring
and 1,609 qualified, resulting in a

28.35%

INCREASE IN CANDIDATES TO OPEN SEATS OVER 2010



49.6%

ELECTED WERE INCUMBENTS

50.4%

ELECTED WERE NEW VOICES

MORE VOTERS:

15.8%

INCREASE IN VOTERS TO OPEN SEATS OVER 2010



MORE OPTIONS:

23 Neighborhood Councils offered Vote-by-Mail
services to their stakeholders as an outreach
strategy for connecting with voters.

8.1%

CAST VOTE-BY-MAIL BALLOTS

91.9%

CAST IN-PERSON BALLOTS

*23 NCs offered VBM
1636 voters requested VBM*



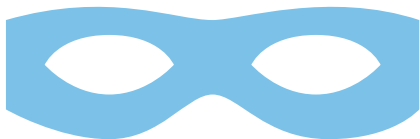
WERMENT!

NEIGHBORHOOD COUNCIL ELECTIONS

**7776 VOTERS (40.87%)
TOOK A POST-ELECTION SURVEY**

THE MOST IMPORTANT ISSUES

AFFECTING THEIR NEIGHBORHOODS:



**PUBLIC SAFETY:
59.6%**

**PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT:
39.4%**

ZONING: 32.4%

YOUTH PROGRAMS: 29.8%

*51.6% of surveyed voters
left compliments for the*

**429
VOLUNTEERS**

*who Empowered LA by
working the Neighborhood
Council polling locations.*

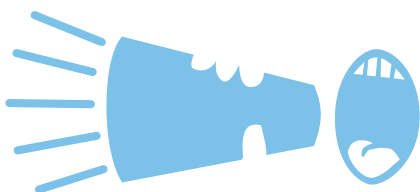
When asked about outreach, voters revealed that the most powerful form of communication is still word-of-mouth.

34.2% heard about the election from their friends

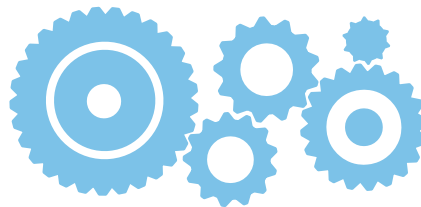
19.0% heard about the election from the Candidates

13.0% heard about the election from NC Boardmembers

WORD OF MOUTH IS EFFECTIVE



*28.1% of those surveyed
commented on the high
quality of the Candidates!*



EmpowerLA created
291 UNIQUE BALLOTS!

Some councils used one ballot while others used as many as 21 ballots!

Neighborhood Council elections were conducted by **Independent Election Administrators** who organized Neighborhood Councils into 12 regions that worked together on regional connectivity and outreach strategies.

EmpowerLA conducted **26 Leadership Academy Workshops** throughout the city in preparation for the Elections, then **11 Candidate Workshops**, **8 Poll Worker Workshops**, and **countless Candidate Forums**, followed by **7 Board Orientations** and **9 Treasurer Trainings**.

Along the way, they encouraged and supported **1703 candidate applicants**, partnered with **429 volunteer poll workers**, and created meaningful election experiences for **19025 voters**.

Most of all, they embraced grassroots democracy, Neighborhood Council style.

The 2012 Neighborhood Council elections demonstrated:

**LOS ANGELES IS
AMERICA'S EMPOWERMENT
CAPITAL!**

Neighborhood Councils are filled with...



"Before, the streets were just cluttered with trash – unbelievable amounts of trash."

Bonnie Klabunde of the North Hills East Neighborhood Council

Bonney Klabunde's neighbors affectionately call her "The Cleaning Lady," but she said she doesn't mind. In the last year, Klabunde (pronounced Klah-bun-dee) has made it her mission to sanitize the formerly garbage-strewn streets of her North Hills East neighborhood.

"My late husband was Deputy Sheriff for 29 years and always used to say that you couldn't fight City Hall. I wish he was still around to see that not only can the people fight City Hall, they can win."

Nancy Woodruff, President of the Foothill Trails District Neighborhood Council

Nancy Woodruff saved her neighbors millions of dollars in the Foothill Trails District Neighborhood Council by defending 5,282 households against unnecessary inspection fees and maintenance.

"It's really hard to live in this country without citizenship."

Julie Monroy, Vice President of the Sun Valley Area Neighborhood Council

Monroy gained her citizenship after attending a citizenship workshop provided by the Panorama City Neighborhood Council in February of 2011. She was so inspired, she hosted a similar event in Sun Valley, engaging families that had no money for attorneys, helping over 400 people.

...Local Heroes!

"Neighborhood Councils are an ideal way for would-be activists to become involved with, and learn the inner workings and dynamics of their community."

-Linda Pruett of the Lake Balboa Neighborhood Council

Linda Pruett witnessed the death, destruction, and injury that resulted from the 1994 Northridge Earthquake and made it her mission to ensure that the next time disaster strikes, her community of Lake Balboa would be prepared and ready to mobilize.

