



Eric (Roderico) Villanueva <eric.villanueva@lacity.org>

Council File: 18-0467

1 message

Russell Schmidt <mail@everyactioncustom.com>

Tue, Nov 20, 2018 at 8:45 PM

Reply-To: mail@russellschmidt.net

To: eric.villanueva@lacity.org

Dear Eric Villanueva,

Dear Councilmember Ryu,

Thank you for proposing needed reforms to Los Angeles's Neighborhood Council (NC) system. NCs can play an important role in amplifying the voices of Angelenos. Unfortunately, they can also be abused by the powerful, who seek to leverage neighborhood councils to reinforce existing policies of exclusion and inequity. See, for example, the pernicious impact of anti-growth ideology promulgated by well-off homeowner activists [Morrow, G. D. (2013). *The Homeowner Revolution: Democracy, Land Use and the Los Angeles Slow-Growth Movement, 1965-1992*. UCLA. <https://escholarship.org/uc/item/6k64g20f>]. As a member of Abundant Housing LA, I believe that NCs should serve the needs of the many, not the aesthetic preferences of the few.

As such, I am encouraged by the reforms you have proposed to NCs (council file: 18-0467). Some of these reforms will help ensure that fair representation is at the core of the NC system. I am particularly pleased with motions that:

- [1] Remove "selections" from the process (NC boardmembers should be chosen by elections).
- [2] Review the extent to which boardmember representation is skewed towards particular groups of stakeholders (overrepresentation of older, whiter Angelenos is well-documented).

Please also consider including the following reforms that would further increase the democratic quality of NCs:

- [1] Establish the definition of stakeholder to be anyone aged sixteen or older—regardless of immigration status—who lives, works, attends school, or owns a business in an NC.
 - [a] Residents of Los Angeles are diverse, and their representatives should be, too.
- [2] Provide resources for NCs to allow stakeholders to vote via online ballot.
 - [a] Online voting will increase voting access to stakeholders who otherwise lack the resources to do so as a result of constraints due to work, family, etc.
- [3] Offer translation services to NCs at their request.
 - [a] Over 50% of Angelenos speak a language other than English at home.
- [4] Provide for the collection and publication of critical demographic data for NCs.
 - [a] Angelenos deserve to know the extent to which their interests are represented on NCs. Relevant demographic data include race, ethnicity, homeowner vs. renter status, etc. This issue could be considered during the one-time review process by the Board of Neighborhood Commissioners, which is recommended in the fourth bullet of your motion.

I am grateful for your commitment to ensuring that one of LA's most important democratic institutions is truly democratic.

Personally sent by Russell Schmidt using Abundant Housing LA's Advocacy Tool. Abundant Housing LA is an all-volunteer grassroots organization committed to advocating for more housing.

Sincerely,
Russell Schmidt
Los Angeles, CA 90008
mail@russellschmidt.net