



Memorandum

TO: HONORABLE MAYOR
AND CITY COUNCIL

FROM: Norberto Dueñas

SUBJECT: NEIGHBORHOODS COMMISSION DATE: September 14, 2012
PILOT ASSESSMENT

Approved

Date

9/14/12

RECOMMENDATION

- (a) Accept the assessment of the Neighborhoods Commission Pilot presented in this memorandum, and
- (b) Provide direction on alternatives as described in this memorandum.

OUTCOME

The outcome of this action will be direction on neighborhood engagement in City Boards and Commissions.

PURPOSE

At the August 14, 2012 City Council meeting, the Administration was directed to prepare an evaluation of the Neighborhoods Commission Pilot for review by City Council as part of the discussion of Boards and Commissions. This memorandum was prepared in response to that direction and presents an assessment of the Pilot and a describes a crossroads of three policy alternatives for the City Council to consider in conjunction with its decisions related to overall Boards and Commissions.

BACKGROUND

The Neighborhoods Commission is an outgrowth of the Strong Neighborhoods Initiative (SNI) Project Advisory Committee (PAC). The PAC was established in January 2002 as the required advisory body for the adoption of the Strong Neighborhoods Initiative Redevelopment Project Area. On September 25, 2007, with the end of the PAC, the City Council established the

Neighborhoods Commission Pilot. A unique caucus process was held in each Council District to nominate three commissioners from each District, for a total of 30 commissioners, plus alternates.

On August 2, 2011, the City Council voted to extend the Pilot six (6) months until December 31, 2011.

On December 13, 2011 the City Council extended the Neighborhoods Commission Pilot for a second time for an additional six (6) months to June 30, 2012.

On June 30, 2012 the term of the Neighborhoods Commission Pilot sunset as directed by City Council.

ASSESSMENT OF PILOT

During the course of the Neighborhoods Commission Pilot, staff worked with the Commission to develop and implement a City Council approved work plan. Staff provided regular updates to the Neighborhood Services and Education Committee (NSE). Based on review by staff, feedback from NSE, the Neighborhoods Commission, this assessment reviews the purpose of the Neighborhoods Commission, presents their accomplishments, examines the strengths and weaknesses of the Pilot and concludes with three policy alternatives.

Pilot Purpose

As established by City Council the purpose of the Neighborhoods Commission Pilot was to “*study, review and evaluate issues, courses of action and policies/programs affecting San José neighborhoods, and to make recommendations to the Mayor and City Council regarding such issues, but only as set forth in the Commission’s Work plan which must be approved by the Mayor and City Council.*” The Council also directed that “*The Neighborhoods Commission will not duplicate the mission or work of any existing commission, including the Planning Commission, Library Commission, Parks and Recreation Commission, or Historic Landmarks Commission. The Neighborhoods Commission is not to be another level of review for land use issues.*”

Pilot Accomplishments

The Neighborhoods Commission met 33 times during the extended three year Pilot and their work resulted in the following accomplishments:

- a) ***Input on the City Budget*** – Provided a letter to Mayor and Council with city-wide neighborhood perspective on the City budget in 2010, 2011 and 2012, and assisted in outreach for the annual community budget meetings.

b) **Feedback for City Departments and dissemination of information to neighborhoods.** The Commission acted as a sounding board for City departments on the following topics: Street Re-paving, City of San José Council re-districting, Community Center Re-use, Community Policing, Traffic-Calming, Police and Fire priorities for 2011, Update of City Public Policy 6-30-Community Notification on Capital Projects, Modification of San José Police Department rotation; Strong Neighborhoods Business Plan Update, Street Tree Policy, Social Host Responsibility Ordinance, Rancho del Pueblo Golf Course, Police Chief selection, and City Clerks Boards and Commissions Elimination and Consolidation Proposal. In most cases, the commission provided input to the presenters and disseminated information out to neighborhoods.

Pilot Strengths and Weaknesses

Based on the three year experience of the Pilot, staff has identified the following key strengths and weaknesses with the Neighborhoods Commission as structured:

Strengths

1. **Balanced Representation** – Requiring representation from each City Council District ensured a more balanced discussion of issues. Issues such as budget were examined from a city-wide viewpoint with commissioners educating each other and City staff on the perspectives of our large and diverse city.
2. **Forum for Neighborhood Feedback** – The Neighborhoods Commission provided a reliable, easily available forum for City Departments seeking neighborhood input on a broad range of new policies, approaches and procedures. Without the existence of the Neighborhoods Commission, many of these Departments would have had to set up, conduct outreach for, and facilitate their own ad hoc neighborhood meetings.

Weaknesses

1. **Narrow Scope** – Because of the restriction on the Neighborhoods Commission from discussing items within the purview of another commission, the scope of work was quite narrow.
2. **Large Size** – 30 members is a large commission and requires significant staff effort to manage and support. The size makes meaningful discussion and debate more difficult given the constraints on meeting time and the wide variety of subjects.
3. **Restricted Caucus Participation** –By designing a caucus where each neighborhood association had a single vote, the process provided only a narrow group of people the opportunity to be involved in the selection of commission members.

