Local Democracy and Neighborhood Participation

Evidence from a large global city.

(Ángel Iglesias, Dir.)

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INTRODUCTION

Globalisation has generated a need for the renewal of local democracy and experiments in democratic innovation at the local level. While city governments may be constrained by the forces of globalism they are also active in developing strategies to improve democracy and, therefore, the local level has become a splendid laboratory of democratic innovations. In this context, civic engagement in local policies appears as a vital element of local governance aimed at both a relegitimation of the local democratic process and the improvement of efficiency. Citizens are not any more viewed as passive consumers of local public services but rather as participants in decision making processes and part of the whole governance system. As a matter of fact and in the light of the many potential benefits of increased civic participation a vast array of local governments in Western Europe as well as in many other countries that recently adhered to democracy have designed and implemented policies to put into motion several civic engagement strategies to foster citizen's involvement in public affairs and, in the end improve the whole system of local governance.

But whereas there is within the citizenry a great potential for developing the democracy, there is, on the contrary, an increasing lack of interest on the part of the citizens to participate in public affairs. To reverse this situation many local governments are putting into motion different initiatives to reinforce their citizen's implication in local affairs. All of these initiatives are based on notions like "citizen empowerment", "strengthening democracy", reinforcement of citizen implication, direct democracy, consumer participation and so on. On the other hand, citizen participation has become an important issue within the context of social change developments not to mention the globalization, the European integration and some other political and socioeconomic processes. The more the societal and institutional differentiation the more responsiveness of the political and administrative systems is required. All these initiatives involve new forms of participation at the different stages of the administrative decisions. Furthermore, an important part of the literature on democracy deals with the question on how to improve citizen participation throughout the different participative models or about creating new ways of participation. These studies focus on public policy approaches from the point of view of the instruments, strategies, resources and contents.

The need for the local governments to innovate is mainly due to two, not necessarily compatible, trends which are the yardsticks of our present time. On the one hand, the desire of improving and expanding the representative democracy. On the other, the existence of a growing process of globalization which changes the traditional arrangements of power division among the different levels of territorial governments. In this context, the local level is becoming a splendid laboratory for democratic innovations and this level seems to be the most adecuate to put into practice the array of new initiatives and, therefore, is also where most part of the discussion has been developed.

We shall therefore begin with a brief revision o some of the problems that may arise in connection with civic participation and the improvement of democracy.

FROM REPRESENTATIVE TO PARTICIPATIVE DEMOCRACY.

Within the normative democratic theory and in some empiric theories of democracy such as those of Social Capital (Putnam, 2000) there is a growing interest in the accountability and responsiveness of the public authorities. In the field of the political science there is also a growing concern about the disaffection and lack of political implication on the part of the citizens. In addition, and in the field of the Public Administration there is a concern regarding the improvement of efficiency linked to the provision of services and on how the administrative organisations come closer to the citizens.

All in all, the representative democracy based on the activities of the political parties needs to be revised. The liberal representation and its theoretical principles do not match satisfactorily with the present situation. This perception reinforces itself by looking back to the liberal theories involved with the representative mandate and verifies that they are an ideological construction of the XIX century.

The liberal representation is, without doubt, intellectually very ingenious, but it, certainly is loosing credibility since the democracy based on political parties has helped to this crisis. The ideas which have informed the liberal representation have not been convalidated by the historical facts and the political parties are no longer an instrument but rather an obstacle for the new demands and participation forms. In this way it is foreseeable that citizens, especially in a postmaterialistic political culture, require from their most nearby administrations the improvement and the enlargement of the expression and exercise of political participation. The new demands of participation at the local level are also demands in favour of a grater control of the public authorities and their decisions. Thus, the innovations as regards participation procedures are also innovations in the forms of control of the responsibility of the authorities.

However, it could be said that the abovementioned changes have not yet produced a general and coherent transformation of the political sphere. Consequently, it would be presumptuous to say that the representative democracy has been substituted for the participative democracy, although, now it could be said that there is an important tendency to introduce it particularly at the local level where it is easier and less risky. All in all, it could be concluded that a new political structure is needed to complete the representative democracy, although this situation can be further complicated since, for instance, it may happen that the bundle of new experiments in democratic innovation fail what would lead to a reduction in the political sphere. Furthermore, it could also happen that those experiences remain unequally distributed which means that they could improve the quality of democracy in some territories and not in others. Therefore, the general conception of the democracy that has been tied to the existence of the nation-state would be damaged. In view of this, there may be necessarily a reflection on the consequences that an apparently emancipating speech would have on the defense of democratization at the local level in the strengthening

of a communitarian idea of politics.

As have already been said, the improvement of local democracy should not lead us to forget the problem of the health and quality of democracy in a more general and extensive level. In this connection, one of the most difficult problems to be resolved is not to try to improve democracy but rather to know how to locate the new participation forms in a general project of democratic enlargement. To say it in other words, how to pass from the local to the general level of governance without a loss of quality in democracy. It has to be remarked that the local autonomy refers only to those aspects that are strictly local, since there are many core elements at the local level which are dependent on other levels of government. This obviously means that the local level can only be understood within a more general context. There is a conservative thought that preoccupies itself with the local level not because its value for the democracy, but in that the local level may be considered as a niche of power that, if necessary, might be used against other territorial levels of government.

Furthermore, there is another important fact that should not be ignored because of its influence in the autonomy of the local level of government: the process of globalisation. This process is placing local governments at stake in that the local level of government is progressively connected with the global order. On the one hand, the internationalisation of capital has an enormous influence in the decisions of the local administrations. As a counterbalance, an in order to preserve some democratic values, the local communities require a further development of their civil societies. The economic pressure on specific localities derived from the requirements of international capital is due to their comparative economic advantages in relation with their States. This means that there exist some well connected localities, politically and economically strong with a strong culture of citizen participation whereas in others there is a lack of both economic interests and a civic culture which promotes an active citizenry. (Delgado, 1997).

DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE AND PUBLIC PARTICIPATION.

The interest to improve and extent the traditional representative democracy comes from the crisis of the national state and its political structures. Admittedly, States and its institutions are too much remote and appear as an abstract entity to its citizens. Moreover, the traditional ways in the practice of politics within the states are eroded in their credibility and, needless to say, their efficiency. Surely, it is not the first time in history that the previous political space has to be expanded and that this enlargement demands new magnitudes and concepts which may be able to embrace, explain and describe the political activity. One does not find much surprise that the studies and reflections concerning the renewal of political participation at the local level of government, in spite of their short history, have already reached an important dimension and density. In this context, the concept of democratic governance regarding civic participation comes equipped with two exigencies. The first one is related to its democratic and normative aspects, the second one has to do with the improvement of the public activities of the Administration.

As regards the first dimension there exists a bundle of general literature on democracy which tends to place the problem of civic participation at the local level in a more general context and reflections about the meaning of democracy. Some authors (Schumpeter, Dahl, Bobbio, Hirst, Macpherson, Sartori, Downs, Held, Hirschman,) among others have developed a notion of democracy where the national and local questions related to democracy cannot be separated. There are others who organize the range of democratic innovations within such concepts as representativeness and legitimacy, that is to say, taking into account the capacity of each instrument to incorporate citizens.

The presently fashionable emphasis on market solutions may result in a technocratic approach to civic participation in which effectiveness and efficiency in terms of costs and results are the most valued variables. As Ian Sanderson suggests (Sanderson, 1999), the democracy could be dominated by an instrumental rationality. To overcome this, what is crucial is the promotion of a communicative rationality (Habermas, 1972) since this is the sort of rationality of a truly democratic citizenship. Attention has to be paid to new forms of participation devices which are no to be manipulated by experts with a managerial and professional idea of power and government. As a matter of fact, the final results of a deliberation process depend upon the formulation of the problems to be dealt with and in the way in which the relevant questions are posed.

By definition, in the political and administrative local subsystem, the policies of citizen participation are directed to assure the governance. Furthermore, it is at the local level where the limits between the political and administrative system and the civil society are more permeable, particularly in the middle size urban communities, where citizen participation policies are much more visible and have greater impacts on the citizenry and, therefore, are of most interest for the political agenda. Linked to this

is the fact that it is at the local level of government where more clearly the State is to be considered as a "negotiating State" (March and Olsen, 2000), and the local government becomes an actor among others actors who may have conflicting interests and have to rely on each other for the resolution of the urban problems.

All in all, local governance requires a redefinition of the dynamics between citizens and the political and administrative system in order to improve the processes by means of which the society formulates its ends and their search. The steadily increasing processes of individualization, differentiation and the changes in the production model of advanced capitalist societies take place, above all, in the cities.

The increased societal complexity where no single actor has the capacity to resolve the societal problems and the need to maximise resources, demands for new mechanisms of coordination between local governments and their civil societies in order, not only to solve the societal problems but to provide enough legitimacy to those solutions. To this has to be added a further factor, namely that the already mentioned differentiation processes challenge the capacity of the political and administrative systems in the making of decisions on behalf of the public interest. In so doing, the public interest question is something that local governments find hard to resolve since the structures of hierarchical coordination and the administrative rationality which relies only on the experts' knowledge are no more functional and, therefore, it becomes imperative to take into account those social relevance standards which include the processes in which the public decisions are made by means of the establishment of communicative processes on which the orientation of the administrative actions should be based. Thus, the local governance requires the generation of public spaces to make possible the social capacity of reflection, which, in turn, depends on the existence of a well developed local civil society.

Needless to say, the growing competitiveness among cities requires the mobilization of their endogenous resources and, in this sense, the civic participation policies are an instrument for the mobilization of such resources. This, of course, requires the search for strategies of consensus and its institutionalization among the political and administrative elites, the local interest groups and the citizens.

PERSPECTIVES ON PARTICIPATIVE DEMOCRACY AT THE LOCAL LEVEL.

The development of civil society will require the development of governance mechanisms in order to regain the citizens' engagement and use their vaste democratic potential. One important mechanism in this respect is the implementation of civic participation processes at the local level.

Along with this, as an study of participative experiences at local governments in several advanced industrial European societies shows, there is a wide array of diverse participation instruments which operate in different socio-political contexts but the results and impacts of civic participation on legitimacy and efficiency vary both among countries and among the cities located in the same country. The logic behind the implementation of the civic participation efforts rests on:

a) The substantive changes in the way that the local governments interactuate with the civil society. It seems that the old model of the representative democracy is not yet exhausted, instead there are groups of articulated citizens with the capacity to block some areas of the public action. Those groups ought, therefore, to be integrated into the public decision processes. Civic participation can supplement and, therefore, improve the performance of the representative democracy by correcting some of its disfunctions, but it can never replace or even displace the representative democracy.

b) The globalization process in its political, social and economic dimensions has important impacts in the cities which have to revise their democratic procedures.

c) The political and administrative systems of all levels have to face a double crisis: a crisis of legitimation and a crisis of efficiency. This involves a redefinition of the role of the public local authorities who should provide structures to promote behaviours which enables the action of public authorities. Thus, the civic participation processes are supposed to provide some answers to overcome the problems derived from the legitimation and efficiency crisis.

In yet another way, there are some obstacles and limits. Although it is difficult to generalise about them, among these, the following seem particularly important:

a) The lack of financial resources and even formal competences of the local governments. Most of the activities of local governments rely on the mandates received from the regional or central level which either are not accompanied of the corresponding financial resources or with the financial support can come political control.

b) The local decisional arena is increasingly restricted by the intromissions in its territory of the regional, central, and even European level of government. This means that the room for manouvre of the local governments is constrained. To promote in this context the civic participation can only lead to frustration.

c) The low degree of institutionalisation of the public participation processes is paradigmatic. It seems that most of the mobilizing experiences rely on the political interests (most of them short term) which get the process started when the surrounding political environment requires it but which come back to the logics of hierarchy as soon as a more favourable environment appears.

d) Finally, the way in which civic participation can contribute to building governance structures varies among specific political cultures. An increase in the civic participation does not necessarily correlate with more efficiency not to mention the uneven influence in terms of equity and representativeness. Furthermore, what may work in one place may produce quite different results elsewhere, not to mention that not all citizens have the same opportunities to participate since either some ethnic minorities are systematically excluded or the public arena is monopolised by individuals who proliferate as "clients" attached to specific agencies.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Civic participation is an essential component to local governance, as it both legitimizes and improves the democratic process. As today's world becomes more global and public discontent with local governments continues to rise, local governments realize the importance of viewing citizens as active participants rather than passive consumers in the community decision-making process. Furthermore, many local governments seek to utilize citizen participation to enhance municipal decision-making through citizen input. By including citizen input, local governments increase the legitimacy of their policy decisions. The process of stimulating and maintaining civic engagement is ongoing, as the governance system adapts to achieve the many potential benefits of increased citizen participation at the local level, including enhanced democratic legitimacy and social capital, and improved governance outcomes.

Historically, Los Angeles has suffered from low civic participation levels and public discontent with City Hall, resulting from decades of civic disempowerment. The recent renewal of civic engagement, however, which began with the 1999 charter reform and the creation of a Neighborhood Council system, provides local officials with the opportunity to aptly respond to the political, social, and economic demands of previously disempowered stakeholders and communities by allowing citizen input into the policy decision-making process.

Despite challenges faced during the planning and implementation process, such as low political support and resource and administrative constraints, Los Angeles' 1999 City Charter reform has increased civic engagement through the Neighborhood Council system and the empowerment provisions it contains. While Neighborhood Councils provide input to City Hall in an advisory capacity with no official policy-making powers, their impact on local governance has been notable, particularly with concern to community impacts and benefits. The Neighborhood Council system as a whole has positively affected participation processes, local "quality of life" issues, and the policymaking process citywide. In order for authentic, effective, and equitable civic participation to occur in Los Angeles at a sustainable level, strong leadership is necessary and collaboration between Neighborhood Councils, stakeholders, and city officials must be enhanced. Authentic political support and adequate resources will be necessary on a consistent basis in order for Neighborhood Councils to become a legitimate part of the governance process in Los Angeles.

The impact Neighborhood Councils have had on city governance is progressive and substantive, although there are many areas that need considerable improvement. The system lacks strong administrative and deliberative capacity, which is vital to the system's effectiveness and authenticity. Currently, the Neighborhood Councils, at the individual level, lack the administrative capacity to organize effectively and to outreach to the larger community. As a result, they have not reached out to all

of their residents, and many Neighborhood Councils lack representative diversity. Those who participate in Neighborhood Councils tend to be community members who were civically empowered before the implementation of the Neighborhood Council system, thereby decreasing the legitimacy and authenticity of the participation by failing to include disempowered residents in the process. Additionally, the Neighborhood Councils lack the capacity to organize on citywide issues, which could considerably improve their political power and influence. Furthermore, the City does not actively seek to include Neighborhood Councils in the governance process, thereby limiting the ability of the Councils to have meaningful impacts and outcomes in the communities they represent. Despite these challenges, the Neighborhood Councils have accomplished many positive intermediate outcomes. On the local level, Neighborhood Councils have affected issues such as street beautification and repaving, planting trees, and graffiti removal. On the citywide level, the Councils have made recommendations to City Hall on issues regarding the budget process, land use and transportation, and revisions to community plans, resulting in improved service delivery and city policies.

The central challenges for Los Angeles now are to maintain this process of civic engagement and find ways to improve its effectiveness, through increased organizational capacity at the individual level, which will improve outreach to under-represented residents; increased capacity at the citywide level with the formation of additional social networks through which Neighborhood Councils can attain greater social and political influence; and greater deliberative involvement in the governance process. Many of these improvements can be accomplished, with strong leadership and adequate resources, through already existing Charter provisions and the creation of additional innovations. With these attainable improvements, the Neighborhood Council system can provide the opportunity for authentic civic participation and improved deliberative governance in Los Angeles.

ISSUE STATEMENT

Civic participation at the local level has the capacity to strengthen democratic institutions, improve public service delivery and use, inform governance strategies, increase social capital, and legitimize local governments. Declines in social capital and civic participation over the past twenty years, as discussed by Putnam (1995) and Ramarkrishnan and Baldassare (2004), reduce the ability of local governments to govern effectively and provide the best services to their constituents, particularly among their socially and economically disadvantaged residents. Without citizen input, local governments have trouble responding effectively to community concerns (Putnam et al., 1994). The legitimacy of the city [rests] "in the form of government and the story it promise[s] – non-political, efficient, and responsive government" that both facilitates community involvement and delivers needed and desired services (Nalbandian, 1999:194). This trend of decreased civic participation overall, such as low voter turnout, has been countered recently by significant increases in civic participation on the local level in many cities, through the creation of place-based neighborhood participation policies, and technological innovations that go beyond place-based participation to enhance e-governance. These new forms and increased incidence of participation provide both cities and their residents an opportunity to reap the many potential benefits of increased citizen engagement.

In addition to countering the trend of low civic participation, new engagement strategies are needed to improve the traditional form of representative democracy in our rapidly changing and increasingly diverse world (Iglesias and Garcia, 2005). The process of globalization catalyzes local governments to become active innovators in civic participation in an effort to redeem and legitimatize governance through democratic processes, balancing the megastructure of a global world with the local structures of cities and neighborhoods (Hise et al., 1996). In a world where decisions affecting the globe are removed from the lives of everyday citizens, local governments "strive for greater autonomy and decision-making capacity" in order to solve local problems, where the barriers between government and civil society are most permeable, and where collective decision-making requires coordination and deliberation in order to be legitimate (Iglesias and Garcia, 2005:3). In this vein, civic participation is "redemptive in three crucial ways. First, participation nourishes the democratic spirit of individuals. Second, it builds community, which in turn nurtures shared values such as compassion, tolerance, and equality. Third, and most broadly, participation transforms institutions so that they become more effective instruments of democracy," all of which have become increasingly important in today's increasingly diverse and global world (Berry et al., 1993:5).

By giving citizens access to additional tools and processes with which to advocate for their neighborhoods, effectively decentralizing local governance, cities have the opportunity to improve trust in government and governance outcomes (Harrigan, 1992), and to redefine the relationship between citizens and their governments (Iglesias and Garcia, 2005). Support for "neighborhood-based

governance" comes from two complimentary beliefs – first, a belief in true democratic processes, and second, a belief that decentralized approaches to government are more responsive to citizens' needs (Chaskin and Abunimah, 1999:60). With increased participation comes improved control mechanisms and increased accountability, as long as the political will exists to support the effort (Iglesias and Garcia, 2005). Thus, civic participation serves to enhance both functions of local governance, which are sometimes at odds with each other – democratic legitimacy and service delivery – and improve both democratic and administrative outcomes.

In light of the many potential benefits of increased civic participation, various local governments in the United States and European nations have recently implemented policies to aid in the creation of alternate forms of participation, to increase participation, and ultimately to improve local governance outcomes (Iglesias and Garcia, 2005). In order for these policies to deliver on the promise of improved governance, participation among equals is necessary, as is sufficient information for informed, rational decision making. Civic education that allows for informed deliberation within the public sphere is a requirement for such systems to achieve their full potential (Iglesias and Garcia, 2005). Additionally, these cities must guard against problems that may arise in such systems, such as the unequal distribution of access and power among participants; a lack of participation among underrepresented or historically disempowered groups; or an inability or unwillingness of those in power to cede any deliberative or decision-making authority to the citizenry. Therefore, an analysis of these policies is necessary to determine the variables that lead to success, the problems that develop and how cities overcome them, and the limitations of new forms of participation.

Iglesias and Garcia (2005) have selected six global cities for a study of local level experiments in civic participation policies: Madrid, Paris, Berlin, London, Rome, and Los Angeles. These cities were selected for their size (greater than one million residents), "administrative" or law-abiding cultures, separation between civic society and government, unique demographic, geographic, and cultural contexts, and existing innovative civic engagement policies that are currently providing manageable data for analysis (2005:4). Of particular interest to Iglesias and Garcia are how lessons learned from other cities' policies may shape the implementation of national policies in Madrid, what factors, if any, lead to success consistently, and what the limitations of such policies are in reshaping the local political sphere. The goals of the study are both descriptive and evaluative, with a strong emphasis on addressing constraints on participation, the factors that led to the civic participation experiment in each city, and whether that experiment has produced authentic civic engagement.

Los Angeles has become a laboratory for democratic innovations, and provides an excellent case within this larger study. The City has a large and diverse population spread across a geographically vast area, has undergone considerable demographic, cultural, and economic shifts over the past fifty years, and has a long history of civic disempowerment. Additionally, Los Angeles has a large population of

recently arrived immigrants, primarily from the Americas, who are integral to the economy and culture of the city, but are not yet well-integrated into formal political processes, and therefore have little access or power in the political arena. In 1999, Los Angeles began the process of developing civic participation policies, which have now been in place long enough to allow for an analysis of their structure, processes, and intermediate outcomes. These policies exist within the broader context of the U.S. federalist system[1], which guarantees freedom of speech and the right to assemble, and has developed some mechanisms of direct democracy at the state level, but does not encourage, and often constrains, deliberative participation. The federalist structure, while constraining collective decision-making in a larger sense by structurally protecting individuals from the intrusion of government and insulating individuals from decision-making through representative democracy, pushes such inclinations to the local level, where authentic democratic participatory innovations are most likely to develop. In Los Angeles, these innovations develop within the City's particular historical, cultural, and socioeconomic contexts, which are not unique in the United States, but represent a magnification of growing trends throughout the nation. The central challenge is to evaluate these policies to determine whether it has generated significant improvements in civic participation and governance outcomes, and if so, what factors are responsible for the system's success that may translate to people and places beyond Los Angeles.

