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TELEPHONE: (213) 978-1551



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NEIGHBORHOOD COUNCILS
EMPOWER LA
Department of
NEIGHBORHOOD EMPOWERMENT

20TH FLOOR, CITY HALL
200 NORTH SPRING STREET
LOS ANGELES, CA 90012

TELEPHONE: (213) 978-1551
TOLL-FREE: 3-1-1
FAX: (213) 978-1751
E-MAIL: EmpowerLA@lacity.org

RAQUEL BELTRÁN
GENERAL MANAGER

www.EmpowerLA.org

October 14, 2022

Honorable Members of the Arts, Parks, Health,
Education, and Neighborhoods Committee
c/o Office of the City Clerk
Room 395, City Hall
Los Angeles, CA 90012

SUBJECT: REPORT RE: CF 21-0407 (Rodriguez/Cedillo)

BACKGROUND

On April 14, 2021, Councilmember Monica Rodriguez introduced a [motion](#), seconded by Councilmember Gil Cedillo, regarding voter identification and other participation requirements in neighborhood council elections. Analysis of various aspects of neighborhood council elections were requested from the Offices of the City Attorney, City Clerk, and the Department of Neighborhood Empowerment (Department).

The motion, [Council File 21-0407](#), instructed the Department to “*report with a survey of Neighborhood Council Election rules, with an analysis on how the bylaws of different Neighborhood Councils vary on election issues, including, but not limited to: eligibility requirements for Board seats, governing board structure, stakeholder requirements, and stakeholder verification.*” In this report, we analyzed the primary features of neighborhood council bylaws and election rules.

While NCs are not completely autonomous or disconnected from the City, their relative independence is achieved through the ability of a board to self-determine, through their bylaws, their own board seat types, overall board structure, and voter eligibility requirements and participation rules. The Department has prepared an analysis of the requirements for neighborhood council board seats and voters, as well as an analysis

of aspects of the 2020- 2021 NC elections. Our analysis focuses on the following four topics: 1) NC board structure, 2) voter turnout, 3) eligibility verification, and 4) the number of people who attempted to participate in the 2021 election.

There were 91 neighborhood councils scheduled to have elections in 2020-2021 (2021), three more than the number scheduled in 2018-2019 (2019) (94). However, not all neighborhood councils held elections in both election seasons.

The Department has also created an [NC Election Comparison Tool \(2019-2021\)](#): an innovative dashboard that provides a means of comparing election results systemwide, regionally, by City Council and by neighborhood council, utilizing data from the 2019 and 2021 election seasons.

ELECTION ANALYSIS

Overview of Voter Turn-Out

The 2019 election was an at-poll election. The 2021 election was an all-VBM election. There were 91 neighborhood councils scheduled to hold elections in 2021. Of those, 65 also held elections in 2019.

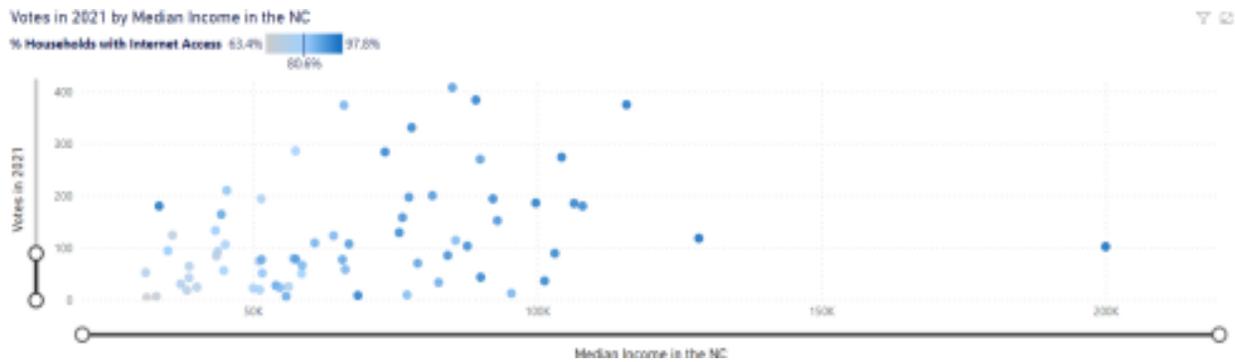
There were 2.5% more candidates in the 2021 election than in the 2019 election for the 91 neighborhood council scheduled for elections. For those holding elections in both election years, a 2.3% increase in the number of candidates was reported.