EVALUTION AND FOLLOW-UP

Staff provides regular updates on neighborhood engagement at the Neighborhood Services and Education Council Committee. If a permanent Neighborhoods Commission is created, staff will provide updates in that forum.

POLICY ALTERNATIVES

Derived from the assessment of the Pilot are three policy alternatives for City Council consideration:

- a) Allow the Neighborhoods Commission to sunset and continue neighborhood engagement through existing Boards and Commissions and outreach,
- b) Restructure other Boards and Commissions as recommended by the City Clerk to include representation from each district and a direct connection to Council Committees to encourage greater neighborhood participation, and allow the Neighborhoods Commission to sunset, or
- c) Create a permanent, restructured, smaller Neighborhoods Commission with a scope focused on City Council identified priorities, and aligned with the Neighborhood Services and Education Committee and Neighborhood Services City Service Area.

Each of these policy alternatives can achieve the goal of engaging neighborhoods in the decisions and work of the City. The first two options would allow the sunset of the Pilot and encourage the participation of neighborhood leaders in existing Boards and Commissions rather than addressing neighborhood issues in a separate body. The second option goes further in restructuring those Boards and Commissions to include membership from all districts. This would open the door to broader neighborhood representation and participation. The third option would establish a new, permanent, stand-alone, Neighborhoods Commission, with consideration given to restructuring to address weaknesses identified in the Pilot. This third option would require the dedication of on-going staff resources from the City Manager's Office.

The engagement of neighborhood leaders and neighborhood perspectives in the work of the City of San José is an important objective. It is also an objective that can be accomplished by following different paths. The three policy alternatives presented in this memorandum provide three distinct and viable paths to neighborhood engagement. We look forward to the City Council discussion of how best to engage the neighborhood perspective in advising and guiding the work of the City within the constraints of budget and staff.

PUBLIC OUTREACH/INTEREST

- Criterion 1: Requires Council action on the use of public funds equal to \$1 million or greater. **(Required: Website posting)**
- Criterion 2: Adoption of a new or revised policy that may have implications for public health, safety, quality of life, or financial/economic vitality of the City. **(Required: E-mail and website posting)**
- Criterion 3: Consideration of proposed changes to service delivery, programs, staffing that may have impacts to community services and have been identified by staff, Council or a community group that requires special outreach. **(Required: E-mail, website posting, community meetings, notice in appropriate newspapers)**

Although this action does not meet any of the criteria above, it will be posted on the City's Council Agenda Website for the September 25, 2012 Council Meeting. Additionally, it will be emailed to neighborhood commission members.

COORDINATION

This memo was coordinated with the City Clerk's Office.

CEQA

Not a Project, File No. PP10-069, Staff Reports/Assessments.

Norberto Dueñas
Deputy City Manager

For questions, please contact Kip Harkness, Assistant to the City Manager, at (408) 535-8501

Attachment





Memorandum

TO: CITY COUNCIL

FROM: Mayor Chuck Reed
Councilmember Judy Chirco
Councilmember Nancy Pyle

SUBJECT: NEIGHBORHOODS
COMMISSION

DATE: 09-20-07

Approved

Chuck Reed *Judy Chirco* *Nancy Pyle*

Date

RECOMMENDATION

Approve the staff recommendation to create a new Neighborhoods Commission as a two-year pilot project subject to approval of the commission work plan and with the following conditions:

1. The Neighborhoods Commission will not duplicate the mission or work of any existing commission, including the Planning Commission, Library Commission, Parks and Recreation Commission, or Historic Landmarks Commission;
2. The Neighborhoods Commission is not to be another level of review for land use projects;
3. Until the Neighborhoods Commission annual work plan is completed and approved by Council, no decisions will be made about staffing and budget requirements;
4. Staff is directed to return with an analysis of all existing boards, commissions, and other public bodies, and the costs to staff each, looking at redundancies and opportunities for consolidation, efficiency, and elimination.

BACKGROUND

This concept came from the community and is in keeping with the Council initiated community engagement process for priority setting. The successful work of the Strong Neighborhoods Initiative Project Area Committee has lead to a desire for an ongoing means for neighborhoods to have a formal voice within City Hall.

Currently, the City has more than 20 boards, commissions, task forces, advisory committees, and other public bodies. We must ensure that a new Neighborhoods Commission does not duplicate existing commissions.

Additionally, each commission or other policy bodies requires committed volunteers, staff time and City funding to operate. The establishment of a new commission provides an opportunity to

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Subject: Donated Services for Parks Maintenance

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review all of them to analyze whether redundancies exist, missions are outdated, or inefficiencies can be eliminated.

Funding and staffing the new Neighborhoods Commission must be reviewed carefully. The existing mechanisms that have been used to fund the Strong Neighborhoods Initiative Project Area Committee may not be available wholly to fund a citywide Neighborhoods Commission.