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[1] For the purposes of this analysis, the authors rely on the contemporary definition of federalism that describes the diffusion of power through many units of government (Wills, 1982).

THE INSTITUTIONAL CONTEXT FOR GOVERNANCE IN LOS ANGELES

While the federalist model in the United States guarantees individual citizens the right to freedom of speech, press, and assembly, among others, and allows for citizens to challenge authority through voting and public protest, the traditional form of liberal, representative democracy in the United States isolates citizens from their government. The checks and balances built into the U.S. Constitution are designed to limit political domination by one branch of government or political factions; these checks and balances, while necessary to guarantee the individual liberties that Americans cherish, also serve to reduce the power of citizens at the national level. Large interest groups with ample financial resources do influence politics and policy nationally, but the individual citizen, the community, and the neighborhood, are lost in this process. Trust, deliberative decision-making, equitable access to information, and strong relationships are lacking for these groups in large-scale politics, necessitating reforms at the local level to enable greater participation.

Similarly, within state constitutions, the same checks and balances exist to prevent political tyranny, and citizens and communities remain isolated from state political processes. The reforms of the Progressive era enacted new political structures, primarily in the arena of "direct democracy" innovations, including the initiative or referendum (a process by which the electorate votes directly on a proposed policy), the recall (a process by which the electorate can recall an elected official between elections), and citizen commissions. These innovations were designed to professionalize state politics, to increase accountability of elected officials, and to grant some decision-making authority to the electorate in a system that had been overly politicized by the legislature and powerful political interest groups. While these reforms did, in many ways, increase citizen access to decision-making authority and political power, they did so administratively, further separating political action at the ballot box from authentic and deliberative participation. Additionally, "direct democracy" reforms have been subverted by powerful interest groups, and are today even less democratic and participatory than when they were first envisioned.

Local government in the United States provides the greatest opportunity for increasing civic engagement because, as the saying goes, "all politics is local[2]," and citizens have the greatest opportunities to influence government on a small scale, where obstacles to access are most easily overcome. Charter cities like Los Angeles have a great potential to be politically responsive to their citizenry, as city mayors often hold sufficient power and responsibility, and are less constrained by the city charter than by general state law, that they are likely to develop political innovations. Additionally, Charter cities may include specific provisions in their charters to create civic engagement opportunities, as Los Angeles did in 1999, through a majority vote of a city's electorate. Voters have the greatest amount of control over their

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[2] Attributed to the late Speaker of the House of the Representatives, Tip O'Neill.

government at the local level. Checks and balances do exist at this level, as they do in all levels of government in the United States, but at the local level these checks and balances are less likely to negatively affect citizen participation. The barriers between a government and its citizenry are more easily overcome locally, where there are more opportunities to participate in governmental activities, information and civic education are more easily accessible, and participation is most likely to increase social capital, which in turn encourages civic engagement, and leads to numerous improvements in governance processes and outcomes.

Federal Political Structures

Federal political structures greatly influence citizen participation in the United States. The federalist model is the basis for administrative structure in the United States at the federal, state, and local levels. Each of these levels embodies five principal themes that include federalism, checks and balances, separated powers, pluralism, and representation. The first three articles of the U.S. Constitution enumerate particular powers and authority amongst the executive, legislative, and judiciary branches of the federal government. Congress, a bicameral body consisting of the Senate and House of Representatives, possesses the power to impose and collect taxes, regulate commerce with foreign nations, declare war, and create and maintain the military. The President, who is the Commander and Chief of the U.S. armed forces, has the power to make treaties, nominate justices to the Supreme Court, and appoint cabinet members and ambassadors. The Supreme Court, the highest court in the U.S., and all lower courts have judicial authority.

In keeping with the spirit of James Madison's Federalist Paper 39, each branch has distinct authority to create, execute, or enforce laws; however, these powers are not unchecked or exclusive from one another. The systems of checks and balances and separation of powers help to ensure that all branches maintain limited and complementary spheres of authority at the federal level (Wills, 1982). For instance, the President may make treaties and appoint ambassadors, other public ministers and consuls, and judges to the Supreme Court, but the Senate must approve these decisions by a two-thirds majority (U.S. Constitution Article 2, Section 2). Likewise, the Vice President, who also serves as the President of the Senate, cannot vote in this chamber unless there is a tie among the Senators (U.S. Constitution Article 1, Section 3). Within Congress, all bills regarding revenue originate in the House of Representatives, but the Senate may propose or concur with amendments to such bills (U.S. Constitution Article 1, Section 7). Finally, the Supreme Court maintains judicial authority over all inferior courts that Congress ordains and establishes as well as possesses judicial jurisdiction that extends to all cases related to U.S. laws and treaties made (U.S. Constitution Article 3, Sections 1 & 2).

While the Constitution's definitions of federal power seem relatively clear, this is not necessarily the case for state governments. The Constitution reserves particular powers to the federal government, such as only Congress may borrow

money on the credit of the U.S. (U.S. Constitution Article 1, Section 8). However it only vaguely defines the degree of power reserved exclusively for the states. To illustrate, the Full Faith and Credit Clause of the Constitution provides continuity between states (Article 4, Section 1). The Clause allows states to enforce non-federal laws, civil claims, and court rulings across state lines. Furthermore, the Tenth Amendment of the Constitution's Bill of Rights declares that powers not delegated to the federal government by the Constitution, nor prohibited by it to the states, will be reserved to the states respectively, or to the citizens (U.S. Constitution, Amendment 10). As a result, each state, which is guaranted to have a republican form of government, has the authority to create, interpret, and execute its own laws, so long as it does not attempt to supercede federal authority or become incompatible with other state laws (U.S. Constitution Article 4, Section 4).

To ensure that states maintain direct authority over their local entities, the U.S.' Founding Fathers[3] did not reserve any powers for local governments under the Federal Constitution. Local entities, which are created and controlled by the state, do not enjoy any powers guaranteed by the Constitution (Musso and Quigley, 1997). Despite the seeming lack of explicit powers delineated by the Constitution, state and local governments possess broad and expansive authority and fiscal responsibility. For instance, they are the primary and direct providers of most public goods and services while the federal government acts as a powerful fiscal and regulatory presence (Musso and Quigley, 1997).

It is important to note that the U.S.'s fifty states vary considerably in the locus of responsibility for economic functions as well as in their roles in intergovernmental relations regarding service provision and the structure of state and local government (Musso and Quigley 1997). The Amendments of the U.S. Constitution delineate particular individual freedoms and rights that must be respected by the states, such as the right of adults to vote, freedom of speech and of the press, and the right to peaceably assemble. As the U.S. Constitution is the supreme law of the nation, state and local governments must respect it when proposing and enacting their laws; however, while laws may be institutionalized at the various levels of government, interpretation and enforcement of such laws have varied over time and from region to region. Despite the variation, the federal structure, which is based on a representative rather than participatory model of democratic governance, limits civic engagement. While rights such as the freedom of speech and peaceable assembly assure citizens a voice within their government, these liberties do not automatically translate into means for citizens to remain engaged in local, state, or national governance. Individual freedoms were originally designed to serve as a limit to tyranny of the state and power of factions while elected officials had the responsibility to represent the

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[3] The Founding Fathers are those individuals who participated in the formation of the United States government in the late 1700's, including such individuals as George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, James Madison, John Adams, Alexander Hamilton, Benjamin Franklin, and other men now famous in U.S. history.

public's collective interests. Without citizens actively engaging their government, however, they become passive constituents of representatives who pass laws that do not support the aims and interests of the citizens (Barber 2003).

California Political Structures

To understand civic participation in Los Angeles it is important to contextualize the City within the specific governance institutions and political history of the State of California. In California, under a government that is comprised of three branches, the bicameral Legislature, the Executive and the Judiciary, the state Constitution delegates many governmental powers and functions to local units such as counties and cities. Articles 4, 5, and 6 of the state Constitution delineate the powers of the three branches. As in the federal model, California's legislature, comprised of the Senate and State Assembly, has the power to propose legislation and present it to the governor for approval. If the governor vetoes the bill, the Legislature can override the decision and enact the statute if at least a two-thirds majority from both chambers agrees to do so (California Constitution Article 4, Section 10). With regard to local governments, the Legislature possesses the power to prescribe uniform procedures for county formation, consolidation, and boundary change (California Constitution Article 11 Section 1). The Legislature also prescribes uniform procedures for city formation and provides for city powers (California Constitution Article 11, Section 2). Furthermore, a county or city may create and enforce within its limits all local police, sanitation, and other ordinances and regulations that do not conflict with general laws of the state or federal government (California Constitution Article 11, Section 7).

Local government structures are not necessarily limited to county or city entities; other structures include public school districts that can cross city and county boundaries, such as the Los Angeles Unified School District. In 1990, California had nearly 7,000 local governments that included 57 counties, 460 cities, and 1,200 school districts. It is not uncommon for California residents to live within the jurisdiction of at least three local governments (Musso and Quigley 1997). Jurisdictions may overlap, and city laws may supersede county laws in some instances. To illustrate, according to state law, city governments retain all sales tax revenues collected within their borders (California Code Sections 98-98.1). [4] Cities also have jurisdiction over other policy areas, such as land use.

California political structures today are heavily influenced by the Progressive era reforms undertaken in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, during which time urban reform movements in the U.S. sought to eliminate the corruption of political machines. Political bosses during the Progressive era based their power on patronage, corruption, and self-perpetuating organizations. With a special personal touch, political machines focused on providing favors and protection to their constituencies

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[4] California Code § 98-98.1. Retrieved on 050206 from http://www.leginfo.ca.gov/cgi-bin/waisgate?WAISdocID=63562214299+2+0+0&WAISaction=retrieve.

rather than appealing to issues or ideologies (Bridges, 1992). Local political machines were able to dominate power under a mayor-council political structure because no single member of the governing body could sufficiently counteract the corrupting force of the political machine. The democratic logic behind the Progressive era was to establish a combination of checks and balances. To accomplish this reforms included strengthening nonpartisan, democratic, and representative structures such as city councils; instituting direct democracy through the initiative and referendum; and empowering advisory input systems like appointed citizen commissions. In 2003, the electorate recalled Governor Gray Davis and voted Arnold Schwarzenegger into office because the majority of Californians agreed that Davis had failed to appropriately remedy ineffectiveness within his administration.

While progressive reformers envisioned a separation of politics and administration, they did not necessarily support neighborhood involvement in the governance process. According to Mogran (1992), California's progressive reforms created a standard council-manager form of government for general law cities, and eliminated party affiliations from city, county, school district, and judicial elections. However, they viewed civic participation at the neighborhood level as a throwback to ward politics where patronage and political machines controlled municipal governments. To avoid this challenge of authority, many cities adopted at-large rather than district or ward elections during the Progressive era. Not only did the reforms guarantee "direct democracy" through the initiative, referendum, and recall processes and through citizen commissions, they also depoliticized and professionalized local government. In doing so, the reforms also minimized the opportunity for political involvement amongst the citizenry.

By the 1960s, the need for active civic participation began to challenge the governance structures established by the Progressive era. President Johnson's War on Poverty inspired storefront organizations and mandates to maximize feasible participation among the citizenry. For instance, the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964 intended to attack poverty by tapping the energy and imagination of citizens at the local level. Through the EOA's community action programs, "local solutions would be tailored to fit local problems" (Berry et al., 1992:22). Through national policies like these, neighborhoods became politically active again. This neighborhood organizing would ultimately provide the framework for the next generation of civic participation associations, namely neighborhood councils. By the 1990s, city governments began to reconsider if they wanted to promote active civic participation. In Los Angeles, the electorate voted for a new charter that essentially reversed some of the reforms instituted in the 1925 Charter so that citizens could have greater impact on city governance.

Local Governance in California

Within the contexts of the federalist model and California's Progressive era reforms, local governance in California and Los Angeles' specific city structure

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provide a unique opportunity for authentic civic participation to flourish. In California, cities have adopted numerous governance strategies that draw upon Progressive era reforms as well as other governance theories, such as entrepreneurial and participatory models. Differing philosophies of urban governance influence how local officials will formulate and implement policies as well as organize and lead public administrations. For instance, municipal/entrepreneurial theory emphasizes outcomes over formal, political processes and public-private interaction over formal (legal) policy implementation. In contrast, a public-private interaction or participatory theory can be considered a necessity in order to manage the task of governing. As opposing governance process theories offer actors varied degrees of participation opportunities and influence, it is important to consider the economic, political, and ideological framework in which these processes are embedded (Pierre, 1999). Governance in Los Angeles today is based more on the participatory model as City officials seek to increase civic engagement structures and mechanisms.

Local governments throughout California commonly institute either mayor-council or council-manager structures. According to Morgan, the mayor-council form preserves the basic separation of powers between the executive and legislative branches (1989). However, depending on the size and complexity of each city, a strong or weak mayor-council relationship can significantly impact local governance. The strong-mayor form is best suited for large cities with diverse populations like Los Angeles because the executive has the authority to arrange compromises and arbitrate power struggles among contending interests (Morgan, 1989). In this capacity, if mayors or other strong leaders seek to responsibly represent their constituencies, they must determine how differing perspectives about fairness and effectiveness of rules, political decisions, and political platforms will impact the needs and demands of powerful and weak constituency and interest groups (Thompson, 2005).

Under the council-manager model, the council possesses the overarching authority to make policy and supervise the administration of city government, while a full-time professionally trained city administrator or manager assumes the full responsibility for day-to-day city operations. The mayor, in this model, performs strictly ceremonial duties and has no direct involvement with managing the municipality's administrative affairs (Morgan, 1989). Cities with populations of over 25,000 residents typically institute this government model. Managers have increasingly begun to possess a more powerful role within city governance structures. They no longer find themselves as formally insulated administrative experts whose policy involvement is limited to advising the council; instead they find themselves as brokers and negotiators of community interests and policy consensus builders. As a result, managers become deeply involved in community political leadership even though they try to avoid formal involvement in the electoral process (Nalbandian, 1990). Some experts suggest that the mayor-council format provides diverse community groups and interests with the greatest opportunity for input. Their diversity of demands creates an opportunity for open conflict and discussion about policy priorities (Herson and Bolland, 1998). Given an adequate source of administrative and political

powers, a mayor can stimulate constructive exercises of community leadership (Morgan and Watson, 1992).

City Structures in California: General Law City vs. Charter City

New demands for civic participation at the local level are also "demands for increased control over the public authorities and the decisions they make" (Iglesias and Garcia, 2005:119). In light of desires to increase local control over municipal affairs, many cities have pursued different government structures that increase the capacity of local governments for autonomy (U.S. Constitution Article 4, Section 4).

In California, where 478 incorporated[5] cities exist, there are three institutional frameworks for municipal government: general law cities, charter cities, and only one consolidated city and county (San Francisco) (League of Women Voters of California, 1992).[6] The California Constitution allows for cities with a population of over 3,500 to create and adopt their own charters (Schockman, 1996). By definition, general law cities are governed by the California Government Code, while charter cities have greater home-rule powers because they are governed by the adoption of a city charter, which in effect serves as the legal constitution of the city. Among these government forms, a charter city is considered to play an important role in promoting civic engagement at the local level, as a charter gives the local voters more control over their local government and the affairs of the city. With regard to such charter cities, the California Constitution Article XI, Section 3 proscribes the creation of city government, and cities derive their power from either the California Government Code (statute) or from adopting a city charter (Hanft, 2004; Martin, 2004).

A general law city and a charter city have a number of differences. The first and perhaps foremost difference between the two types of government structures appears in the degree of control the state government may exercise over city policy. In general, a charter city has more freedom to legislate than does a general law city. The City Charter serves as a constitution for the city, limits politicians' authority, and dictates what the municipal government can or cannot provide for its citizens (UCLA, 1997). Although a city charter is not required to have any particular provisions with respect to home rule control, a city often reserves the greatest amount of power allowed under the California Constitution when it adopts a charter (League of California Cities, 2005). In addition, a city charter can provide local standards with regard to the provision of general city services to the population and sets regulations utilized by the business community (Parlow and Keane, 2002). Moreover, a charter city can provide for any form of government, including mayor/council/city manager

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[5] Incorporated cities are legal corporate entities, with certain rights and responsibilities under state law.

[6] The consolidated city/county is a city/county that has been merged into one jurisdiction and is governed by a charter (Hanft, 2004). It is not a common form in the United States and will not be discussed further.

in the government. The charter theoretically controls all aspects of city government, and creates institutions of government. The charter allocates power among these institutions of government, and thereby defines many aspects of how a city government operates (Chemerinsky, 2000).

Contrary to a charter, California law describes most procedures under which a general law city operates, even though general law offers considerable choices in the forms of municipal governments possible, as well as fairly broad powers over local affairs (League of Women Voters of California, 1992). For example, the general law establishes the qualifications required of city council members (California Government Code Section 36502), whereas a city charter can establish unique criteria for its city council or specific city offices. Such criteria must not be discriminatory, and residency requirements must not violate the "Privileges and Immunities" Clause of the California Constitution.

The level of mayoral authority also typically differs between the two government structures. As stated above, a mayor of a general law city tends to have less control over city affairs. Reforms of a city charter allow a mayor of a charter city (and its residents) to increase the formal power granted to the mayor's office, as they may view a strong mayor system as a way to solve urban problems. According to Mullin, Peele, and Cain this implicit agreement helps to determine whether a mayor's strategies will be effective for achieving his or her policy goals, as governmental institutions create constraints and opportunities that may affect a mayor's strategies (2004).

A charter city and a general law city may differ in their election procedures, such as different types of elected positions. For example, general law cities typically have a council/manager form of government wherein the Mayor is a member of the City Council. In contrast, a charter city may have a mayor/council form of government where the mayor is elected independently of the City Council, and serves in an executive capacity. The state government generally holds at-large elections, whereby voters may vote for any candidate on the ballot in both general law cities and charter cities. However, each city has its own district election by California Government Code Section 34871.

Both general law cities and charter cities can be evaluated on their strengths and weaknesses in terms of political responsiveness, accountability, structural stability, and civic engagement. Based on the characteristics of both a charter city and a general law city, Table 1 summarizes their strengths and weakness in terms of three main criteria: political responsiveness and accountability, structural stability, and civic engagement.

Table 1. Strengths/Weaknesses of General Law and Charter Cities

	General law city	Charter city
Political responsiveness and accountability	Medium	High
Structural stability	High	Low
Civic engagement	Low	High

Overall, a charter city has greater potential to be politically responsive to the citizen than a general law city does, because a mayor has more power and takes most responsibilities in a charter city. Because many charter cities allow mayors to have more leverage and implementation discretion based on their own charters, the mayors' powers and activities are likely to have a greater chance of extending flexibility rather than being constrained by the general law. In a charter city, especially in Los Angeles, many "checks and balances" exist to protect against corruption and excess authority caused by such extended flexibility and political power. Essentially, Los Angeles has a "plural executive" in which the Council, the City Attorney, and the City Controller all serve various oversight functions and are all elected separately by the citizens (Parlow and Keane, 2002).

The government structure of a charter city is generally considered to have less stability than a general law city for several reasons. The first is that charter cities have greater power to legislate, with the implication that the charter may conflict with state laws, which have precedence on all affairs of statewide concern. Second, the scope of the term 'municipal affairs' provides the opportunity for uncertainty, and there does not exist an easy analytical test to determine the scope (League of California Cities, 2005). Such uncertainties and unclear legal boundaries create low structural stability. Furthermore, political instability in a charter city may also be caused by the tension among stakeholders when the charter is adopted or reformed. When using a charter commission election or a governing board of the city for charter adoption or reform, there are usually political conflicts, as charter reform means many changes in the government structures or a power shift in the municipality. For example, Los Angeles' charter reform in 1999 included increased authorities of the mayor. In the process of this reform, Mayor Richard Riordan conflicted with many members of the city council and other commissions (Parlow and Keane, 2002).

One of the important strengths of a charter city is that its charter can include specific provisions to create civic engagement opportunities. A city charter is a unique document that, in many ways, acts like a constitution for the city that adopts it. A charter can only be adopted, amended, or repealed by a majority vote of a city's voters (League of California Cities, 2005). As such, it allows a city to tailor its organization and elective offices, taking into account the unique local conditions and needs of its communities through voting. In this regard, a charter city gives the local voters more control over their local government and the affairs of the city. In other words, a charter city provides its citizens with more opportunities to participate in

governmental activities, and such opportunities may yield increased civic engagement at the local level.

Therefore, while the Federal and California Constitutions are based upon the traditional model of liberal, representative democracy that isolates individuals from the government, local governments provide citizens with more flexibility and opportunities for civic engagement. At the national and state levels, civic participation by the citizen is limited to voting, and representatives assume the responsibility of governing. At the local level, however, citizens may play a more direct role in governance. Municipal government structures, particularly in the case of a charter city, can provide specific avenues for increased citizen participation in local governance. By including in its charter specific provisions that create civic engagement opportunities, namely through the establishment of DONE and the Neighborhood Council system, as discussed below, Los Angeles offers its residents the important responsibility of actively participating in their government, improving governance outcomes, and ensuring that their leaders are held to a high level of accountability.

