

Communication from Public

Name: Renee H

Date Submitted: 04/29/2026 08:32 AM

Council File No: 26-0489

Comments for Public Posting: Los Angeles needs to pass Rank Choice Voting. Not just for itself, LA has an obligation to make the RCV something that every municipality in the county is able to achieve for themselves. At present moment, voting equipment does not support it. This means that whoever has their ballots printed from the Los Angeles County Registrar is effectively barred from implementing Ranked Choice Voting in their own elections. RCV is proven to be effective in creating a more representative democracy of the people. Every city should be able to have that, especially Los Angeles.

Communication from Public

Name: Elizabeth Dunkelberger
Date Submitted: 04/29/2026 02:49 PM
Council File No: 26-0489
Comments for Public Posting: I am in favor of funding the parks.

Communication from Public

Name: Shirley Kressel

Date Submitted: 04/29/2026 03:15 PM

Council File No: 26-0489

Comments for Public Posting: I am writing to advocate strongly for Ranked Choice Voting! This is an important way to encourage every citizen to vote, by letting them vote their conscience and express their wishes, without fear of the "spoiler" effect. It is far more efficient than having run-off elections. There is no downside to Ranked Choice voting, and there are many advantages. Thank you for your diligince in supporting a healthy democratic process. Shirley Kressel

Communication from Public

Name: Soraya

Date Submitted: 04/29/2026 02:23 PM

Council File No: 26-0489

Comments for Public Posting: Councilman President Marqueece Harris-Dawson Dear Chair and Members of the Committee, I urge you to treat Charter reform as a once-in-a-generation opportunity to rebuild trust in City Hall. Please ensure that the public is fully engaged in this process and that the final package includes meaningful structural reforms. In particular, I support expanding the City Council to improve representation and advancing strong ethics reforms, including authorizing the Ethics Commission to place ordinances on the ballot, providing them independent legal counsel, and ensuring they have a protected budget. These reforms are critical to strengthening accountability and restoring public trust. Los Angeles needs a government that is more transparent, more representative, and more accountable to its residents. I urge you to move forward with a comprehensive reform package that meets this moment.

Communication from Public

Name: Soraya

Date Submitted: 04/29/2026 02:24 PM

Council File No: 26-0489

Comments for Public Posting: Dear Chair and Members of the Committee, I urge you to treat Charter reform as a once-in-a-generation opportunity to rebuild trust in City Hall. Please ensure that the public is fully engaged in this process and that the final package includes meaningful structural reforms. In particular, I support expanding the City Council to improve representation and advancing strong ethics reforms, including authorizing the Ethics Commission to place ordinances on the ballot, providing them independent legal counsel, and ensuring they have a protected budget. These reforms are critical to strengthening accountability and restoring public trust. Los Angeles needs a government that is more transparent, more representative, and more accountable to its residents. I urge you to move forward with a comprehensive reform package that meets this moment.

Communication from Public

Name:

Date Submitted: 04/29/2026 02:27 PM

Council File No: 26-0489

Comments for Public Posting: Dear Chair and Members of the Committee, I am greatly heartened by the goals and values represented in the proposed changes to the City Charter. I urge you to treat Charter reform as a once-in-a-generation opportunity to rebuild trust in City Hall. Please ensure that the public is fully engaged in this process and that the final package includes meaningful structural reforms. In particular, I support expanding the City Council to improve representation and advancing strong ethics reforms, including authorizing the Ethics Commission to place ordinances on the ballot, providing them independent legal counsel, and ensuring they have a protected budget. These reforms are critical to strengthening accountability and restoring public trust. Los Angeles needs a government that is more transparent, more representative, and more accountable to its residents. I urge you to move forward with a comprehensive reform package that meets this moment. Sandra Cutuli woofster46@gmail.com 1840 Preuss Road Los Angeles, California 90035-4314

Communication from Public

Name:

Date Submitted: 04/29/2026 02:31 PM

Council File No: 26-0489

Comments for Public Posting: I oppose raising property taxes for this kind of funding. Please fix the wasteful spending and rampant fraud, and you'll hve more than enough funds for this.

Communication from Public

Name: nancy freedman
Date Submitted: 04/29/2026 01:25 PM
Council File No: 26-0489
Comments for Public Posting: My request is to move the request for more General Fund allotment to the November ballot for voters to approve. The parks are in dire need of staff and repair. There is work to be done and RAP works with bandaids and revolving staff. It is in dire need to service communities and serves all people. Now is the time to double the funds that have not been raised since 1937.

Communication from Public

Name: Center for Asian Americans United for Self-Empowerment

Date Submitted: 04/29/2026 01:26 PM

Council File No: 26-0489

Comments for Public Posting: To the Los Angeles City Council Rules, Elections, and Intergovernmental Relations Committee: On behalf of the Center for Asian Americans United for Self-Empowerment (CAUSE), we are submitting the attached February 2026 Charter Reform White Paper and formal Public Comment Letter to the Charter Reform Commission. These documents summarize the urgent structural reforms needed to address a significant representation gap: only 46% of AANHPI residents currently feel well-represented by city leadership. We urge the Committee to review the detailed findings in the White Paper regarding two primary priorities: Codifying Language Access as a Charter Right: To ensure equity, language access must move from a discretionary, underfunded service to a mandatory, citywide obligation. Expanding the City Council to 25-29 Districts: Smaller districts are essential to increasing responsiveness and preventing the dilution of geographically dispersed AANHPI communities. The attached documents offer a roadmap for a more ethical and accessible city government. We look forward to your review of these recommendations. Sincerely, Nancy Yap
Executive Director CAUSE



Center for Asian Americans United for Self Empowerment

FEBRUARY 2026 CHARTER REFORM WHITE PAPER

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

On February 23, 2026, CAUSE convened Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander (AANHPI) community leaders and stakeholders for a dialogue with Los Angeles City Charter Reform Commissioners. While current city structures often fail to reach these communities, this convening provided a platform to advocate for systemic changes in representation, language accessibility, and government accountability. This white paper serves as a record of the policy recommendations and community narratives shared.

CONTEXT AND BACKGROUND

Why Charter Reform is Happening: The City of Los Angeles is currently undergoing its first charter reform process since 1999. The energy for reform was triggered by a series of political scandals and a general crisis of public trust in City Hall. This constitutional review is a once-in-a-generation opportunity to restructure city government to be more ethical, transparent, and representative.

Missing Perspectives: The AANHPI community is a critical demographic in Los Angeles, yet many residents feel disconnected from city leadership. A 2022 multiethnic survey by CAUSE revealed that only 46% of AANHPI residents feel well-represented by elected and appointed city leaders - the lowest percentage among all major racial groups surveyed.

Building on CAUSE's ongoing work regarding redistricting and election administration, this convening served as a strategic dialogue to ensure the Commission appreciates the complexity of AANHPI communities. The goal is to move beyond romantic notions of inclusion and toward practical, codified structural reforms that protect the interests and accessibility of a community representing dozens of distinct ethnicities and languages.

With the City Charter Reform Commission currently evaluating the city's governing operating system, AANHPI leaders emphasized that reform is an art that requires proactive engagement and inspiration to solve deep-seated inequities. This meeting aimed to bridge the gap between these community insights and the formal commission process.

LOCATION: CAUSE Office

MATERIALS SHARED

- [Letter from CAUSE, re: LA City Charter Reform Commission's ad hoc committee](#)
- [Public Charter Reform Item Tracker](#)



Center for Asian Americans United for Self Empowerment

COMMUNITY LEADERS IN ATTENDANCE (22)

- **LA City Charter Reform Commission**
 - Raymond Meza, Commission Chair
 - Justin Ramirez, Executive Director
 - Andrea Mac
 - Carla Fuentes
 - James Thomas
 - Michael Yap
 - Ted Stein
- **Community Organizations:**
 - **Lead:** CAUSE - Center for Asian Americans United for Self-Empowerment (Charlie Woo (Board Chair), Nancy Yap, Heather Sit)
 - AAPI Equity Alliance - Asian American Pacific Islander Equity Alliance (Hoang Nguyen)
 - ABA - Asian Business Association (Dennis Huang)
 - AJSOCAL - Asian Americans Advancing Justice Southern California (Benjamin Tran)
 - KADC - Korean American Democratic Committee (Esther Lim, Kenneth Ahn)
 - PWC - Pilipino Workers Center (Aquilina Soriano Versoza)
 - Thai CDC - Thai Community Development Center (Chanchanit Martorell)
- **Submitted Written Comments in Lieu of Attendance**
 - APIFM - Asian Pacific Islander Forward Movement
 - SOCALPICRT - Southern California Pacific Islander Community Response Team
- **Additional Community Leaders Attending as Individuals**
 - Christen Marquez, UCLA Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander Data Policy Lab
 - Godfrey Plata
 - Sydney Pike, Pacific Islander Health Partnership
 - Valentine Angeles, Political Policy Consultant
 - William Chao

KEY INSIGHTS AND REFLECTIONS

- **Challenging the AANHPI Monolith:** A recurring theme was the danger of viewing the AANHPI community through a single lens. Leaders representing Filipino, Thai, Korean, Chinese, Vietnamese, Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander, and South Asian interests emphasized that no single voice can represent the needs of diverse neighborhoods - from the working-class needs of the Thai community to the unique health disparities faced by the geographically dispersed Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander populations.
- **The Need for Council Expansion:** Participants broadly agreed that the current size of Los Angeles City Council districts limits meaningful engagement with many communities across the city. Leaders emphasized that expanding the number of districts would enable more responsive governance and greater opportunities for distinct communities of interest to be visible within districts. Several participants noted



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that larger expansions, including proposals up to 29 districts, would further increase the likelihood that geographically dispersed AANHPI communities could be meaningfully represented.

