



clerk CIS <clerk.cis@lacity.org>

Your Community Impact Statement Submittal - Council File Number: 23-1027

1 message

LA City SNow <cityoflaprod@service-now.com>

Sun, Sep 14, 2025 at 11:06 PM

Reply-To: LA City SNow <cityoflaprod@service-now.com>

To: reformlacher@lacity.org, Clerk.CIS@lacity.org, commission@empowerla.org, H.Kline@whcouncil.org

A Neighborhood Council Community Impact Statement (CIS) has been successfully submitted to your Commission or City Council. We provided information below about CISs and attached a copy of the CIS.

We encourage you to reach out to the Community Impact Statement Filer to acknowledge receipt and if this Community Impact Statement will be scheduled at a future meeting. Neighborhood Council board members are volunteers and it would be helpful if they received confirmation that you received their CIS.

The CIS process was enabled by the to Los Angeles Administrative Code §Section 22.819. It provides that, "a Neighborhood Council may take a formal position on a matter by way of a Community Impact Statement (CIS) or written resolution." NCs representatives also testify before City Boards and Commissions on the item related to their CIS. If the Neighborhood Council chooses to do so, the Neighborhood Council representative must provide the Commission with a copy of the CIS or rResolution sufficiently in advance for review, possible inclusion on the agenda, and posting on the Commission's website. Any information you can provide related to your agenda setting schedule is helpful to share with the NC.

If the CIS or resolution pertains to a matter *listed on the Commission's agenda*, during the time the matter is heard, the designated Neighborhood Council representative should be given an opportunity to present the Neighborhood Council's formal position. We encourage becoming familiar with the City Council's rules on the subject. At the Chair's discretion, the Neighborhood Council representative may be asked to have a seat at the table (or equivalent for a virtual meeting) typically reserved for City staff and may provide the Neighborhood Council representative more time than allotted to members of the general public. They are also permitted up to five (5) minutes of time to address the legislative body. If the CIS or resolution pertains to a matter *not listed on the agenda*, the designated Neighborhood Council representative may speak during General Public Comments.

We share this information to assist you with the docketing neighborhood council items before your board/commission. If you have questions and/or concerns, please contact the Department of Neighborhood Empowerment at empowerla@lacity.org.

***** This is an automated response, please DO NOT reply to this email. *****

Contact Information

Neighborhood Council: Woodland Hills-Warner Center

Name: Heath Kline

Email: h.kline@whcouncil.org

The Board approved this CIS by a vote of: Yea(17) Nay(1) Abstain(0) Ineligible(0) Recusal(0)

Date of NC Board Action: 05/08/2024

Type of NC Board Action: For if Amended

Impact Information

Date: 09/15/2025

Update to a Previous Input: No

Directed To: Charter Reform Commission, City Council and Committees, Board of Neighborhood Commissioners

Council File Number: 23-1027

City Planning Number:

Agenda Date:

Item Number:

Summary: The Woodland Hills-Warner Center Neighborhood Council proposes a ballot measure to amend/replace Article IX of the Los Angeles City Charter. The revisions/replacement aim to address the long-standing challenges and inconsistent support faced by Neighborhood Councils, such as insufficient funding, limited incorporation of input in city decision-making, and the need for comprehensive training and support. The amended Charter will establish a more robust, equitable, and accountable framework for the Neighborhood Council system, ensuring that these grassroots bodies receive the recognition, support, and resources they require to thrive. The revisions will clarify the obligations of

city officials to foster and support Neighborhood Councils and establish mechanisms for addressing lapses in fulfilling these responsibilities. The proposed replacement of Article IX seeks to address operational challenges, such as difficulties in achieving quorum, by providing sufficient funding, training, and resources for councils. It will also institute regular processes for evaluation, improvement, and oversight of the Neighborhood Council system to identify and resolve issues proactively. By codifying these reforms in the City Charter, the Neighborhood Council system can become more resilient, responsive, and empowering, genuinely valuing and supporting the remarkable work of Neighborhood Councils and their dedicated volunteers.

 **WHWCNC CIS CF 23-1027 Charter Reform - Article IX.pdf**
742K

Board

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Rose O'Sullivan Area 7 Alt.

August Steurer, At-Large

*Board Authorized Submittal
by Heath Kline*

for

Dena Weiss, President

d.weiss@whcouncil.org

Action Passed on 05/22/2024

Members Present: 17

Quorum:13

Members voting Aye: 18

Members voting Nay: 1

Members Abstaining: 0

Members Ineligible: 0

Members Recused: 0

Community Impact Statement (CIS) in Support of City Council File CF 23-1027 if Amended

ITEM: Updated City Charter to be placed before the voters of LA
POSITION: Support if Amended

REQUESTED ACTION: In addition to other needed revision to Los Angeles City Charter voters should be asked to approve a new City Charter that includes the revisions proposed in our attached rewrite of Article IX that is incorporated in full and made a part of this CIS.

The Woodland Hills – Warner Center Neighborhood Council proposes that the City Council place a ballot measure to amend Article IX of the City Charter per the separate accompanying Article IX replacement text or incorporate these changes into any other City Charter reform measure placed before the voters.

These proposed revisions to Article IX of the Los Angeles City Charter are a necessary response to long-standing challenges faced by Neighborhood Councils. For years, NCs have struggled with inconsistent support from the city government. Key problems include insufficient funding, limited incorporation of NC input in city decisions, inadequate training and support, and the city's occasional disregard for NC legal rights and powers under the Charter.

Just as we have laws and systems in place to ensure the well-being and protection of vulnerable populations, we must also have robust safeguards and support for Neighborhood Councils, which serve as essential democratic institutions for empowering and engaging communities. City officials' inconsistent support for Neighborhood Councils is not merely an administrative shortcoming; it is a structural issue that can hinder the effectiveness of our local democracy.

By revising Article IX, the city can create a more robust, equitable, and accountable framework for the Neighborhood Council system, one that provides these grassroots bodies with the recognition, support, and resources they require to thrive. The updated Charter provisions will not only clarify the obligations of city officials to foster and support Neighborhood Councils but also establish clear mechanisms for addressing any lapses in fulfilling these responsibilities.

The Neighborhood Council system in Los Angeles is an extensive and intricate network, comprising 99 councils with over 1,300 dedicated participants. These volunteers contribute their time, energy, and expertise to serve their communities and facilitate democracy at the grassroots level. However, despite their

commitment and passion, many Neighborhood Councils face persistent operational challenges that can limit their ability to fully realize their mission and potential.

Notably, approximately one-third of Neighborhood Councils encounter difficulties in achieving quorum, the minimum number of members required to conduct official business. This participation challenge arises from various factors, including a shortage of candidates willing to step forward and serve, as well as the frustration and burnout that can lead to resignations among current council members.

These operational hurdles are not simply administrative inconveniences; they are indicators of a broader, long-standing pattern of inconsistent support that has affected the Neighborhood Council system. When councils struggle to attain quorum, they face limitations in advocating for their communities, providing meaningful input on city policies, and delivering the critical services and support that their constituents need.

The proposed amendments to Article IX of the City Charter seek to directly address these challenges by establishing a more supportive, empowering, and sustainable framework for Neighborhood Councils. By ensuring sufficient funding, training, and resources for councils, as well as elucidating the responsibilities of city officials to support and collaborate with these grassroots entities, the revisions aim to overcome the historical inconsistencies and empower Neighborhood Councils to flourish.