CIVIC PARTICIPATION IN LOS ANGELES

Having established the broader institutional context within which Los Angeles is embedded, we now turn to the case discussion. Los Angeles has faced the difficult challenges of overcoming a long history of civic disempowerment and race and class divisions (Musso et al., 2006), and the modern challenge of improving civic involvement in a world of increasing globalization and declining social capital. Los Angeles is a world city that boasts a huge population and highly urbanized areas, spread over a large geographic space, with residents ranging from the nation's poorest to the nation's richest, from newly arrived immigrants to well-settled home owners, and from English-language learners and those who need additional assistance in the educational system to the very highly educated. The City's rapidly growing population, primarily from continued immigration, creates such diversity and density that neighborhood governance becomes increasingly difficult.

Los Angeles: Social Characteristics of a Global City

Demographic, social, and economic characteristics of Los Angeles' population, as well as the physical nature of the city itself, have considerable implications for civic participation. Los Angeles is large in both physical scale and in population (466 square miles with a population in 2004 of nearly 3.75 million people[7]), with an oddly shaped non-contiguous boundary, separating many neighborhoods physically from other areas of the city (see Appendix A). The city is polycentric, with a large downtown but also many other dense economic and population centers, creating a complex physical space in which Angelenos[8] interact. Los Angeles is also a park-poor city overall, lacking in sufficient open space, but particularly when viewed through the lens of race; "white neighborhoods (where whites make up 75 percent or more of the residents) boast 31.8 acres of park space for every 1,000 people, compared to 1.7 acres in African-American neighborhoods and 0.6 acres in Latino neighborhoods" (Sherer, 2003:6). Los Angeles' scale, its complex geography, and its inequitable distribution of public space, when combined, create a difficult physical sphere for public interaction and participation.

Additionally, shifts in Los Angeles' economy toward low-wage service-sector jobs, decreases in manufacturing, and reductions in union representation and political access for workers, have significant impacts on civic engagement, making Los Angeles an interesting and important case study, as more U.S. cities follow Los Angeles' lead. These socioeconomic changes in Los Angeles represent trends that are happening throughout the nation. These trends, which include "rising proportions of the population that are neither in the white "majority" nor black "minority,"...low proportion[s] of longtime residents, and new challenge[s] of immigration" all create obstacles to civic participation at the local level (Myers, 1999:919).

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[7] U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2004.
[8] "Angelenos" is a common name for people who live in Los Angeles.

Demographic Characteristics

The city of Los Angeles has a population of approximately 3.7 million people, which is 1.3 % of the total U.S. population (Table 2). Los Angeles accounts for nearly 11% of the entire California population of 34 million, which makes Los Angeles the largest city in California. Los Angeles County, which includes the City of Los Angeles, encompasses approximately 9.5 million people. The median age in Los Angeles is 33.3 years, which is slightly lower than that of the United States (35.3 years).

Los Angeles is well known for its racial diversity, as a "minority White" city, with less than half of the population reporting its race as 'White' (46.9%). The black or African American race accounts for approximately 11% of the whole 'one race' population, and Asian accounts for 10%. Interestingly, 25.7% of this one race population is categorized as 'some other race' in the 2000 census, which presumably includes the Hispanic/Latino[9] population. As a center of Latino culture, Los Angeles boasts 1.7 million Latinos (regardless of nationality), which is approximately half of the total population of Los Angeles.

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[9] According to the Census 2000, American Community Survey: People who identify themselves with the terms "Hispanic" or "Latino" are those who are self-classified as "Mexican," "Puerto Rican," or "Cuban" or "other Spanish, Hispanic, or Latino." The respondents' origin can be viewed as the heritage, nationality group, lineage, or country of birth of the person or the person's parents or ancestors before their arrival in the United States. For the purposes of this report, the terms Latino and Hispanic shall be used interchangeably.

Chart 1. Demographic shifts in Los Angeles, 1970-2000.

Racial Demographic Shifts, 1970-2000
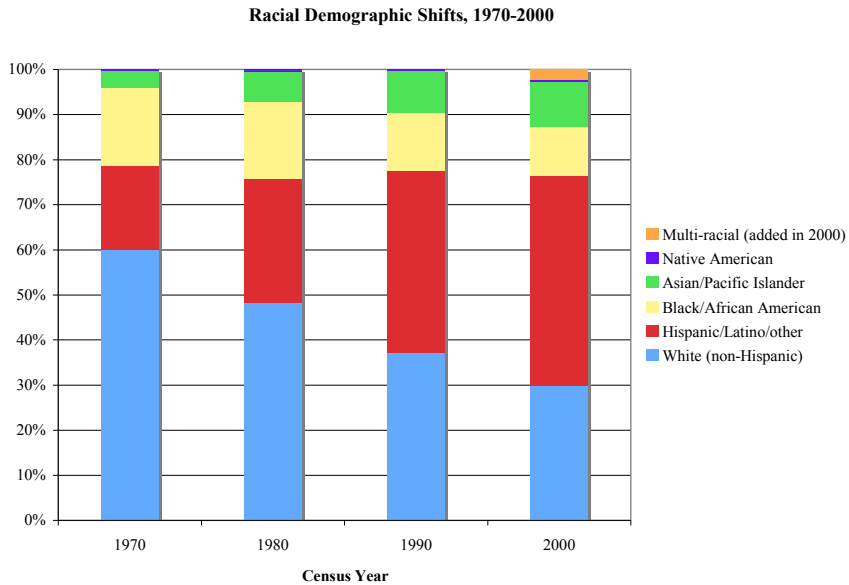
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 1970-2000.

Los Angeles today looks very different from the Los Angeles of a half century ago; in fact, Los Angeles has experienced a significant shift toward a Latino-dominated population within the last 30 years, as shown in Chart 1 above, with corresponding reductions in both white and African American populations, as percentages of the whole. This shift, which is in large part the result of increasing immigration from Latin America, means that more than ever Angelenos are new residents, with lower home ownership rates, English proficiency, educational attainment, and political access and power, all of which lead to reduced social capital and lower civic participation.

Table 2. Demographic Characteristics of Los Angeles (2000)

Subject	Number	Percent
Total population	3,694,820	100
Male	1,841,805	49.8
Female	1,853,015	50.2
Population by age		
Under 5 years	285,976	7.7
5-17 years	338,206	9.2
18 years and over	2,713,509	73.4
65 years and over	357,129	9.7
Median age (years)	31.6	N.A.
Population by race		
One race	3,503,532	94.8
White	1,734,036	46.9
Black or African American	415,195	11.2
American Indian and Alaska Native	29,412	0.8
Asian	369,254	10
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander	5,915	0.2
Some other race	949,720	25.7
Two or more races	191,288	5.2
Hispanic or Latino (of any race)	1,719,073	46.5
Total Households	1,275,412	100
Family Households	798,719	62.6
Nonfamily Households	476,693	37.4
Average household size	2.83	N.A.
Total Family	798,719	
Average family size	3.56	N.A.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000.

Social Characteristics

Social characteristics have considerable implications for Los Angeles' civic participation levels. Of the 2.3 million people who are 25 years old or over in Los Angeles, approximately 67% are high school graduates (Table 3), which is comparatively low relative to the nation (80.4% of the over-25-population). One-third of these high school graduates hold bachelor degrees or higher (i.e. 25.5% of all people older than 25 years). Communities with higher education levels tend to have higher levels of social capital, as measured by group participation, including volunteerism, memberships in organizations, voting, and social activities with friends and family (Helliwell and Putnam, 1999). Los Angeles faces significant educational inequities and low educational achievement, which lead to low participation levels.

As an international city, Los Angeles also embraces many foreign-born individuals. About 40.9% of the total population of Los Angeles is foreign-born. In addition, more than half of Angelenos who are older than 5 years speak a language other than English at home (approximately 60% of the total population). As more homogenous communities generally report higher levels of social capital and public activity, Los Angeles' high levels of diversity create additional challenges to civic engagement. Communities in which English is not spoken at home face a language barrier preventing them from gaining access and power in the political realm, and many families are likely to face other barriers as well, particularly if they have friends or family who have questionable legal status in the United States, which may prevent them from public participation out of fear of the legal consequences. Even when controlling for other socioeconomic factors, ethnic fragmentation alone is enough to reduce participation and levels of government spending and investment in communities (Costa and Kahn, 2002). Therefore, Los Angeles, with lower than average education levels, high levels of foreign-born individuals, and low English fluency, faces significant challenges to civic engagement, particularly for those communities that are historically disempowered and would likely benefit the most from increased participation.

Table 3. Social Characteristics

Subject	Number	Percent
Population 25 years and over	2,308,887	100
High school graduate or higher	1,538,715	66.6
Bachelor's degree or higher	589,061	25.5
Total population	3,694,820	100
Foreign born	1,512,720	40.9
Speak a language other than English at home (population 5 years and over)	1,974,316	57.8

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000

Economic Characteristics

Economic characteristics also have strong implications for civic participation. Approximately 1.6 million people in Los Angeles are in the labor force (Table 4), and on average, these people spend about an hour commuting every day (28.5 minutes, twice a day, compared to the national average of 24.4 minutes) (U.S. American Community Survey, 2004). Long commute times have a significant impact on the amount of time Angelenos have available for public activities. Verba and colleagues (1995) suggest that the reduction in free time caused by commuting reduces political activism, and Robert Putnam (2000) agrees that this happens primarily in metropolitan areas, as homes and jobs become more separated in time and space, fragmenting communities and reducing social and political participation.

The median household income (in 1999) was $36,687, which is slightly lower than that of the nation. The per capita income in Los Angeles (in 1999) was $20,671, which is also lower than the national figure ($21,587). This indicates that individuals who live in Los Angeles might have less financial stability than in other locales in the United States. In fact, approximately one quarter of the entire population of Los Angeles lives at or below the poverty level (22.1% of the total population, which is 801,050 individuals), which is almost double the national percentage (12.4%). Low incomes have a similarly negative impact on civic participation. Alesina and La Ferrara (2000) find that high levels of income disparity (large gaps between high and low incomes) reduce organizational membership, and Markus and Walton (2002) found that the upper one third of income earners are more than five times more likely to donate money to political causes than those in the bottom one third. The upper one third has also held steady in its voting behavior between 1960 and 1996, while voting turnout among adults in the bottom one third fell 10 percentage points in those years, to 30 percentage points below higher wage earners. In 1996, fewer than 3% of Americans without high school diplomas, and thus low wage jobs, reported attending a political meeting that year, while 10% of college graduates, who presumably have higher wage jobs, reported doing so (Markus and Walton, 2002). These differences in organizational membership and political activism are likely the result of lack of financial and temporal resources which lead people to focus more closely on making ends meet and less closely on the public sphere.

In terms of housing, Los Angeles residents pay higher costs than most of the nation. The median price for a single-family house was $221,600 in 2000, which is almost twice as high as the national median. In Los Angeles there are extremely low levels of home ownership – only 38.6% of 1.3 million total occupied housing units in Los Angeles is owned, while the majority of occupied units (61.4%) are rented. This is the reverse of national trends; the rate of owned housing units among total occupied housing units in the U.S. is 66.2% in 2000, and the rented housing units account for 33.8% of all units. Home ownership rates also affect civic engagement; those who own homes in neighborhoods have a vested interest, financially and socially, in that neighborhood, and are more inclined to participate in neighborhood organizations that protect that interest and improve their investments (DiPasquale and Glaeser, 1998). Homeowners tend to stay in homes longer than renters, and therefore often have more stable roots in a community, leading to increased community cohesion. Tenure in a community has been suggested to be the most important variable in determining neighborhood activism rather than ownership itself (Cox, 1982). Just as long commutes fragment society by causing people to spend more time traveling and less time at home or in their communities, low home ownership may lead to a lack of community cohesion and lower social and political investment.

Table 4. Economic Characteristics

Subject	Number	Percent
Total population	3,694,820	100
In labor force (population 16 years and over)	1,690,316	60.2
Mean travel time to work in minutes (workers 16 years and over)	29.6	N.A.
Median household income in 1999 (dollars)	36,687	N.A.
Per capita income in 1999 (dollars)	20,671	N.A.
Individuals below poverty level	801,050	22.1
Total housing units	1,337,706	100
Occupied housing units	1,275,412	95.3
Owner-occupied housing units	491,882	38.6
Renter-occupied housing units	783,530	61.4
Vacant housing units	62,294	4.7
Single-family owner-occupied homes	412,804	□
Median value (dollars)	221,600	N.A.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000.

Social Capital in Los Angeles

The diversity and demographic character of Los Angeles, as discussed above, has important implications for "social capital," the networks and norms that build trust, shared values, and reciprocity among individuals (Brown and Ferris, 2002),[10] and which is associated with informal social norms (Dasgupta and Serageldin, 2000). Social capital is an important factor in increasing citizen trust and as such is interwoven with civic engagement and participation at the local level (Putnam, 2000; Brown and Ferris, 2002). Studies suggest that people with higher education and income levels are more likely to have stronger social capital, which leads to greater participation in community organizations and local government. Most studies also suggest that increased diversity is associated with lower social capital, which is particularly important in Los Angeles.

Social capital indicators for Los Angeles are available from the Social Capital Community Benchmark (SCCB) survey[11], which was conducted nationally in 2000 by the Saguaro Seminar and Robert Putnam of the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University, in collaboration with over 30 community and private foundations

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[10] Putnam (2000) has defined social capital as the collective value of all social networks and the inclinations that arise from these networks for individuals to do things for one another. In addition, based on their own research using SCCB survey data, Brown and Ferris (2002) argue that social capital indices are clustered along two dimensions: network-based social capital, which is embedded in community networks, and norm-based social capital that measures norms and trust.

[11] Survey data is found at http://www.cfsv.org/communitysurvey/ca2c.html

across the U.S.[12] The SCCB survey analysis by Brown and Ferris (2003) showed that Los Angeles has less social capital than the national average. More specifically, based on regression analysis with SCCB data, Brown and Ferris (2001) found that much of Los Angeles' deficit in social capital is attributable not to defects in the City's institutions, but to the City's attractiveness to people who are in the early stages of building social capital. In the 2002 study, they argue that the scores for social capital in Los Angeles are lower than the national average on seven of the nine indices such as formal group involvement, organizational activism/leadership, electoral politics, faith-based engagement, informal socializing, social trust, and interracial trust.

Reasons for low social capital in Los Angeles can be found in the demographic characteristics of the City discussed above. In Los Angeles, newly arrived immigrants make up a substantial percentage of the population. Nearly 33% percent of the total population is lacking a high school diploma or higher educational attainment, and 57.8% of the total population speaks a language other than English at home (US Census Bureau, 2000). Such diversity leads Los Angeles residents to be less embedded in civic networks and to express less trust in their fellow citizens (Brown and Ferris, 2002). As Brown and Ferris (2002) found, education and income are the most important factors in determining social capital; people with higher education and income backgrounds have higher levels of electoral and protest politics, civic participation and involvement, and informal socializing. Diversity and low educational attainment and income levels of many residents therefore result in both lower levels of social capital in Los Angeles, and an increased number of challenges to efforts that seek to increase civic participation in the City.

The Political Background of Charter Reform

In 1925, during the Progressive era, Los Angeles adopted a City Charter that widely dispersed power among public officials, creating a "municipal feudalism" in which neighborhoods had little power, and empowerment of neighborhoods was viewed as a threat to the governing structure (Schockman, 1996: 62). At the time, Los Angeles was a relatively homogenous city and only a fraction of the size it is today. As the racial and ethnic composition and the size of Los Angeles has changed considerably over the past 40 years, the needs and concerns of the citizenry have evolved with the expectation that local government would be responsive to these developing needs. However, as a result of the wide dispersion of power created by the 1925 Charter, the local government was unable to respond efficiently and

[12] The survey data was collected from a representative national sample of 3003 respondents, and representative samples of more than 30 communities, including Los Angeles (Brown and Ferris, 2003). In the Los Angeles area survey (co-sponsored by the California Community Foundation and the University of Southern California's Center on Philanthropy and Public Policy) represents a random sample of 500 individuals countywide. Interviews were conducted in English, and with Spanish-only speakers in Spanish (The Social Capital Benchmark Survey, 2001). The data were weighted to be representative of the community (Brown and Ferris, 2002).

effectively to these concerns, creating an environment of discontent, particularly among minorities. In response, beginning in the late 1940s and early 1950s, many minority groups began forming political coalitions, seeking political and social empowerment. Despite successes in the political arena throughout the decades following the 1950s, many minority groups were still frustrated by the overall unresponsiveness of the local government and its inability to adapt to the diverse needs of the geographically unique and ethnically diverse neighborhoods of the city. Other, more politically empowered groups, such as residents of the San Fernando Valley, also began to express discontent with the local government, and in the 1970s, started a movement to secede from the City of Los Angeles, which gained political momentum in 1997. With growing pressure from all groups, the City was forced to implement change through a new Charter (1999), approved by the public, and intended to empower citizens through political innovations that enhance collective, deliberative participation in local governance.

For most of the 20th century, Los Angeles was governed according to a Progressive era city charter adopted in 1925 that established a weak-mayor of government with dispersed power among boards and commissions, the City Council, and a variety of other executives (Parlow and Keene, 2002). In 1889, Los Angeles passed the first charter designed by the local government, with modifications passed in 1902, 1909, and 1911. In 1925, the voters approved the basis for the charter that remained in effect until 1999 (Sonenshein, 2004). The governance structure is a "plural executive" in which citizens elect the Mayor, the City Attorney, and City Controller separately through non-partisan elections (Parlow and Keane, 2002). In addition, the City Clerk, the City Treasurer, the City Administrative Officer (CAO), and the Chief Legislative Analyst (CLA) also have specified executive powers (ibid). Legislative duties fall to a fifteen member City Council, in which members serve may serve up to two four-year terms. Unlike many city governments, the Los Angeles City Council has administrative and executive powers in addition to its legislative powers (ibid).

Boards and commissions also serve as advisory and policymaking bodies to further disperse power in the City of Los Angeles. Because members of boards and commissions are appointed, they are considered nonpolitical and thus ideal for providing expert advice and policy suggestions (IGS Library, 2005). Currently, Los Angeles has fourteen advisory boards and sixteen commissions that engage in policy making with over 240 commissioners (Musso and Weare, 2005; Boards and Commissions, 2006). See Appendix B for a full listing. In addition, thirty-two departments provide services throughout the city (Musso and Weare, 2005).

The 1925 City Charter established a four-year term for the Mayor, a position responsible for promoting and maintaining cooperation between city departments and offices, consolidating departments and offices when necessary with the approval of two-thirds of the City Council, approving or vetoing Council measures, and enforcing City ordinances (Parlow and Keane, 2002). The Mayor had significant budgetary

control but limited power in other areas (ibid). For example, the City Council was designated as the governing body of the City and had the power to review and change decisions made by commissions. The boards and commissions have varying degrees of power and control over budgetary matters, with four types of boards and commissions: proprietary, semi-independent, managing, and non-managing (Parlow and Keane, 2002). Proprietary commissions generate and control their own revenues and budgets, whereas semi-independent commissions generate some of their own revenues with supplements from the City (ibid). Managing commissions oversee departments but depend on the City for funding and non-managing commissions simply have advisory roles with no authority to make or implement policy (ibid).

Los Angeles Socio-Political History

Los Angeles has experienced a long history of disempowerment of minority, immigrant, and low-income neighborhoods, well documented from the 1850s to the present. In the 1890s, the idea of neighborhoods as places that would benefit from civic empowerment grew from Jane Addams' social work in Chicago, and became the foundation of the progressive movement in the United States (Pitt, n.d.). Settlement houses and neighborhood associations began to advocate, in the style of Chicago's Saul Alinsky, for issues of public health and safety, women's suffrage, early childhood education, juvenile health and welfare, sanitation, and parks and green spaces. By the 1930s these social organizations had become the beginnings of the neighborhood empowerment movement that we see in Los Angeles today, with local panels that had been convened to fight juvenile delinquency forming the very first "Neighborhood Councils" (Pitt, n.d.).

The period from 1965 to 1985 saw neighborhood empowerment grow, fueled by President Johnson's War on Poverty, which required cities to foster participation by the "poor" in order to receive Federal funds, and fueled by the ensuing Watts riots (Pitt, n.d.). In the 1970s and 1980s the high rate of population growth and development of the Los Angeles area led to the reduced quality of municipal services, and the passage of Proposition 13, which limited the State's collection of property taxes, further cut City spending (Pitt, n.d.). Residents' discontent with the poor quality of municipal services, and with city government in general, led to a resurgence in local democracy and an increase in the effectiveness of neighborhood associations such as civic clubs, homeowners' associations, chambers of commerce, tenant groups, and environmental groups, in solving local problems, illustrating the point that civic participation has the ability to "solve practical public problems through deliberative action" (Fung and Wright, 2003:29).