- **Language Access as a Structural Necessity:** Current language access efforts are often treated as discretionary and are frequently underfunded. Leaders highlighted that city departments often cite a “lack of budget” as a reason for failing to provide translation or interpretation services. There is a collective demand to move these protections out of temporary executive orders and into the City Charter to ensure they are mandatory and fully-funded.

STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATIONS & NEXT STEPS

1. **Advancing Meaningful Council Expansion:** Following this discussion, and informed by research from community coalitions and academic partners, CAUSE will continue advocating for meaningful expansion of the Los Angeles City Council to reduce district size and strengthen representation for communities across the city. Increasing the number of districts and reducing district size would help ensure that geographically dispersed AANHPI communities of interest are not diluted or split across multiple districts. Smaller districts also enable more localized governance, allowing council offices to better understand and respond to the cultural, linguistic, and economic dynamics of the neighborhoods they serve. This structure creates greater opportunity for distinct AANHPI ethnic communities to be visible within districts and strengthens engagement and accountability between residents and their elected representatives.
 2. **Pursuing Language Access as a Charter Right:** Following this discussion, CAUSE will advocate for the incorporation of language access protections into the Los Angeles City Charter. Establishing language access at the Charter level would create a durable, citywide obligation to ensure that communications, programs, and civic processes are accessible across the languages spoken by Los Angeles residents. By embedding this principle in the Charter, the City can move beyond discretionary policies and temporary executive actions and instead require departments to adopt and maintain policies that support consistent communication with the cultural and linguistic communities of Los Angeles.
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COMMUNITY PERSPECTIVES INFORMING CHARTER REFORM

The following accounts reflect perspectives shared by community leaders, advocates, and practitioners during the February 23 convening with members of the Los Angeles City Charter Reform Commission. Participants spoke from their professional and lived experiences working with AANHPI communities across Los Angeles. These narratives illustrate how residents encounter city systems in practice and highlight the challenges, barriers, and opportunities discussed during the meeting. They are included to document the range of experiences raised in the conversation and do not represent a unified position among participants.

1. Council Expansion & Local Representation

Community leaders described how the size of current council districts makes it difficult for elected officials to meaningfully engage with the many distinct AANHPI communities across Los Angeles.

- **On the Need for Local Representation:** Former planning commissioners and neighborhood leaders described council districts that are simply too large and too diverse for one office to serve effectively. When a single district spans multiple immigrant enclaves with very different needs, no community receives sufficient attention. Leaders noted that smaller districts would allow councilmembers to walk neighborhood corridors, understand hyper-local conditions, and remain accountable to distinct AAPI and NHPI communities rather than treating them as one undifferentiated block.
- **On Diverse Needs Within “AAPI” Labels:** Leaders stressed that “AAPI” represents dozens of communities with different income levels, health outcomes, and languages. In practice, the most visible and resourced segments often receive attention, while low-wage, undocumented, and linguistically isolated residents remain unseen. Participants noted that smaller districts would make it easier for council offices to recognize these differences and respond to the specific needs of individual ethnic communities.

2. Language Access and Civic Accessibility

Leaders described language barriers as a structural obstacle to participation in many city processes, from planning and public safety to workplace protections and healthcare access.

- **On Language Rights as a Human Right:** Worker center organizers framed language access as a basic human right. When interpretation is delayed or unavailable, wage theft cases stall, healthcare visits are postponed, and workers who live paycheck to paycheck go longer without pay they are already owed. Language, they noted, is not a “nice to have”; it is the gatekeeper to many other rights.
- **On Differences in Language Usage:** A Filipino advocate noted that even English-speaking workers can face barriers in legal or medical settings. While many Filipinos speak English fluently, the use and frequency of certain terms can differ from those commonly used in U.S. legal or healthcare systems. In high-stakes situations, those subtle differences can lead to misunderstandings for individuals who appear fluent on paper but are navigating unfamiliar terminology.



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- **On the City's Unfunded Language Mandates:** Community organizations that helped advise on Mayor Garcetti's language access executive order described it as an important step forward. However, they also noted that the policy was adopted without dedicated funding. As a result, they observed a recurring pattern: language access commitments exist in theory, but translation, interpretation, and bilingual staffing are often unavailable in practice.
- **On Planning Without Translation:** A former Planning Commissioner recounted efforts to encourage the department to translate planning notices and public documents. Without translated materials, residents cannot meaningfully review environmental reports or planning proposals that may affect their businesses, housing stability, or neighborhood conditions.
- **On Everyday Crime Reporting Without Language Support:** One advocate described helping an elderly Cantonese-speaking neighbor report a burglary. Because there was no reliable language support available, the report was relayed through multiple people: the neighbor spoke to the advocate's mother in Cantonese, the mother translated to English, and the advocate then conveyed the information to the police. Participants described this type of informal "telephone chain" as a common workaround when language access protocols are unclear or unavailable.

3. Worker Rights, Wage Theft & Economic Justice

Worker advocates described how gaps in enforcement and language access affect many low-wage immigrant workers across Los Angeles.

- **On the Wage Theft:** Advocates cited estimates that workers in Los Angeles lose roughly \$25 million per week to wage theft. Participants noted that while the City has adopted minimum wage protections, enforcement capacity often does not match the scale or complexity of violations. As a result, community organizations, along with County and State agencies, frequently step in to assist workers seeking to recover unpaid wages.
- **On City Wage Enforcement Efforts That Don't Match the Complexity of Violations:** Frontline worker advocates explained that the City's Office of Wage Standards primarily addresses minimum wage violations and certain retaliation claims. However, many cases involving low-wage workers center on overtime violations or missed meal and rest breaks. Participants noted that these gaps can make it difficult for workers to find support through existing city enforcement mechanisms.
- **On Underground Economies and Trafficking:** A Thai community leader described an underground economy in which low-wage, often undocumented Thai workers experience significant exploitation. With an estimated 40–50 percent of the community lacking legal status, participants described a continuum of abuse ranging from unpaid wages to coercive labor practices. Advocates noted that limited enforcement and language barriers can make it difficult for workers in these situations to seek help.



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4. Deportation Defense, Right to Counsel & Immigrant Safety

Community leaders described how gaps in legal protection and misunderstandings of immigration status create fear, instability, and barriers to safety for many immigrant and Pacific Islander communities.

- **On the “State of Fear” in Immigrant Communities:** Organizations reported that in some sub-communities, roughly half of residents may lack legal immigration status. Without guaranteed access to legal counsel in deportation proceedings, participants described families living in a constant state of fear. Some reported keeping children home from school, avoiding health clinics, or hesitating to report crimes out of concern that any interaction with authorities could lead to detention or deportation.
- **On Trafficking Victims Treated as Criminals:** Legal advocates described cases in which individuals identified as labor trafficking survivors were arrested or detained rather than protected. In some instances, victims were transferred to detention facilities far from Los Angeles before attorneys could intervene. Participants noted that these situations highlight the challenges trafficking survivors face when legal protections are not consistently recognized.
- **On COFA and U.S. National Migrants Being Misunderstood:** Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander leaders explained that migrants from American Samoa and Compact of Free Association (COFA) nations, such as the Marshall Islands, Micronesia, and Palau, are lawfully present in the United States under special statuses. However, participants shared examples in which local authorities were unfamiliar with these documents, leading to confusion or suspicion toward individuals who were legally present.
- **On Healthcare and Deportation Fear:** Advocates described how many Pacific Islanders travel to Los Angeles for cancer treatment or specialized medical care that is unavailable in their home islands. Participants shared concerns that enforcement actions involving individuals seeking medical care can create fear within these communities, discouraging others from pursuing treatment even when their health depends on it.
- **On How Lack of Counsel Hurts the Whole City:** Speakers emphasized that deportation proceedings affect not only individuals but entire families and neighborhoods. With approximately 40 percent of Los Angeles residents being immigrants and roughly one in five children having at least one undocumented parent, participants noted that the removal of a family member can have ripple effects across households, workplaces, schools, and local economies.

5. Youth & Non-Citizen Voting

Advocates shared stories illustrating how young people and non-citizen residents often carry significant civic and household responsibilities while having limited formal voice in local decision-making.

- **On Youth Carrying Adult Responsibilities:** NHPI advocates described how many 16- and 17-year-olds regularly translate at doctor’s appointments, complete government forms, and contribute to their household income. In some cases, young people leave school early to work full-time or take informal jobs to help sustain their families.



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Participants noted the contrast between these responsibilities and the lack of opportunities for youth to participate directly in civic decision-making.

- **On Breaking Cycles of Civic Non-Participation:** Several speakers noted that in many immigrant households, civic participation is rarely discussed because parents may come from countries without strong traditions of democratic engagement. Participants suggested that allowing 16-year-olds to vote in city and LAUSD elections, particularly when paired with civic education, could help establish habits of participation earlier in life.
- **On Youth Defending Critical School Programs:** Community members referenced debates around programs such as the Black Student Achievement Plan as examples of how school board decisions directly affect students' daily lives. Some participants argued that youth participation in school district elections could allow students a greater voice in decisions that shape their educational environment.
- **On Non-Citizen Families and Household Voice:** Participants also described multi-generational households in which elders or parents may be non-citizens or hold immigration statuses that prevent them from voting. In these situations, youth in the household may be the only potential voters. Advocates suggested that youth or non-citizen voting proposals could create opportunities for families heavily affected by city and school policies to have some representation in civic processes.

6. Police Accountability & Public Safety

Speakers highlighted experiences with law enforcement that reflect ongoing concerns related to accountability, language access, and trust between public safety institutions and immigrant communities.

