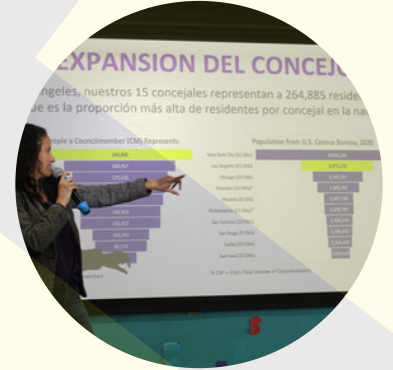


## COUNCIL EXPANSION | RECOMMENDATIONS BRIEF



### APPROACH TO DEVELOPING RECOMMENDATIONS

OUR LA integrates a racial and economic equity lens in developing policy recommendations for council expansion centered in the experiences, needs, and priorities of low-income BIPOC Angelenos.

The Council Expansion Policy Workgroup developed recommendations from resident feedback gathered in March through:

- Community surveys
- Four in-person community convenings held in the Eastside, Central Los Angeles, San Fernando Valley, and South Los Angeles

The workgroup analyzed the findings and themes from the survey and the convenings, conducted additional research, and integrated our coalition's values and goals into the drafting of recommendations. This document summarizes the primary goals our policy recommendations seek to accomplish.

These recommendations will be presented to community partners and residents across the city in late summer to gather feedback and further refine them before submitting to the LA City Council.

### ORIGINS OF OUR LA

The LA City scandal has caused deep wounds across communities and exposed inequities in how city government operates. While the political and civic leaders involved in the scandal must be held accountable, intercommunity healing and a more equitable future will require more than just resignations. A new vision of city governance is needed, and that vision needs to be rooted in and shaped by the perspectives of Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) and low-income Angelenos. In collaboration with residents, OUR LA will work to realize this vision and advance a community-based reform agenda.

OUR LA is a multiracial, multi-generational, and multi-intersectional coalition of community-based organizations and racial justice advocates committed to community voice, multiracial solidarity, power-building, racial equity, structural reform, and transparency.



# RECOMMENDATION - NUMBER OF DISTRICTS

To restore trust in City Hall and strengthen political representation for BIPOC and low-income Angelenos, **OUR LA recommends expanding the Los Angeles City Council between 23 to 31 single-member districts.\***

- At 23 council districts, Black and API Angelenos could each acquire a plurality council district, which is unachievable under our 15-council district model. Additionally, Latinx Angelenos could acquire three additional majority districts and three additional plurality districts. Plurality council districts are districts where one population exceeds the population of any other population in the district.
- Anything greater than 31 council districts, historically and linguistically dense Asian communities like Koreatown face threats of being divided, potentially reducing the effectiveness of a new API plurality district.

\*Further district modeling and community feedback may widen or narrow this range. We also acknowledge that alternative models of governance (hybrid councils or multi-member districts) may prove more effective at meeting the goals and vision of OUR LA but require additional time and research to reach an informed recommendation.



# RECOMMENDATION - EQUITABLE COUNCIL EXPANSION

In addition to our recommendation on the number of districts, OUR LA urges the Los Angeles City Council to consider the following **four values of equitable council expansion**.

- (1) Council expansion must **effectively shift power and strengthen the political representation** of impacted communities at all levels (descriptive, substantive, and effective).
- (2) Council expansion needs to **significantly minimize and prevent harm** to any impacted community's political power and representation
- (3) Council expansion and any change in the structure of the LA City Council should lead to structural change that **eliminates system barriers to representation**.
- (4) Council expansion should create optimal opportunities within the city's decision-making process(es) **to center** the needs and participation of **impacted/underrepresented communities**.

*For more information, please contact Aaron Robertson,  
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## COUNCIL EXPANSION | FULL RECOMMENDATIONS



The LA City scandal has caused deep wounds across communities and exposed inequities in how city government operates. While the political and civic leaders involved in the scandal must be held accountable, intercommunity healing and a more equitable future will require more than just resignations. A new vision of city governance is needed, and that vision needs to be rooted in and shaped by the perspectives of Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) and low-income Angelenos. In collaboration with residents, OUR LA will work to realize this vision and advance a community-based reform agenda. This document details the complete set of draft recommendations for expanding the LA City Council, which our Council Expansion Policy Workgroup developed.

### APPROACH TO DEVELOPING RECOMMENDATIONS

OUR LA integrates a racial and economic equity lens in developing policy recommendations for an LA City and LAUSD IRC centered in the experiences, needs, and priorities of low-income BIPOC Angelenos.

The Council Expansion Policy Workgroup developed recommendations from resident feedback gathered in March through:

- Community surveys
- Four in-person community convenings held in the Eastside, Central Los Angeles, San Fernando Valley, and South Los Angeles

The workgroup analyzed the findings and themes from the survey and the convenings, conducted additional research, and integrated our coalition's values and goals into the drafting of the recommendations below.