Furthermore, by instituting regular processes for the evaluation, improvement, and oversight of the Neighborhood Council system, the amended Article IX will facilitate the identification and resolution of operational issues before they escalate into more significant problems. This proactive approach will ensure that councils have the tools and support necessary to surmount challenges and effectively serve their communities.

In summary, the magnitude and intricacy of the Neighborhood Council system in Los Angeles, coupled with the significant operational challenges encountered by many councils, highlight the crucial importance of the proposed revisions to Article IX. By codifying these reforms in the City Charter, we can establish a more resilient, responsive, and empowering framework for grassroots democracy—one that genuinely values and supports the remarkable work of our Neighborhood Councils and their dedicated volunteers.

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED:


Dena Weiss, President
Woodland Hills – Warner Center Neighborhood Council
May 22, 2024

WHWCNC Draft for Replacement of City Charter Article IX

Article IX - Department of Neighborhood Empowerment and Neighborhood Councils

Introduction to Article IX.

Department of Neighborhood Empowerment and Neighborhood Councils

In a city as vast and diverse as Los Angeles, ensuring that every voice is heard and every community is well served is a critical challenge. Article IX of the Los Angeles City Charter establishes the Neighborhood Council system as a vital bridge between its residents and their government. By creating a network of grassroots, community-based councils, Article IX aims to foster a more accessible, responsive, and inclusive system of governance that brings decision-making closer to the people it affects.

The Neighborhood Council system is designed to serve as a two-way conduit for communication and collaboration between the City and its residents. These councils provide a platform for community members to express their needs, concerns, and aspirations directly to City officials and decision-makers. At the same time, they serve as a channel for the City to keep residents informed about important issues, policies, and initiatives that impact their neighborhoods. By facilitating this ongoing dialogue and partnership, Neighborhood Councils help to build a stronger, more cohesive, and more responsive City government.

Article IX creates a robust Neighborhood Council system by providing a clear, comprehensive, and empowering framework for its operation. Through the essential funding, training, and support for Neighborhood Councils, increased opportunities for collaboration with City departments and officials, and a commitment to continuous improvement and adaptation, these amendments aim to maximize the impact and effectiveness of this vital participatory system. Ultimately, investing in the success of Neighborhood Councils is an investment in the future of Los Angeles as a city where every community has a strong voice and a meaningful role in shaping its destiny.

Section 900.

Purpose and Mission of Neighborhood Councils

- (a) The purpose of the Neighborhood Council system is to promote more inclusive and participatory governance in the City of Los Angeles by empowering community members to have a voice in the decisions that affect their lives and their neighborhoods.
- (b) Neighborhood Councils shall serve as the primary means for the City to engage with and obtain input from stakeholders on issues of concern to their communities. They shall have a formal role in the City's decision making processes and shall be treated as integral partners in the governance of the City.
- (c) The mission of Neighborhood Councils is to:
 1. Foster a sense of community and civic engagement among stakeholders.
 2. Identify and prioritize the needs and concerns of their communities.
 3. Develop and advocate for policies, programs, and projects that address community needs and improve quality of life.

4. Provide a forum for discussion and deliberation on community issues.
 5. Facilitate communication and collaboration between community members, City Departments, the City Council, and the Mayor.
 6. Empower stakeholders to actively shape the future of their neighborhoods and the City.
- (d) Engaging stakeholders in local government through Neighborhood Councils means:
1. Proactively reaching out to and involving a diverse range of community members, including those who have been historically underrepresented or marginalized.
 2. Providing multiple and accessible opportunities for stakeholders to learn about, discuss, and provide input on City policies, programs, and decisions.
 3. Ensuring that stakeholder input is carefully considered and incorporated into City decision-making processes.
 4. Fostering ongoing dialogue and collaboration between Neighborhood Councils, City Departments, elected officials, and community members.
 5. Empowering stakeholders with the knowledge, skills, and resources they need to effectively participate in and influence local government.
 6. Continuously evaluating and improving the processes and structures for stakeholder engagement to ensure maximum effectiveness and inclusivity.
- (e) The City Council, the Mayor, City Departments, and all agencies and officers of the City shall recognize, respect, and support the critical role of Neighborhood Councils in engaging stakeholders. They shall partner to achieve more responsive, accountable, and participatory governance in Los Angeles.
- (f) To fulfill their purpose and mission, Neighborhood Councils shall receive adequate and consistent core funding from the City, separate from and in addition to any funds available through optional Neighborhood Purpose Grants. This core funding shall be sufficient to support the basic operations, successful outreach, and participation of Neighborhood Councils in City decision-making processes.
- (g) Neighborhood Councils shall prioritize the development and implementation of effective marketing and communication strategies to engage, inform, and mobilize their stakeholders, recognizing that these skills are essential to fulfilling their purpose and mission in the digital age.

Section 901.

Department of Neighborhood Empowerment - Duties and Responsibilities

The Department of Neighborhood Empowerment (DONE) shall have the primary responsibility to support, facilitate, and enhance the role of Neighborhood Councils as the primary agents for engaging stakeholders in local government.

DONE shall:

- (a) Assist Neighborhood Councils in achieving their full potential as effective advocates for their communities and advisors to city government.
- (b) Provide training, resources, and technical assistance to help Neighborhood Councils effectively engage stakeholders, develop their organizational capacity, and participate in city decision-making processes.

- (c) Facilitate communication and collaboration between Neighborhood Councils and City Departments, as outlined in Section 902, to ensure a robust flow of information and opportunities for input.
- (d) Work with City Departments to develop and implement effective strategies for utilizing Neighborhood Councils as a primary means of interfacing with stakeholders in their communities.
- (e) Collaborate with the City Clerk's office to ensure that the funding and resources allocated to Neighborhood Councils are administered promptly, equitably, and in compliance with applicable rules and regulations.
- (f) Regularly consult with Neighborhood Councils to assess their needs and priorities and identify opportunities to improve the support and resources provided by DONE and City Departments.
- (g) Advocate within city government for the recognition and consideration of Neighborhood Council input in decision-making processes, and for City Departments' compliance with their obligations under Section 902.
- (h) Maintain a system for sharing information and best practices among Neighborhood Councils, and for connecting them with relevant community organizations and resources.
- (i) Periodically review and assess the effectiveness of the Neighborhood Council system and recommend improvements to the City Council and Mayor.
- (j) Provide administrative, operational, and logistical support to the Board of Neighborhood Commissioners (BONC) as outlined in Section 902(g), to ensure that BONC can effectively carry out its policymaking and oversight functions for the Neighborhood Council system.
- (k) Develop, implement, and maintain digital platforms, tools, and resources to facilitate online engagement, communication, and collaboration among Neighborhood Councils, stakeholders, and City agencies, ensuring equitable access and addressing potential barriers to digital participation.
- (l) Establish data governance policies and provide training and support to Neighborhood Councils on data management best practices, ensuring effective utilization of data to inform decision-making, evaluate impact, and enhance transparency.
- (m) Prioritize digital literacy training and resources for Neighborhood Council members and stakeholders, promoting inclusive digital participation and skill development.
- (n) Implement appropriate cybersecurity measures to protect sensitive data and maintain stakeholders' privacy, and conduct regular cybersecurity audits and training for DONE staff and Neighborhood Council members.
- (o) Provide comprehensive training, resources, and support to Neighborhood Councils to develop and continuously enhance their marketing and engagement capabilities, including:
 - 1. Offering in-depth training programs on marketing strategy development, branding, content creation, social media management, email marketing, and other essential marketing skills.
 - 2. Providing access to professional marketing tools, templates, and resources to help Neighborhood Councils effectively plan, execute, and measure their marketing and engagement efforts.
 - 3. Connecting Neighborhood Councils with marketing experts and mentors who can provide guidance, feedback, and support in developing and implementing effective marketing strategies.
 - 4. Encouraging and facilitating the sharing of marketing best practices, success stories, and lessons learned among Neighborhood Councils to foster a culture of continuous learning and improvement.