- **On Protest and Police Violence:** Immigrant worker organizers recalled peaceful May Day marches where demonstrators were injured during confrontations with the LAPD. Subsequent litigation found that the force used in some instances was unlawful, resulting in significant legal settlements. Participants described these experiences as shaping how many immigrant communities view calls for police accountability.
- **On Mental Health Crises Turned Deadly:** Leaders referenced cases such as Yong Yang in Koreatown and Angelo Quinto in Northern California, where families called for assistance during mental health crises, and the encounters ended in fatalities. Participants shared these examples to illustrate concerns that current emergency response systems may not be equipped to safely address mental health situations.
- **On Language Access and Basic Police Functions:** Advocates described conversations with law enforcement personnel about how officers communicate with limited-English-proficient residents. In one exchange, an officer indicated that they would attempt to contact a third-party translator "whenever they can." Participants noted that these types of ad hoc solutions highlight the absence of consistent language access protocols in some policing situations.
- **On U-Visas and Missing LAPD Protocols:** Legal service providers discussed federal U-Visa protections, which allow undocumented victims of certain crimes to cooperate with law enforcement without immediate risk of deportation. Participants noted that the



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process requires certification from local authorities and expressed concern that there is not always a consistent internal protocol for handling these requests.

- **On Survivors Discouraged From Reporting Sexual Assault:** A youth program leader shared the experience of a young intern who sought help after a sexual assault shortly after arriving in Los Angeles. According to the account shared, the initial police response involved questioning the survivor's actions and clothing, and hesitancy to take a report. Participants described the experience as an example of how survivors may feel discouraged from seeking help through formal systems.
- **On Basic Crime Reporting Without Language Support:** An advocate recounted assisting an elderly Cantonese-speaking neighbor who had experienced a burglary. Because language support was not immediately available, the report was relayed through several people who translated in sequence before reaching law enforcement. Participants described similar situations as evidence of how language barriers can complicate even basic interactions with public safety systems.

7. Public Advocate & Structural Accountability

Participants discussed the potential role of a Public Advocate as an independent mechanism to help residents navigate city government and address systemic barriers to access and accountability.

- **On the Public Advocate as an "Artful" Solution:** One participant described structural reform as "an art, not a science," suggesting that a Public Advocate could function as a flexible tool for addressing multiple gaps in city systems. In this framing, the office could provide residents with a more accessible entry point into a complex municipal structure that many find difficult to navigate.
- **On Holding Together a Deeply Diverse City:** Another speaker reflected on Los Angeles' identity as a global city whose economic strength is closely tied to its diversity. At the same time, they suggested that city institutions have not always kept pace with the challenge of maintaining civic connections across many communities. The participant described a Public Advocate as a role that could focus on how policies affect communities that often feel excluded from decision-making.
- **On Power Imbalances Between Residents and Council Offices:** Participants with experience in public affairs described how the current structure can create perceived power imbalances between residents and individual council offices. Because council offices control many neighborhood-level services, some residents worry that raising concerns about a councilmember could affect their ability to access assistance. A citywide Public Advocate was described as a potential counterbalance that could help residents raise concerns outside of district-level political dynamics.
- **On Learning From (But Improving On) Other Models:** Participants also discussed existing Public Advocate structures in other cities, including New York. While some noted limitations in those models, several suggested that Los Angeles could establish a stronger, more independent office, potentially tasked with identifying systemic barriers in areas such as language access, small-business support, and access to city services.



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8. Economic Development, Procurement & Small Business Support

Community and business leaders described structural barriers that limit immigrant-owned small businesses' ability to access city programs, procurement opportunities, and economic development resources.

- **On Capital Investment and Procurement Barriers:** During the convening, community leaders expressed concerns about the rigidity of the City's capital improvement and procurement processes and their impact on immigrant-owned small businesses. Participants suggested that a more flexible and coordinated Capital Improvement Program could better support ethnic commercial corridors through language-accessible outreach, infrastructure improvements such as lighting and streetscape investments, and marketing support, as Los Angeles prepares for major global events such as the World Cup and the 2028 Olympics.
- **On City Programs That Don't Fit Immigrant Small Businesses:** Business advocates described how many AAPI immigrant-owned shops in Koreatown, Thai Town, Historic Filipinotown, and other corridors may appear successful from the outside but face significant barriers to accessing city resources. One leader shared that their organization ultimately stepped away from a City of Los Angeles small business contract because the city's systems were too rigid, English-dominant, and heavily online-based to effectively serve their limited-English-proficient clients. They noted that similar contracts with County and State agencies, which offered more flexibility, were functioning more effectively.
- **On the Limits of the BusinessSource Center Model:** Community development practitioners discussed the City's BusinessSource Centers as a well-intentioned model that often misses many immigrant entrepreneurs in practice. Participants noted that for many small businesses in their networks, the centers lack sufficient bilingual staff, culturally competent advising, and user-friendly processes. As a result, some immigrant-owned businesses do not view the centers as resources they can realistically access.
- **On Language as a Barrier to Certification and Procurement:** One participant described helping an AAPI small business navigate the city's procurement and certification platforms. Even for someone fluent in English and familiar with government systems, the process was described as confusing and time-consuming. For business owners whose primary language is Korean, Thai, Tagalog, or Chinese, participants suggested that the platforms can be especially difficult to navigate, limiting participation in city contracting opportunities.
- **On Perception vs. Reality for AAPI Businesses:** The Asian Business Association noted that the visible success of some AAPI-owned enterprises can create a perception that these businesses are broadly thriving. However, participants emphasized that many small or undercapitalized businesses still face significant barriers to accessing city contracting or growth opportunities. The organization noted that, despite decades of work to address contracting inequities, many promising businesses still struggle to enter city procurement pipelines.



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- **On Missed Opportunities in Cultural Districts:** Leaders from cultural corridors such as Thai Town and other heritage districts described efforts to strengthen local economies through cultural tourism, small business support, and neighborhood development initiatives. Participants noted that without tailored investment in infrastructure, marketing, and language-accessible business assistance, the communities that host cultural events and attract visitors often see limited long-term economic benefit.
- **On Tying Economic Development to Language and Access:** Across testimonies, speakers repeatedly connected economic development to language access and structural accessibility. Participants emphasized that programs related to procurement, contracting, and small business support may remain out of reach if key materials, application systems, and compliance processes are accessible primarily to English-speaking, technologically fluent business owners.



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February 25, 2026

Los Angeles City Charter Reform Commission
200 N. Spring Street
Los Angeles, CA 90012

Dear Commissioners,

On behalf of the Center for Asian Americans United for Self-Empowerment (CAUSE) and the Asian American Native Hawaiian Pacific Islander (AANHPI) community leaders who joined us on February 23, thank you for meeting with us and engaging directly with our communities. As we shared, our purpose was not to introduce new proposals, but to ensure that AANHPI perspectives are meaningfully reflected in the recommendations already under consideration. This letter formalizes two priorities that CAUSE believes are especially critical at this stage: codifying comprehensive language access in the Charter and expanding the City Council.

Comprehensive Language Access in the Charter

Language access is not a courtesy. It is a civil right and a prerequisite for equal participation in civic life. Yet in Los Angeles, it is too often treated as discretionary, unevenly implemented, or dependent on shifting administrative priorities.

Codifying language access in the Charter would establish it as a binding, citywide obligation. At a minimum, this should include:

- A clear requirement that all departments provide meaningful language access
- Translation accuracy, qualified interpretation, and culturally competent outreach
- Dedicated and sustainable funding
- Transparent accountability and oversight mechanisms

In addition to operative provisions, a commitment to equitable communication could be reflected in the Charter's Preamble and guiding principles, signaling that language access is a core civic value and an interpretive standard for governance.

This is especially relevant as new structures are adopted. Implementation of noncitizen voting should include language access standards comparable to those for statewide elections. The Capital Investment Program should incorporate multilingual wayfinding and outreach that support immigrant-owned small businesses and strengthen participation in cultural districts.

Expansion of the City Council to 29 Districts

CAUSE and our partners strongly advocate for expanding the Los Angeles City Council to 29 single member districts.

With nearly 250,000 residents per district under the current model, councilmembers are asked to represent extraordinarily diverse populations across large geographic areas. During our meeting, community leaders emphasized that this scale limits responsiveness because elected officials cannot adequately address the immense diversity of needs within such large districts. Smaller districts would allow for greater responsiveness to neighborhood level conditions, including differences in income, cultural backgrounds, and linguistic needs. Fewer constituents per district would increase residents' access to their elected officials, particularly immigrant communities navigating complex systems, small businesses seeking city support, and working families advocating for local improvements.

Expansion is also essential for visibility and representation. Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander communities in Los Angeles are often dispersed across the city without concentrated geographic hubs, making representation especially difficult under the current 15 district model. Expanding to 29 districts creates a meaningful opportunity to strengthen their presence within districts and ensure their voices are more consistently heard in local governance.



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Dish Networks, Gen Mobile

Our 2022 survey reinforces the public support for this reform. Sixty-one percent of voters overall supported increasing the size of the City Council, with support highest among AANHPI respondents at 67 percent. At the same time, only 46 percent of AANHPI respondents said people of their race or ethnicity are well represented by Los Angeles city government leaders, lower than every other major group surveyed. These findings underscore both strong support for structural reform and a clear representation gap that expansion can help address.

Los Angeles is one of the most diverse cities in the world. Structural reforms that improve access and responsiveness will strengthen not only AANHPI communities but the city as a whole.

With approximately one month remaining in this reform process, we encourage the Commission to ensure that the perspectives, stories, and concerns shared by AANHPI leaders are reflected in your remaining deliberations and final recommendations. CAUSE remains a resource and partner as you move forward, and we stand ready to continue supporting engagement that meaningfully serves all Angelenos.

We look forward to seeing these priorities reflected in your final work.