The emergence of unified minority civic engagement has also transformed Los Angeles' politics and government structure during the past half century. Beginning with a coalition of African American leaders in the 1950s and continuing on to today with civil rights leaders of other minority groups such as Latinos and Jews, City Hall became more representative of the city's diversity. Since the 1940s,

these coalitions have consistently registered as Democrats and have voted for predominantly Democratic leaders in local, state, and national offices. However, it is important to note that local elections in Los Angeles are nonpartisan; therefore candidates are elected based on campaign platforms and not based on party affiliations. As a result, party affiliation does not tie local officials' hands when proposing and making policy decisions. Many elected officials, particularly Latino and African American leaders, seek to represent their communities, even if in doing so, they are not adhering to their personal party affiliations.

Frustrated by City officials' resistance to African American representation, a group of politically active African American leaders in the 1950s formed the Democratic Minority Conference, whose mission was to support African American political candidates, increase voter registration, and demand district reapportionment based on race. By canvassing and fundraising in African American communities, groups like the Conference and the Committee for Representative Government mobilized the African American electorate. By the early 1960s, three of Los Angeles' fifteen city council districts were led by African American leaders, including Tom Bradley. An alliance between the African American and Jewish communities in 1973 assisted Bradley in becoming the City's first African American mayor. As Mayor for four consecutive terms, he helped usher in civic reforms such as expanding urban renewal, rapid transit, and business expansion programs (Sides, 2006). During Bradley's 20-year tenure, Los Angeles witnessed a dramatic transformation in its population and political leadership. An increase in minority communities in South Central, the Eastside, and the San Fernando Valley pushed out entrenched city leaders who failed to represent their constituents. African American leaders like Bradley and Bernard Parks, former Chief of Police and now a City Councilmember, broadened coalitions between communities in efforts to make City Hall more responsive.

The emergence of a Latino political bloc further changed Los Angeles politics. Beginning in the 1940s, under the leadership of Edward Roybal's Community Service Organization, a grassroots movement began in Los Angeles' Boyle Heights community. As a result of a massive voter registration drive throughout the Eastside's communities in 1949, over 11,000 Mexican Americans and Jewish voters helped Roybal become the first Latino City Councilmember since 1881 (Library of Congress, 2006). Roybal and other Latino leaders championed civil rights causes like education desegregation, immigration reform, and public resource equity. Like the African American and Jewish communities, a majority of Latinos in Los Angeles registered as Democrats. Their voting block significantly impacted national, state, and local politics, as more Latinos were elected and appointed to positions of power. For instance, with the support of multi-ethnic coalitions, Roybal became the first Latino Congressman in over 80 years; Gloria Molina became the first Latina Los Angeles County Supervisor; and Antonio Villaraigosa served as California's first Latino Speaker of the Assembly. In 2005, Villaraigosa became the first Latino Mayor in over 130 years. Demographic, economic, social, and political shifts in the city, state, and nation have influenced the election of public officials, who are more

responsive to their constituencies' demands and expectations.

While Latino and African American leaders have been successful in changing the political structure of Los Angeles, their impact on governance has been limited by other factors affecting the city. All councilmembers, the mayor, and other city officials are expected to represent the city's residents; however, racial tensions, economic recessions, dissatisfaction with City Hall, and apathy among residents are all consistent problems that have affected city officials and laws, and have complicated policy decisions. For instance, a growing Latin American immigrant population has placed added pressure on city officials as to how the City will distribute public services in an equitable and responsible manner.

Shifting politics and demographics have forced the City to adapt its governance processes to allow Angelenos greater access and power in civic life. The 1925 Charter resulted from Progressive era reform in response to political corruption that intentionally created a dispersion of powers between the mayor, city council, administrators, and commissions (Schockman, 1996). This dispersion of power created what Schockman calls "municipal feudalism", in which the power of neighborhoods was consistently undermined and removed in order to protect the governing structure established by the 1925 Charter (ibid:62). Between the passage of the 1925 Charter and the successful reform in 1999, there were four failed attempts to reform the City's Charter to increase neighborhood power (Bollens, 1963). The 1925 Charter underwent modifications over time through the passage of multiple amendments, some of which sought to increase neighborhood empowerment, but the amendments ultimately created a large and disjointed governing document. As the desire for greater neighborhood power grew, calls for drastic reform increased, including the various attempts to create a borough system and efforts by some neighborhoods to secede from the City. The threats of secession pushed political leaders to reform the Charter in 1999.

The Charter Reform of 1999

The charter reform was, in large part, a response to an attempt by a large area of Los Angeles, the San Fernando Valley, to secede from the City of Los Angeles.[13] The Valley's desire to secede from Los Angeles stemmed from a variety of causes: the "long-standing political conservatism and racial homogeneity of the Valley, a desire to gain greater control over local land use, ... a suburban vision" and the physical separation of the Valley and the City by the Santa Monica Mountains (Sonenshein, 2004:75). Despite continued failure, the secession movement was never far from appearing on the political agenda. In the past, the Los Angles City Council held the power to veto the secession ballot measures, however, in 1997 the State Legislature

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[13] Secession is the process by which an entity attempts to withdraw from a political unit. In the case Los Angeles, the geographic area of the San Fernando Valley attempted to detach itself politically from the City of Los Angeles and form its own city government.

removed this power (Sonenshein, 2004). At the same time, both the Harbor and Hollywood areas were joining the secession movement. With the removal of the City Council's veto power, the city government felt the pressure to reform in order to avoid the realization of the secession movement, in which the City would lose a large portion of its tax base.

In addition to the political pressure resulting from the secession movement, there was growing evidence that the citizens of Los Angeles were dissatisfied with the local government. In a discussion of reform in Los Angeles, Boudreau stated, "The city government was facing a legitimacy crisis, an overwhelming sense of citizen dissatisfaction and opting out attitudes" (Boudreau, 2003:796). The "civic unrest" of 1992 brought national attention to the existing tensions between the citizens and local government (Schockman, 1996:63). The outbreak of the 1992 Los Angeles riots was sparked by the acquittal of four white Los Angeles Police Department officers charged with beating African American motorist Rodney King. After six days of rioting and looting in Los Angeles' South and Koreatown areas, 2,383 people were injured, 8,000 were arrested, and 51 were killed. In addition, over 700 businesses were burned and there was an estimated $1 billion in property damages. Ultimately, the riot was the response to growing racial tensions and drastically disproportionate economic disparities (Bergesen and Herman, 1998). Much of the racial tension then and now results from the great diversity of Los Angeles and the "place-specific problems" that result from such diversity (Oakerson and Svorny, 2005:519). Oakerson and Svorny (2005) also suggested that those at City Hall did not have the incentives to take actions that would positively affect the diverse concerns of the communities throughout Los Angeles.

As a result of the frustration with the local government and the riots, three main areas of concerns emerged for the public: "the policy-making functions" of the city government, "the management structure of city operations", and "the provision of city services" (McCarthy et al., 1998:4-5). The city government is viewed as slow and unresponsive, as well as lacking in accountability and flexibility, and concerns over the equitable distribution of services are prominent (ibid). Additionally, as noted above, a widely publicized study found that Los Angeles lacked civic connectedness and participatory groups compared to other similar cities, therefore creating high levels of distrust in both government and fellow citizens (Saguaro Seminar, 2001)

The Two-Year Reform Process

The Mayor of Los Angeles from 1993 to 2001, Richard Riordan, became a strong supporter of charter reform. Riordan viewed this reform as a chance to increase the powers of the Mayor and the Mayor's Office, while simultaneously removing power from the City Council (Sonenshein, 2004). The threat of secession of certain regions of the City and growing citizen distrust gave Riordan the proper window in which to advocate for reform. His support of the charter reform movement added more strain to his already tenuous relationship with the City

Council. The City Council envisioned this reform as small changes to the current charter through the recommendations of an appointed charter reform commission, whereas Riordan wanted to take aggressive steps to change the charter through the recommendations of an elected charter reform commission (ibid). As a result, for approximately two years, two reform commissions developed plans for the charter reform and were often at odds with each other, sometimes in a very public manner. Even though there were two commissions working on charter reform, the expectation was that a unified proposal would result from these deliberations, independent from both the Mayor's Office and the City Council, and that the public would vote on this unified charter. Despite their differences, the two commissions eventually agreed upon a unified charter, and on June 8, 1999, the voters of Los Angeles approved the new charter with a margin of 60% to 40% (ibid). Most notably, the new charter made changes in mayoral power and the power of the City Council, created decentralized Area Planning Commissions, and established a Neighborhood Council system. Despite these changes, many "checks and balances" remain in place (e.g. the City Attorney and City Controller still have oversight over the Mayor) (Parlow and Keane, 2002).

Mayoral power. The Mayor's historically weak position was strengthened somewhat in the new Charter, which provided the Mayor the power to transfer employees and money from one department to another, issue executive orders to city departments, and remove department heads and city commissioners without the approval of the City Council (ibid). The Mayor is also designated as the Chief Executive and is in charge of managing the city departments and bureaucracy (Parlow and Keane, 2002). The City Council's powers were further weakened in that it could no longer modify decisions made by commissions (ibid).

Increasing mayoral power was intended to increase responsiveness, efficiency, and accountability of local government. By giving more authority to the Mayor, it was thought that citizens could hold one person, the Mayor, responsible for the effectiveness and efficiency of the delivery of city goods and services, improving accountability in the service delivery functions of the city (Parlow and Keane, 2002). Since 2001, two mayors have governed Los Angeles, James Hahn (2001 – 2005) and Antonio Villaraigosa (2005 – Present). Both elected officials have enjoyed the benefits of increased powers that Riordan successfully secured with the 1999 Charter reform. Hahn and Villaraigosa have sought to further the influence of their respective administrations based on their interpretation of the Charter. Meanwhile, the role of the City Council remained largely unchanged.

Decentralized planning commissions. The new Charter also required the formation of at least five area planning commissions that would be responsible for making decisions concerning land permits (Sonenshein, 2004). In the end, seven Area Planning Commissions (APCs) were formed in 2000. The development of the seven APCs allowed for greater citizen participation in which the commissions have actual decision making power, thereby making strides toward decentralized political power

(ibid). The Area Planning Commissions are composed of appointed citizen representatives, encouraging the decentralization of land use to the regional (community) level.

Advisory neighborhood councils. The Charter created the Department of Neighborhood Empowerment (DONE), which was required to develop and implement a system of advisory Neighborhood Councils. Additionally, the City Council, council committees, and the boards and commissions must notify Neighborhood Councils before any policy or program decision is made in order to allow for input from the Neighborhood Councils through the Early Notification System (Sonenshein, 2004). The creation of DONE and the provisions for Neighborhood Councils were intended to increase individual empowerment, access to government, local autonomy, immigrant involvement, government responsiveness, neighborhood participation, and community interaction (Participation Study Group, June 25, 1997). Purcell noted this "new layer of participation at the neighborhood scale" had the potential to "allow the government to be closer and more responsive to the needs of voters", and was created specifically as an answer to the complaints of non-responsiveness by wealthier neighborhood's in Los Angeles (Purcell, 2002:34).

Los Angeles Civic Participation Policies

The charter reform measure of 1999 created a new city agency, the Department of Neighborhood Empowerment (DONE), a Neighborhood Council system with a seven-member Board of Commissioners, and an "Early Warning System" (later renamed Early Notification System) to notify Neighborhood Councils of pending policy decisions, in an effort to address the distrust and resentment of Los Angeles' residents toward City Hall (see Appendix C for a theoretical overview of electronic governance) (Charter Article IX, 1999). DONE was "charged with the goal of promoting increased public participation in government and working to make government more responsive to local needs" through a new citywide system of Neighborhood Councils that it would develop in the year immediately following passage of the reform measure (Ordinance 172728, 1999:1).

DONE is responsible for enabling local communities to form Neighborhood Councils, certifying those councils, coordinating neighborhood service delivery with relevant city departments, and assisting in community-based problem solving. DONE is composed of a Board of Neighborhood Commissioners, an Executive Office including a General Manager and an Assistant General Manager, a Field Operations Division, with a Director, that encompasses an Empowerment Academy and Community Engagement Team, a Neighborhood Council Advocates Team, and an Elections and Innovations Team. Each team is staffed with Project Coordinators who are responsible for engaging with the community, City departments, and Neighborhood Councils. Specifically, Project Coordinators are directly responsible for assisting the Neighborhood Councils with the certification process, the election process, communication with city officials, and providing the necessary resources for

success such as training and meeting facilities (DONE, 2006).

Neighborhood Councils: Planning and Implementation

DONE was granted a budget of $780,000 by the City Council in November 1999, and what ultimately became a two-year planning process began on that date. DONE spent most of 2000 holding regional workshops to assist in the planning process. While there were no procedural delays toward the passage of the plan, the process did little to educate the public on the possibilities for the new system or "address the challenge of incorporating into the process historically disenfranchised residents," leading to cynicism and political conflict (Musso et al. 2002:8). Controversial issues within the planning process include differing visions for the system, resource limitations, and regional planning.

Different visions for the formation of Neighborhood Councils became apparent during the planning process. City officials emphasized self-responsibility in the formation of the Neighborhood Council system, providing so little guidance during the workshops that the citizens produced a complicated array of ideas with little understanding of how the system might actually function. Community organizers emphasized the desire for structured political influence, and expressed dissatisfaction with the position of the city, as they perceived that the city was trying to unload its responsibilities onto the communities (Musso et al., 2002).

Funding became a contentious issue as well, as it was generally accepted by community organizers and DONE staff that the City had significantly under-funded DONE in the planning and implementation process by only allotting $780,000 for the first year, and ignoring the Charter's requirement to set up a two year funding cycle (Charter, Article IX, Section 911). The City's lack of proper funding "calls into question the depth of political support for the Neighborhood Councils" and was insufficient for such a large, politically complex project that required professionally staffed workshops, high levels of effective outreach in diverse communities, and administrative and political savvy (Musso et al., 2002:10).

The resource limitations of the process correlate directly with many of the main criticisms of the regional planning process, which were lack of outreach and lack of meaningful deliberations. Outreach to poor and minority communities was weak, leading to input that was not representative of Los Angeles' diverse communities. Additionally, the process by which input was gathered from residents was so constrained by time, the complexity of the issues, the organizational structure of the workshops, and the lack of education, that it produced little meaningful information and a lack of reasoned judgments on the "preferred design" of the Neighborhood Council system (Musso et al., 2002:11).

The passage of the final plan in May, 2001, is seen as the result of dedicated

staff at DONE, the Board of Neighborhood Council members, and community organizers, who were able to overcome the obstacles of the under-funded and under-structured planning process. The final plan included controversial elements, however, that are addressed below, including the size and boundaries of the councils and how participation is structured, in addition to issues of citywide networking capacity. The plan also did little to narrow the focus of the system as outlined in the Charter, which set out broad goals that are not easily defined or measured, including promoting participation, promoting collaboration, making government more responsive, and building a sense of community. The plan could have formalized these goals and outlined ways to reach them, but for the most part it did not. Much of the plan focuses on the details of the certification process, elections, and procedures to amend certification and bylaws, emphasizing on establishing certified Neighborhood Councils but with little detail about specific ways in which the goals and objectives of DONE and of the Neighborhood Councils will be reached.

The size and boundaries of Neighborhood Councils became one of the most controversial issues in the planning process. Large councils were assumed to be better for consolidating political power and negotiating with the City Council, but would likely ignore smaller, more local concerns, while smaller councils were thought to be too small and disorganized to have much power on the city level. Allowing communities to determine the size and boundaries of their own councils was believed to allow for greater democratic, grassroots freedom and self-determination, but might also have the effect of segregating the more organized and administratively-minded councils from others if they were able to organize first and fastest, and thus gain additional political power, while other communities lagged behind. After much negotiation, the final plan allowed for communities to determine the size and boundaries of their councils, with a few limitations. This devolution of boundary-setting authority supported community self-determination, but lent itself to inter-community disputes over boundaries, which slowed down the certification process in some areas of the City (Bailey, 2002).

The structure of participation within the Neighborhood Councils became controversial as well, particularly with regard to the definition of stakeholders, the lack of organizational structure mandated by the plan, and the lack of mechanisms that would foster authentic participation. First, while the Charter defined stakeholders as anyone "who lives, works or owns property" within a given community, the plan broadened that definition to include anyone who participates in community institutions (Plan, Article III, 2(c)(ii)(a)). Second, the plan does not require a standard organizational structure for each Neighborhood Council, but does impose some regulations that may have had an effect on council formation, including the application of the Brown Act[14] and the requirement that no single stakeholder group

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[14] The Brown Act guarantees the public's right to attend and participate in the meetings of "public commissions, boards, councils, and other legislative bodies of local government agencies [which] exist to aid in the conduct of the people's business (Hoch, et al., 2003: 9).

can hold a majority position on any Neighborhood Council board (Plan, Article III, 2(c)(ii). The restriction on majority stakeholder representation is unclear, as it does not seem that a council's bylaws are required to include a provision to prevent such majority representation, and some councils do have majority representation by certain stakeholder groups. Third, Musso et al's analysis of the planning process shows that few mechanisms and channels were put in place to foster authentic participation; clearly lacking were provisions for the delegation of public hearings from the city level to the Neighborhood Council level, provisions for the systematic handling of budget requests, and mechanisms for monitoring service delivery quality (2002).

The final plan places great responsibility on both DONE and the individual councils for success of the system. DONE is expected to support the system by assisting with certification, overseeing compliance with the City's Charter and other laws, performing public education services, providing operational support, maintaining a database of Neighborhood Councils, assisting the councils and the City to communicate with each other, and supporting the Early Notification System (Plan, Article III). Individual councils are expected to self-organize and comply with all applicable city laws and regulations, develop bylaws, ways of communicating with (and surveying biennially) their stakeholders, and methods of financial accounting, all with very little financial or administrative support.

Certified Neighborhood Councils

A major responsibility of DONE is to establish a certification process for Neighborhood Councils and assist in their certification efforts. In the first few years of the implementation of the plan, DONE focused on initiating the certification process and responding to issues arising from this process (Musso et al., 2004). In the plan created by DONE, specific guidelines and regulations were established for the certification process. The plan requires that organizing councils apply for certification by completing a multi-part application that is then submitted to DONE. The plan requires that councils include the following:

- Specific information about boundaries following the regulations mentioned above,
- A detailed plan for outreach,
- Established bylaws with specific regulations concerning diversity, meeting guidelines and grievance procedures,
- A specified budgeting process,
- Ethical standards, and
- Contact information for "no less than three and no more than five" people associated with the applying council (Plan, Article III).

The plan also establishes specific time deadlines concerning the processing of applications, public notices, and public hearings that must be observed by DONE

(Plan, Article IV). However, some Neighborhood Council members have expressed concerns about the expanding and evolving nature of the rules imposed by DONE (Musso et al., 2004). These concerns are legitimate considering that the process of organization and certification falls mainly to the organizing members of the councils. According to Musso et al. "Neighborhood Councils are expected to self-organize into councils" and do this "while complying with a variety of regulatory requirements (2004:14). Additionally, in early 2004, concerns were expressed that certain planning areas did not have any certified Neighborhood Councils; however as of 2006, seven new Councils have been approved, including those in planning areas formerly lacking Councils (ibid). To date, there are eighty-eight certified Neighborhood Councils with eighty-five of those having elected boards (DONE, 2006). Appendix D lists these councils in order of certification, along with their certification dates, and the number of residents represented by each council. These councils represent 3,343,133 residents, or approximately 87% of the total population of Los Angeles. The average number of residents represented by each council is 37,990, but the councils range in size from 7,323 to 103,364 residents.

Once certified, Neighborhood Councils must hold elections in order to establish an official board. The election process is designed to be open with the purpose of preventing dominance by certain stakeholder groups, which is a danger if board members are self-appointed (Musso et al., 2004). Because of issues surrounding the focus on self-determination by Neighborhood Councils and the Charter requirements to have representative boards, various difficulties and controversies have plagued the election process. Musso et al. describe three main areas creating difficulties: a lack of standards, political divisions, and a lack of authority (2004).

Initially, DONE allowed the Neighborhood Councils to develop election procedures on an individual basis, with DONE approval required before elections could officially take place. Individual development of election procedures was time consuming, significantly slowing the process for many Neighborhood Councils, creating frustration and confusion (Musso et al., 2004). Additionally, this created a significant administrative workload for DONE as they worked with the individual Councils to devise procedures. In January 2005, official election procedures were approved by the City Council, potentially streamlining the election process.

Political divisions within and between Neighborhood Councils, as well as an initially vague delineation of election authority, have also created difficulties in the election process. Political divisions resulting from ethnicity and race, political ideologies, and even individual differences have created controversies during elections (Musso et al., 2004). These divisions have led to concerns that certain stakeholder groups will take over a board, leading to the development of election procedures that are not conducive to wide or representative participation (ibid). Disagreements between DONE and the Neighborhood Councils are another source of conflict. DONE has assumed the roles of both approver for election procedures and monitor of elections; however, this power is not clearly delegated to DONE in the Charter or

the Plan (Musso et al., 2004). Consequently, Neighborhood Councils have challenged DONE decisions, creating an antagonistic relationship between the Councils and DONE. Despite these challenges, most Neighborhood Councils have conducted successful elections with limited controversy and with what Musso et al. consider promising turnouts from the wider community (2004).