5. Assessing the impact and effectiveness of Neighborhood Councils' marketing and engagement efforts regularly and providing data-driven insights and recommendations for optimization.

(p) Establish a dedicated Marketing and Engagement Support Unit within DONE to provide specialized assistance, resources, and consulting services to Neighborhood Councils in developing and executing their marketing and engagement strategies.

In carrying out these duties, DONE shall respect the autonomy and independence of Neighborhood Councils and shall not interfere with their internal affairs or decision-making processes, except as necessary to ensure compliance with applicable laws and regulations.

Section 902.

Board of Neighborhood Commissioners

(a) The Board of Neighborhood Commissioners (BONC) shall serve as a policymaking and oversight body for the Neighborhood Council system, working in collaboration with the Department of Neighborhood Empowerment (DONE) and Neighborhood Councils to promote the system's effective and equitable functioning.

(b) BONC shall comprise fourteen members appointed by the Mayor and confirmed by the City Council. Commissioners shall meet the following qualifications:

1. Substantial experience serving on a Neighborhood Council Board, and a demonstrated track record of effective leadership, community engagement, and problem-solving.
2. Deep knowledge of the Neighborhood Council system, including its purpose, structure, functions, and challenges, gained through direct involvement in Neighborhood Council operations and activities.
3. Strong understanding of the diverse needs, issues, and aspirations of Los Angeles neighborhoods, with a proven ability to engage and empower community stakeholders from all walks of life.
4. Demonstrated commitment to the values and goals of the Neighborhood Council system, including promoting civic participation, community empowerment, and inclusive decision-making.
5. Proven skills in communication, collaboration, and consensus-building, with the ability to foster productive working relationships among Neighborhood Councils, City officials, and other key stakeholders.
6. Familiarity with the laws, policies, and procedures governing Neighborhood Councils, including the City Charter, the Plan for a Citywide System of Neighborhood Councils, and other relevant documents.
7. A reputation for integrity, transparency, and ethical conduct, with no conflicts of interest or other disqualifying factors as determined by the City's Ethics Commission.
8. Willingness and ability to devote sufficient time and energy to fulfill the duties and responsibilities of a BONC Commissioner, including regular attendance at meetings, community events, and other official functions.
9. Residency in the City of Los Angeles, with a strong preference for individuals who have lived in and demonstrated a deep understanding of the City's diverse neighborhoods and communities.

- (c) In making appointments to BONC, the Mayor and City Council shall strive to ensure that the Commission reflects the city's geographic, racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic diversity and includes a balance of perspectives from different Neighborhood Councils and community stakeholder groups.
- (d) BONC Commissioners shall serve four-year staggered terms, with a no maximum of consecutive terms. The initial terms of the Commissioners shall be determined by lot, with Commissioners serving an initial one, two, three or four-year term to establish the staggered rotation in 3,4,3,4 manner across the city's planning areas.
- (e) BONC Commissioners may be removed from office by the Mayor, with the consent of the City Council, for cause including neglect of duty, misconduct, or inability to perform the duties of the office.
- (f) If BONC cannot achieve a quorum for a scheduled meeting, the meeting shall be rescheduled to the earliest possible date when a quorum can be achieved. If a lack of quorum persists for more than two consecutive scheduled meetings, the Mayor and City Council shall take immediate steps to fill any vacancies and ensure that BONC can function effectively.
- (g) BONC shall collaborate with DONE to support the Neighborhood Council system but shall not have direct management authority over the department. The general manager of DONE shall report to the Mayor and City Council, with input from BONC, on matters related to the Neighborhood Council system.
- (h) BONC shall not have its own dedicated staff. Instead, DONE shall provide administrative, operational, and logistical support to BONC, including but not limited to:
 - 1. Preparing and posting agendas for BONC meetings.
 - 2. Taking and maintaining minutes of BONC meetings.
 - 3. Providing staff reports and analysis to inform BONC's decision-making.
 - 4. Assisting with the implementation of BONC's policies and directives.
 - 5. Facilitating communication between BONC, Neighborhood Councils, and other City agencies.
 - 6. Providing other support necessary for BONC to effectively carry out its duties and responsibilities.
- (i) BONC shall work with DONE to establish policies and guidelines for Neighborhood Councils' digital engagement and marketing efforts, ensuring that these activities align with the mission and purpose of the Neighborhood Council system and adhere to principles of transparency, inclusivity, and accountability.

Section 903.

Powers and Legitimacy of Neighborhood Councils

- (a) Neighborhood Councils shall serve as the official voice of their respective communities and shall have the power to:
 - 1. Provide advisory recommendations to the City Council, Mayor, City Departments, and other governmental entities on issues, policies, and legislation that impact their communities.
 - 2. Participate in developing and reviewing City plans, policies, and budgets that affect their communities and provide input and recommendations to ensure alignment with community needs and priorities.
 - 3. Engage in collaborative problem-solving and decision-making with City agencies and other stakeholders to address community challenges and opportunities.

4. Advocate for allocating City resources and services to meet the specific needs of their communities.
 5. Conduct outreach and engage with community stakeholders to gather input, build consensus, and foster participation in the Neighborhood Council system and City governance processes.
- (b) Neighborhood Councils shall be recognized as legitimate and professional bodies, deserving of respect and cooperation from all aspects of City governance, including the City Council, Mayor's office, City Departments, and other governmental entities.
- (c) The City Council, Mayor, and all City Departments shall give substantial weight to the input, recommendations, and Community Impact Statements provided by Neighborhood Councils. It shall provide a written explanation when decisions are made that differ from the positions or advice offered by the Neighborhood Councils.
- (d) In public hearings, meetings, and other forums where community input is sought, Neighborhood Councils shall be given a higher status than the general public in providing comments and recommendations. This includes:
1. Designated speaking time for Neighborhood Council representatives separate from the general public comment period
 2. Priority in the speaking order, with Neighborhood Council representatives being called upon to provide input before opening the floor to the public.
 3. Opportunity for Neighborhood Council representatives to engage in dialogue and ask questions of City officials or staff, beyond the scope of general public comment.
- (e) City Departments shall work with Neighborhood Councils to establish clear protocols and procedures for incorporating their input and recommendations into decision-making processes, giving due consideration to the unique role and expertise of Neighborhood Councils in representing their communities.
- (f) Neighborhood Council board members shall be treated with the same professionalism and courtesy accorded to other elected officials and City staff, recognizing their voluntary service and dedication to their communities.
- (g) Neighborhood Council board members shall, in turn, demonstrate professionalism and respect in their interactions with the City Council, Mayor, City Departments, and other governmental entities. Failure to maintain appropriate decorum and respect may result in disciplinary action, including removal from the Neighborhood Council board, per the procedures outlined in the Neighborhood Council's bylaws and the Department of Neighborhood Empowerment's (DONE) policies.
- (h) The City shall provide Neighborhood Councils access to City data, information, and resources necessary to effectively fulfill their roles and responsibilities, subject to applicable legal and confidentiality requirements.
- (i) Neighborhood Councils shall have the right to agendaize and discuss any matter of community concern at their meetings, and to request the presence of City officials or staff to address these matters, subject to reasonable notice and availability.
- (j) The City shall provide ongoing training, support, and resources to help Neighborhood Council board members develop the skills, knowledge, and expertise necessary to effectively serve their communities and engage in City governance processes.

