

Neighborhoods Commission Update

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Neighborhoods Commission (NC). As defined in San José City Ordinance No. 29297, the Neighborhoods Commission (NC) has the functions, powers, and duties to study, review, and evaluate and make recommendations to the Council regarding issues, policies, and programs affecting the quality of life in San José neighborhoods focusing on neighborhood safety, transportation, and code enforcement. The NC also advises and makes recommendations to the Council regarding annual budget priorities. The NC is the only SJ commission whose members are selected by neighborhood caucus and approved by the SJ City Council.

The Neighborhoods Commission has not met since June 8, 2022 and is in the process of being reorganized.

Neighborhoods Commission Restructure. The City is proposing to sunset the Neighborhoods Commission and transition the Independent Citizens Oversight Committee to a Standing Committee of the Parks and Recreation Commission via the following actions:

1. Sunset the Neighborhoods Commission;
2. Transition the Independent Citizens Oversight Committee to a Standing Committee of the Parks and Recreation Commission;
3. Return to Neighborhood Services and Education Committee in Spring 2024 with a report on staff's Neighborhood Association Engagement Model; and
4. Cross reference this action to City Council April 11, 2023, Agenda.

SUMMARY AND OUTCOME

The Parks, Recreation, and Neighborhood Services Department (PRNS) is recommending to sunset the Neighborhoods Commission. Staff will administratively form a Neighborhood Association Engagement Model comprised of a diverse cross-section of neighborhood leaders and City staff from departments that deliver quality of life neighborhood programs or services.

The City's position is that the current structure of the Neighborhoods Commission does not allow for engagement at a level that addresses and responds to dynamic neighborhood issues. To better address these types of issues, the Department will develop a Neighborhood Association Engagement Model in collaboration with neighborhood leaders to allow for increased engagement with a larger portion of the City's neighborhood associations and better align with key neighborhood-serving departments in the delivery of services.

COMMENTS & OBSERVATIONS

I, as well as former NC Chairs and neighborhood community leaders, do not agree with the restructure proposal. Over the years, I have provided the D1LG NC status reports detailing the issues with lack of support from the City.

The PRNS recommendation was presented to the SJ All District Leadership Group (ADLG) for comment. The current NC Chair Jim Carter, a member of the ADLG, has made a recommendation to the ADLG that I agree with and support.

NC Chair Jim Carter's recommendation includes the following:

1. Postpone sunseting of the Neighborhoods Commission until recommendations are heard from neighbors representing the districts of San Jose.
2. Have the ADLG would present an alternative to sunseting the Neighborhoods Commission.
3. Do not decommission the Neighborhoods Commission. Instead, immediately convene an Ad-Hoc transition committee comprised of neighborhood leaders recommended by the ADLG. The transition committee will devise an alternative to the Neighborhoods Commission. City Staff would not need to support the Ad-Hoc transition committee.
4. The committee will sunset in August and present their recommendations to the SJ Neighborhood Services and Education committee in August. Delaying this process further erodes and representation of the neighbors' concerns and issues.