Mechanisms for Participation

According to Iglesias and Garcia, local governments must be innovative in the types of mechanisms they develop to foster civic participation in order to create legitimate participation as opposed to superficial engagement of citizens (2005). The Charter introduces two mechanisms that foster communication between Neighborhood Councils and the City as well as among Neighborhood Councils: the Early Notification System and the Los Angeles Neighborhood Councils Congress. The Early Notifications System is an electronic communication mechanism created to inform Neighborhood Councils of pending City decisions. The Los Angeles Neighborhood Councils Congress was created as a mechanism to increase the effectiveness of communication among Neighborhood Councils and to allow the Councils to work together on citywide issues. In addition, independently of the City and the Charter, the Citywide Alliance of Neighborhood Councils was formed with the intent of functioning as an independent information clearing house for the Neighborhood Councils.

Early Notification System

Based on Musso and Weare's report on the Early Notification System (2005), the planning and implementation of the Early Notification System faced many political, legal, and structural barriers. The plan for the Early Notification System (ENS) consisted of three drafts that constantly changed in focus from larger issues of "who, what, and when" to a more narrow focus on technological capacities (Musso and Weare, 2005). The narrowing focus of the plan for the ENS also reduced the potential of the program to increase and enhance the participatory process of Neighborhood Councils. The initial system was envisioned as a broad-based effort to inform and engage citizens, but the planning and implementation process decreased this to a matter of technical concerns. The resulting system is not as comprehensive as originally planned nor is it perfect; however, it is "one of the most comprehensive systems for public notification among large American cities" (ibid:611).

Phase One of the ENS was implemented in July 2001, as the new City webpage was introduced (Musso and Weare, 2005). The new front page of the website consisted of a direct link to the ENS through which organizations and individuals can subscribe to 89 different types of email notification. To date, there are approximately 3,000 subscriptions (ibid). As it became clear that the ENS would not overwhelm departments and agencies, many departments became more supportive and participated in training sessions provided by the Information Technology Agency,

the agency charged with planning and implementing the ENS (ibid). Despite a successful launch of this system in 2001, the planning process faced many challenges because of vague language, legal barriers, and a shift in focus to technology instead of the goals and objectives of the system.

Following patterns of past reforms, the language establishing the ENS was relatively vague and left the implementation of the system to the discretion of city agencies and the City Council (Musso and Weare, 2005). As a result of this vague language, the planning and implementation of the Early Notification System met with resistance from administrators and the City Council. The Charter stated that:

> The Regulations shall establish procedures for receiving input from Neighborhood Councils prior to decisions by the City Council, City Council Committees and boards and commissions. The procedures shall include, but need not be limited to, notice to Neighborhood Councils as soon as practical, and a reasonable opportunity to provide input before decisions are made (Charter, Article IX, Section 907).

Initially, the City Council changed the language of the reform to further weaken the impact of the ENS by removing the consequences of failing to notify Neighborhood Councils by stating that City decisions could not be invalidated by the fact that Neighborhood Councils were not notified of the pending decision (Musso and Weare, 2005).

Legal barriers also narrowed the focus of plan for the Early Notification System and created limits as to the effectiveness of the system, specifically with reference to the notification time requirements. The planning team used the Brown Act as a guide for the notification requirements, which resulted in a minimum of a 72 hour notice, straying from the initial objectives of the ENS that would have required around 30 days notice (Musso and Weare, 2005).

In addition, adequate funding and the technical capacity for implementation of the system were lacking. The Information Technology Agency (ITA) was charged with the responsibility of creating the system, but a lack of funding from the City, resulting in part from the State's fiscal difficulties, forced the ITA to rely on staff from other agencies and projects (Musso and Weare, 2005). The ITA also faced challenges to implementation because of the wide variance of technical capacities at the many City departments and agencies (ibid). As the planning of the system progressed, much of the focused shifted to expanding the current Listserv provided by the City Clerk's Office and integrating this technology throughout city departments, therefore concentrating the plan on the technical aspects of implementation (ibid).

Currently, uncertainties about needed improvements and budget problems have prevented new developments to the system. According to Musso and Weare, the

City has attempted to make improvements such as more clearly defining agenda items, while the City has attempted to receive feedback from interested parties, but little progress as been made thus far (2005). Two issues have been instrumental in preventing forward movement: the "highly fragmented" government structure in Los Angeles and "information overload," as the Neighborhood Councils are unable to process the large amount of information delivered by the City (ibid:613). According to stakeholder interviews, it is necessary for the ENS to provide more advanced notice, particularly with issues concerning specific local concerns such as parking. In order for implementation of improvements to occur, clarification of necessary improvements is needed from Neighborhood Councils and city departments as well as an assessment of the means by which the improvements will be made.

Los Angeles Neighborhood Councils Congress

Article IX, Section 901(c) of the Los Angeles Charter recommends that Neighborhood Councils form a "Congress of Neighborhoods" to increase their effectiveness at communicating with one another and creating solutions to citywide issues that affect many Neighborhood Councils. The Charter does not mandate the Congress, nor does it state a preferred structure; any formation of such a Congress was left entirely up to the Neighborhood Councils. In 2005, researchers at the University of Southern California facilitated workshop meetings with Neighborhood Councils on the formation of the Congress, its structure and goals, and how to proceed. The Neighborhood Councils decided not to involve DONE in the process. Instead, the councils agreed that the Congress would function as a deliberative body separate from DONE and the City (LANCC, 2005). Working groups met monthly throughout 2005, and LANCC held its first Senate meeting on May 4, 2005, where its Standing Rules were approved. The Congress is made up of one delegate (Senator) or Alternate from each Neighborhood Council that participates in the Congress. The Congress is composed of five standing committees (Agenda/Steering, Budget/Finance, Communications/Outreach, Organization/Structure, and General Assembly/Congress of Neighborhood Councils), which exist for the purpose of improving effective communication among the Neighborhood Councils and fulfilling their responsibilities under the Charter (LANCC Standing Rules, 2005). The Mission Statement for the Congress includes the following goals:

1. Provide opportunities for Neighborhood Councils to communicate with each other on issues of common interest, including Citywide issues, regional issues, and local issues with Citywide or regional implications;
2. Establish a formal structure for Neighborhood Councils to speak with a collective voice on City issues;
3. Develop and maintain tools for effective communication among Neighborhood Councils;
4. Develop and maintain expertise on City issues;
5. Provide assistance to Neighborhood Councils regarding elections, bylaws, and grievances;

6. Educate Neighborhood Councils about how to effectively bring issues before City government; and

7. Educate the public and City government about Neighborhood Councils (LANCC Charter, 2005).

As of May 1, 2006, thirty-nine Neighborhood Councils had ratified the LANCC Charter. The latest Senate meeting was held May 6, 2006, in Downtown Los Angeles. At this point, it is uncertain whether the LANCC will increase effective communication among the Neighborhood Councils, but with nearly half of all certified Neighborhood Councils now participating, the LANCC has a chance to reach some of the goals outlined in its Mission Statement.

Citywide Alliance of Neighborhood Councils

The Citywide Alliance of Neighborhood Councils formed in 2001 as an independent coalition of Neighborhood Councils, aimed at fostering communication among the councils. While no Neighborhood Councils are officially members of the Alliance, many community organizers from councils around the city participate in bimonthly meetings. The Alliance's bylaws, which were approved in July, 2003, require that each Neighborhood Council that wishes to be represented in the Alliance designate one delegate (and an alternate delegate), and allot each council's delegate a single vote at Alliance meetings. The Alliance is comprised of this Board of Delegates (one delegate from each member council) and is overseen by a Steering Committee made up of two delegates from each planning area (14 total) (ALLNCS, 2006). In an effort to improve communication among Neighborhood Councils, the Alliance often invites experts and elected officials to participate in its bimonthly meetings. For instance, Councilmembers Alex Padilla and Greg Smith, and State Assemblyman Robert Alarcon, have attended Alliance meetings. In 2005, the Alliance co-sponsored two mayoral debates on network television aimed at increasing public education and allowing Neighborhood Council members a chance to question the candidates directly (ALLNCS, 2006). The Alliance has self-organized to serve a similar purpose as the Charter-recommended Congress of Neighborhoods, with an emphasis on communication and networking, but without city support (Musso, et al, 2002).

EVALUATION

Having discussed the specific demographic, socioeconomic, historic, and political contexts of Los Angeles, we now turn to the evaluation of Los Angeles' civic participation policies. The evaluation is based upon a set of criteria culled primarily from Berry, Portney, and Thomson, in *The Rebirth of Urban Democracy* (1993), Iglesias and Garcia, in *Globalization, Sovereignty and Local Democracy in Major Cities* (2005), Thomson, in *Los Angeles Participation: The Vision and the Reality* (2002), and Musso and colleagues in *Neighborhood Councils in Los Angeles: A Midterm Status Report* (2004). These criteria evaluate the structures, processes, and outcomes of L.A.'s civic participation policies, from which conclusions about potential long-term success are drawn, and recommendations for improvement are developed.

Criteria

The effectiveness of civic participation policies is difficult to measure, as the goals of these policies are often broad, such as improving governance strategies and service delivery, and strengthening social capital and democratic institutions. Therefore, it is necessary to evaluate these policies' structures, processes, and outcomes to determine the extent to which the conditions necessary for improved governance, social capital, and democratic legitimacy are met. Berry, Portney, and Thomson, in *The Rebirth of Urban Democracy*, established four criteria that are necessary for neighborhood participation policies to succeed: (1) reliance on small, natural neighborhoods, (2) a citywide system, (3) political support and the sufficient provision of resources, and (4) a strong participatory core (Berry et al., 1993). Additionally, the process of neighborhood participation can be evaluated through an analysis of decision-making channels, the instruments or mechanisms of participation, and the "concrete experience" of participation (Iglesias and Garcia, 2005:131). Similarly to Berry et al. (1993), Thomson and colleagues (2002) found that in order for such civic participation policies to be successful in the long run, the following factors are necessary: "leadership motivation to achieve a participatory restructuring, establishment of the basic elements of participation structure, a balance between politics and public service, and a sufficiently rapid mobilization" (Thomson, 2002:2). In other words, civic participation innovations must have strong political and financial support, a well-designed citywide structure based on small, natural neighborhoods, and an emphasis on inclusive grassroots democracy, which downplays partisanship, and they must not lose momentum in the implementation phase. Additionally, Musso et al (2004) consider three benchmarks for long-term success to be "(1) emerging organizational capacity of Neighborhood Councils and the quality and impact of their initial activities; (2) participation in their activities and the 'social capital' developed by the relationships they create; and (3) measures of stakeholders' political efficacy and their attitudes regarding city government and their community" (Musso, et al, 2004: 5). The success of Los Angeles' Neighborhood Council system will depend on the extent to which it meets these criteria, synthesized below in Table 5.

Table 5. Criteria for Evaluating the Neighborhood Council System

Evaluation	Criteria
Evaluating Structure	Small, natural neighborhoods
	Citywide system
	Political support
	Sufficient resources

Evaluating Processes	Who participates?
	    -Levels of participation
	  -Diversity in representation
	  -Outreach
	  -Participatory core

	Mechanisms of participation
	  -Instruments
	  -Channels of decision-making

	Relationships and social capital

	Experiences of participation
	  -Strengths/successes
	  -Weaknesses/challenges
	  -Political attitudes

Evaluating Outcomes	Local quality of life issues
	  -Service delivery
	  -Land use, economic development
	  -Educational and social assistance
	  -Community beautification
	  -Outreach, organizing, events

	Citywide issues -Effects on city policies

Evaluating Structures

The Neighborhood Council system faces structural challenges resulting from the large size of the Neighborhood Councils, a lack of political support and resources, and varying degrees of organizational capacity. Despite these challenges, a citywide system has formed, which is an essential component for a sustainable council system.

Small, Natural Neighborhoods and A Citywide System

Based on studies in other American cities, Berry et al. recommend that neighborhood councils represent 2,000 to 5,000 residents in order to foster face-to-face interactions (1993). However, the Los Angeles Neighborhood Councils represent an average of 38,000 residents, with a range of 7,000-103,000 residents. Given the size of Los Angeles, it would be difficult to implement a council system with an average representation falling within the range recommended by Berry et al.,

and the City recommends a minimum of around 19,000 residents (Musso et al., 2004). However, the current large size and wide boundaries of the Councils make outreach and interaction within the communities difficult, as these become both time consuming and expensive. According to stakeholder interviews, the large size of the Neighborhood Councils have created conflicts within Councils as board members fight over the use of available resources. One interviewee stated that "everyone wants something for their own area" within the Council boundaries, decreasing the effectiveness of the Councils (Interviewee 008, 4-27-06).

Despite these challenges, the Neighborhood Council system was required to be citywide by the Charter and developed accordingly. Berry et al. emphasize that a citywide system is essential for a successful and sustainable neighborhood council system that equitably represents citizen interests to the local government (1993). In Los Angeles, all seven planning areas are represented by at least one Neighborhood Council and Councils represent nearly 87% of the total Los Angeles population. This indicates that the system developing in Los Angeles has the potential for sustainability despite other limitations.

Political Support and Sufficient Resources

Strong political support is essential for neighborhood councils to gain a legitimate place within local governance. Sufficient resources are also needed for successful implementation of a neighborhood council system (Berry et al., 1993). However, political support for the Los Angeles Neighborhood Council System has been relatively low. During the planning process, conflicts between Mayor Riordan, and the City Council created administrative and political difficulties, and the Neighborhood Council system received little support from either group (Musso et al., 2002). The Mayor hired a General Manger for DONE who did not have the necessary experience to effectively manage DONE, creating animosity between DONE and certain Councilmembers, slowing the planning process and frustrating the Neighborhood Council representatives (ibid).

In 2001, a new Mayor, James Hahn, was elected along with new Councilmembers. Hahn campaigned in support of Neighborhood Councils and made some positive changes to support the system, such as hiring a new General Manager, but these changes did not increase the overall support for Neighborhood Councils (Musso et al., 2002). The current Mayor, Antonio Villaraigosa, has shown little support for the Neighborhood Councils. A City insider indicated in an interview that the Mayor's administration is concerned that Neighborhood Councils will oppose the Mayor's agenda and therefore become obstacles to the Mayor's citywide goals. The Administration fears that the Neighborhood Councils will organize effectively to impact citywide issues. Stakeholder interviews have revealed a distrust of City Hall, with most stakeholders suggesting that they do not think the Mayor supports the Neighborhood Councils. The stakeholders indicated that the Mayor only supports the Councils when he needs them to participate in the Mayor's Day of Service. One

interview respondent stated that the Mayor "does not actively seek Neighborhood Council input or involvement on a regular basis (Interviewee 009, 5-03-06). Additionally, stakeholders suggest that the City Attorney's Office and the City Controller's Office are not supportive of or responsive to the Neighborhood Councils. As for City Councilmembers, support for Neighborhood Councils varies depending on the Councilmember and the Councilmembers' staff. According to stakeholders, some Councilmembers are responsive to advice provided by the Neighborhood Councils and consistently send representatives to Neighborhood Council meetings, whereas other Councilmembers rarely interact with the Councils. Overall, many stakeholders believe that as a whole, the City Council is not responsive to the Neighborhood Councils and that the City Council views them as a nuisance and something to be controlled, fearing that the Neighborhood Councils may try to usurp their power. They also believe that officials show public support for the Neighborhood Councils only as a public relations strategy. However, stakeholders acknowledge that certain City Departments such as the Department of Water and Power, the Planning Department, and the Department of Parks and Recreation have been supportive of Neighborhood Councils and that certain local police and fire department have shown support through publicly acknowledging the usefulness of Neighborhood Councils.

In addition to a lack of overall political support, the Neighborhood Councils do not have adequate resources to function effectively. According to Musso et al., "the City of Los Angeles has not furnished the amount of resources necessary to support the system of neighborhood councils envisioned in the Charter" (2004:14). Inadequate funding was a particular problem during the planning and early implementation of the system, which limited input from the community into the planning process and the overall effectiveness of the eventual Plan developed by DONE (Musso et al., 2002). Berry et al. emphasize the importance of adequate resources and funding in the initial stages in order to develop sustainable neighborhood council systems (1993). In addition, the Neighborhood Councils and DONE have relatively small budgets given their expansive responsibilities, and DONE's budget is small compared to the budgets of neighborhood empowerment departments in Portland, Seattle, and Minneapolis (Musso et al., 2004). Neighborhood Councils are allotted a budget of $50,000 dollars per year; however, they must apply each year for this funding (Musso et al., 2004). This places a strain on Councils with low administrative capacity and puts these Councils at a disadvantage. Additionally, stakeholders indicated in interviews that this funding was not adequate in order to address the needs of the communities and to cover administrative costs, resulting in conflicts over the best uses of the limited funding.

Organizational Capacity

The Neighborhood Council system structure leaves much of the determination of boundaries, by-laws, and organizational structure to the individual Neighborhood Councils, creating a system in which some Councils are well equipped

to organize and others do not have the capacity to function at high levels (Musso et al., 2004). The Councils that function at higher levels are better able to accomplish their goals, whereas lower functioning Councils are not as effective. According to stakeholder interviews, this lack of organizational capacity is a main source of frustration for community members, and as frustration levels rise, the Councils see frequent board member turnover and reduced attendance at meetings. Many stakeholders expressed the need for new types of training for Neighborhood Councils in areas such as administrative skills, conflict resolution, and leadership skills, as well as training in what it means to be a public servant, in order to increase the capacities of individual Councils. The current structure creates an environment in which "a two-tiered system that reinforces existing political inequities" may develop (Musso et al., 2004).

Evaluating Processes

While evaluating the Neighborhood Council system, it is important to consider the participation levels, the diversity, the political innovations, the experiences of the participants of the system and the impact of the system on the social capital of Los Angeles. Although the system has made progress, many barriers exist to the sustainability of the system based on issues in these areas such as low attendance levels, a lack of diversity and effective outreach, and implementation problems concerning political innovations.

Participation Levels

Although Neighborhood Councils may vary in size, a common trend has emerged: levels of participation have remained relatively marginal. Councils currently represent approximately 7,000 to 103,000 residents while the number of council board members ranges from 10 to 48 community stakeholders (DONE, 2006). Yet, regardless of the size of the council area or its board, only a limited number of residents participate in the Neighborhood Council system. A lack of interest in the system among younger and newer City residents in the system has further suppressed levels of involvement, as board member elections show. As Chart 2 shows, below, only 9% of Neighborhood Councils reported having more than 50 stakeholders in attendance at an average meeting, and 25% of Councils reported having 10 or fewer at an average meeting. At the largest meeting of the year, one third of Councils did report having between 50 and 100, and 22% reported having greater than 100 stakeholders present, but these attendance rates clearly do not extend to other meetings throughout the year. In council areas that represent, on average, over 38,000 residents, 10-50 attendees at an average monthly meeting is low, signifying that a few individuals tend to dominate participation throughout the Neighborhood Council system.

Low levels of involvement reflect a lack of interest in participation in the Neighborhood Council system. According to interviews with stakeholders from

various councils, low voter turnout for council elections almost matches how many or how few community members attend monthly council meetings on a regular basis. Frequently, candidates run unopposed or need to only reach out to a minimal number of community members in order to secure their seats on the council boards. In one case, a candidate in the North Los Angeles area needed only to stand up during a board meeting and declare her candidacy. As she was unopposed, she did not need to worry about campaigning, and was elected with fewer than twenty votes (Interviewee 010, May 5, 2006). This case is not surprising when other council board members from areas throughout the City shared similar stories of their elections.

Chart 2. Attendance at Neighborhood Council Meetings.

Attendance at Neighborhood Council Meetings
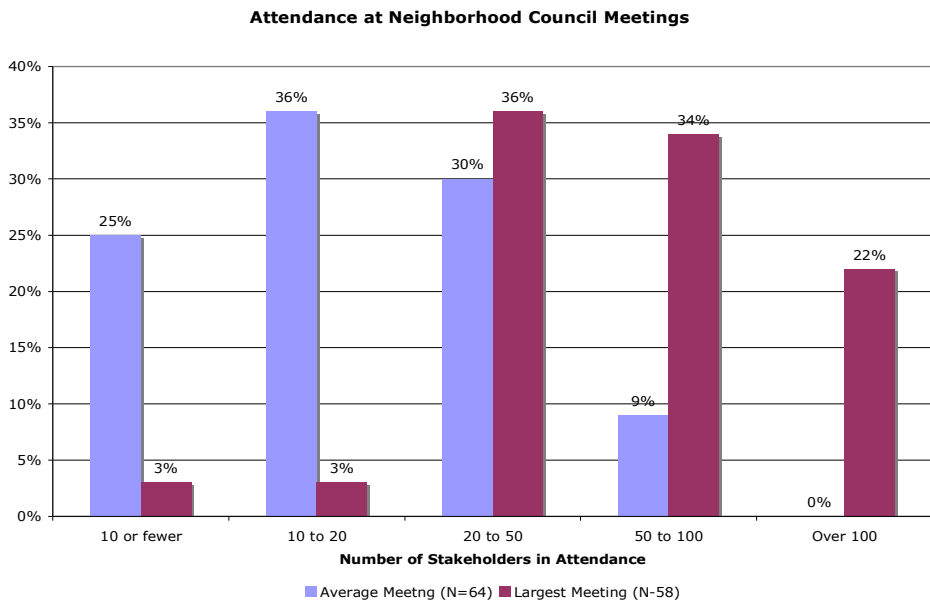
Source: Created from NPP DONE Project Coordinator survey data

Council Diversity

According to the Charter and the plan established by DONE, diversity among neighborhood representatives is a key goal. The plan created by DONE requires Neighborhood Councils to establish guidelines to ensure board members are representative of the broader community and to ensure that outreach is directed at a diverse population (Plan, Article III). In a city as diverse and populous as Los Angeles, it is important for Neighborhood Councils to include a representative sampling of the larger population in order to ensure the "democratic legitimacy" of the Councils (Musso et al., 2004:26). Council board members tend to differ from the larger Los Angeles population in a variety of ways, including length of residency in Los Angeles, proportion of racial and ethnic groups, and income levels. Most board members have resided within the City significantly longer than the majority of Los

Angeles residents and they tend to own homes in a City composed primarily of renters, as shown in Chart 3 (Musso et al., 2004).