- (k) Neighborhood Councils' input and positions shall be explicitly considered in the deliberations and decisions of City commissions, boards, and other advisory bodies that impact their communities.

Section 904.

Neighborhood Council Monitoring and Input on City Services

- (a) Neighborhood Councils shall have the power and responsibility to monitor the delivery and quality of City services in their respective communities, and to provide input and recommendations to the City Council, Mayor, and City Departments on improving and enhancing these services.
- (b) Neighborhood Councils shall establish standing committees or working groups focused on key areas of City services, such as public safety, infrastructure, transportation, sanitation, and parks and recreation, to facilitate the monitoring and evaluating these services at the community level.
- (c) These committees or working groups shall:
1. Regularly assess the effectiveness, responsiveness, and equity of City services in their communities, using a variety of methods such as surveys, community feedback, and data analysis.
 2. Identify gaps, challenges, or opportunities for improvement in the delivery of City services and develop recommendations for addressing these issues.
 3. Collaborate with relevant City Departments, the Mayor's office, and the City Council to share their findings, recommendations, and community input on City services.
 4. Advocate for allocating resources, policy changes, or other actions needed to enhance the quality and responsiveness of City services in their communities.
- (d) City Departments shall provide regular updates and reports to Neighborhood Councils on the delivery of services in their communities, including performance metrics, challenges, and improvement plans. These updates shall be provided through the Early Warning System (EWS) and in-person presentations at Neighborhood Council meetings, as requested.
- (e) Neighborhood Councils shall have the right to request and receive data and information from City Departments related to the delivery of services in their communities, subject to applicable legal and confidentiality requirements.
- (f) The Mayor and City Council shall give substantial weight to the input, recommendations, and Community Impact Statements provided by Neighborhood Councils regarding City services and shall provide a written response addressing how this input was considered and incorporated into decisions and actions related to service delivery.
- (g) The Department of Neighborhood Empowerment (DONE) shall provide training, resources, and support to Neighborhood Councils to help them effectively monitor and provide input on City services, including best practices for data analysis, community engagement, and advocacy.
- (h) Neighborhood Councils shall collaborate, through regional alliances or issue-based coalitions, to share information, best practices, and advocacy strategies related to monitoring and improving City services across multiple communities.

Section 905.

City Departments - Engagement and Collaboration with Neighborhood Councils

- (a) All City Departments shall recognize Neighborhood Councils as important stakeholders and valuable partners in engaging with their communities.
- (b) City Departments shall make every effort to consult with Neighborhood Councils early in the decisionmaking process on issues that may impact their communities and give due consideration to their input.
- (c) City Departments shall designate liaisons to work with Neighborhood Councils and to facilitate regular communication and collaboration between the department and the councils.
- (d) City Departments shall utilize Neighborhood Councils as a primary means of interfacing with stakeholders in their respective communities. They shall work with the councils to develop effective community outreach and engagement strategies.
- (e) City Departments shall provide training and resources to Neighborhood Councils to enhance their capacity to participate in departmental outreach activities effectively. This training shall include:
 - 1. Best practices for community outreach and engagement
 - 2. Strategies for effective communication and collaboration with City Departments
 - 3. Use of digital tools and platforms for outreach and engagement
 - 4. Techniques for gathering and incorporating community input into decision-making processes
- (f) City Departments shall actively involve Neighborhood Councils in the planning, implementation, and evaluation of their community outreach activities, such as:
 - 1. Public meetings and workshops
 - 2. Surveys and feedback mechanisms
 - 3. Community events and festivals
 - 4. Outreach campaigns and initiatives
- (g) City Departments shall collaborate with DONE to provide Neighborhood Councils with access to relevant data, digital tools, and platforms that can enhance their engagement and outreach efforts while ensuring appropriate data governance and security measures are in place.
- (h) City Departments shall work with DONE to integrate Neighborhood Councils into the City's digital infrastructure, such as shared data platforms, online collaboration tools, and digital service delivery, to facilitate seamless communication and collaboration between Neighborhood Councils and City agencies.
- (i) City Departments shall provide a written response to any formal communication, including Community Impact Statements, from a Neighborhood Council within 30 days of receipt. The response shall include:
 - 1. Acknowledgment of the communication and the issues, concerns, or recommendations raised by the Neighborhood Council.
 - 2. Describe how the department will consider or utilize the input provided by the Neighborhood Council in its decision-making processes.
 - 3. Once a determination has been made, information on the outcome or resolution of the issue, policy, or legislation addressed in the Neighborhood Council's communication will be provided.

- (j) If an outcome or resolution has not been reached within the initial 30-day response period, the City Department shall provide the Neighborhood Council with regular updates on the progress of the matter until a final determination is made.
- (k) DONE shall work with City Departments to develop and implement protocols for tracking and monitoring departments' responsiveness to Neighborhood Council communications and shall report on the effectiveness of these protocols to the City Council and the Mayor annually.

Section 906.

City Council and Mayor - Engagement with and Support for Neighborhood Councils

- (a) The City Council and the Mayor shall recognize Neighborhood Councils as important partners in the city's governance and accord them due respect and consideration in all matters affecting their communities.
- (b) The City Council shall consult with Neighborhood Councils on all major policy decisions and legislative actions that may impact their communities and give substantial weight to their input in the decision-making process.
- (c) The Mayor shall ensure that all City Departments and agencies under the Mayor's jurisdiction comply with their obligations to engage with Neighborhood Councils, as outlined in Section 902. They shall hold them accountable for doing so.
- (d) The City Council and the Mayor shall work with Neighborhood Councils to identify and address issues of concern to their communities and collaborate with them in developing solutions and initiatives to meet community needs.
- (e) The City Council and the Mayor shall provide regular updates to Neighborhood Councils on their activities and decisions and be responsive to requests for information or assistance from the councils.
- (f) The City Council and the Mayor shall ensure that Neighborhood Councils have the resources and support they need to effectively fulfill their role as the primary agents of community engagement. This shall include:
1. Allocating sufficient funds in the annual City budget to support the operations, outreach, and participation of Neighborhood Councils.
 2. Ensuring that the Department of Neighborhood Empowerment is adequately staffed and resourced to carry out its duties under Section 901.
 3. Providing dedicated funding for Neighborhood Council members' training, capacity-building, and leadership development programs.
 4. Regularly reviewing and adjusting funding levels based on the evolving needs and priorities of Neighborhood Councils and their communities.
- (g) The City Council and the Mayor shall not use the availability of Neighborhood Purpose Grants to justify reducing or limiting the core funding and support provided to Neighborhood Councils.
- (h) The City Council and the Mayor shall ensure that Neighborhood Councils have access to the digital infrastructure, tools, and resources to effectively engage with their stakeholders and participate in City decision-making online.

- (i) The City Council and the Mayor shall support DONE's efforts to provide training, resources, and support to Neighborhood Councils in building their digital marketing and engagement capacities, recognizing the critical role of these skills in fostering robust civic participation in the digital age.