These recommendations will be presented to community partners and residents across the city in late summer to gather feedback and further refine them before submitting them officially to the LA City Council.





## **LOS ANGELES, THE SECOND-LARGEST CITY IN THE NATION, HAS 15 COUNCIL MEMBERS REPRESENTING NEARLY 4 MILLION ANGELENOS.**

- Each council member in Los Angeles is responsible for representing approximately 265,000 Angelenos - over a quarter million people. In comparison to every other peer city in size and population, a Los Angeles council member represents more residents than any other council member in the nation.
- The current size of the Los Angeles City Council (15 council members) was decided by voters in 1925 when Los Angeles was notably less equitable, diverse, and populated. Back then each 15 council members represented on average a little more than 38,000 residents.
- In resident feedback OUR LA received, people do not feel represented by the Los Angeles City Council across all racial groups and the lack of representation is shared even more acutely among BIPOC groups. In their responses, people described a desire to feel more represented by the Los Angeles City Council not only in terms of their racial or gender identities, but also by their income, housing status, and more.
- Today, we have a unique opportunity to change the makeup and size of our council districts and restore political power in the City of Los Angeles to our most impacted communities.

***For more information, please contact Aaron Robertson,  
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## RECOMMENDATION - NUMBER OF DISTRICTS

To restore trust in City Hall and strengthen political representation for BIPOC and low-income Angelenos, OUR LA recommends expanding the Los Angeles City Council between 23 to 31 single-member districts.\*

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\*Further district modeling and community feedback may widen or narrow this range. We also acknowledge that alternative models of governance (hybrid councils or multi-member districts) may prove more effective at meeting the goals and vision of OUR LA but require additional time and research to reach an informed recommendation.



## RECOMMENDATION - FOUR VALUES OF EQUITABLE COUNCIL EXPANSION

OUR LA defines racial and socioeconomic equity as ensuring that historically marginalized, disenfranchised, and underrepresented low-income BIPOC communities do not continue to face systemic barriers to participating in our democratic processes, accessing city resources, engaging with their representatives, and having their community needs met.

**OUR LA URGES THE LOS ANGELES CITY COUNCIL TO CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING FOUR VALUES OF EQUITABLE COUNCIL EXPANSION.**

**1) Council expansion must effectively shift power and strengthen the political representation of impacted communities at all levels (descriptive, substantive, and effective).**

- An effective shift in power strengthens political representation for the most impacted communities. Council expansion should utilize a racial and socioeconomic equity approach that acknowledges and mitigates the historic harms and disparities experienced by BIPOC and low-income Angelenos with expressed guarantees that their communities and neighborhoods will be protected, resourced, and represented in the LA City Council. Additionally, there must be careful attention to communities harmed by structural racism and anti-Black prejudice.
- While the City Charter does not specify how districts are drawn or what Communities of Interest (COI) remain whole, changes in council size do allow us to speculate districts that maintain or increase political representation for impacted communities.

**2) Council expansion must significantly minimize and prevent harm to any impacted community's political power and representation.**

- Impacted communities include houseless communities, low-income communities, renters, formerly incarcerated people, immigrants, tribal communities, Black, Latinx, and Indigenous communities, and other communities bearing disproportionate socioeconomic and environmental burdens.

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## RECOMMENDATION - EQUITABLE COUNCIL EXPANSION

### 3) Council expansion and any change in the structure of the LA City Council should lead to structural change that eliminates systemic barriers to representation.

- Beyond creating new majority or plurality districts for BIPOC and low-income Angelenos, council expansion needs to make a meaningful difference for all marginalized communities resulting in equitable distribution of resources, city services, and opportunities for healthy, safe, and thriving communities.
- This should include an exploration of new pathways and opportunities for civic participation and representation among American Indian and Alaska Native communities, Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander communities, indigenous communities, and other geographically dispersed communities who may not acquire descriptive representation through council expansion. Solutions may include a dedicated staff member within each council office that works on outreach to and interaction with these communities, a dedicated office that oversees and implements effective government-to-government consultation between city bureaus, council offices, and these communities, or reforming the Neighborhood Council process to increase the number of councils and membership of marginalized communities. The examples listed above are not an exhaustive list of ways for City Hall to eliminate system barriers to representation.

### 4) Council expansion should create optimal opportunities within the city's decision-making process(es) to center the needs and participation of impacted/underrepresented communities.

- We must create a new vision of city governance rooted in and shaped by the perspectives of BIPOC and low-income Angelenos. This vision should recognize the historic harms and atrocities done to BIPOC communities through the stripping and taking of indigenous lands, the institution of American chattel slavery and its vestiges, and the role that city government officials have played in the decimation, silencing, and diminishing of political power in BIPOC and low-income communities.
- In expanding the council size, we must not repeat the mistakes of our past, and we must put racial and socioeconomic equity first, recognizing the different circumstances, needs, and challenges facing communities throughout Los Angeles.

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