"I was a lucky person, I had a job."

Anise Goldfarb of the Northwest San Pedro Neighborhood Council

Many of Anise's friends at school were not so lucky, and they often complained that it was impossible to find work. Anise formed a committee of Boardmembers and local teens and hosted a Youth Employment Fair at Port of Los Angeles High School.



"There is less and less government service and spending so it is up to us to develop programs and groups of volunteers to take care of our individual neighborhoods and to increase our influence by joining forces on joint projects."

- Denyse Selesnick of the Tarzana Neighborhood Council

Tarzana Neighborhood Council's Denyse Selesnick put her professional skills as an event coordinator to work, organizing the Valley's Senior Symposium which connects seniors with service providers that address their physical, mental, financial and emotional health.

EMPOWER LA Award Recipients 2012

In 2012, 55 Neighborhood Councils celebrated their 10th Anniversaries, an occasion marked by the first annual Board of Neighborhood Commissioners EmpowerLA Awards, given to the Neighborhood Councils that best achieve their mission to engage their local stakeholders and ensure that their government is responsive to the needs of the community.



North Hills East Neighborhood Council was honored for their commitment to bilingual civic engagement and for their ambitious outreach strategies that include professional translation services complemented by social media in English and Spanish to engage their community and to form partnerships with schools, parent centers, non-profit organizations, and law enforcement. EmpowerLA.org/NHENC



Silver Lake Neighborhood Council received the EmpowerLA award for their work on the Silver Lake Reservoir, a project that started when they heard that the beloved sycamore trees were tagged for removal. They investigated, discovered the DWP's plan to rip up the park for a large pipeline, and went into action, eventually moving the pipeline to the bottom of the reservoir and saving \$20 million in construction costs. EmpowerLA.org/SLNC



Park Mesa Heights Community Council hosts an annual Unity Fest that draws thousands of people to a festival that is held in Van Ness Park, connecting people with health providers, departments that deliver city services, organizations that represent the stakeholders, and the history of the community, all as an expression of Unity! EmpowerLA.org/PMHCC

Mar Vista Community Council's Green Committee brought home an award for their annual "Green Garden Showcase" that engages the community in the sustainable lifestyle by putting the spotlight on drought tolerant and food producing gardens with a popular tour that connects people with the Council. EmpowerLA.org/MVCC



Sherman Oaks Neighborhood Council won for the Neighborhood Services Committee's "Pothole Lottery," a campaign to identify the worst potholes and alleyways in Sherman Oaks and then get them repaired. A stakeholder remarked "I've waited 54 years for the dangerous pothole in front of my house to be fixed!" and the Director of Street Services, Nazario Saucedo exclaimed, "This is the model of what Neighborhood Council participation should be; doing the research and taking action." EmpowerLA.org/SONC



Mid City Neighborhood Council was honored for their work on the Washington Boulevard Improvement, a project that has kept them busy since 2005 improving safety, beauty, and economic development along the corridor. Gang activity went down and crime rates went down by over 50% in the first two years. Graffiti tagging dropped from 189 times per week to less than 10 times per week! The CRA and CD 10, impressed with their results, helped the group gather funding for their goal of a median island, which was completed this summer with community input on design and placement. EmpowerLA.org/MINC



Harbor Gateway North Neighborhood Council was recognized for their work organizing the community and turning out large numbers of residents to protest the development of land under the freeway, a project that they contended would result in environmental and health issues for the residents. They stayed on it for years and prevailed, convincing the Planning Commission to oppose the zone change. EmpowerLA.org/HGNNC



Leadership & Support

City Attorney

The City Attorney's Office serves as counsel to all City commissions, departments, officers, and entities, as well as all Neighborhood Councils. In order to more effectively serve the City's Neighborhood Councils, the City Attorney's Office established the Neighborhood Council Advice Division, which is headed by Managing Assistant City Attorney Darren Martinez. *(photo: Carmen Hawkins, Darren Martinez, Alois Phillips)*



Leadership Academy

EmpowerLA's Leadership Academy offers the General Manager's Roundtable, featuring GM's from the many departments that deliver city services, and workshops that focus on strategic planning, leadership, communications, planning and land-use, and how to navigate City Hall.