Section 907.

**Utilization of the Early Warning System and Departmental Collaboration with
Neighborhood Councils**

- (a) The Department of Neighborhood Empowerment (DONE), the Board of Neighborhood Commissioners (BONC), and all other City departments shall actively utilize the City's existing Early Warning System (EWS) to provide timely and relevant information to Neighborhood Councils about issues, changes in projects or policies, and other matters that may impact their communities.
- (b) The EWS, managed by the City's Information Technology Department, shall be used to:
1. Distribute regular reports and updates to Neighborhood Councils on identified issues, concerns, or changes in City projects or policies.
 2. Facilitate timely communication and collaboration between City departments and Neighborhood Councils to address challenges and ensure community awareness of relevant developments.
 3. Provide Neighborhood Councils with a minimum of 60 days' advance notice of any proposed changes, a clear and concise summary of the potential impacts on the community and an opportunity for the Neighborhood Councils to provide input and feedback.
- (c) All City departments, boards, commissions, and other agencies shall be required to work proactively with DONE and Neighborhood Councils to provide early notification and detailed information through the EWS about any proposed changes to projects, policies, or other matters that may affect the communities served by the Neighborhood Councils.
- (d) DONE and BONC shall work with the Information Technology Department to ensure that the EWS is effectively utilized and maintained as a critical tool for communication and collaboration between City departments and Neighborhood Councils.
- (e) Neighborhood Councils shall have the right to submit Community Impact Statements to the City Clerk's Council File System and any relevant City department, board, commission, or agency regarding any matter that affects their community. These statements shall be given due consideration in the decision-making process. The recipient of a Community Impact Statement shall provide a written response to the submitting Neighborhood Council within 30 days, acknowledging receipt of the statement, outlining how the statement will be considered or utilized, and providing information on the outcome or resolution of the issue, policy, or legislation addressed in the statement.
- (f) DONE shall work proactively with Neighborhood Councils and City departments to facilitate effective communication, collaboration, and problem-solving, focusing on capacity building, leadership development, and stakeholder engagement strategies.
- (g) The use of the EWS and departmental collaboration processes shall be designed and implemented in a supportive, transparent, and empowering manner for Neighborhood Councils and their communities.
- (h) DONE shall provide regular updates to the City Council and the Mayor on the effectiveness of the EWS and departmental collaboration, along with recommendations for further support or resources needed to strengthen the Neighborhood Council system.

Section 908.

General Manager of the Department of Neighborhood Empowerment

- (a) The General Manager of the Department of Neighborhood Empowerment (DONE) shall be appointed by the Mayor, subject to confirmation by the City Council, and shall serve at the mayor's pleasure.
- (b) The General Manager shall be responsible for DONE's overall administration, management, and operation, ensuring that the department effectively carries out its duties and responsibilities as outlined in Section 901.
- (c) The General Manager shall have the following core responsibilities:
 - 1. Providing leadership, direction, and supervision to DONE staff in supporting and empowering Neighborhood Councils.
 - 2. Developing and implementing strategies, programs, and initiatives to enhance the effectiveness and impact of the Neighborhood Council system.
 - 3. Managing DONE's budget and resources to ensure they are used efficiently and aligned with the department's mission and priorities.
 - 4. Collaborating with other City agencies, the City Council, and the Mayor's office to promote the integration of Neighborhood Councils into City decision-making processes;
 - 5. Regularly engaging with Neighborhood Councils to understand their needs, concerns, and priorities, and to gather feedback on DONE's support and services.
 - 6. Providing administrative, operational, and logistical support to the Board of Neighborhood Commissioners (BONC) as outlined in Section 902(g).
 - 7. Reporting to the Mayor and City Council on the activities, achievements, and challenges of DONE and the Neighborhood Council system.
- (d) The General Manager shall possess the following minimum qualifications and capabilities:
 - 1. Demonstrated community engagement, grassroots organizing, and/or civic participation expertise.
 - 2. Strong leadership, management, and communication skills.
 - 3. Deep understanding of the Neighborhood Council system and its role in Los Angeles City governance.
 - 4. Ability to build and maintain effective relationships with diverse stakeholders, including Neighborhood Councils, City agencies, elected officials, and community organizations.
 - 5. Commitment to transparency, accountability, and inclusive decision-making.
 - 6. Experience in public administration, organizational development, and/or program management.
 - 7. Knowledge of City budgeting, contracting, and administrative processes.
 - 8. Knowledge of digital engagement strategies, online collaboration tools, and data management best practices.
 - 9. Experience in developing and implementing effective digital marketing and communication strategies for community-based organizations.

10. Demonstrated expertise in marketing, branding, and communication strategies for community-based organizations.
 11. Proven track record of successfully developing and implementing marketing and engagement initiatives that drive stakeholder participation and mobilization.
- (e) The Mayor and City Council shall ensure that the General Manager receives the necessary resources, support, and authority to effectively fulfill their responsibilities and to enable DONE to carry out its mission of supporting and empowering Neighborhood Councils.
- (f) The General Manager shall prioritize allocating resources and staff to support the Marketing and Engagement Support Unit within DONE, recognizing its critical role in empowering Neighborhood Councils to effectively engage and mobilize their stakeholders.
- (g) The General Manager shall prioritize developing and implementing training programs, resources, and support initiatives to build the digital marketing and engagement capacities of Neighborhood Councils, recognizing the critical role of these skills in fostering effective civic participation in the digital age.

Section 909.

Certification and Decertification of Neighborhood Councils

- (a) The Department of Neighborhood Empowerment (DONE), in collaboration with the Board of Neighborhood Commissioners (BONC), shall establish and maintain a transparent, fair, and inclusive process for the certification and decertification of Neighborhood Councils.
- (b) The certification process shall ensure that proposed Neighborhood Councils:
1. Represent a diverse and inclusive community stakeholder base.
 2. Have developed a clear purpose, mission, and governance structure.
 3. Have demonstrated a commitment to engaging and empowering their stakeholders.
 4. Have a plan for marketing, outreach, and communication with their stakeholders, considering the volunteer nature of the board members.
 5. Have a leadership team that reflects the diversity of their community and is committed to the principles of inclusive, participatory governance.
- (c) DONE shall provide guidance, resources, and support to assist community groups in forming and certifying new Neighborhood Councils, ensuring that all interested parties have equitable access to the certification process. This support shall include training and resources tailored to the needs of volunteer board members.
- (d) BONC shall have the authority to approve or deny the certification of a proposed Neighborhood Council based on the criteria established by DONE and the provisions of this Article while considering the volunteer status of the board members.
- (e) Once certified, a Neighborhood Council shall be subject to the provisions of this Article and any other applicable laws, regulations, and policies governing the Neighborhood Council system. However, these provisions shall be applied in a manner that recognizes the volunteer nature of the board members and does not place undue burdens on their participation.