Turnout and median income

Income did not appear to be a factor influencing voter turnout. The neighborhood council with the highest average income (\$200k) reported 102 votes cast. The neighborhood council with one of the lowest number of votes cast (6) has an average household income of \$33k.

Turnout and internet access

Access to the internet in the neighborhood council's service area appears not to be a factor influencing voter turnout. Neighborhoods with less reliable access to the Internet had similar turnout to other neighborhoods with more reliable access to the internet. However, none of the NCs in areas where fewer households had internet access had a high turnout.



2021 Results

Dept of Neighborhood Empowerment - Council File 21-0407 - January 2022

Voter turnout for the 91 neighborhood councils scheduled to hold elections in 2021 was 17,577. This was a reduction of -6,408 votes compared with turnout in 2019 (-20.05%).

Additional analysis of the 91 NCs scheduled to hold elections in 2021 shows there were 9,245 people in 2021 who requested ballots, but did not return their ballots - did not vote. When added to the number who voted (17,577), this represents a total of 26,822 (+4,837 people) who attempted to participate or participated in the 2021 election (+39%).

Comparison with 2019

Voter turnout for the 65 neighborhood councils scheduled to hold elections in 2021 which also held elections in 2019 was 16,828. This was a reduction of -1,633 votes from voter turnout in 2019 (-8.85%).

Analysis of the 65 NCs scheduled to hold elections in both election years show there were 8,866 people in 2021 who requested ballots, but did not return their ballot - did not vote. When added to the number who voted (16,828), this represents a total of 25,688 (+7,227 more people) who attempted to participate or participated in the 2021 election when compared with 2019 (+22%).

Further discussion on the topic of the number of ballots not returned is provided below.

Board Structure

Neighborhood council board seats are either ***at-large seats or categorical seats (not-at-large)***, where candidates - and in some cases voters for these seats - must belong to an internal district within the NC, or be a stakeholder of a certain type. Such would be the case with a Business Representative seat, for example.

The Department reviewed the bylaws of approximately one-third of the neighborhood councils to collect a sampling of the types of eligibility categories reflected in governing

board seats. A total of 130 unique board seat types were found amongst the 33 neighborhood councils included in the sample - the full list is attached to this report.

To explain further, the Election Comparison Tool may be filtered by *at-large* seats vs. *categorical/not-at-large* seats. For all 91 neighborhood councils scheduled for elections in 2021, those with *at-large* board structures (9) represented a smaller share of votes and ballots not returned. Neighborhood Councils with *categorical/not-at-large* board structures experienced a smaller percentage reduction in voter turnout:

Board Structure (91 NCs)	Voter Turnout	No. of Ballots not returned	Change in Voter turnout
At -Large (9 NCs)	1,740	686	+26.64%
Categorical/Not-at-large (82 NCs)	15,837	8,559	-15%
Total	17,577	9,245	-12.14%

Eligibility Verification (documentation vs. self-affirmation)

Neighborhood councils determine how voters will verify their stakeholder eligibility in order to vote in neighborhood council elections. Neighborhood Councils select either “**documentation**” or “**self-affirmation**” style verification. This refers to their means of stakeholder verification to determine voter eligibility. 47 neighborhood councils have chosen the documentation method. 52 have chosen the self-affirmation method.

To receive a ballot in self-affirmation elections, voters fill out a form with their name, local address, and stakeholder type, then sign it as a sworn statement of stakeholder status. Voters in documentation-style elections must provide, at a minimum, proof of identity, age, and local address, such as would be found on a current driver’s license. But if an NC has categorical requirements for voters, they may need to provide additional documents, if these requirements are not tied to geography (as is the case with district seats) but to stakeholder type.

For example, if only renters can vote for renters representative candidates, then a voter may need to show a copy of a lease or letter from a landlord. A [wide range of document types](#) are accepted by City Clerk as proof of stakeholder status in NC elections. [Special provisions for unhoused voters](#) are also in place.