Sincerely,

Nancy Yap
Executive Director

With support from AANHPI community organizations and leaders, including:

AAPI Equity Alliance
Asian Pacific Islander Forward Movement
Korean American Democratic Committee
Southern California Pacific Islander Community Response Team (SoCal PICRT)

Communication from Public

Name: Briget Arndell

Date Submitted: 04/29/2026 09:23 AM

Council File No: 26-0489

Comments for Public Posting: Parks provide vital green space for Angelinos of all ages. Green space provides many health benefits, including providing shade and cooling on very hot days in Los Angeles. Our parks are in dire need of funding and attention. As a resident and home owner in District 8, I am asking for the Council to vote yes to move this to the November ballot; to fund our green spaces, to double Recreation and Parks Allocation.

Communication from Public

Name: Sean McMorris
Date Submitted: 04/29/2026 10:49 AM
Council File No: 26-0489
Comments for Public Posting: Please see California Common Cause's attached written public comment for item #1 on the April 30, 2026, Rules Committee agenda. Regards, Sean McMorris

April 29, 2026

Rules, Elections and Intergovernmental Relations Committee
200 N. Spring Street, Room 350
Los Angeles, CA, 90012



Re: Agenda Item #1 – Charter Reform Commission Report

Honorable Chair and Members of the Rules Committee and City Council:

On behalf of California Common Cause, I urge you to approach the Charter Reform Commission's report as a once-in-a-generation opportunity to rebuild trust in City Hall and fundamentally strengthen Los Angeles' system of governance.

First, the City must **engage the public thoroughly and meaningfully** before dismissing, advancing, or amending the L.A. City Charter Reform Commission's recommendations. The Commission's report reflects extensive outreach—over 50 public meetings, thousands of comments, and engagement across all 15 council districts . That level of engagement should not end with the Commission. As you consider which reforms to advance, it is critical that Angelenos continue to have clear, accessible, and meaningful opportunities to shape the final package. This includes robust public hearings, language access, and sufficient time for communities to understand and weigh in on proposed changes that will govern the City for decades.

Second, the Council should **adopt reforms that meaningfully address corruption, restore trust, and improve representation**. The Commission's findings are clear: the City's challenges are structural. Concentrated power, opaque decision-making, and weak oversight have enabled pay-to-play dynamics and repeated scandals that have eroded public confidence in City Hall. Incremental changes will not be enough. The City must adopt reforms that make power easier to follow, harder to abuse, and more accountable to the public.

Third, we strongly encourage the Council to advance key reforms within the government structure and ethics and accountability portions of the report—particularly those that **increase council size and strengthen ethics, accountability, and campaign finance safeguards**.

Expanding the City Council is one of the most important reforms in this package. Los Angeles currently has some of the largest council districts in the nation, with each member representing roughly 260,000 residents. This scale limits access, weakens representation, and concentrates power in ways that can make misconduct harder to detect and prevent. Establishing more districts will bring government closer to the people, improve constituent services, and create more opportunities for diverse and responsive representation. The proposed transition framework appropriately phases in this expansion beginning in 2032 .

Equally critical are reforms to **strengthen the City's ethics, accountability, and campaign finance systems**. The report rightly identifies that trust cannot be rebuilt without strong, independent oversight and clear consequences for misconduct. Authorizing Ethics Commission

ballot placement, providing independent legal counsel, and securing a protected budget are essential steps to ensure the Commission has the tools and independence needed to investigate and enforce the law.

In addition, the proposed **accountability and campaign finance reforms**—including clarifying suspension rules, prohibiting the use of campaign funds to pay certain fines, aligning penalty structures, and strengthening enforcement authority—are necessary to ensure that violations carry real consequences. These reforms move beyond symbolism and address a core public concern: that rules exist, but are not consistently enforced. Strengthening these provisions will help deter misconduct, reduce opportunities for pay-to-play, and ensure that officials are held accountable when they violate the public's trust.

These recommendations are also consistent with long-standing proposals from California Common Cause to enhance Ethics Commission independence, ensure timely action on reforms, and close loopholes in campaign finance and lobbying laws. Without strong ethics enforcement and modernized campaign finance rules, structural reforms alone will not be sufficient to restore public confidence.

Taken together, these reforms directly respond to what Angelenos have been asking for: **more voice, stronger accountability, and a government that works for residents—not insiders**. They address the root causes of corruption and mistrust by changing the underlying rules of the system.

This moment calls for leadership. We urge the Committee and Council to:

- Continue robust and inclusive public engagement,
- Advance a comprehensive package of meaningful structural reforms, and
- Prioritize reforms that expand representation and strengthen ethics and accountability.

Los Angeles voters deserve the opportunity to decide on a reform package that is bold enough to meet this moment. We respectfully urge you to move these and other important reforms forward.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sean McMorris,

Sean McMorris

Transparency, Ethics, and Accountability Program Manager
California Common Cause
smcmorris@commoncause.org

Communication from Public

Name: Kathleen Flanagan

Date Submitted: 04/29/2026 10:27 PM

Council File No: 26-0489

Comments for Public Posting: Please support the increased allocation to Recreation & Parks, which is long overdue. Our open spaces that exist are inadequate for the population in LA, and thus it requires more attention to those we have. Exercise, health, sports and much more bring a community of hundreds of thousands of all ages together in our parks and rec centers for free. Don't let our parks disappear through neglect.

Communication from Public

Name:

Date Submitted: 04/29/2026 10:31 AM

Council File No: 26-0489

Comments for Public Posting: Regarding the Charter Reform Commission amendment Sec. 311. b Budget Estimates to Mayor; Statement of Budget Priorities: "Neighborhood Councils shall submit to the Mayor, in the same timeframe as the City Departments, their budget request for the next fiscal year. The chair of The Board of Neighborhood Commissioners or another Commissioner designated by the Board of Neighborhood Commissioners shall be a single point-of-contact for this Neighborhood Council budget process and shall organize the requests of the Neighborhood Councils into a single submission to the Mayor." This proposed Charter amendment is beyond the capacity of the unpaid Commissioners serving on the Board of Neighborhood Commissioners. It is impossible for one unpaid Commissioner to be a single point-of-contact for this monumental responsibility. The Commission (BONC) meets twice monthly for one to three hours. The ability to achieve quorum can be impacted by life circumstances. Organizing Ninety-Nine Neighborhood Council budgets and submitting the budgets to the Mayor is a lengthy, time-sensitive fiduciary responsibility. This responsibility must be handled by full time paid employees. It is not possible or feasible for the unpaid Commissioners to review ninety-nine budgets, attest to their content and accuracy, etc. Out of Ninety-Nine Neighborhood Councils, this amendment was supported by less than one half.

Communication from Public

Name: Mary Moon Hernandez

Date Submitted: 04/29/2026 10:35 AM

Council File No: 26-0489

Comments for Public Posting: I am a resident of the San Fernando Valley and ai support the Charter Reform proposed by the committee. Los Angels is a giant beautiful city and each neighborhood needs representation. City Council districts are far too large for one City Council Memeber to represent.

Communication from Public

Name: Lof Feliz Improvement Association
Date Submitted: 04/29/2026 06:04 PM
Council File No: 26-0489
Comments for Public Posting: Please see attached letter. Thank you.



advocacy and action
for Los Feliz

2025-2026

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Debra Matlock

First Vice-President

Amy Gustincic*

Second Vice-President

Melody King

Coordinating Secretary

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Alex Kondracke

Chris Laib*

Elizabeth Lovins

Deanne Paul

Joel Rochlin

Tiger Schenkman

Riley Schmidt

Karen Stetler

*Past President

April 29, 2026

RE: Council File 26-0489 Charter Reform Recommendations

Dear Honorable Members of the Los Angeles City Council,

The Los Feliz Improvement Association (LFIA), representing all residents of Los Feliz since 1916, has always advocated for the betterment of our community, from protecting the integrity of Griffith Park to ensuring our streets remain safe and accessible. Today, we write to express our strong support for the sweeping Charter Reform proposals currently before you, which represent a historic opportunity to restore public trust and modernize our city’s infrastructure.

We support the Commission’s recommendation to expand the City Council from 15 to 25 members. Our current structure, established over a century ago, leaves council members representing nearly 260,000 residents each—the largest ratio in the nation. By expanding the Council, we can ensure:

- **Smaller Districts:** More manageable district sizes allow for better responsiveness to neighborhood-specific concerns like local zoning and traffic.
- **Greater Representation:** Smaller districts provide a clearer voice for the diverse communities that make up Los Angeles.

We also strongly urge the Council to finalize the establishment of a truly independent redistricting commission. Removing elected officials from the process of drawing their own district boundaries is essential to ensuring fairness and impartiality.

Several other reforms fall directly within the LFIA’s purview of neighborhood improvement and environmental stewardship:

- **Park Funding:** We support doubling charter-mandated funds for city parks. As stewards of Griffith Park, we know that consistent, protected investment is critical for maintaining these vital public spaces.
- **Anti-Corruption and Ethics:** The creation of an independent anti-corruption office is a necessary step to rebuilding the trust that has been eroded by recent City Hall scandals.
- **Streamlining Operations:** We support measures to modernize the City Attorney’s Office and update civil service systems to ensure our city workforce can serve Angelenos efficiently and without political interference.

LFIA believes that good neighborhoods don’t happen by accident. They require a city government that is transparent, accountable, and representative. We urge you to place these critical reforms on the November 2026 ballot to let the voters decide the future of our city’s governance.