- (f) DONE, in collaboration with BONC, shall establish a process for decertifying Neighborhood Councils that fail to meet the minimum standards of operation, engagement, and governance, as outlined in this Article and the Plan for Neighborhood Councils. This process shall consider the volunteer status of the board members and provide adequate support and resources to help struggling councils address any deficiencies.
- (g) The decertification process shall include:
1. Explicit criteria for initiating decertification proceedings, with due consideration given to the challenges faced by volunteer-led organizations.
 2. Adequate notice and opportunity for the Neighborhood Council to respond to and address any deficiencies, along with guidance and support from DONE.
 3. A fair and impartial hearing before BONC to consider the evidence and arguments for and against decertification, taking into account the volunteer nature of the board.
 4. A final decision by BONC, subject to appeal to the City Council.
- (h) DONE shall work with any decertified Neighborhood Council to address the issues that led to decertification and support re-establishing a new, certified council in the affected community if community stakeholders desire. This support shall be tailored to the needs and constraints of volunteer-led organizations.

Section 910.

Neighborhood Council Elections and Selections

- (a) Neighborhood Councils shall have the option to hold either elections or selections for their board members, as determined by their bylaws and in accordance with the policies and procedures established by the Department of Neighborhood Empowerment (DONE) and the City Clerk.
- (b) The City Clerk shall be responsible for administering and overseeing Neighborhood Council elections and selections, ensuring that they are conducted fairly, transparently, and in compliance with all applicable laws, regulations, and procedures.
- (c) DONE, in collaboration with the City Clerk and Neighborhood Councils, shall be responsible for the year-round promotion, outreach, and education efforts related to Neighborhood Council elections and selections, with the goal of maximizing candidate recruitment, voter participation, and stakeholder engagement.
- (d) DONE and the City Clerk shall develop and implement a comprehensive and multi-faceted outreach and education campaign to promote Neighborhood Council elections and selections, which shall include, but not be limited to:
1. Creating and disseminating informational materials, such as brochures, flyers, and videos, explaining the purpose, process, and importance of Neighborhood Council elections and selections.
 2. Conducting targeted outreach to underrepresented communities and stakeholder groups to encourage their participation as candidates and voters.
 3. Partnering with community-based organizations, schools, and other local institutions to spread awareness and build support for Neighborhood Council elections and selections.

4. Utilizing traditional and digital media channels, including social media, local news outlets, and public service announcements, to promote elections and selections and encourage stakeholder participation.
 5. Hosting candidate forums, workshops, and other events to educate potential candidates and voters about the Neighborhood Council system and the election/selection process.
 6. Providing technical assistance and support to Neighborhood Councils in their own outreach and promotion efforts related to elections and selections.
- (e) The City shall allocate adequate funding to support the year-round promotion and outreach efforts for Neighborhood Council elections and selections and the administration of the polls and selections themselves.
- (f) DONE and the City Clerk shall work collaboratively with Neighborhood Councils to continuously assess and improve the effectiveness of the election and selection processes and related outreach and promotion efforts, based on metrics such as candidate recruitment, voter turnout, and stakeholder satisfaction.
- (g) The City Clerk, in consultation with DONE, shall establish and maintain a centralized database of Neighborhood Council stakeholders to verify voter eligibility and facilitate election outreach efforts while ensuring appropriate privacy protections.
- (h) DONE and the City Clerk shall provide regular reports to the City Council, Mayor, and Neighborhood Councils on the status, outcomes, and challenges of Neighborhood Council elections and selections, including recommendations for improvements and any necessary policy or resource interventions.

Section 911.

Appropriation and Independent Funding Commission

- (a) The City shall appropriate funds for the Department of Neighborhood Empowerment (DONE) and the Neighborhood Councils each fiscal year to ensure their proper functioning and the fulfillment of their duties and responsibilities as outlined in this Article.
- (b) An Independent Neighborhood Council Funding Commission (INCFC) shall be established to evaluate and recommend the appropriate level of funding necessary for Neighborhood Councils to effectively carry out their roles and responsibilities and serve as a vital link between communities and City governance.
- (c) The INCFC shall be composed of seven members, appointed as follows:
1. Two members appointed by the Mayor.
 2. Two members appointed by the City Council.
 3. Two members appointed by the Board of Neighborhood Commissioners (BONC);
 4. One member appointed by the Controller.
- (d) The members of the INCFC shall have demonstrated expertise in public budgeting, community engagement, and/or the Neighborhood Council system, and shall not be current City employees or Neighborhood Council board members.
- (e) The INCFC shall, on a tri-annual basis:

1. Conduct a review and comprehensive update assessment of neighborhood council funding needs, considering factors such as community outreach, meeting expenses, administrative costs, and project and program implementation.
 2. Evaluate the effectiveness of the current funding allocation and distribution process for Neighborhood Councils.
 3. Review the overall budget of DONE and assess its adequacy in supporting the Neighborhood Council system.
 4. Based on their findings and analysis, provide recommendations to the Mayor and City Council on the appropriate level of funding for Neighborhood Councils and DONE.
- (f) The Mayor and City Council shall give substantial weight to the INCFC's recommendations in developing the annual City budget and shall provide a written justification for any significant deviations from these recommendations.
- (g) The INCFC shall also provide guidance and recommendations to Neighborhood Councils on best practices for financial management, budgeting, and the effective use of allocated funds to maximize their impact in the community.
- (h) The INCFC shall operate with complete transparency and make its findings, recommendations, and methodologies available to the public and Neighborhood Councils in a timely and accessible manner.
- (i) The City shall provide the INCFC with the necessary resources, staff support, and access to information to carry out its duties effectively and independently.
- (j) The INCFC shall develop recommendations for a more equitable and needs-based funding model for Neighborhood Councils, considering factors such as:
1. The population size and demographic characteristics of each Neighborhood Council's community.
 2. The geographic size and density of each Neighborhood Council's area.
 3. Each community has unique socio-economic challenges and needs, such as poverty, unemployment, and language barriers.
 4. The level of civic engagement and participation in each Neighborhood Council's activities.
 5. The operational and administrative costs of running a Neighborhood Council in each community.
- (k) In developing these recommendations, the INCFC shall:
1. Consult with Neighborhood Councils, community stakeholders, and City Departments to gather input and perspectives on funding needs and challenges.
 2. Research and evaluate funding models used by other jurisdictions with similar neighborhood council or community engagement systems.
 3. Conduct public hearings and workshops to present proposed funding models and gather feedback from Neighborhood Councils and the public.
 4. Develop clear criteria and guidelines for implementing and evaluating the effectiveness of the proposed funding model.

- (l) The INCFC shall present its recommendations for a new Neighborhood Council funding model to the Mayor, City Council, and BONC within one year of adopting this amended Article IX.
- (m) The Mayor and City Council shall give substantial weight to the INCFC's recommendations. It shall work collaboratively with BONC and DONE to implement a more equitable and needs-based funding model for Neighborhood Councils within a reasonable timeframe.
- (n) The INCFC shall conduct an interim review after 18 months to assess the effectiveness of the implemented funding model and provide recommendations for further improvements as needed.

Section 912.