Voter Turnout

The Department analyzed 2021 voter turnout by eligibility verification method established by the neighborhood councils described above. Self-affirmation neighborhood councils showed a slightly higher total number of ballots not returned, but this is because there are more NCs using self-affirmation than documentation. As is indicated in the table below showing voter turnout and unreturned ballots for these two voter eligibility methods, the average number of unreturned ballots per NC is close to the same:

Eligibility Method (91 NCs)	Voter Turnout	Total # of Ballots not	Avg # unreturned
		returned	ballots per NC
Self-Affirmation (48 NCs)	7,327	4,933	103
Documentation (43 NCs)	10,250	4,312	100

About People Attempting to Participate

In almost all points of analysis, when projecting the voter turnout HAD people who did not return their ballots voted, **voter turnout would have increased in almost all neighborhood councils**. When examining the City Council Districts with the greatest number of ballots not returned in the 2020 election, the greatest concentration (93%) of the 9,245 ballots not returned were in five City Council districts (pre-2021 redistricting):

Council Districts with Greatest Number of Ballots Not Returned in 2021 Election (Pre-2021 Redistricting Changes)
D=Documentation and SA=Self Affirmation

Council District	Votes by Eligibility Method	No. of Ballots Not returned
Council District 4	<u>13 NCs = 3,469 votes</u> 5 NCs D = 815 8 NCs SA = 2,654	<u>2,531 not returned</u> 5 NCs D = 399 8 NC SA = 2,132

Council District 11	<u>4 NCs = 5,841 votes</u> 4 NCs D = 5,841 0 NCs SA = N/A	<u>2,208 not returned</u> 4 NCs D = 2,208 0 NCs SA = N/A
Council District 5	<u>7 NCs = 2,388 votes</u> 2 NCs D = 282 5 NCs SA = 2,106	<u>1,584 not returned</u> 2 NCs D = 117 5 NCs SA = 1,467
Council District 13	<u>9 NCs = 1,325 votes</u> 2 NCs D = 27 7 NCs SA = 1,298	<u>1,248 not returned</u> 2 NCs D = 42 7 NCs SA = 1,206
Council District 1	<u>13 NCs = 1,399 votes</u> 13 NCs D = 925 4 NCs SA = 474	<u>1,116 not returned</u> 13 NCs D = 668 4 NCs SA = 448

CONCLUSION

The most significant factor affecting voter turn was reflected in the number of ballots not returned.

1. NCs with *categorical/not-at-large* board structures experienced the greatest share of votes, but also the greatest number of ballots not returned. This board structure style is also the preferred board structure for most neighborhood councils (90%).
2. The difference in voter turnout based on eligibility method (documentation vs. self affirmation) was small. However, the difference in ballots not returned was greater for NCs requiring the documentation method to establish voter eligibility.
3. The Office of the City Clerk has indicated it will ensure the handbook and corresponding registration documents include consular documents to its list of acceptable documentation to establish eligibility.

However, the data shows that although there was a greater number of individuals who engaged in the elections for the 91 neighborhood councils scheduled to hold elections (25,688), there were 9,245 individuals who requested ballots but did not vote - they did not return their ballots. Of those, more than 92% - were from NCs with categorical eligibility requirements (8,559). The greatest concentration of voters who did not return their ballots were in 5 Council Districts: Districts 1, 4, 5, 11, and 13.

There is also an increase (7.14%) in the number of NCs that were seated by board

affirmations, who were scheduled for elections in 2021 but did not qualify to hold them, due to an absence of competitive races. Of the 15 that had board affirmations, 12 (80%) are boards with *categorical/not-at-large* board structures. This trend should be closely monitored as it seems to suggest there are challenges and possible barriers to overcome to support expanded stakeholder awareness and engagement in the Neighborhood Council and the election. This may be due to limited awareness of the NC and limited engagement of stakeholders in the NC to sustain a balanced and ongoing pool of prospective candidates.

FISCAL IMPACT:

There is no fiscal impact with the report.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Raquel Beltran". The signature is written in a cursive style, with the first name "Raquel" and the last name "Beltran" clearly legible. The signature is positioned above a horizontal line.