Sincerely,
The Board of Directors of LFIA

Debra Matlock
President

Communication from Public

Name: Clara Solis

Date Submitted: 04/29/2026 08:25 PM

Council File No: 26-0489

Comments for Public Posting: I urge this committee to have a more robust public outreach plan. I OPPOSE THE FOLLOWING PROPOSALS FROM THE CHARTER REFORM COMMISSION: We oppose allowing RAP to sell/transfer land. • Oppose that all NC meetings allow remote public comment, current budget does not provide support for wifi for this requirement. Would make it difficult for seniors and disabled to chair committees. • Strengthen the City's ethics, accountability, and campaign finance systems: -Clarifying suspension rules. We Oppose increasing suspension vote from 8 to 12 members. • Amending Floor Area Ratio Limit More study is needed for the following proposals: MORE STUDY IS NEEDED • EMPOWERING DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC WORKS • REPLACING AREA PLANNING COMMISSIONS WITH A BOARD OF NEIGHBORHOOD APPEALS • STREAMLINING CITY PLANNING PROCESSES • REMOVING BAN ON CITY BUSINESS ENTERPRISES • CREATING A CFO I support that the following items go before the voters: 2) Expansion of the City Council from 15 to 25 councilmembers. 3) Allocating 2 % of City budget to infrastructure (DPW). 4) Increased Charter Allocation for Department of Recreation & Parks (RAP) 6) ELECTIONS/DEMOCRACY • Ranked Choice Voting • Lowering the voting Age to 16 for municipal and LAUSD elections 7) Strengthen the City's ethics, accountability, and campaign finance systems: • Allow Ethics Commission to add items to the ballot placement • Providing independent legal counsel to the Ethics Commission. • Provide a protected budget for the Ethics Commission. • Prohibiting the use of campaign funds to pay certain fines, aligning penalty structures, and strengthening enforcement authority to ensure real consequences when parties break the rules. • Create Office of Inspector General. 8) Increased Charter Allocation for Department of Recreation and Parks (RAP) 9) Bifurcating (splitting) the City Attorney's office. Favor, but both should be elected. Oppose if not, AND REMOVE IF NOT ELECTED. 10) Neighborhood Councils: • Expanding the Board of Neighborhood Commissioners with at-large seats selected by NC's. • Separate Queue in Public Comment for Community Impact Statements. • Strengthen Neighborhood Councils (clarifying NC activities and allowing consent calendars) • Require Remote Public Comment at General Board Meeting

only. * (See oppose above) • Require BONC members to complete legally-required trainings • Allow NC's to deliver statements to government agencies ADD: and their state and county representatives. 11) Police Accountability • Council authority over LAPD policies • Personal Liability insurance 1 million/officer cost of no more than \$50/mo • Strengthening Chief of Police's removal authority • Protest/First Amendment rights. 12) Budget, Personnel, Operations, • 2 – Year Operating Budget • Periodic Charter Review (Every 10 years) 13) Controller's ability to study fraud and abuse. ADD ITEMS NOT INCLUDED BY CHARTER REFORM COMMISSION: • Increase the number of terms that City Council members can serve from 3 to 4 terms • Charter-guaranteed budget allocations for NC's • Require elections to be held for NC's.

Communication from Public

Name: Warren LeeBoucher

Date Submitted: 04/29/2026 03:39 PM

Council File No: 26-0489

Comments for Public Posting: Hello, I'm a 90025 constituent, and strongly in favor of Rank Choice Voting. Having an instant runoff election saves money in the long term. Los Angeles needs to be as financially effective as possible. Thank you, - Warren LeeBoucher

Communication from Public

Name: Will Wright
Date Submitted: 04/29/2026 04:24 PM
Council File No: 26-0489
Comments for Public Posting: Attached, please find AIA|LA Formal Recommendations for Inclusion in the November 2026 Charter Reform Ballot Measure — Council File 26-0489

April 29, 2026

Councilmember Marqueece Harris-Dawson, Chair
Councilmember Nithya Raman, Vice Chair
Councilmember Katy Yaroslavsky
Councilmember Hugo Soto-Martinez
Councilmember John Lee
Rules, Elections, and Intergovernmental Relations Committee
Los Angeles City Council
200 N. Spring Street, Room 340
Los Angeles, CA 90012

RE: AIALA Formal Recommendations for Inclusion in the November 2026 Charter Reform Ballot Measure
– [Council File 26-0489](#)

Dear Chair Harris-Dawson, Vice Chair Raman, and Council Members Yaroslavsky, Soto-Martinez, and Lee,

A GENERATIONAL MOMENT — AND A CLEAR OBLIGATION TO ACT

Los Angeles is not failing because its people lack ambition. It is failing because its government lacks the structural capacity to act on ambition. With the 2028 Olympic and Paralympic Games approaching, billions of dollars in unresolved deferred maintenance liabilities compounding across every neighborhood, and the fires of January 2025 still demanding a sustained recovery response, our city cannot afford a government organized around the institutional habits of 1925.

The Charter Reform Commission — which held more than 50 public meetings, visited all 15 council districts, and collected over 14,000 survey responses — transmitted its 301-page [final report](#) to the City Council on April 2, 2026. That report makes a blunt and accurate diagnosis: Los Angeles does not just have a personnel problem. It has a structural one. The Commission’s recommended reforms now sit before this Committee, and the Council must decide by June 2026 which proposals will appear before voters on the November 2026 ballot.

AIALA urges this Committee to move swiftly and decisively. On behalf of our 4,500+ architects, urban designers, and design professionals who collectively shape the city’s built environment every day, we write to formally endorse the Commission’s core infrastructure and governance recommendations — and to call on this Committee to carry them to the ballot with the strongest possible Charter-level protections. Where the Commission’s recommendations provide a strong foundation, we also identify where AIALA’s expertise points toward measures that must go further.

WHAT THE COMMISSION FOUND — AND WHY AIALA AGREES

The Commission’s report confirms what AIALA has documented through years of direct advocacy: the dysfunctions in Los Angeles’ governmental structure are not isolated failures — they are systemic, compounding, and measurable:

- Eight separate City departments manage the public right-of-way with eight separate agendas, generating duplicative work, last-minute project changes, and costly coordination failures.
- Los Angeles is the only major American city without a multi-year Capital Infrastructure Program (CIP) — a fact confirmed in the Commission’s report and supported by 71% of the 14,000+ survey respondents who backed multiyear budget planning.
- Unsafe streets have generated nearly \$500 million in liability settlements over the past five years — more than half of all City settlement spending — meaning Los Angeles routinely pays more in liability than it would have spent simply fixing the problem.
- The Department of Recreation and Parks operates on a charter funding formula frozen since the 1930s — today set at just 0.0325% of assessed property value — with 40% of its budget now diverted to indirect costs, starving parks in our most underserved communities.
- The Board of Public Works — a politically appointed, multi-member body unique among major American cities — obfuscates accountability and dilutes executive authority over more than \$1 billion in annual infrastructure spending.
- Development permitting remains fragmented across LADBS, LACP, LADOT, LAFD, and BOE, creating serial bottlenecks that delay housing production and increase project costs citywide.

These are not inconveniences. They are structural failures with compounding fiscal, human, and legal consequences. The Commission’s report is a mandate for action. The question before this Committee is not whether to act — it is whether the ballot language will be strong enough to make the reforms durable.

AIAILA’S FIVE STRUCTURAL REFORM RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 1 — Adopt and Strengthen the Commission’s Director of Public Works Proposal — and Require a Licensed Architect

The Commission’s April 2 report recommends establishing a Director of Public Works with broader coordinating authority, designating Public Works as the lead agency for the Capital Infrastructure Program, and allocating at least 2% of the City’s general fund budget to Public Works. AIAILA strongly endorses these recommendations. We also urge the Committee to go further in one critical respect: the Charter must require that this Director also serve as the City’s Chief Design Officer (CDO), and that this individual be a California-licensed architect — the only licensed profession that integrates structural engineering, life-safety, accessibility, urban design, and long-range planning into a unified discipline.

AIAILA Connection: AIAILA has formally advocated for a licensed-architect CDO since 2022. Our February 2026 Charter Reform submission called for merging this role with the Director of Public Works, concentrating authority and ending the accountability gap that has plagued infrastructure delivery for decades. The Commission’s report validates this structural argument. Chicago, New York, Houston, and every comparable peer city has a single, empowered Director of Public Works accountable to the Mayor and the public. Los Angeles does not — yet.

Cautionary Precedent: The 1999 Charter created a Director of Public Works position that was subsequently watered down and administratively erased. The new Charter must explicitly protect the role: shielding the Director from arbitrary reassignment, empowering them to set Department-wide policy, and vesting them with authority over

the citywide CIP. The Commission’s report recognizes this risk — but recognition is not protection. The ballot language must be explicit.

Recommendation 2 — Carry the Commission’s CIP Mandate to the Ballot with Full Legal Protections

The Charter Reform Commission’s April 2 report recommends requiring a formal Capital Improvement Program covering at least five fiscal years, with identified funding sources sufficient to build, operate, and maintain projects, administered by the Director of Public Works. AIAILA fully supports this recommendation and urges this Committee to ensure it reaches the ballot with Charter-level protections strong enough to survive future administrations.

AIAILA Connection: In our March 17, 2026 letter to Council Members Blumenfield and Yaroslavsky, AIAILA documented the compounding costs of Los Angeles’ CIP vacuum: a \$1.37 billion Willits sidewalk settlement, a Bureau of Street Services that did not repave a single street after mid-2024, and a pavement condition index falling 4% annually. New York, Chicago, San Francisco, San Diego, Long Beach, and Seattle all publish rolling multi-year capital plans. Los Angeles has been identified as the only major U.S. city without one for over a decade.