Neighborhood Purpose Grants

- (a) Neighborhood Councils may issue Neighborhood Purpose Grants (NPGs) to support community-based projects and initiatives that align with their mission and priorities, as outlined in Section 900, subject to the provisions of this section.
- (b) The issuance of NPGs shall be at the discretion of the City Council and the Mayor, who shall determine annually whether to authorize the NPG program and, if so, at what funding level.
- (c) If authorized, the City Council and the Mayor shall allocate specific funds for the NPG program during the annual budget process. The City Clerk shall be responsible for administering these funds and overseeing the NPG program in accordance with the policies and procedures established by the City Council and the Mayor.
- (d) If the City Council and the Mayor do not authorize the NPG program each year or allocate insufficient funds to meet the needs of all Neighborhood Councils, DONE shall work with the Neighborhood Councils to identify alternative ways to support community-based projects and initiatives, such as through partnerships, in-kind resources, or other funding sources. Additionally, at its discretion, the City Council may authorize the City Clerk to accept monetary donations to an NPG account for a Neighborhood Council to provide NPGs.
- (e) The issuance of NPGs shall not detract from or substitute for neighborhood councils' core responsibilities and functions in engaging stakeholders and participating in City decision-making processes.
- (f) DONE shall provide guidance and oversight to ensure that any authorized NPGs are used appropriately and in compliance with all applicable laws, regulations, and policies.
- (g) Neighborhood Councils shall report annually to DONE on their use of NPGs, including the projects and initiatives supported, the outcomes achieved, and any challenges or lessons learned. DONE shall compile these reports and provide an annual summary to the City Council and the Mayor, along with any program improvements or adjustments recommendations.

Section 913.

Neighborhood Council Budget Advocates

- (a) There shall be an independent alliance of Neighborhood Council members, known as the Budget Advocates, which shall be empowered to:
 - 1. Review and analyze the Mayor's proposed budget on behalf of Neighborhood Councils;
 - 2. Conduct interviews with City Department heads and other key officials to gather information and insights on budgetary matters.

3. Based on their analysis and findings, issue reports and recommendations to inform and advise Neighborhood Councils, the Mayor, and the City Council on the City budget.
 4. Coordinate with Neighborhood Councils to gather input, priorities, and concerns related to the city budget, and to incorporate this feedback into their reports and recommendations.
 5. Advocate for allocating City resources and funding to meet the specific needs and priorities of Neighborhood Councils and their communities.
- (b) The Budget Advocates shall be composed of representatives from each Neighborhood Council, selected through a fair and transparent process as outlined in the Neighborhood Council bylaws and the Department of Neighborhood Empowerment's (DONE) policies.
- (c) While the Budget Advocates serve a crucial role in representing the interests of Neighborhood Councils in the City budget process, they shall operate as an independent entity and are not an official part of City governance.
- (d) Notwithstanding their independent status, the Budget Advocates shall be entitled to receive funding from the City to support their work, including but not limited to expenses related to research, analysis, meetings, and the production of reports and recommendations.
- (e) The Budget Advocates shall receive regular training and support from DONE and the City Administrative Officer (CAO) to enhance their understanding of the City budget process, financial management, and effective advocacy strategies.
- (f) The Mayor and City Council shall give substantial weight to the Budget Advocates' reports, recommendations, and input. It shall provide a written response addressing how their input was considered and incorporated into the final City budget.
- (g) The Budget Advocates shall work collaboratively with DONE, the Neighborhood Councils, the Mayor's office, and the City Council to ensure that the City budget reflects the needs, priorities, and concerns of the communities served by the Neighborhood Councils.
- (h) To foster transparency and accountability in the budget process, the Budget Advocates shall provide regular updates and reports to the Neighborhood Councils on their activities, findings, and the impact of their advocacy efforts.

Section 914.

Citywide Neighborhood Council Conferences

- (a) The Department of Neighborhood Empowerment (DONE), in collaboration with Neighborhood Councils, shall organize and host semi-annual Citywide Neighborhood Council Conferences in March and September of each year.
- (b) The purpose of these conferences shall be to:
1. Provide education, training, and resources to Neighborhood Council members and the public on topics relevant to the Neighborhood Council system and effective community engagement.
 2. Foster discussion, collaboration, and networking among Neighborhood Councils, City officials, and community stakeholders on issues of importance to Neighborhood Councils and their communities.
 3. Showcase best practices, innovations, and successes of Neighborhood Councils in addressing community needs and promoting civic participation.

4. Gather input and feedback from Neighborhood Councils and the public on ways to improve and strengthen the Neighborhood Council system and its impact on City governance.
- (c) DONE shall work collaboratively with Neighborhood Councils to develop each conference's agenda, content, and format, ensuring that the events are responsive to the needs and interests of Neighborhood Councils and their stakeholders.
- (d) The City shall provide adequate funding for the planning, promotion, and execution of the Citywide Neighborhood Council Conferences, including but not limited to:
1. Securing appropriate venues and facilities.
 2. Providing necessary audio-visual equipment, materials, and supplies.
 3. Covering the costs of speakers, facilitators, and other program participants.
 4. Offering translation and interpretation services to ensure language accessibility.
 5. Providing refreshments and meals as appropriate.
 6. Supporting outreach and promotion efforts to maximize attendance and participation.
- (e) The Citywide Neighborhood Council Conferences shall be open to all Neighborhood Council members, stakeholders, and interested members of the public, with no admission fee required.
- (f) DONE shall work with Neighborhood Councils and other City Departments to identify and secure additional resources, partnerships, and sponsorships to enhance the conferences' quality, reach, and impact.
- (g) DONE shall provide a report to the City Council, Mayor, and Neighborhood Councils within 60 days after each conference, summarizing the key outcomes, learnings, and recommendations from the event and any plans for follow-up actions or improvements.
- (h) The Citywide Neighborhood Council Conferences shall be considered an essential component of the City's support for the Neighborhood Council system and its commitment to fostering a strong, vibrant, and inclusive system of participatory governance in Los Angeles.

Section 915.

Evaluation and Improvement of the Neighborhood Council System

- (a) The Department of Neighborhood Empowerment (DONE), in collaboration with the Board of Neighborhood Commissioners (BONC), shall establish a comprehensive framework for the regular evaluation and continuous improvement of the Neighborhood Council system.
- (b) DONE shall conduct a bi-annual assessment after elections of the effectiveness, impact, and challenges of the Neighborhood Council system, considering factors such as:
1. Stakeholder engagement and participation.
 2. Diversity and inclusivity of Neighborhood Council membership and leadership.
 3. Collaboration and communication between Neighborhood Councils, City Departments, and other stakeholders.
 4. Impact of Neighborhood Council activities and initiatives on their communities.
 5. Effectiveness of Neighborhood Council marketing and engagement strategies.

6. Allocation and utilization of resources and support provided to Neighborhood Councils.
- (c) Based on the findings of the bi-annual assessment, DONE shall develop and present to BONC and the City Council a set of recommendations for enhancing the effectiveness, impact, and sustainability of the Neighborhood Council system.
- (d) DONE shall work with Neighborhood Councils, City Departments, and other stakeholders to implement the approved recommendations and continuously monitor their progress and outcomes.
- (e) Every five years, DONE shall conduct a comprehensive review of the Neighborhood Council system, including an evaluation of the existing Plan for Neighborhood Councils, to identify areas for strategic improvement and make recommendations for amendments to the Plan or the City Charter, as necessary.
- (f) The City Council and the Mayor shall ensure that DONE has the necessary resources, support, and authority to effectively carry out its responsibilities for evaluating and improving the Neighborhood Council system.

Section 916.