**Raquel Beltran, General Manager
Department of Neighborhood Empowerment**

ATTACHMENT

SURVEY OF GOVERNING BOARD SEATS ON 33 NEIGHBORHOOD

COUNCILS *A total of 130 unique governing board seat types were found in a*

sample of 33 NCs:

- | | | |
|---|---|--|
| 1. At-Large Representative | Representative | 29. At-Large Youth Representative |
| 2. Business Owner Representative | 15. Monterey Hills Representative | 30. Bel Air Association |
| 3. Community Based Representative | 16. Mount Washington Representative | 31. Bel Air Crest Master Association |
| 4. Home/Condo Owner | 17. Sycamore Grove Representatives | 32. Bel-Air Glen District |
| 5. Renter Representative | 18. Community Interest At-Large | 33. Bel Air Hills Association |
| 6. School Representative | 19. Business Representative | 34. Bel Air Ridge HOA |
| 7. Senior Representative | 20. Central Atwater Representative | 35. Bel Air Ridge HOA Alternate |
| 8. Youth Representatives | 21. Community Group/Non-Profit Representative | 36. Bel-Air District |
| 9. Arts District Resident Representative | 22. Education Representative | 37. Benedict Canyon Association |
| 10. Business Owner, Employee, Non Profit Representative | 23. Faith-Based Organizations Representative | 38. Casiano Estates Association |
| 11. Little Tokyo Resident Representative | 24. North Atwater Representative | 39. Commercial or Office Enterprise Districts |
| 12. Little Tokyo At Large Business Owner, Employee, Non-Profit Representative | 25. South Atwater Representative | 40. Community Interest At-Large Board Member |
| 13. Little Tokyo Property Owner Representative | 26. Vice President of Operations | 41. Community Interest At-Large Alternate |
| 14. Montecito Heights | 27. Vice President of Legislative Affairs | 42. Custodian of Open Spaces |
| | 28. At-Large Traditional Stakeholder | 43. Doheny Sunset Plaza Neighborhood Association |
| | | 44. Faith-Based Institutions |
| | | 45. Franklin-Coldwater District |

- | | | |
|--|--|---|
| 46.Holmby Hills HOA | 50.North of Sunset | Beverly Glen |
| 47.Laurel Canyon Association | District | 55.Area 1 Seat |
| 48.Laurel Canyon Association | Alternate | 56.Area 2 Seat |
| 48.Laurel Canyon Association | 51.Private 7-12 Schools | 57.Area 3 Seat |
| 48.Laurel Canyon Association Alternate | 52.Private K-6 Schools | 58.Area 4 Seat |
| 49.North of Sunset District | 53.Public Educational Institutions | 59.Community Seat |
| | 54.Residents of | 60.Community Interest Seat |
| | | |
| 61.Corresponding Secretary | 75.Youth Representative | 95.Fashion District Business Director |
| 62.Communication Secretary | 76.Outreach Officer | 96.Fashion District Residential Director |
| 63.Home/Condo Owners Representative | 77.Communications Officer | 97.Historic Core Business Director |
| 64.Residential Renters Representative | 78.Land Use Officer | 98.Historic Core Business Director |
| 65.Retail/Service Business Representative | 79.Area A Director | 99.Social Service Providers (SSP) |
| 66.Community Service Organization Representative | 80.Area B Director | 100. South Park Business Director |
| 67.Community Based Organizations Representative | 81.Area C Director | 101. South Park Residential Director |
| 68.Senior Group Representative | 82.Area D Director | 102. Historic Core Resident Alternate |
| 69.Schools Representative | 83.Area E Director | 103. South Park Resident Alternate |
| 70.Faith Based Organizations Representative | 84.Area F Director | 104. South Park Resident Director Alternate |
| 71.Youth Group Representative | 85.Area G Director | 105. Social Service Providers (SSP) Alternate |
| 72.Sergeant at Arms | 86.Area H Director | 106. Arts Director |
| 73.Education Representative | 87.Board Member | 107. Boulevards Director |
| 74.Senior Citizen Representative | 88.Vice President Communications and Outreach | 108. Business Director |
| e | 89.Vice President of Administration | 109. Education Director |
| | 90.Area-Wide Stakeholder Board Member | 110. Elder Director |
| | 91.At-Large Stakeholder Board Member | |
| | 92.Center City East Business Director | |
| | 93.Center City East Residential Director | |
| | 94.Civic Center/Financial District Business Director | |

111. Public Safety
Director

112. Social Justice
Director

113. Sustainability
Director

114. Youth
Director

115. Immediate
Past President

116. Sub-District 1
Director

117. Sub-District 2
Director

118. Sub-District 3
Director

119. Sub-District 4
Director

120. District 1
Representative

121. District 2
Representative

122. District 3
Representative

123. District 4
Representative

124. District 5

Representative

125. District 6

Representative

126. Homeless &
Displacement
Prevention

Representative

127. Public Health &
Safety Representative

128. Arts & Culture
Representative

129. Tenant

Representative

130. Property
Owner
Representative