Legal Imperative: Following the U.S. Supreme Court’s ruling in *Sheetz v. County of El Dorado* (2024), municipalities must demonstrate a documented nexus between development impact fees and specific infrastructure needs. Without a publicly vetted CIP, Los Angeles’ impact fee revenues are legally vulnerable. Mayor Bass’ Executive Directive 9 established a foundation, but an Executive Directive can be rescinded by any future administration. Only Charter-level language makes this reform permanent.

Recommendation 3 — Consolidate and Streamline Development Services

The Charter must reorganize fragmented development and public-realm functions by: (a) consolidating LADOT into the Department of Public Works to unify right-of-way project delivery; and (b) establishing a Department of Business Services as a centralized “concierge” for development permits and small business support — officially shifting city personnel from regulatory gatekeepers to active solution-providers.

AIAILA Connection: AIAILA’s 2025–2026 Advocacy Platform calls explicitly for a permanent, cross-departmental Expedited Review Unit and a citywide “Zoning Certainty” program. Our members encounter the direct consequences of this fragmentation daily — in projects stalled across serial agency queues, in housing developments delayed by uncoordinated plan-check processes, and in public realm projects redesigned mid-construction because transportation and public works were not coordinated from the start.

Precedent: Boston’s Inspectional Services Department and Denver’s Development Services function as coordinated “one-stop” permitting entities. Los Angeles’ serial, multi-agency model is an outlier that imposes real economic costs on housing production, small businesses, and public projects alike.

Recommendation 4 — Empower a Department of Real Estate to Optimize Civic Assets

The Charter must empower a professionalized Department of Real Estate with the authority and mandate to strategically manage and generate revenue from the City’s publicly owned properties — transforming underutilized civic assets from budget liabilities into community keystones and revenue generators.

AIAILA Connection: AIAILA’s advocacy consistently emphasizes that fiscal sustainability must be built on value creation, not perpetual tax increases. Empty civic center retail spaces, underutilized public parcels, and government-induced blight represent billions of dollars in latent value. Design-led activation of these assets can generate new revenue streams that directly offset the deferred maintenance liabilities accumulating across the

city's streets, sidewalks, parks, and public facilities — a uniquely architectural perspective that the Charter Reform process must not overlook.

Precedent: Washington D.C.'s Office of Public-Private Partnerships and Chicago's Department of Assets, Information, and Services both demonstrate that disciplined, design-aware management of public real estate can generate meaningful civic dividends.

Recommendation 5 — Carry the Commission's Parks Funding Proposal to the Ballot and Protect It

The Charter Reform Commission recommends doubling the Recreation and Parks (RAP) funding formula — which has remained frozen since the 1930s — from 0.0325% to 0.065% of assessed property value. AIALA strongly endorses this recommendation and urges the Committee to ensure the ballot language also explicitly protects this allocation from the indirect cost diversions that currently consume 40% of RAP's budget.

AIALA Connection: Los Angeles has plummeted to 90th in the national ParkScore rankings — a direct consequence of a Depression-era formula that was never updated to reflect the city's growth or its equity obligations. AIALA's advocacy platform includes equitable access to parks and civic infrastructure as a core design justice principle. Our members design the community spaces that depend on this funding, and we have witnessed firsthand how park deterioration compounds inequity in our most underserved neighborhoods.

Precedent: San Francisco's Recreation and Parks Department operates under a dedicated property tax set-aside enshrined in its city charter — enabling consistent capital investment and programming. The Commission's recommendation puts Los Angeles on this path. The Committee must ensure the ballot language carries it there with durability.

A SPECIFIC AND URGENT CALL TO ACTION

The Charter Reform Commission has done its work. The 301-page report transmitted on April 2, 2026 reflects more than 50 public meetings, 14,000+ resident responses, and months of rigorous deliberation. The Commission's recommendations on the CIP, the Director of Public Works, infrastructure funding, and parks are sound, urgent, and supported by the public. The question now before this Committee is whether those recommendations will reach voters with the protective Charter language they deserve — or whether they will be diluted, deferred, or left vulnerable to the same administrative erosion that undid the 1999 reforms.

AIALA respectfully and urgently requests that this Committee take the following actions before the June 2026 ballot submission deadline:

1. Place the Commission's CIP mandate, Director of Public Works, 2% Public Works budget floor, and RAP funding doubling on the November 2026 ballot with explicit Charter-level protections — drafted to prevent administrative erosion by any future administration.
2. Strengthen the Director of Public Works language to require that this individual hold a California architectural license and serve concurrently as the City's Chief Design Officer — ensuring that design quality, fiscal stewardship, and long-range infrastructure planning are unified under a single, accountable leader.
3. Include the development services consolidation and real estate optimization measures as additional ballot items, reflecting the breadth of structural reform Los Angeles needs to become genuinely functional.

4. Invite AIALA to participate as a formal technical resource and drafting partner in the Committee's working sessions between now and the June deadline.

The Commission has handed this Committee a remarkable document. The residents of Los Angeles — including the 71% who told the Commission they support multiyear budget planning — are counting on this Committee to deliver it to the ballot intact and with strength. AIALA is prepared to help you do exactly that.

If you have any questions, you may contact me at will@aialosangeles.org

Thank you for your time, leadership, and dedication to our city.

Truly yours,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Will Wright', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Will Wright, Hon. AIALA
Director, Government & Public Affairs

Communication from Public

Name: KATHLEEN MURPHY

Date Submitted: 04/29/2026 04:47 PM

Council File No: 26-0489

Comments for Public Posting: My name is Kathleen Murphy and I live in Echo Park. Ever since I moved to Los Angeles in 1986, I and my family have hiked, picnicked and enjoyed the city's parks, Elysian and Griffith, in particular. I am writing to urge you most strenuously to DOUBLE the Department of Recreation and Parks (RAP)'s charter allocation — and to vote YES to place this measure on the November ballot. The City-commissioned Parks Needs Assessment, developed with input from over 100,000 Angelenos, identified over \$2 billion in deferred maintenance and a \$14.76 billion gap to reach peer-city service levels. Doubling RAP's allocation from 0.0325% to 0.065% of assessed property value — phased in over four years — would begin to close this gap and restore the parks, programs, and staff our communities depend on. We've done this before: in 2011, LA voters approved Measure L to increase the Library's allocation, and it passed with 63% approval. Polling shows 8 out of 10 LA voters already support additional park funding. The public is ready. We need our Council to act. FUND OUR PARKS NOW!!!! Double Recreation and Parks' allocation. Vote YES to move this to the November ballot. Thank you! Kathleen Murphy

Communication from Public

Name: LIONEL MARES
Date Submitted: 04/29/2026 08:37 PM
Council File No: 26-0489

Comments for Public Posting: Dear Councilmembers, I am writing as a concerned Angeleno to urge you to consider and advance the proposal to double the Los Angeles Department of Recreation and Parks (RAP)'s Charter allocation from 0.033% to 0.065% of assessed property value. LA has dropped from 49th to 90th in the Trust for Public Land's national ParkScore ranking. RAP's Charter allocation has been frozen since 1937, yet today 40% of its budget (\$145M) is diverted to cover indirect costs never included in the original formula. Between FY 2009–2023, RAP's budget grew at half the rate of the rest of the City. The Parks Needs Assessment — developed with input from over 100,000 Angelenos — makes clear that our parks are underfunded and underserved. Doubling the Charter allocation is a necessary step to restore decades of cuts and ensure safe, clean, accessible parks for all Angelenos. Please include this proposal in your final recommendations. For Reference: Los Angeles ranks the lowest among Southern California 2025 ParkScore list | Los Angeles County Thank you,
-- LIONEL MARES, MPA

Communication from Public

Name: L. Dakin

Date Submitted: 04/29/2026 08:39 PM

Council File No: 26-0489

Comments for Public Posting: RCV to the Rules Committee – LA City Council Dear Los Angeles City Council's Rules Committee, As a long-time resident (I moved here in 1999) and a registered voter in LA City, I strongly urge you to implement Ranked Choice Voting into our city's elections. Ranked Choice Voting (RCV) gives voters more choice, reduces negative campaigning, and leads to more representative outcomes. This is everyone's chance to create a more democratic process in LA City's elections and therefore our local government. Thank you for all your hard work and your attention to this important opportunity.

Communication from Public

Name: LIONEL MARES
Date Submitted: 04/29/2026 08:40 PM
Council File No: 26-0489

Comments for Public Posting: Dear Councilmembers, In recent months, the call for reform within Neighborhood Councils in Los Angeles has grown louder, especially after Mayor Karen Bass's promise in April 2023 to review these councils. Despite this, significant improvements remain elusive, raising concerns about civic engagement and community involvement. The existing structure of Neighborhood Councils and the Department of Neighborhood Empowerment has not seen the major changes expected. Many neighborhoods feel marginalized and uninformed about council activities. This has led to a widespread sentiment that the ****City Council**** and the Mayor need to remain proactive in engaging with communities. Enhanced engagement can help illuminate the issues neighborhoods face, fostering a sense of inclusivity. Greater civic engagement is crucial for revitalizing public trust and participation in local governance. Engaging communities effectively can bring to light the unique challenges faced by each neighborhood and allow for solutions that reflect their specific needs. Fostering this dialogue can significantly enhance decision-making processes. The Charter Reform Commission recently convened to discuss necessary reforms in government structure and operations. However, there has been concern regarding the disposal of many recommendations by good government advocates. This raises questions about the Commission's commitment to inclusive governance.