Comprehensive Review of the Neighborhood Council System

- (a) Every nine years, the City shall issue a rigorous, in-depth, and impartial comprehensive review of the Neighborhood Council system, assessing its effectiveness, identifying areas for improvement, and making recommendations for any necessary amendments to this Article or other relevant policies and procedures.
- (b) Conducting the comprehensive review process shall begin seven years after completing the previous review's final report and be conducted over two years.
- (c) The comprehensive review shall be conducted by an independent, external entity with demonstrated expertise in community engagement, local governance, and organizational evaluation. The entity shall be selected through a competitive bidding process and shall not have any conflicts of interest with the City or the Neighborhood Council system.
- (d) The comprehensive review shall build upon the findings and recommendations of the annual reviews conducted by the Department of Neighborhood Empowerment (DONE) and the Board of Neighborhood Commissioners (BONC) during the preceding 5 years, as outlined in Section 907.
- (e) The comprehensive review shall include, but not be limited to, a thorough assessment of:
 1. The overall effectiveness of the Neighborhood Council system in promoting civic engagement, community empowerment, and meaningful participation in City governance.
 2. The adequacy and equity of funding and resources provided to Neighborhood Councils.
 3. The effectiveness of the support, training, and resources provided by DONE and other City Departments to Neighborhood Councils.
 4. The level of collaboration and engagement between Neighborhood Councils, City Departments, the Mayor's office, and the City Council.
 5. The effectiveness of the Early Warning System (EWS) and other communication and notification processes.
 6. The Impact of Neighborhood Council Input and recommendations on City decision-making and Service delivery.

7. Any barriers or challenges to effective participation and representation in the Neighborhood Council system.
- (f) In conducting the comprehensive review, the independent entity shall:
1. Engage extensively with Neighborhood Councils, community stakeholders, City Departments, and other relevant entities to gather input, feedback, and recommendations.
 2. Review data, metrics, and reports related to Neighborhood Council performance, funding, and impact, including the findings of DONE and BONC's annual reviews.
 3. Evaluate the effectiveness of any changes or improvements implemented since the last comprehensive review.
 4. Identify best practices and innovations from other jurisdictions or organizations that could be adapted to strengthen the Neighborhood Council system.
 5. Conduct a rigorous analysis of the findings using appropriate research methodologies and evaluation frameworks.
- (g) Based on the comprehensive review's findings, the independent entity shall develop a detailed report with specific, actionable recommendations for improvements, reforms, or amendments to the Neighborhood Council system, including any proposed changes to this Article.
- (h) The report and recommendations shall be presented to the Mayor, City Council, DONE, BONC, and the public within six months of the completion of the comprehensive review.
- (i) The Mayor and City Council shall carefully consider the recommendations from the comprehensive review. It shall develop a public action plan, in collaboration with DONE, BONC, and Neighborhood Councils, to implement necessary changes and improvements promptly and transparently.
- (j) The City shall allocate adequate resources and funding to support the comprehensive review process and implement recommended changes and improvements.

Section 917.

Transfer of Powers and Continuation of the Neighborhood Council System

- (a) Upon the adoption of this amended Article IX, all powers, duties, and responsibilities of the Department of Neighborhood Empowerment (DONE), the Board of Neighborhood Commissioners (BONC), and the Neighborhood Councils shall be transferred to and assumed by their respective entities as described in this Article.
- (b) All existing Neighborhood Councils shall continue to operate under their current certification, bylaws, and election procedures until they are required to comply with any new provisions or amendments to this Article, as determined by DONE and BONC.
- (c) DONE and BONC shall work collaboratively with Neighborhood Councils to develop a clear and comprehensive transition plan for the implementation of the revised Article IX, including:
1. Updating certification requirements, bylaws, and election procedures to align with the new provisions.
 2. Providing training, resources, and support to Neighborhood Councils to facilitate a smooth transition.

3. Establishing a timeline for compliance with new provisions, considering the varying needs and capacities of individual Neighborhood Councils.
 4. Monitoring and evaluating the progress of the transition process and making necessary adjustments to ensure its success.
- (d) During the transition process, DONE shall continue to provide all necessary support and resources to Neighborhood Councils to ensure their ongoing operation and effectiveness in serving their communities.
- (e) The City Council shall approve a transitional budget allocation for DONE and the Neighborhood Councils sufficient to support the successful implementation of the revised Article IX.
- (f) All existing contracts, agreements, and partnerships entered into by DONE, BONC, or any Neighborhood Council shall remain in effect unless and until they are amended, terminated, or superseded in accordance with their respective terms and the provisions of this Article.
- (g) The Mayor, City Council, DONE, and BONC shall work collaboratively to address any challenges or obstacles during the transition process. They shall make necessary adjustments to ensure the continued vitality and success of the Neighborhood Council system.
- (h) The transition process shall prioritize transparency, inclusivity, and ongoing communication with Neighborhood Councils and community stakeholders to ensure that their voices are heard, and their needs are met throughout the implementation of the revised Article IX.

Section 918.

Effecting the Ordinance

- (a) Upon adopting this amended Article IX, all previous versions of Article IX shall be superseded and replaced by the provisions contained herein.
- (b) Any existing ordinances, regulations, or policies inconsistent with the provisions of this amended Article IX shall be null and void to the extent of such inconsistency.
- (c) The City Council shall have the authority to adopt additional ordinances, regulations, or policies as necessary to implement and enforce the provisions of this amended Article IX, provided that such enactments are consistent with the spirit and intent of this Article.
- (d) The adoption of this amended Article IX shall not affect the validity of any actions, decisions, or agreements made by the Department of Neighborhood Empowerment (DONE), the Board of Neighborhood Commissioners (BONC), or any Neighborhood Council before the effective date of this Article, provided that such actions, decisions, or agreements were valid under the previously applicable provisions of Article IX.
- (e) Any challenges, disputes, or legal proceedings arising from the interpretation or application of this amended Article IX shall be resolved in accordance with the dispute resolution processes established by DONE and BONC, or through the appropriate judicial channels as necessary.
- (f) The provisions of this amended Article IX shall be severable. If any section, subsection, sentence, clause, phrase, or portion of this Article is held invalid or unconstitutional by a court of competent jurisdiction, such decision shall not affect the validity of the remaining portions of this Article.
- (g) The City Attorney shall have the authority to review and interpret the provisions of this amended Article IX and to provide legal guidance to DONE, BONC, the Neighborhood Councils, and other City entities as necessary to ensure its consistent and lawful implementation.

(h) The relationship between Neighborhood Councils and the City Attorney shall be governed by the following principles:

1. The City Attorney shall provide legal advice and representation to Neighborhood Councils on matters related to their official powers, duties, and functions as described in Article IX, subject to the resources and priorities of the City Attorney's Office.
2. Neighborhood Councils shall have the right to request and receive legal opinions from the City Attorney on their operations, decision-making processes, and compliance with applicable laws and regulations.
3. In the event of a potential conflict of interest between the legal interests of a Neighborhood Council and those of the City, its departments, or other entities, the City Attorney shall promptly notify the affected Neighborhood Council and work collaboratively to identify and implement appropriate measures to address the conflict, which may include:
 - a) Assigning separate legal counsel within the City Attorney's Office to represent the Neighborhood Council and the City entity, respectively.
 - b) Engaging outside legal counsel to represent the Neighborhood Council, subject to the approval of the City Council and the Mayor.
 - c) Developing ethical screens or other safeguards to ensure that the Neighborhood Council's legal representation is not compromised by the City Attorney's obligations to the City.
4. The City Attorney shall develop and implement policies and procedures to identify, disclose, and mitigate potential conflicts of interest in the legal representation of Neighborhood Councils, and shall provide regular training to Neighborhood Council board members on their legal rights and responsibilities.

(i) This amended Article IX shall take effect immediately upon its adoption by the City Council and approval by the Mayor, unless otherwise specified in the adopting ordinance.