Councils for Councils

Councils for Councils (C4C) is a Peer Mentoring Program that is designed to strengthen the Neighborhood Council system by recruiting, training, and placing "expert" Neighborhood Council members as mentors to less experienced Neighborhood Councils. C4C@EmpowerLA.com



Congress of Neighborhoods

Each year, on the fourth Saturday in September, community leaders from throughout the city converge on City Hall for the Congress of Neighborhoods, an all-day event that features practical workshops on how to connect the people of LA with City Hall, delivering city services and improving the quality of life for everybody. NCCongressLA.com



Citywide and Regional Voices

PlanCheckNC

Every month, on the second Saturday, volunteer Land-Use experts from the Neighborhood Councils meet at PlanCheckNC, an organization that works to educate and inform the Neighborhood Council representatives while establishing strong working relationships with the Department of City Planning. PlanCheckNCLA.com



The Neighborhood Council Budget Advocates

The Neighborhood Council Budget Advocates are selected each year at the Mayor's Budget Day and work to engage the community in the process of establishing budget priorities for the City of LA. Each Spring they meet with the Mayor and present the results of their research in the Budget Advocates White Paper. BudgetAdvocatesLA.com



DWP MOU Oversight and DWP Advocacy Committees

Eight years ago, the city's Neighborhood Councils reacted to a large and unexplained Department of Water and Power rate increase with a citywide voice, resulting in a rollback of the rate increases. The NCs followed up by negotiating an agreement with the DWP, a Memorandum of Understanding that paved the way for better communication and notice on significant issues. NCs formed an MOU Oversight Committee to ensure that the terms of the MOU are met and the Advocacy Committee which represents the public on issues that impact the community. NCs were key in establishing the City of LA's Ratepayer Advocate position and the Office of Public Accountability. DWPMOU@EmpowerLA.org



NEIGHBORHOOD COUNCILS ALLIANCES *and* COALITIONS

LA's Neighborhood Councils have organized into regional alliances and citywide organizations in order to maximize their impact and connect with the many City of LA Departments that deliver services to the many communities that make up Los Angeles.



The Los Angeles Neighborhood Council Coalition (LANCC.org) meets monthly and is open to Boardmembers and stakeholders of all Neighborhood Councils. Eight years ago, when LANCC was formed, City Councilwoman Janice Hahn proclaimed "This is a historic day, you will be leading this city into the future." Since then, LANCC has stayed true to Hahn's proclamation, engaging veterans and newcomers alike and establishing common ground on issues that impact Angelenos citywide. (LANCC@EmpowerLA.org)

The Harbor Alliance of Neighborhood Councils (HANC) represents the 7 Councils of the Gateway and the Harbor, meeting monthly and serving as an informational and advocacy alliance. (HANC@EmpowerLA.org)

The Valley Alliance of Neighborhood Councils (VANC) was founded in 2003 by Jill Banks Barad and represents the 34 Neighborhood Councils of the Valley. VANC meets monthly and its mission is to develop solutions to the issues of concern to the Neighborhood Councils in the San Fernando Valley. VANC also has a Resource Board to support other Valley Neighborhood Councils. (VANC@EmpowerLA.org)

South Los Angeles is represented by the South LA Alliance of Neighborhood Councils (SLAANC) and includes 14 Councils working together to advocate as one voice on issues that impact the neighborhoods of South LA. (SLAANC@EmpowerLA.org)



The Westside Regional Alliance of Councils (WRAC) is a cooperative regional alliance made up of all 10 Neighborhood and Community Councils on the Westside of Los Angeles, committed to advocating, assisting, and informing all councils of the issues and opportunities that are important to the westside of LA. (WRAC@EmpowerLA.org)

Neighborhood Empowerment Staff

The Department of Neighborhood Empowerment is a Charter Department, responsible for Empowering LA by supporting Neighborhood Councils.



Grayce Liu
General Manager



Leyla Campos
Director of Field Operations



Jeff Brill
Senior Management
Analyst II



Janet Lindo
Executive Administrative
Assistant



Joseph Hari
Policy Director



Armando Ruiz
Funding Program Director



Stephen Box
Director of Outreach and
Communications

EmpowerLA is led by General Manager Grayce Liu and provides administrative, field, funding, policy, outreach, and communications support for Neighborhood Councils.



Tom Soong



Barry Stone



Amelia Herrera-Robles



Lisette Covarrubias



Tanea Larios



Melvin Canas



Amber Meshack

Neighborhood Empowerment Advocates (NEA) support Neighborhood Councils with EmpowerLA's Leadership Academy, the Councils 4 Councils peer mentoring program, Board Development workshops, and hands-on guidance.



Betty Wong Oyama
Neighborhood Empowerment
Advocate



Kibibi Conner
Accountant Clerk II



Man-Qin He
Accountant II



Monique Collins
Clerk Typist



Johngiang Nguyen
System Analyst



Sonya Calloway
Clerk Typist



Maximo Fortu
Senior Accountant II

EmpowerLA administrative and funding staff assist Neighborhood Councils with everything from leases and contracts to funding and grants.

To contact the Department, call 213-978-1551 or email EmpowerLA@LACity.org



KEEP CALM AND EMPOWER LA



Department of Neighborhood Empowerment

200 North Spring Street, Suite 2005, Los Angeles, CA 90012

Tel: (213) 978-1551 • Email: EmpowerLA@LACity.org • EmpowerLA.org