Recommendations for Improvement: - Enhanced Communication: Establish clearer channels for communication between government officials and neighborhoods. - Empower Neighborhood Councils: Provide more resources and authority to Neighborhood Councils to address local issues. - Regular Engagement: Schedule regular town hall meetings to gather community feedback and ensure transparency. - Revisit Reform Proposals: Reconsider recommendations from advocacy groups to improve governance structures and increase accountability. Making robust changes to the current government structure requires a collective effort from both the leadership and the communities. It's essential to delineate power more effectively between the executive and legislative branches, ensuring a system that prioritizes public involvement and responsiveness. Emphasizing community engagement and proactive governance

can help restore trust in city administration. For your Reference:
LA Mayor Bass Promises Review Of Neighborhood Councils |
LAist Thank you, LIONEL MARES, MPA

Communication from Public

Name: LIONEL MARES
Date Submitted: 04/29/2026 08:49 PM
Council File No: 26-0489
Comments for Public Posting: RE: Ensuring Checks and Balances in Los Angeles City Government See attached - Public Comment

Dear City Councilmembers,

Re: Ensuring Checks and Balances in Los Angeles City Government

A foundational purpose of any city charter is to establish a system of government that is balanced, accountable, and responsive to the people it serves. As you undertake the critical task of revising the Los Angeles City Charter, it is essential that the Commission preserve and strengthen the system of checks and balances that prevents any single elected office from accumulating excessive power.

Los Angeles cannot afford a structure in which the Mayor, the City Council, or any other elected body holds disproportionate control over the functions of government. Concentrated authority undermines transparency, weakens public trust, and limits the ability of communities to meaningfully influence decisions that affect their daily lives.

To uphold democratic integrity, the Charter must ensure:

1. A Balanced Distribution of Power

No branch of city government should dominate the others. Executive, legislative, and administrative responsibilities must remain clearly defined and appropriately separated to prevent overreach by any single office.

2. Strong Oversight and Accountability Mechanisms

Independent oversight bodies must remain insulated from political pressure. Their authority should be protected, not diminished, to ensure that public institutions operate with fairness, professionalism, and transparency.

3. Meaningful Public Participation

The voices of Angelenos must be embedded into the decision-making process—not treated as an afterthought. The Charter should require accessible public engagement, transparent deliberations, and mechanisms that ensure community input is genuinely considered.

4. Protection Against Excessive Influence

No elected official should wield unilateral control over departments, appointments, or policy implementation. A balanced system promotes collaboration, reduces the risk of abuse, and strengthens the legitimacy of government actions.

A reformed Charter must reflect the core democratic principle that power is shared, not concentrated. By reinforcing checks and balances, the Commission can help build a government that is more equitable, more accountable, and more reflective of the diverse communities that make up the City of Los Angeles.

5. LAPD Accountability – Empower City Council with more power over LAPD.

The City Council currently has no direct oversight over LAPD. Under the Charter, the department only answers to the Board of Police Commissioners, which is composed of volunteer, part-time Mayoral appointees. This proposal would give the City Council more direct policy authority over the LAPD.

6. LAPD Accountability – Allow Police Chief to remove officers for misconduct.

Clarify the authority of the Chief of Police to initiate and pursue the removal of officers with repeated histories of harm or misconduct. The Charter gives the Board of Rights the final say in disciplinary cases against LAPD officers. However, it does not clearly explain the Chief of Police's role or authority to remove officers in cases of repeated misconduct.

Thank you for your commitment to this historic process and for your dedication to strengthening our city's democratic institutions.

Respectfully submitted,

--

LIONEL MARES, MPA

Communication from Public

Name: LIONEL MARES
Date Submitted: 04/29/2026 09:01 PM
Council File No: 26-0489
Comments for Public Posting: RE: Public Advocate See attached - Public Comment

Dear City Councilmembers,

Establishing a public advocate in Los Angeles could address various pressing issues, similar to the role seen in New York City. Here are a few key reasons why such a position would be beneficial for the city:

Representation of Marginalized Communities

- **Voice for the Voiceless:** A public advocate can serve as a critical voice for marginalized communities, ensuring their concerns and needs are addressed in city policies and initiatives.
- **Equitable Policy Advocacy:** They can advocate for equity in resources, services, and opportunities, particularly for underserved populations.

Accountability and Transparency

- **Oversight of City Government:** A public advocate could hold city officials accountable for their actions, promoting transparency in governance and decision-making processes.
- **Reporting Mechanisms:** They can help establish robust mechanisms for residents to report grievances and ensure that those issues are effectively addressed.

Community Engagement and Education

- **Fostering Civic Engagement:** A public advocate can empower citizens by encouraging participation in local government and public discourse.
- **Education on Rights and Resources:** They can also educate residents about their rights and available resources, improving overall community resilience.

Having a public advocate similar to New York's in Los Angeles could lead to more responsive governance, enhanced community engagement, and significantly better representation of the diverse population's interests.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully submitted,

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LIONEL MARES, MPA

Communication from Public

Name: LIONEL MARES
Date Submitted: 04/29/2026 09:05 PM
Council File No: 26-0489
Comments for Public Posting: Re: Budgeting & Capital Infrastructure Program (CIP) See attached - Public Comment

Dear City Council Members,

Participatory Budgeting:

The City runs on your taxes, so you should get a real say in the City's budget. The City should be required to include the public in the budget process in a meaningful way.

Two-Year Budget:

Currently, each City budget only covers one year. If budgets were to cover two years instead, then:

- City workers could spend significantly more time serving the people of Los Angeles – instead of making budgets (the budget process currently takes 11 months of every year and involves every department).
- The City would have time to base budgets on how well City programs are performing and what they actually need, rather than just making a marginal adjustment to whatever the previous year's budget was.
- The City would do more long term planning – because it would be budgeting for plans designed to work for at least two years.
- The City would have more time to get the public involved in participatory budgeting.

Performance-Based Budgeting:

The current budget process takes the previous year's budget and incrementally adds or subtracts to each department's budget without analyzing the outcomes of that budget allocation.

Performance-based budgeting sets goals and specific results and prioritizes spending to achieve those results.

Capital Infrastructure Program:

Require an actionable five-year infrastructure program that accounts for all of the City's infrastructure needs, provides a strategic plan based on equity and citywide priorities, and provides funding for necessary repair and maintenance.

Respectfully submitted,

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LIONEL MARES, MPA

Communication from Public

Name: LIONEL MARES
Date Submitted: 04/29/2026 09:11 PM
Council File No: 26-0489
Comments for Public Posting: Re: Preamble See Attached - Public Comment

Dear City Councilmembers,

One of the lessons I have learned is that without a transparent and accountable city government, nothing effective can happen. The frustration that I have experienced in trying to get all 99 Neighborhood Councils to work in unison and failing every time, taught me that something had to change!

To devise a city government that all Angelenos can agree to would require compromise and collaboration. The Charter should be clear which powers are delineated among the Executive, Legislative and Elected officials of Government. The Charter Commission should ensure against overreach that can result in tyranny.

My thoughts on the Preamble and Bill of Rights:

We, the residents of Los Angeles, stand united in our commitment to a democratic and equitable city. Recognizing the rich tapestry of cultures, perspectives, and experiences that make up our community, we envision a Charter that empowers all voices and fosters active participation in governance.

In pursuit of a just and innovative city, we prioritize transparency, accountability, and inclusivity in our local government. Together, we pledge to uphold the values of equity, sustainability, and justice, ensuring that every Angeleno has the opportunity to thrive and influence the policies that affect their lives.

Bill of Rights

1. **Right to Participate:** Every resident shall have the right to engage in the democratic process, including voting and public discourse.
2. **Right to Equity:** All residents deserve fair treatment and equal access to resources, services, and opportunities, regardless of their background.
3. **Right to Transparency:** The city government shall operate openly, with accessible information regarding decisions, budgets, and policies.
4. **Right to Sustainability:** We commit to protecting our environment and promoting sustainable practices for the health of future generations.
5. **Right to Justice:** We affirm the right to fair and impartial treatment within the legal system, ensuring safety and equity for all.
6. **Right to Community:** Residents are entitled to a safe and supportive neighborhood, fostering connections and collective efforts toward common goals.

Respectfully,

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LIONEL MARES, MPA

Communication from Public

Name: LIONEL MARES
Date Submitted: 04/29/2026 09:21 PM
Council File No: 26-0489

Comments for Public Posting: Dear City Councilmembers, In recent months, the call for reform within Neighborhood Councils in Los Angeles has grown louder, especially after Mayor Karen Bass's promise in April 2023 to review these councils. Despite this, significant improvements remain elusive, raising concerns about civic engagement and community involvement. The existing structure of Neighborhood Councils and the Department of Neighborhood Empowerment has not seen the major changes expected. Many neighborhoods feel marginalized and uninformed about council activities. This has led to a widespread sentiment that the ****City Council**** and the Mayor need to remain proactive in engaging with communities. Enhanced engagement can help illuminate the issues neighborhoods face, fostering a sense of inclusivity. Greater civic engagement is crucial for revitalizing public trust and participation in local governance. Engaging communities effectively can bring to light the unique challenges faced by each neighborhood and allow for solutions that reflect their specific needs. Fostering this dialogue can significantly enhance decision-making processes. The Charter Reform Commission recently convened to discuss necessary reforms in government structure and operations. However, there has been concern regarding the disposal of many recommendations by good government advocates. This raises questions about the Commission's commitment to inclusive governance.

Recommendations for Improvement:

- Enhanced Communication: Establish clearer channels for communication between government officials and neighborhoods.
- Empower Neighborhood Councils: Provide more resources and authority to Neighborhood Councils to address local issues.
- Regular Engagement: Schedule regular town hall meetings to gather community feedback and ensure transparency.
- Revisit Reform Proposals: Reconsider recommendations from advocacy groups to improve governance structures and increase accountability.

Making robust changes to the current government structure requires a collective effort from both the leadership and the communities. It's essential to delineate power more effectively between the executive and legislative branches, ensuring a system that prioritizes public involvement and responsiveness.