Chart 3. Tenure in the Community: City of Los Angeles vs. NC Boards
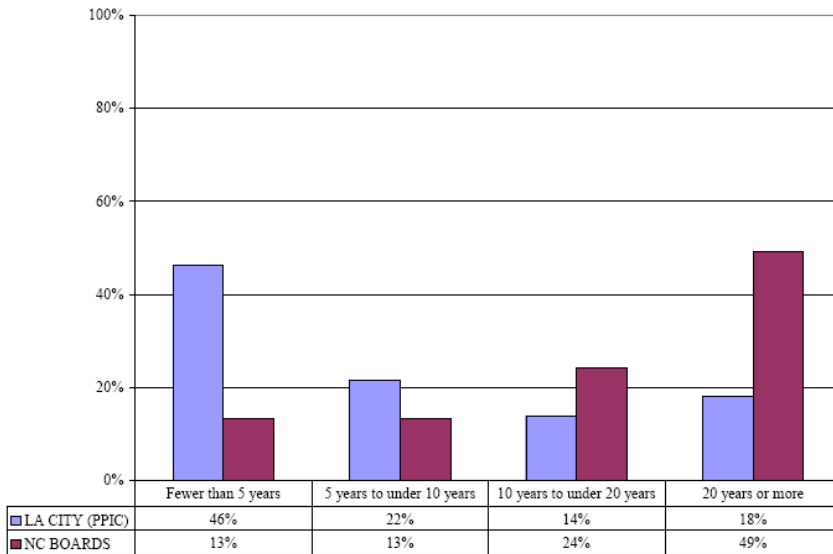
	Fewer than 5 years	5 years to under 10 years	10 years to under 20 years	20 years or more
LA CITY (PPIC)	46%	22%	14%	18%
NC BOARDS	13%	13%	24%	49%

Source: Musso, Juliet A., Weare, Christopher, and Cooper, Terry L. 2004. *Neighborhood Councils in Los Angeles: A Midterm Status Report.*

As a result of the board members' homeowner status, many members identify most strongly with homeowner interests despite representing other stakeholder interests such as social services, businesses, and faith-based organizations, as shown in Chart 4 (ibid).

Chart 4. Stakeholder Identification for NC Board Members

Source: Musso, Juliet A., Weare, Christopher, and Cooper, Terry L. 2004. *Neighborhood Councils in Los Angeles: A Midterm Status Report.*

Significant differences between Council board members and Los Angeles residents also appear when assessing racial and ethnic makeup and income levels. The Council boards disproportionately represent high-income, white residents. According to Musso et al., "Neighborhood Council boards display disproportionate representation of whites relative to other groups in the City," although this varies based on geographic location (see Chart 5, below) (2004:30). In addition, many of the board members have salaries between $60,000 to $100,000 per year, whereas a large portion of the general population falls within a salary range of below $20,000 and up to $40,000 per year (ibid), as shown in Chart 6. Interviews with stakeholders have indicated a concern about this lack of diversity among board members and a desire to outreach to a larger segment of the communities.

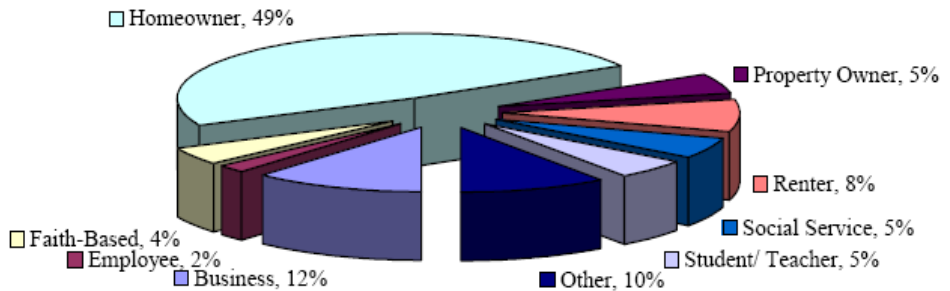**Chart 5. Race/Ethnicity: City of Los Angeles vs. NC Boards**
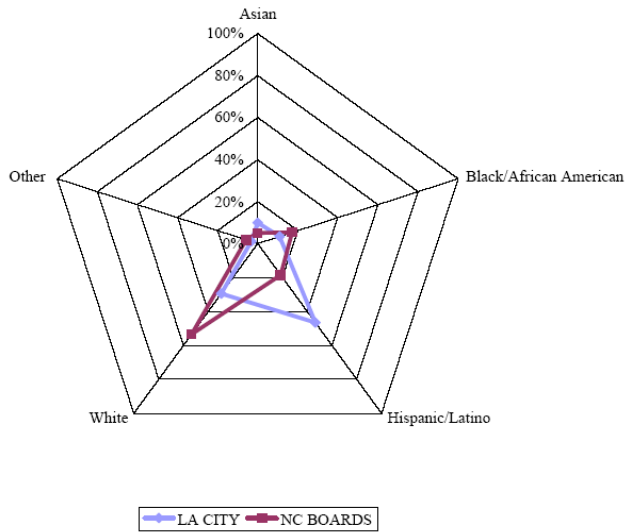
Source: Musso, Juliet A., Weare, Christopher, and Cooper, Terry L. 2004. *Neighborhood Councils in Los Angeles: A Midterm Status Report.*

Chart 6. Income Levels: City of Los Angeles vs. NC Boards

Source: Musso, Juliet A., Weare, Christopher, and Cooper, Terry L. 2004. *Neighborhood Councils in Los Angeles: A Midterm Status Report.*

Diverse   stakeholder   participation   contributes   to   creating   sustained

relationships that enhance a community's social capital. To accomplish this, it is important that Neighborhood Councils foster relationships that include different stakeholder affiliations, ethnicity, and class. This will ultimately enable board members to develop a broader understanding of the interests and aims of their communities (Musso et al., 2005). This goal has not been fully realized because certain groups continue to dominate the system while others are excluded from active participation.

Certain segments of many communities continue to be excluded from participating in the Neighborhood Council system, thereby perpetuating the belief that the system is not representative and that the board members are uninterested in the concerns and values of all the community members. According to stakeholder interviews conducted throughout the city, many groups continue to be excluded from actively participating in the system. Reasons for this include language barriers, as well as time and resource constraints. According to Barber, "Those that are powerless in the system fail to mobilize at all and fall away largely unnoticed" (Barber, 2003:265). Inroads have been made to minimize obstacles for seemingly powerless community members to participate, but progress varies among the Neighborhood Councils.

Language barriers have negatively impacted participation in the Neighborhood Council system, as board members who only speak English have found it difficult to involve Limited English Proficient (LEP) community members in council meetings and activities. For instance, African American board members in South Los Angeles have found it challenging to engage LEP Latinos (Interviewee 010, May 10, 2006). In Hollywood, white board members could not effectively communicate with LEP Armenians (Interviewee 003, April 13, 2006). Recognizing the potential to include LEP community members, some boards, as in the case of a Council in South Los Angeles, conduct on-site translation during monthly meetings (Interviewee 010, May 10, 2006). Bilingual DONE Project Coordinators have also helped monolingual councils overcome language barriers by providing translation assistance during outreach events. Proactive boards throughout the City have made inroads in increasing participation rates by attempting to overcome language barriers; however, many Councils remain unrepresentative of the larger community.

Time and resource constraints also continue to suppress participation rates within the Neighborhood Council system. Given that involvement in Neighborhood Councils is volunteer-based, many community members do not have sufficient time and resources to dedicate to active participation. As a result, particular groups within the communities tend to dominate board and stakeholder membership. Based on interviewee's experience with Neighborhood Councils in Los Angeles, active participants tend to be predominantly older, retired, conservative white men, which is contrary to the City's demographic makeup (Interviewee 010, May 5, 2006). Charts 5 and 6 illustrate these disparities. Many renters, minority groups, and commuters throughout the City find themselves less likely to participate because they cannot afford to donate their time to multiple monthly and committee meetings that can last

up to four hours a night (Interviewee 010, May 5, 2006). Chart 4 shows that homeowner interests tend to dominate other stakeholder interests in the Neighborhood Council system. As a result, these groups control Neighborhood Council board membership and stakeholder involvement, which leads to stagnation, exclusivity, and non-responsiveness within the Neighborhood Council system.

While motivations for involvement in the Neighborhood Councils vary for individuals and groups, only active members seem to fully benefit from participation. The purpose of the Neighborhood Council system is to empower communities within the City's governance structure. Varied ideas about what empowerment means have resulted in growing tensions among council members. Many board members and stakeholders join their respective Neighborhood Councils because they seek to fulfill a sense of civic duty or they want to improve their communities. Several participants throughout the City have become involved in the system for more self-interested reasons. To illustrate the diverse agendas of council members, observers and participants have noted that some council participants focus their attention on promoting not-in-my-backyard (NIMBY) issues (Interviewee 004, April 24, 2006). Others use the Neighborhood Council system as a stepping-stone for their burgeoning political careers or simply to further their own personal agendas within their communities (Interview 005, April 12, 2006). Finally, some council participants seek to recapture and bolster a sense of community camaraderie (Interviewee 003, April 12, 2006). These three generalized characterizations have a tendency to contradict one another. For instance, founding council members in the Hollywood area initially participated in the Neighborhood Council system because they sought to make a positive impact in improving civic engagement. Now these same members are leaving the council system because they feel they are fighting an uphill battle against new members who view redevelopment as the council's primary concern (Interviewee 003, April 13, 2006).

Similarly, the concerns and goals of Neighborhood Councils often differ significantly from the general concerns of residents. One area in which the Neighborhood Councils and the larger population do agree is that public safety is of the utmost concern to local communities and the City as a whole (Musso et al., 2004). However, the similarities end with that concern, as board members are more concerned with issues surrounding transportation and land use, whereas the larger population is more acutely concerned with education and the economy (ibid). This disconnect results from the Neighborhood Councils' roles and responsibilities in focusing on local and citywide issues; they have little to no jurisdiction or power over larger issues, such as decisions concerning education or the economy, although Neighborhood Councils could organize to influence larger governmental decisions if the political will existed to do so.

In order to ensure the long-term success and sustainability of Neighborhood Councils, it will be necessary to close these gaps between board members and the larger Los Angeles population, as well as integrating the motivations behind

Neighborhood Councils participation. Musso et al. have identified three areas in need of improvement: stakeholder diversity, descriptive diversity, and participatory opportunities (2004). These improvements can be achieved through a variety of mechanisms including:

- Broader efforts at outreach,
- More "transparent and inclusive elections,"
- Designation of Board seats to a wider variety of stakeholder groups, and
- Ad hoc committees centered on action oriented projects (Musso et al., 2004:36).

If the Neighborhood Councils are successful in addressing the issue of diversity, they have the potential to increase the social capital of their respective communities and to ensure the deliberative participation of many community members, thereby increasing the sustainability of the system. These improvements would require additional financial support in the form of sufficient resource allocation for greater outreach and new election processes, as well as additional political support within Neighborhood Councils and at the City.

Outreach and Organizing

Neighborhood Councils have conducted outreach and organizing programs in order to promote increased civic engagement within their communities. Neighborhood Councils have utilized print media (e.g. newsletters and flyers), word-of-mouth, and the Internet to promote their missions, goals, and events. Their successes range from council to council and from event to event. Obstacles such as time and budget constraints hinder the extent to which these programs are successful, but they have not proven to completely deter councils in bolstering civic participation.

Neighborhood Councils have used special events as one outreach tool. Organizing special events has helped community members learn about important local issues and has introduced them to the benefits of the Neighborhood Council system. Two examples in distinctly different areas of the City demonstrate how significantly councils can affect a community's civic participation. A council in the South Los Angeles area attracted over seventy community members to participate in a question-and-answer forum with three State Assembly candidates who sought to represent their community. Normally, approximately thirty-five participants attend monthly council meetings in that area (Interviewee 009, May 3, 2006). In another case, a Neighborhood Council in North Los Angeles organized a town hall meeting with over four hundred attendees, where they discussed a controversial development project. Fewer than fifteen community members usually attend regular monthly council meetings in that area (Interviewee 010, May 5, 2006). While events like these attract large crowds, high attendance is short-lived. As Chart 2 illustrates, most council meetings average no more than fifty attendees per monthly meeting. Over a third of

all council meetings in Los Angeles average only ten to twenty participants. Controversial issues often draw large crowds to council events (Interviewee 005, April 12, 2006). In order to sustain or even increase the civic engagement of community members, Neighborhood Councils must use other means to attract the attention of those who are not already active participants.

Another outreach tool utilized by Neighborhood Councils is the media. Community outreach has provided Neighborhood Councils with an outlet to promote civic participation. Councils have relied on both low- and high-tech media to relay their messages to the public. For instance, Councils post fliers in English, Spanish, and Armenian in the South, West, and Hollywood. Some Councils have also developed their own newsletters, highlighting their planned events and discussion of issues concerning their communities. Finally, each Council can take advantage of the Internet by creating their own websites or simply posting their accomplishments on the DONE website. These media tools, while all beneficial to different degrees, require council members to dedicate themselves to producing and distributing them, and face the same challenges of time and resource constraints as other forms of outreach.

As a result, Council members have voiced concerns that time and budget constraints have adversely impacted their progress of promoting their council's call for increased civic engagement. Councils are allowed to apply for up to $50,000 per year from the City, with which to conduct community outreach and local projects. Councils that expend their full budget every fiscal year have suggested that the City consider increasing the amounts allotted so they can continue to conduct outreach to the community. Oftentimes, these councils reside in lower income neighborhoods like East and South Los Angeles (Interviewee 005, April 12, 2006). Interestingly, councils in higher income areas like North and West Los Angeles report having surpluses each fiscal year, primarily because stakeholders choose to spend their own funds on council projects rather than use public funds (Interviewees 004 & 010, April 24, 2006 & May 5, 2006). While all councils may not necessarily share the same budget constraints, council members have identified the common concern that limited time and resources does not help the councils' outreach programs.

Time constraints result from the volunteer-based nature of the Neighborhood Councils. The volunteer status of the Neighborhood Council system tends to restrain outreach efforts, thereby reducing the potential for broadening the diversity of board membership and stakeholder involvement. Board members must balance their commitments to their families, full time jobs, and other social obligations, while also trying to strengthen community ties. Monthly board meetings and weekly committee meetings that can last up to four hours a night further limit their abilities to conduct outreach to the broader community (Interviewee 005, April 28, 2006). While some council members seek to make the Neighborhood Council system more representative, the majority of council stakeholders and board members do not want to see change. As stated above, many of these participants are older, often retired and

conservative individuals, who have long-standing ties to their communities. While many of these individuals have more free time to conduct outreach and other programming on behalf of the Neighborhood Councils, they choose not to do so because this may threaten their local influence and authority. As a result of this lack of outreach, the Neighborhood Council system is unlikely to become more representative of Los Angeles residents in the near future.

Political Innovations

The Los Angeles Charter includes empowerment provisions (i.e., the Early Notification System and the Neighborhood Councils Congress) designed to increase neighborhood empowerment (as shown in Table 6). Iglesias and Garcia (2005) argue that such political innovations are necessary at the local level where the barrier between government and civic society is most permeable and where governments can most directly influence participation among its citizens. These provisions were designed with the intent of fulfilling many of the necessary factors of authentic democracy, including equitable and timely access to sufficient information for collaborative decision-making, and authentic action through a deliberative body.

The Los Angeles Charter includes provisions designed to empower citizens by providing them sufficient and timely information through the ENS; allowing them input into the budget process through the Mayor's office; facilitating communication, networking, and deliberation through the Congress; granting the ability to monitor service-delivery; and granting the right to hold public hearings on local matters. These provisions are designed to work together; for example, the Neighborhood Councils are notified of pending program or policy changes at the City, which enables the Neighborhood Councils to monitor service delivery more efficiently. Similarly, the Los Angeles Neighborhood Councils Congress may facilitate communication about issues that arise through the use of these provisions, such as budgeting requests or public hearings (Charter Section 901).

Table 6. Empowerment Provisions

Charter Provision	Status
"Early Notification System" Designed to notify Neighborhood Councils of pending program or policy changes at the City, with "reasonable opportunity to provide input" (Charter Section 907).	Not fully implemented due to lack of both funding and new technology education. City provides automated notification in minimum 72 hours. Needs improvements regarding user-friendly information access, digital divide, etc.
Neighborhood Councils may make budget requests to the Mayor (Charter Section 909).	Four budget innovations developed (Budget Day, Regional Deliberative Forums, a Stakeholder Survey, and Working Group meetings), but the process still lacks sufficient representation and deliberation. $50,000 allocated to each Neighborhood Council annually; Neighborhood Councils must apply to City for funding.
Congress of Neighborhoods (supported by the City) (Charter Section 901).	Facilitates communication and training among Neighborhood Councils, but does not serve as a deliberative body.
Neighborhood Councils will monitor service delivery and meet with city officials periodically (Charter Section 910).	Some action, but no consistent mechanisms for monitoring service delivery.
Neighborhood Councils may hold hearings on matters of local concern (as delegated by the City Council).	No action.

Despite the efforts to increase civic participation through these empowerment provisions, many of these mechanisms are not well implemented because the Neighborhood Councils lack sufficient funding, new technology education, user-friendly information access, and an institutionalized monitoring system. The Early Notification System, budgeting process, Congress, and Alliance are evaluated below.

Early Notification System[15]

The ENS has the potential to improve information flows and communication

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[15] The Early Notification System is evaluated based on the data from 'ENS Implementation Interview', which was conducted by Neighborhood Participation Project at USC in 2002, and 'Neighborhood Councils in Los Angeles: A Midterm Status Report' (Musso et. al., 2004).

so that Neighborhood Councils can more effectively contribute to the local governance process and increase opportunities for civic engagement. According to Musso and Silbert (2001), the ENS serves as an experiment in Internet governance because communication and information sharing among Neighborhood Councils, City Councils, the Mayor, and City departments have happened mainly through online interaction. In this regard, the ENS was intended to "level the playing field" of the policy-making process by making government more transparent and responsive (Musso and Weare, 2005).

Musso and Weare (2005) argue that the ENS also has the potential to affect the structure and process of political participation. For instance, one interviewee of the ENS Implementation Interviews[16] indicated that the ENS provides an opportunity for Neighborhood Councils to receive information at an earlier stage of the policy process and therefore, provide input to the City Council regarding neighborhood impact reports (Interviewee 88, April 9, 2002). In addition, the ENS has experienced success in increasing subscriptions to email notifications, including Neighborhood Councils, and it has significantly increased the number subscriptions for organizations and individuals who do not have connections to City Hall (Musso and Weare, 2005). Therefore, the ENS has made rapid, flexible, and low-cost communication possible, allowing for increased citizen participation

Despite its successes associated with the participation process, the ENS needs improvement. Although the ENS was created based on the Charter provision to develop a more user-friendly environment for accessing information, it currently provides only limited information regarding the underlying issues facing the City that do not appear on City agendas. Additionally, notification is not required to be made sufficiently in advance to permit Neighborhood Councils to provide meaningful input (Musso et al., 2004). Additionally, the ENS has failed to engage historically disempowered groups (Musso and Wear, 2005) and according to Musso and Silbert (2004) it has failed to bring in new participants in the decision-making process (i.e. less educated and lower income residents), therefore, it has not expanded participatory patterns. Education about new communication technology and information sharing is also not likely to be sufficiently implemented because of resistance from department personnel and a lack of technological capacity. For example, an interviewee indicates that educating department personnel about the roles of Neighborhood Councils and the integration of the current Community Police Action Boards (CPABS) into the neighborhood council structure has been difficult (Interviewee #110, April 10, 2002). In terms of policy implementation, the ENS has shortcomings related to vague and weak Charter and Ordinance provisions[17] and to a lack of political and administrative

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[16] NPP research team conducted more than 100 semi-structured interviews with major actors at all stages of the implementation process and so on in 2002 (Musso and Weare, 2005).

[17] The LA system is thus far extraordinarily vague in specifying what City departments are to make available to the ENS (http://www.usc.edu/schools/sppd/research/npp/conf2-2.htm)

leadership. Even though the ENS was envisioned as a way to notify citizens, it is still unclear when in the process notification should be made (Interviewee 88, April 9, 2002). Finally, the ENS has experienced implementation barriers, including political and administrative opposition, resource constraints (including financial and personnel limitations), and organizational path dependency (Musso and Silbert, 2001; Thomson, 2002; Musso and Weare, 2005).