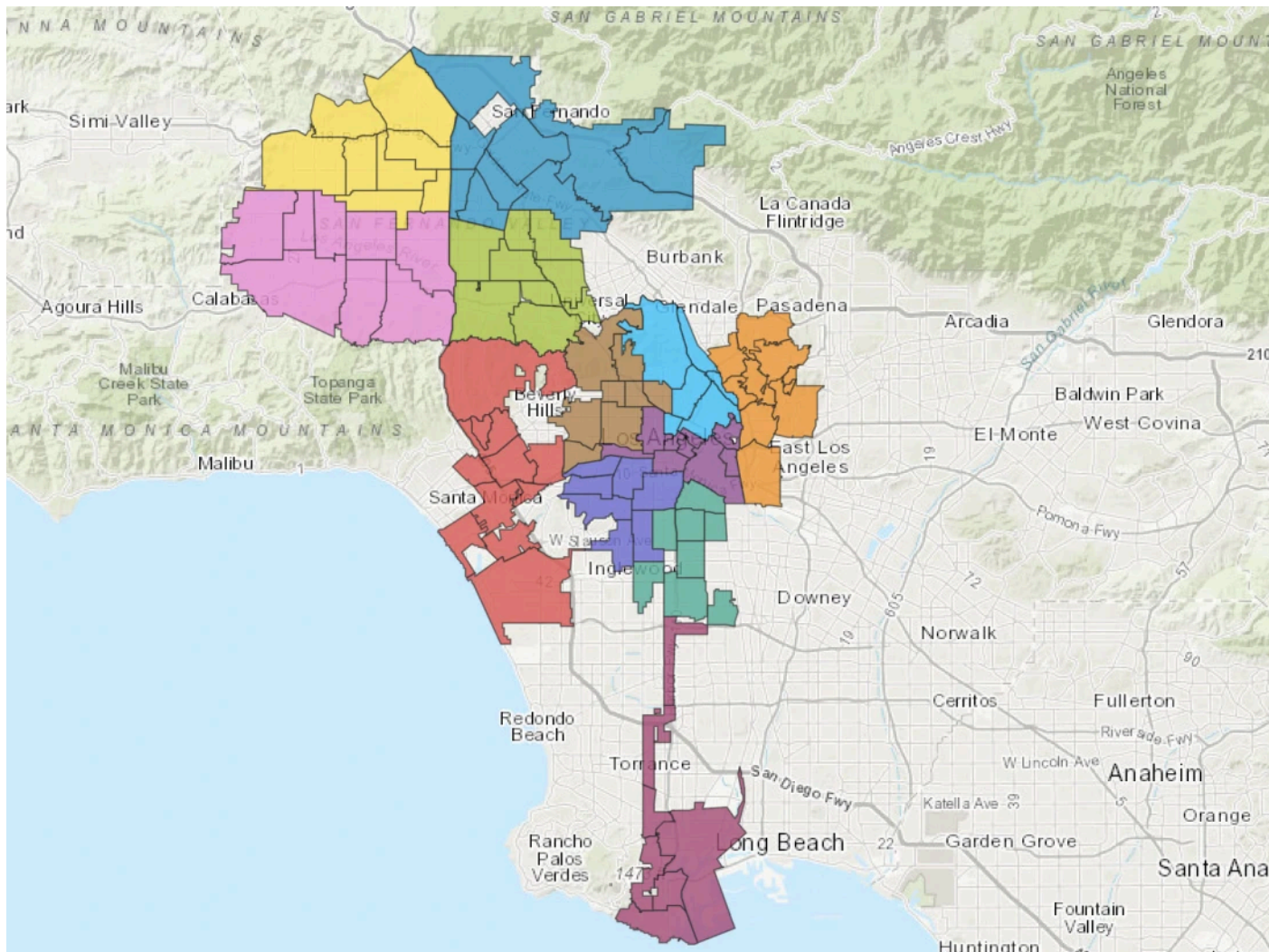
Emphasizing community engagement and proactive governance

can help restore trust in city administration. For your Reference:
LA Mayor Bass Promises Review Of Neighborhood Councils |
LAist Thank you, LIONEL MARES, MPA

LA Mayor Bass Promises Review Of Neighborhood Councils

By [Frank Stoltze](#)

Published Apr 26, 2023 4:11 PM



A map showing the 99 neighborhood council districts.

(Courtesy City of L.A.)

Los Angeles Mayor Karen Bass Wednesday promised to evaluate the city's neighborhood council system, which was once touted as a way to give voice to local communities but often has been ignored by those in power.

Her comments on LAist's AirTalk program follow the [recent resignation of the former general manager](#) of the Department of Neighborhood Empowerment (DONE), which oversees the city's 99 councils. Raquel Beltran had come under increasing criticism for how she managed the neighborhood council system.

“I really want to have the whole system evaluated,” Bass said, adding that there can be “big differences in the capacity, the neighborhood involvement, the functioning.”

She noted that “[e]ven in one neighborhood, you might have multiple councils.” Bass said she wants to “really improve the system ... Now that we have an opportunity to have a new general manager, it’s an opportunity to evaluate everything.”

Neighborhood councils want more details

“I’m glad that Mayor Bass is finally listening to the concerns of neighborhood councils,” said Lionel Mares of the Sun Valley Neighborhood Council. “We do need reform and changes.”

“I’m just curious what the mayor really has in mind,” said Kay Hartman, a member of the neighborhood council in Palms. “The direction she has in mind — it’s really hard to evaluate.”

“It’s hard to respond” to the mayor, said Damien Burke, who was once treasurer of the Hollywood Studio District Neighborhood Council. “She didn’t really say much.”

[He recently resigned from the council](#) when a representative of DONE

demanded they make a donation to the Sheriff’s Youth Foundation over the objections of an overwhelming majority of the council. The foundation returned the money amid the controversy, according to Burke.

A Bass spokesperson declined to provide more details on the mayor’s thinking.

Neighborhood councils: as local as local government gets

As my colleague Brianna Lee has reported in [a comprehensive guide to L.A.’s neighborhood councils](#):

Neighborhood councils are advisory groups for city officials. They can’t pass laws or compel officials to do anything, but they can weigh in on neighborhood priorities and legislation or programs that affect the area. Think of them as a collective voice for the neighborhood with a direct line of communication to your city councilmember’s office.

They’re also about as local as local government gets — and they’re not strangers to, as Brianna put it, “infighting, personal animosities, pettiness, power trips, deadlocked meetings that last for hours, and even harassment.”

The Neighborhood Council system was established in 1999 “as a way of ensuring that the City government remains responsive to the different needs and lifestyles of Los Angeles’ rich variety of communities,” according to DONE’s website.

The Brief

[VIEW ALL](#)

Feds at LAUSD schools

Two South LA elementary schools turn away agents

29 minutes ago

Real ID

What to know as May 7 deadline approaches

43 minutes ago

Jillian Lauren

What we know about the LAPD shooting

3 hours ago

Perhaps more important in that moment, it was an attempt to ease tensions with San Fernando Valley residents threatening to [secede from L.A.](#)

‘Conflict resolution is a big deal’

Hartman said one of the issues she wants addressed is the need for help from the city in resolving disputes on neighborhood councils.

“Conflict resolution is a big deal in a lot of neighborhood councils because we have these people who are not professionals,” she said, adding, DONE “doesn’t always know how to help or doesn’t help in a way that makes things run smoothly.”

Hartman also said she wants to see the city council listen more to neighborhood councils.

“I want to be able to get five minutes in front of the city council or a city council committee,” said Hartman, instead of simply signing up to speak at meetings like everybody else. She noted that her council ostensibly represents the interests of 30,000 people.

“Neighborhood councils need better support” from DONE, Burke said, noting that wealthier neighborhoods in the city “are able to use this system to advance their purposes in city government.”

He said in “a neighborhood like mine where incomes are low, people work two or three jobs, where a lot of people are not native English speakers, navigating the bureaucracy and the work to make a neighborhood council effective is out of reach.”

Burke said effective support for the NC system costs money. “And that money is hard to come by when the mayor is proposing tens of millions of dollars more for the LAPD, which already gets more than 40% of the city’s discretionary funds,” he said.

Mares of the Sun Valley neighborhood council described having a hard time getting assistance from DONE for things as simple as how to run a hybrid zoom and in-person meeting. That’s critical for working council members.

“They have been very slow,” he said.

Neighborhood council members have long complained they lack real power in the city.

“I feel like the city council does not take us seriously,” Mares said. “We would like to have more power, more influence.” Burke echoed that theme, saying the councils have “a tiny bully pulpit.”

Communication from Public

Name: LIONEL MARES
Date Submitted: 04/29/2026 09:38 PM
Council File No: 26-0489
Comments for Public Posting: Re: RAP Charter Allocation Proposal See Attached - Public Comment

Dear City Councilmembers,

I am writing as a concerned Angeleno to urge you to reconsider and advance the proposal to double the Los Angeles Department of Recreation and Parks (RAP)'s Charter allocation from 0.033% to 0.065% of assessed property value.

LA has dropped from 49th to **90th** in the **Trust for Public Land's national [ParkScore ranking](#)**. RAP's Charter allocation has been frozen since 1937, yet today 40% of its budget (\$145M) is diverted to cover indirect costs never included in the original formula. Between FY 2009–2023, RAP's budget grew at half the rate of the rest of the City.

The ***Parks Needs Assessment*** — developed with input from over 100,000 Angelenos — makes clear that our parks are underfunded and underserved. Doubling the Charter allocation is a necessary step to restore decades of cuts and ensure safe, clean, accessible parks for all Angelenos.

Please include this proposal in your final recommendations.

For Reference:

[Los Angeles ranks the lowest among Southern California 2025 ParkScore list | Los Angeles County](#)

Thank you,

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LIONEL MARES, MPA