Evaluation of both technological innovation (e.g., the ENS) and communication practices (especially, between Neighborhood Councils and the City Council) is likely to be an important part of improving the participation process. According to the "City Council Communication Practices: NC Impact Interview,"[18] Neighborhood Councils influence the City Council both positively and negatively. Overall, Neighborhood Councils positively affect the City Council's work, as it plays a role of a communiqué between residents and the City (Interviewee 22, 2002). The City Councils can get information on community issues and interests from Neighborhood Councils, and many interviewees who participated in the NC Impact Interview stated that Neighborhood Councils' feedback and advice help improve the City Council's responsiveness to its citizenry. Neighborhood Councils also have a positive effect on City Council outreach. More specifically, because the ENS helps to speed-up working processes and improves information flow, communications between Neighborhood Councils and the City Council are easier than before, allowing the City Council to outreach to the communities more easily. The City Council now has a considerable amount of information on the communities through Neighborhood Councils' feedback.

Neighborhood Councils also sometimes have negative impacts on the City Council, particularly when it takes a long time to receive feedback from Neighborhood Councils on specific issues, especially public safety. Also, a contentious relationship may arise between people or Councils and City Council members. While conflicts between organizations or people may delay decision-making on some issues (e.g. street parking) and may deter building social capital, the City Council tries to maintain good relationships with Neighborhood Councils to reduce such conflicts (Interviewee 707, April 24, 2004; Interviewee 22, February 4, 2004).

In addition, problems exist related to the status of the Charter's empowerment provisions. According to Charter Section 908, the City Council may delegate the authority to hold hearings to Neighborhood Councils on matters of local concern, but this provision has been ignored in the planning process (Musso et al.,

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[18] A semi-structured interview protocol attempted to probe how the City Council learns about emerging issues, their working relationship with Neighborhood Councils, and their perceptions of the councils. Between 2002 and 2004, NPP research team conducted three rounds of interviews with a total of 64 deputies from all of the 15 city council offices (Musso and Weare, 2004).

2004). In the Neighborhood Participation Project's research team's observations of over 40 Neighborhood Council meetings, City Council members or their staff attended only seven meetings, primarily in the Valley, Harbor, and West areas. This indicates that many Neighborhood Councils' activities are focused on internal issues and not on citywide issues (Musso et al., 2004), and that many City Councilmembers do not consider it politically important to publicly support the Neighborhood Councils.

For successful communication practices between Neighborhood Councils and the City Council, it is important to build trust and commitment between the two groups. The development of both formal and informal networks, which can encourage communication between Neighborhood Councils and the City Councils in various ways, is necessary for improved communications, which may become a solid foundation for increasing citizen participation at the local level.

In summary, the ENS allows for increased citizen participation because it improves information flows and communication between organizations and people through e-governance strategies and transparent policy-making processes. The ENS is intimately associated with communication practices between Neighborhood Councils and the City Council; however, the ENS also needs improvements regarding user-friendly information access, the digital divide, policy implementation, and information education. Although Neighborhood Councils positively affect the City Council's work through the ENS, it is necessary to continue to build trust and commitment between the two groups.

Neighborhood Councils and the City Budget

Citizen participation in the budgetary process has generally been limited in Los Angeles. Prior to the establishment of the Neighborhood Council system, the public was only invited to interact at the end of the budget process, when the budget was already written. Through public hearings, citizens could share their thoughts with the City Council's Budget and Finance Committee, which then submitted its report with recommendations to the Council. The budget would subsequently be approved with minimal citizen input. Interestingly, it remains unclear how important the Neighborhood Councils' input on the budgetary process is because the Neighborhood Council Plan and the implementing ordinances do not provide details about their authority or capacity in this process (Musso et al. 2005).

The City's Priority Based Budgeting process, adopted in FY 2003 – 2004, has required the City to continue to increase spending but with no new revenue streams. The process was designed to emphasize efficiency, but contains an inherent contradiction between spending and revenues (Musso et al. 2005). As a result, competition for the limited funds is created among City departments and with the City Council. While the Charter did not specify what role Neighborhood Councils would play in the Priority Based Budgetary process, the channels for public involvement

have allowed councils to be proactive in the process. The City implemented four budgetary innovations that fostered public participation:

- Beginning with Budget Day, a one-day event first held in 2002, the City introduced the public to the budget process and the fiscal constraints of the City. While success of the overall event could not be clearly measured because formal discussions between stakeholders and city officials were limited, the City decided to implement an improved means for involving the public in the budget process as a result of the event, which included a regional deliberation process (Musso et al., 2005).

- Over the next couple of years, the Mayor's Office and DONE developed an institutionalized regional deliberation process that included Neighborhood Councils in the budget process. The Regional Deliberative Forum invited public participants from seven regional areas to discuss and list their top-five priorities for the City to consider (Musso et al., 2005).

- In FY 2005 – 2006, the City distributed a survey to stakeholders with the goal of learning what programs and priorities concerned the stakeholders most. Critics argued that the City's outreach mechanism was too complex for many stakeholders to understand (Musso et al., 2005).

- The City's fourth institutionalized toolset, the Working Group meetings, are designed to help Neighborhood Council representatives shape the budget process in the future. Created in response to criticism of the previous participatory mechanisms, the meetings were convened so councils could make recommendations about improving the process. The resulting proposals were: make the next survey more pertinent to the issues that stakeholders confront; require Neighborhood Councils to dedicate meeting times to deliberate about budget priorities; and, allow councils to deliberate regionally with each other before making recommendations to the Mayor (Musso et al., 2005).

As demonstrated above, each innovation was created in response to the results of the previous mechanism. While no one mechanism has proven to be an outright success, the City has worked to ensure that Neighborhood Councils play an important role in the budgetary process. Implementing the Priority Based Budgeting process has increased public participation in a formal system that had previously minimized citizen input, although it is unclear at this point what the outcomes from this increased input will be.

While an increase in public participation is an improvement to the system, it cannot be the only measurement used to evaluate the budget process. Musso et al. argue that the public budgetary process has yet to be very representative, informed, or

deliberative (2005). Stakeholders remain confused, disillusioned, and frustrated with the budget process because of its complexity and the failure of city officials to clearly explain the process. Furthermore, underserved or disenfranchised groups continue to lack an equitable voice in the public process because elites dominate discussions and information. As a result, engagement in the process remains limited. In order for the City's public budgetary process to be considered a success, it must first become truly inclusive of all stakeholders. To do this, obstacles like goal ambiguity, hostile fiscal environments, and organizational culture and politics must be overcome within City Hall and in Neighborhood Councils. Neighborhood Councils' input on the budgetary process can be considered valuable and vital only if the processes become more deliberative and representative of citizens' needs.

Los Angeles Neighborhood Councils Congress

The Neighborhood Councils Congress, as recommended by the Charter, may increase communication and networking opportunities among the Neighborhood Councils. In the Midterm Status Report, Musso et al (2004) found that Neighborhood Councils have not been working cooperatively with other Councils and that their communication and networking activities were not sufficiently vigorous. As such findings indicate, the need exists for a citywide Congress that engages councils in local networking around substantive systemic and city policy issues. Additionally, the Congress enables city officials to interact with one unified group rather than dozens of separate Councils on citywide issues (McGreevy, 2005). After creating the Neighborhood Councils Congress in 2005, the Congress Working Group has been evaluating it to determine whether it is helpful for communication, information sharing, and simplified fact-gathering among Neighborhood Councils and city officials; findings indicate that it is helpful, but rarely serves to organize Neighborhood Councils across the city to increase their political power or access

Through monitoring of City agendas for issues of interest to Neighborhood Councils, the Congress seeks to increase political power through group deliberation and action, but is not often successful. According to McGreevy (2005), Neighborhood Councils believe that the Congress' collective votes and voices on issues would likely be more influential than the actions of individual councils. For instance, the Congress was influential in defeating the Department of Water and Power (DWP) rate hike and in the creation of the subsequent Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). As this one example shows, the Congress can increase the political power of the Neighborhood Councils, and should be used to this effect more regularly to improve Neighborhood Councils' impact citywide.

Additionally, the Congress needs leadership development. Initially, leaders of the Neighborhood Council system created the Congress with the intent of increasing their political power (McGreevy, 2005). Even though the representative system of the Congress has been ensured, fair yet effective leadership of such an organization is likely to be difficult. According to Jim Alger, President of Northridge

West Neighborhood Council, many individual Neighborhood Councils do not cooperate with each other in the Congress; this situation may negatively influence consensus building among Neighborhood Councils in the Congress, making exercising leadership of the Congress difficult (Alger, 2006).

Citywide Alliance of Neighborhood Councils

The Citywide Alliance of Neighborhood Councils, an independent, volunteer coalition, is fulfilling some of the functions of the Congress as mentioned in the Charter, without direct support from the City (Musso et al, 2002:23). The Alliance thus far possesses considerable communication capacity and a positive relationship with local government officials. However, the Alliance is likely to face challenges surrounding its organizational structure and political power. According to Alliance co-founder Noah Modisett, the Alliance provides Neighborhood Councils and city officials with a good opportunity to meet and exchange ideas through the Alliance Networking Center (City Watch, 2004). The Alliance's communication system, including information sharing, seems to work well; for instance, Greg Nelson from DONE, and Bill Christopher, a Board of Neighborhood Commissioners (BONC) member and a member of the Steering Committee for the Alliance, regularly participate in Alliance meetings. Also, public policy discussions that make their way onto DONE agenda are often worked out at the Alliance meetings (Gelfand, 2006). However, a weak organizational structure makes the overall success of the Alliance questionable.

The Alliance was developed through a process of self-organization of the Neighborhood Councils (Musso et al., 2002); however, only a few Neighborhood Councils participate in the Alliance (Gelfand 2006). It is overseen primarily by its Steering Committee, and lacks sufficient institutionalization. Because the Alliance operates under the umbrella of People for Livable and Active Neighborhoods in Los Angeles (PLAN/LA), a non-profit corporation (LANCC, 2006), it may face challenges in representing Neighborhood Councils separately from its other organizational concerns. Thus, although it was never designed to become a deliberative body, it is unlikely that this capacity will develop to fill the need for such a body.

The Alliance has faced some political difficulties since its inception. For instance, when the Alliance sponsored two Mayoral debates in 2005, questions regarding its political power as well as its representatives were raised. While Musso and Kitsuse argue (2002) that Neighborhood Councils may diffuse the risks of contentious action by forming coalitions across councils or with other organizations, and the Alliance may prove to be a vehicle for this purpose, centralized social movement organizations have become less necessary to the process of forming coalitions in recent years, as new forms of communication have made it easier for independent organizations to communicate and coordinate with one another directly (Musso and Kitsuse, 2002). Even though the Alliance was not created to be a political

body that represents the Neighborhood Councils, it did represent Neighborhood Councils' preferences and interest in the Mayoral debates in 2005. To function well as an impartial information clearinghouse, the Alliance's political activities and roles in collective action need to be reevaluated.

Relationships and Social Capital

Beyond the relationship of the Neighborhood Councils with the City Council, it is important to examine how Neighborhood Councils relate with other organizations. In particular, because of the variety among the Neighborhood Councils, the networks created by Neighborhood Councils with other agencies need to be investigated, especially in terms of social capital. The Neighborhood Councils' expenditures on outreach and organizing serve as an indicator that Neighborhood Councils maintain close relationships with other organizations. For example, a review of Neighborhood Councils' expenditures from February 2004 indicates that almost half of NC expenditures relate to outreach and communications, including direct outreach expenditures, printing, and telephone expenses (Musso et al, 2004).

In general, Neighborhood Councils have been likely to create and maintain successful relationships with other organizations (e.g. private, nonprofit, and government entities). Neighborhood Councils usually have frequent contact with members from other organizations through Alliance forums. The main purposes of such forums are to share current information about the emerging Neighborhood Councils and existing Councils' relationships with the City, and to open lines of communication between Neighborhood Councils throughout the City. In addition, representatives from DONE, the Board of Neighborhood Commissioners (BONC), and a variety of city departments meet with Neighborhood Council stakeholders every other month to discuss issues relevant to the Neighborhood Council system. Individual and organizational networks contribute to increasing trust and reciprocity. For example, the representatives of Neighborhood Councils are connected with the Police Department and alarm industries (e.g. burglar alarm systems), as well as the Department of Water and Power, the Planning and Land Use Committee, and the Housing Committee; these networks enable Neighborhood Councils to more effectively monitor service delivery and provide input and guidance to city departments regarding relevant policies (Musso et al., 2004).

Based on these Neighborhood Councils' network activities, the positive relationship of Neighborhood Councils with other organizations can contribute significantly to enhancing civic participation by increasing social capital. That is, Neighborhood Councils are believed to have a favorable impact on their community (56% of Project Coordinators and 73% of City Council staff responded affirmatively when surveyed). However, a significant citywide impact is not perceived to exist (Musso et al, 2004). In addition, city employees who work most closely with Neighborhood Councils, DONE Project Coordinators, and City Council staff favorably rate the activities of most Councils that they encounter (Musso et al., 2004).

However, even though the evaluation of the relationships of Neighborhood Councils with other organizations is positive, more sustainable and specific collaboration between Neighborhood Councils and other organizations is needed to maintain and improve the system.

Experiences of Participation

According to interviews with stakeholders who represent labor, development, business, social service, faith-based and education organizations, community members largely perceive the Neighborhood Council system as ineffective. Although interviewees believe the system is flawed, they do believe it is important and repairable. Working both inside and outside of the Neighborhood Council system, i.e., as a community volunteer or a municipal officer, provided the stakeholders with an appreciation for the management and purpose of the system, as well as their own Councils; however, this appreciation was tempered by frustration with certain management aspects of the system. The consensus of those interviewed suggested that in order for the system to become effective in stimulating civic engagement throughout Los Angeles, all aspects of the system need to be reformed.

Positive and negative views of Neighborhood Council-level management influenced many of the stakeholders' critiques of the Neighborhood Council system. Several interviewees cited infighting, instances of board members' pursuits to further their personal agendas, NIMBY-ism, lack of training as public leaders, exclusivity, and insulation from a majority of residents' concerns as factors that attributed to their own Council's ineffectiveness. At the same time, stakeholders identified hosting at-large community service events and maintaining long-standing communication practices with City Hall officials and other municipal agencies like the Los Angeles Police Department and Department of Public Works as demonstrations of how their Councils have effectively engaged their communities. Ultimately, however, the negative outweighed the positive with regard to local level self-assessment.

Civic engagement remains limited, according to stakeholders interviewed, because the Neighborhood Council system does not receive the administrative support it needs and deserves from public officials. Stakeholders were much more critical of City Hall and DONE when they described their experiences from within the Neighborhood Council system. Most of the interviewees agreed that the majority of City Council members and the Mayor do not consider the Neighborhood Council system as important. In fact, some stakeholders suggested that most public officials viewed the system as burdensome and would not necessarily mind if the system failed (Interviewee 004 & 005, April 24, 2006 & April 12, 2006). Additionally, the DONE administration received criticism during the interviews. Changing rules, high turnover in field staff, unprofessional training sessions, and the lack of oversight and direction with regards to budget management have attributed to the stakeholders' frustrations with the system.

Stakeholders recommended that for the Neighborhood Council system to improve in terms of representativeness, responsiveness by public officials, overcoming administrative challenges, and increasing organizational capacity, the system needs to undergo significant reforms. For instance, board members need to receive better training in general and specialized areas such as leadership development, outreach programming, budget management, and land use policies (Interviewee 005, April 12, 2006). The DONE General Manager and his or her staff need to be able to understand and support the administration and goals of a department that oversees all of Los Angeles' Neighborhood Councils. More importantly, the General Manager must be dedicated to increasing civic engagement throughout the City (Interviewee 007, April 14, 2006). These improvements would not only boost morale of current participants, but they could also help Neighborhood Councils make a greater positive impact on increasing civic participation among individuals not currently participating.

Evaluating Outcomes

One way to measure the success of the Neighborhood Council system is to look at the effect Neighborhood Councils have had on local and citywide issues. These issues range from small-scale local projects, such as street beautification and repaving, planting trees, community parks and gardens, and graffiti removal, to larger citywide issues such as revisions to the city's community plans, opposing the Department of Water and Power's proposed 18% rate hike, transportation route recommendations, the proposed expansion of the LAX airport, and the Los Angeles Police Department's alarm response policy (DONE Project Coordinator Survey, 2004). Neighborhood Council goals and accomplishments are organized into eight categories, described below in Table 7.

Table 7. Neighborhood Council Goals and Accomplishments

| Category of Activity	Examples of Activities
1. Outreach and Organizing	Newsletters, e-mails, stakeholder surveys, leafleting, posting regular meeting notices, etc.
2. Community Events	Street festivals, parades, block parties, pancake breakfast, Dia de los Muertos celebration, etc.
3. Social and Educational Assistance	Support for community-based organizations, job training, youth activities, social service assistance, targeted local economic development, etc.
4. Community Beautification	Streetscape improvement, façade improvement, planting trees, graffiti clean-up, improvements, to parks, etc.

5. Citywide Issue Involvement	Protest or recommendations on citywide issues, such as DWP rate hike, LAPD alarm issue, street naming policies, etc.
6. Land Use (general)	General mention of land use.
6a. NIMBY	"Not in my backyard." Do it in someone else's back yard. Social services (i.e. treatment facilities, homeless shelters, etc.)
6b. Conditional Support	Support the project in principle, but oppose for specific reasons, such as environmental concerns or practicality (i.e. affordable housing, cell phone towers).
6c. NIABY	"Not in anybody's back yard." Public safety concerns (e.g. natural gas tanks), transport of hazardous materials (e.g. nuclear materials), etc.
6d. YIMBY	"Yes in my back yard." Support project in local community.
6e. Anti-development	Opposed to new development projects.
6f. Other	Other (not described above)
7. Proactive Planning	Developing criteria or guidelines for new development planning, initiating a neighborhood planning process, or developing neighborhood plans.
7a. Economic Development	Community improvements to attract businesses, working with Chamber of Commerce, etc.
8. Other	Other (not described above).

Source: Modified from Neighborhood Participation Project (NPP) Land Use Analysis (2004).

In 2004, DONE Project Coordinators completed a survey for the Neighborhood Participation Project, in which they listed local and citywide accomplishments of the Neighborhood Councils with which they worked. These accomplishments are represented in Chart 7, which shows that the majority of Neighborhood Council accomplishments fall within the categories of land use, community beautification, social and educational assistance, and citywide issues. Fewer accomplishments fall within the categories of outreach, proactive planning, and event coordination, which supports other findings that the Neighborhood Councils' weaknesses lie primarily in outreach activities and the development of proactive policies or actions.

Chart 7. DONE Project Coordinator Assessment of NC Accomplishments

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DONE PC Reports on Neighborhood Council Accomplishments

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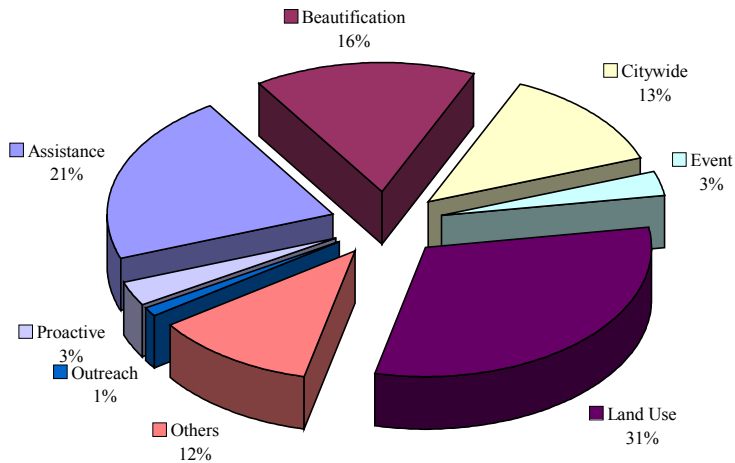
Source: Neighborhood Participation Project (NPP) Land Use Analysis (2004).

In contrast, a content analysis of NPP staff notes of Neighborhood Council meetings places a greater emphasis on outreach activities and proactive behaviors (see Chart 8) than is seen in measurable outcomes, signifying that Neighborhood Councils may be trying to be more proactive and outreach-oriented by discussing these issues at meetings, but are having trouble meeting these goals.

Chart 8. Content Analysis of Neighborhood Council Meeting Notes

Neighborhood Council Meeting Notes

Source: Neighborhood Participation Project (NPP) Land Use Analysis (2004).

The self-reported accomplishments, as represented in Chart 9, show a marked contrast between what the Neighborhood Councils consider to be their accomplishments and what the Project Coordinators report. The Councils perceive that they place a greater emphasis on outreach activities, including events, and proactive planning, than the DONE Project Coordinator survey suggests. In opposition to the Project Coordinator survey results, the Councils report fewer accomplishments in land use and citywide issues, while reporting approximately the same accomplishments in social and educational assistance and other. The method Neighborhood Councils use to evaluate themselves and their accomplishments is markedly different from how they are viewed by DONE's Project Coordinators. This difference is likely the result of differing perspectives, as the Neighborhood Councils are aware of their goals and, and therefore may see accomplishments in areas where outsiders do not. This may explain the Neighborhood Councils' beliefs that they have accomplished a lot in the areas of outreach activities and proactive planning, while the DONE Project Coordinators have reported that lack of outreach is one of the main weaknesses of the Neighborhood Council system.

Chart 9. Self-Reported Neighborhood Council Accomplishments
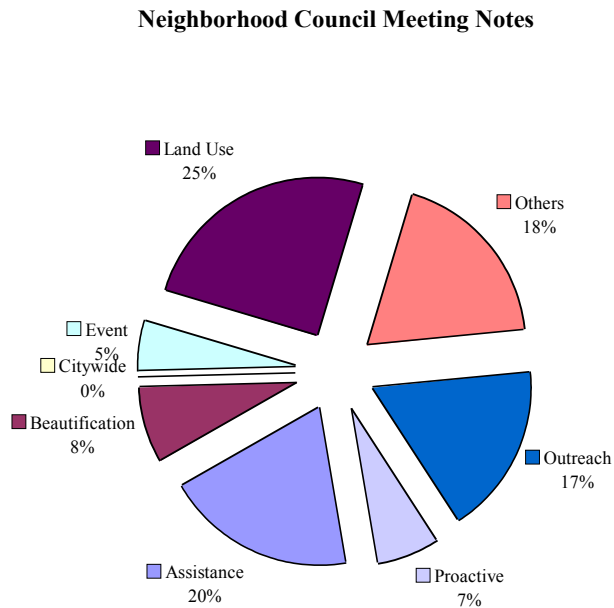
<div align="center">Self-Reported Neighborhood Council Accomplishments</div>
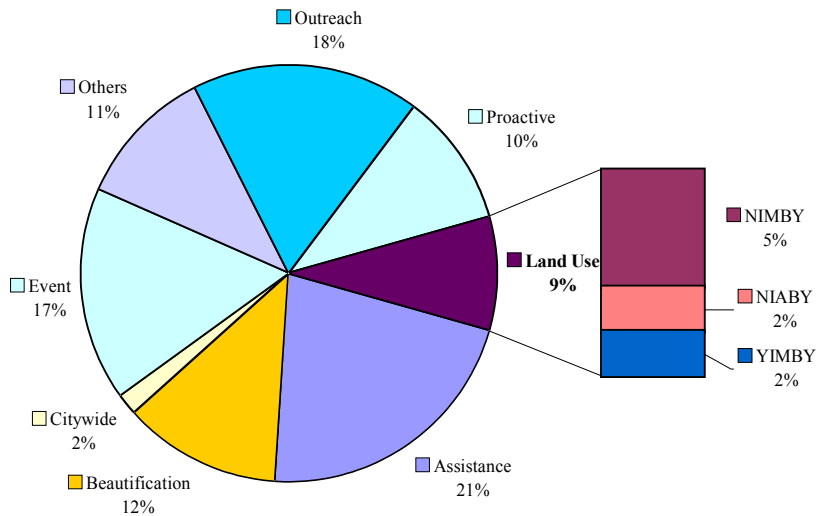
Source: Neighborhood Participation Project (NPP) Land Use Analysis (2004).

Local Accomplishments and Land Use

While Neighborhood Councils provide only an advisory role in local governance, their impact on local land use and development policies has been an important success for the system. According to Elliot et al. (f.c.), regardless of the variation of the Councils' capacity and local circumstances, Neighborhood Council board and committee leaders are self-organized and self-educated in land use and planning issues. In fact, consistently high participation in these issue discussions demonstrates that this is one of the most important functions that a Neighborhood Council can play. To further their role in local land use policy, Neighborhood Councils sponsor a variety of activities that complement local development, such as conducting community events, beautification projects and outreach. Regional variation with regards to capacity, historical relationships to City Hall, and community attitudes toward development shape to what extent Neighborhood Councils become involved in the land use debates within their areas as well as throughout the City. According to self-reported Council accomplishments, Councils overwhelmingly identified local issues as their top priority, whereas they cited only 2% of their accomplishments as citywide-focused (Musso et al., 2004).

The socioeconomic makeup of each Neighborhood Council can greatly

influence its involvement in land use discussions. For instance, board members who are older and more affluent possess more readily available resources and experience in planning. In addition, homeowners tend to be motivated by land use issues for a variety of reasons, including protecting property rights and ensuring stable property values. While concern has persisted that these groups would have a tendency to amplify NIMBY-ism, residents who are actively involved with the Neighborhood Council tend to reduce conflict between a vocal community, the business community and City Hall (Elliot et al., f.c.). In doing so, councils have often taken a more proactive role in participating in land use discussions.

Depending on the region and particular land use issue, involvement in policy debates has encompassed opposition and support from Neighborhood Councils. The establishment of the Neighborhood Council system has offered historically under-represented communities, like South L.A., a voice in the policymaking process. This collective voice has generally focused on oppositional discussions. In contrast, well-represented areas have used the system to move beyond an oppositional posture. For instance, DONE staff considered the Downtown Los Angeles Neighborhood Council's "infrastructure policies and procedures" of its Land Use Committee as best practices for other councils. DONE also cited the Hollywood United Neighborhood Council for its proactive participation in the placement of a fire station that minimized resident dislocation (Elliot et al., f.c.). Regardless of their stance on land use issues, Council board members share a commitment and desire to remain active in such policy debates.

In addition to the Councils' dedication, their ability to participate in specific policy discussions will significantly impact their role is issues like land use and development.   When surveyed, land use and planning committee chairs and community volunteers believed that they possessed valuable experience that would help their councils. However, when asked, nearly two-thirds (67%) of these same volunteers agreed that they needed additional technical expertise in order to advise their councils responsibly on proposed projects or planning policies (Elliot et al., f.c.). Such support must come from City Hall. DONE provides some training sessions for board members; however, specific guidance in more sophisticated policy issues like land use should initially come from City Council staff. The staff's assistance will not only provide answers to questions about technical directions, but it will also boost the credibility of the Neighborhood Councils. Because Neighborhood Councils can only provide advice to City Hall, they must exert political influence in order to demand tangible benefits at the local level. Those councils that have a strong interest in land use will often find themselves in close communication with developers and City Council staff (Elliot et. al. f.c.). Cooperation with and assistance from City Hall officials will ultimately amplify the Councils' ability to effectively participate in policy discussions.

Citywide Accomplishments

While many of the measurable outcomes of the Neighborhood Council system have been local and small in scale, the system has had an impact on a few city policies. Two key examples of citywide issues upon which Neighborhood Councils have made a significant impact are the LAPD's proposed change to its alarm response policy in 2003 and the LADWP's proposed rate hike in 2004. In 2003, Neighborhood Councils opposed the Los Angeles Police Department's (LAPD's) proposal to stop responding to unconfirmed burglar alarms. The Neighborhood Councils were instrumental in the City Council's decision to take over the issue and overrule the LAPD's decision. The burglar alarm policy remained unchanged (the Police Department must respond to all burglar alarms, whether they are confirmed as actual break-ins or are false alarms) (DONE, 2003). Similarly, in their largest citywide effort to date, approximately 30 Neighborhood Councils opposed the proposed 18% rate hike by the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power (LADWP). LADWP settled for an 11% rate hike, and a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) was signed between Neighborhood Councils and the LADWP, which requires the LADWP to appoint contact persons and liaisons for each Neighborhood Council and Planning District, respectively, and to notify the Councils within a reasonable time frame of any upcoming changes in policies or programs (DONE, 2005). These examples point to success in both affecting service delivery through city policies and forming new partnerships through which Neighborhood Councils have increased influence. The creation of Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) with city departments such as the LADWP and others, such as the MOU signed between the Department of Public Works and four Neighborhood Councils in the San Fernando Valley (Mid Town North Hollywood, Greater Toluca Lake, Neighborhood Council Valley Village, and Studio City) to develop a system of prioritization for public works projects in these neighborhoods, speak to the issue of political influence, and suggest that city departments see Neighborhood Councils as real partners in improving service delivery; however, according a City insider, the current Mayor is discouraging city departments from creating any new MOUs with Neighborhood Councils (DONE, 2005).

Long-term Potential for Success

The Neighborhood Council system can achieve long-term success if it meets specific benchmarks that enhance the communities' social capital and improve governance outcomes, while at the same time overcoming challenges that diminish the impact councils have on their communities. Stakeholder and academic assessments of the system indicate that while progress has been made since the Charter instituted the Neighborhood Council system, long-term success will only result if stakeholders, community members, and City Hall officials address recurrent systemic issues, such as a lack of political and financial support, administrative challenges, issues of representativeness, coalition-building for greater political power and access, and some

personality issues as well, such as infighting among council members. Ultimately, the success of the system will be measured by the extent to which it positively changes the character of civic engagement in Los Angeles over time, as well as by the ways it improves service delivery, enhances local government legitimacy, and builds participatory capacity (Musso et al 2004).

Musso and her colleagues designed initial benchmarks for the Neighborhood Council system's long-term success (2004). First, the system must recognize the Councils' emerging organizational capacities, as well as the quality and impact of their initial activities. Second, the system must promote participation in order to develop the communities' social capital. Third, the system should measure stakeholders' efficacy and their attitudes regarding City Hall and their communities. Finally, council members, if they seek to achieve long-term success, must conduct evaluations of council activities and accomplishments.

The evaluative criteria used to assess the Neighborhood Councils' structures, processes, and outcomes are useful for determining the long-term viability of the system. Structurally, the citywide nature of the system supports long-term sustainability, but the system's lack of sufficient political and financial resources are challenges that must be overcome for the system to thrive. Additionally, the large size of individual Councils makes many of the initial goals of the system more difficult to reach, including fostering a sense of community and improving local social capital; without face-to-face interactions among community residents, these broader goals may remain unachieved. Procedurally, the systems' main strengths lie in the implementation of the Charter's empowerment provisions, and the opportunities these provisions provide for improved participation and governance. The system's main weakness lies in its lack of representative diversity and outreach to underrepresented and historically disempowered communities, which is a necessary element of a truly authentic system. In terms of outcomes, the long-term success of the system will rely primarily on the ability of the system to affect citywide issues instead of just small-scale, local issues. If the Neighborhood Councils can use the Congress to build political power through collective deliberation and action, they have a considerable opportunity to impact issues transcend individual neighborhoods.

Academic scholars and community stakeholders have identified benefits and obstacles that can both positively and adversely impact the future of the Neighborhood Council system. While some of the stakeholders have criticized the current administrative structure and overall effectiveness of the council system, all of the interviewees offered insights about how to overcome current obstacles and what improvements have been or could be made based on the lessons learned thus far. As a result of recent interviews with stakeholders who represent labor, development, business, social services, faith-based and education organizations throughout various regions in Los Angeles, it is evident that the Councils, to varying degrees, have started to meet and even surpass the benchmarks previously set by Musso and colleagues (2004). While the interviewees described benefits that could ultimately bolster civic

engagement, they also warned of long term negative effects that could handicap the Neighborhood Council system. Below is a listing of some of conclusions the interviewees offered about their visions of the future.

Benefits that could increase civic engagement in Los Angeles include:

- A shared vision of the future of the Neighborhood Council system will emerge.
- Improved and consistent promotion by City Hall officials will ensure the longevity of the Neighborhood Council system
- The system can function as an ongoing resource for local public officials as well as keep them accountable to constituent needs and concerns if participation increases.
- The new General Manager at DONE needs to be able to understand and handle the complex administrative and political responsibilities of coordinating the citywide system.
- Authentic support from public officials will give the Neighborhood Council system credibility within City Hall and the community.

Challenges that could suppress or stymie civic engagement in Los Angeles include:

- A continued lack of budgetary accountability will lead to misuse of public funds.
- Special interests can potentially hurt the system's authenticity by polarizing groups or individuals within the community and councils.
- Continued infighting will stifle innovation, thereby limiting the progress of outreach efforts, as well as preventing the effective administration of their budgets and the promotion of civic engagement through meetings and community events.
- The stigma of ineffectiveness, regardless of whether it is perceived or real, will lead to the phasing out of the Neighborhood Council system.
- A disgruntled shadow government, constituted by residents continually frustrated by City Hall's unresponsiveness, can emerge and challenge the City government's authority.

Long-term success is not guaranteed, as the system faces many challenges. Councils dedicated to furthering civic engagement within their communities should seriously consider how they will set and meet benchmarks that ensure the longevity and success of the Neighborhood Council system.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

Innovative in its goals and broad in scope, the Los Angeles the Neighborhood Council system has encountered planning and implementation challenges that have resulted from the administrative obstacles of low political support and resource constraints. With adequate public funding and resource procurement, and increased political support, the Neighborhood Council system can more effectively engage Angelenos in the City's governance process. To accomplish this, three recommendations should be considered. First, individual councils should strengthen their capacity with regards to outreach and diversity. Second, improving the leadership of the Los Angeles Neighborhood Councils Congress, thereby increasing the Councils' political power and influence, should enhance the citywide capacity of the system. Third, Councils need improved access to the deliberative policy-making process and greater opportunities to effectively influence City Hall and generate meaningful outcomes. These three recommendations, in addition to sufficient political and financial support in all areas, will help the Neighborhood Council system fulfill its purpose of increasing the authentic civic engagement of Angelenos (see Table 8).

Table 8. Recommendations for Improvement

Recommendation	Purpose
1. Increase Political and Financial Support	Increase organizational capacity of Councils.
1a. Political support from City Officials (i.e., dedicated staff members)	Secure a legitimate place for Councils in the governance process.
1b. Adequate funding and resource allotment	
2. Increase Organizational Capacity and Representative Nature of Individual Councils	Increase legitimacy and authenticity of Councils through representativeness.
2a. Invest resources in outreach	
2b. Engage new participants	
3. Increase Citywide Organizational Capacity	Increase access to the deliberative decision-making process and political power.
3a. Invest more resources in the Los Angeles Neighborhood Councils Congress	Increase effectiveness in generating meaningful outcomes.
4. Inclusion in the Governance Process	Increase access to the deliberative and governance process.
4a. Early Notification System	
4b. Inclusion in budgetary process	Increase effectiveness in generating meaningful outcomes.

Currently, the Neighborhood Council system encounters several challenges that limit its capacity to engage its communities, including a lack of political support and limited financial resources. Ideally, public officials, particularly City Councilmembers and the Mayor, should invest more of their time and political capital in promoting the Neighborhood Council system, although the reality of local politics make this unlikely. With additional support of public officials, and dedicated staff members at DONE and other city departments, the system has the potential to gain increased access to and influence over the governance process and become a more effective decision-making body. Political support alone will not improve the system; funding commitments and access to the budgeting process need to be improved in order to strengthen Neighborhood Councils' organizational capacity. The expansion of organizational capacity will ensure that the system becomes a more legitimate and authentic representative body.

In addition to strengthening their organizational capacity at the local level, Councils should invest more of their resources in expanding outreach efforts to broaden the diversity of their participants. Greater diversity and higher levels of participation will ultimately enhance the system's legitimacy and authenticity, as it demonstrates that Councils are indeed authentic representative bodies. Reaching out to community members who have yet to participate in Neighborhood Councils should be a top priority when councils conduct their outreach efforts. With a larger, more diverse stakeholder base, Neighborhood Councils can have a greater impact on local and citywide issues and more strongly influence City officials.

Expanding the organizational capacity of the Neighborhood Council system citywide may increase the Councils' political influence in City Hall and throughout the City, and increase Neighborhood Councils' access to the deliberative process. The Los Angeles Neighborhood Councils Congress has the potential to become a collective deliberative body for the Neighborhood Councils, if the Councils invest more time and resources into making it so. If a significant majority of the Neighborhood Councils participates in the Congress, they will be able to collectively increase their access to public officials as well as gain greater political power, which may lead to more citywide accomplishments.

At the same time that Councils' organizational capacities are developed and strengthened, the deliberative process should be improved, enabling the Councils to more effectively influence their communities and City Hall. The Neighborhood Council system has already established key processes, such as the development of the Early Notification System and involvement in the City's budgetary planning process, that have helped increase the participation of Councils in the deliberative process. These instruments, thus far, only provide councils with limited political influence because they have not been implemented to their full capacity. Once deliberative processes like these are enhanced, Councils will have greater influence in the City's governance processes and therefore, have greater impacts and outcomes at the community and citywide level.

Neighborhood Councils continue to make progress in increasing the quality and level of civic engagement in Los Angeles. Despite the challenges facing them, the Councils can become fully legitimate and authentic representatives of their communities throughout the City. By developing and enhancing their organizational capabilities, while also gaining adequate political and financial support from City Hall, as well as adequate access to deliberative policy-making processes, Neighborhood Councils can effectively increase and enhance civic participation in Los Angeles.

By improving the Neighborhood Council system, and empowering residents to advocate for their neighborhoods and their City, effectively decentralizing local governance, Los Angeles has the opportunity to improve trust and governance (Harrigan, 1992), and to redefine the relationship between people and their governments. With increased participation comes improved control mechanisms and accountability, as long as the political will exists to support the effort, and enhances both functions of local governance – democratic legitimacy and service provisioning – resulting in more authentic democratic processes and responsive local government.

Neighborhood-based governance is particularly important in Los Angeles, a city that faces the challenges of an increasingly diverse population, income and educational inequities, and growing sprawl and physical separation, where these factors act as barriers to participation. Los Angeles' history of coalition politics and civic disempowerment, embedded within the federal political structure of the United States, which guarantees individual rights and freedoms but serves also to insulate individuals from governance processes, creates a context in which civic engagement innovations are tested, and hopefully revised to become more effective and more representative. As Los Angeles reflects larger social and economic forces in the United States and Europe, its experiment in Neighborhood Councils informs efforts to counter the forces of globalization, socio-political fragmentation, and civic apathy, generating hope that these local movements toward authentic democratic involvement will succeed in making governments more responsive to and representative of their constituents.

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Appendix A
Los Angeles City Map

Source: Los Angeles Almanac, 2006.

Appendix B
Boards and Commissions
City of Los Angeles

Boards

Board of Airport Commissioners
Board of Harbor Commissioners
Board of Neighborhood Commissioners
Board of Police Commissioners
Board of Recreation and Parks
Board of Transportation Commissioners
Board of Water and Power Commissioners
Board of Zoning Appeals
Citizens Unit for Participation in Housing and Community Development Board
Fire Commissioners Board
Information Technology Commissioners Board
Project Restore Board of Directors
Public Works Board
Workforce Investment Board

Commissions

Affordable Housing Commission
Area Planning Commission
Building and Safety Commission
City Ethics Commission
City Planning Commissions
Civil Service Commission
Commission for Children, Youth, and Their Families
Commission on Disability
Commission on the Status of Women
Cultural Affairs Commission
Cultural Heritage Commission
Disabled Access Appeals Commission
Human Relations Commission
Quality and Productivity Commission
Rent Adjustment Commission

Appendix C
Theoretical Overview of Electronic Governance

The Early Notification System, as mandated by the Charter, was based upon the use of technology as a tool of governance and the theories behind electronic democracy. The system was modeled after a communication system established in St. Paul, Minnesota in 1979 that has evolved over time to incorporate electronic means of communication (Musso and Weare, 2005). According to Musso and Weare, "new technology is theorized to improve *individual capacity* for political participation by lowering the costs of communication and easing access to the information required for political activity" (2005:601). Much of the research regarding electronic democracy has been concerned with the way in which technology is structured and how the dissemination of information changes due to the technology (Musso and Weare, 2005). The research has produced varying evidence as to technology's impact on participation and provision of services. Davis (1999) found that technology such as email did increase the public's contact with Congress and Verba et al. (1995) found that technology enables the public to contact and interact with public officials at an increased rate. Others have raised concerns that technology simply provides those who are already civically engaged (social and political elites) easier access to public officials because of access to and proficiency with technology, and that it fails to encourage participation by other groups in society (Musso and Weare, 2005). However, technology has been show to have a mobilizing effect (ibid). Technology allows citizens in similar geographic areas or with similar political interests to communicate easily, as well as enables organizations to recruit new members and facilitate action (ibid). Essentially, technology can mobilize and enable diverse groups to interact with each other and with public officials in an efficient and low cost manner. Musso and Weare view this interest in electronic democracy as part of the "participatory state movement" that is a reaction to citizen frustration with current government structures (2005:603). They further emphasize that electronic democracy has the capacity to increase participation by influencing three areas: "procedural rules," "collaborative processes," and "devolution of decision-making authority" (ibid).

Musso et al. argue that electronic democracy developments can take two governance approaches: "entrepreneurial" or civically focused (2000). An entrepreneurial approach focuses on provision of services and economic development, whereas a civically focused approach emphasizes participation through involvement of diverse groups and "strengthening social capital" (ibid:4). Refer to Table 1A.

Table 1A. Technology Models and Communication Channels

Technology design within models of metropolitan reform

Model	Information provision	Communication channels
Entrepreneurial		

Enterprise	Business and tourism information
	Programs supporting business
	Ordinances related to business
	Business climate
	Employment and business
	  opportunities
	Advertisements
		Businesses, tourism, or
		  chamber of commerce
		Economic development
		Applications and city
		  transactions

Service	Public safety Culture and leisure Parks and recreation Transportation Calendar of events Public library	Public safety Culture and leisure Transportation Public library
Participatory		
Interest group	Elected officials City manager Other governmental bodies Policy-making process Local interest groups Election information	Elected officials City manager Links to other governmental bodies Links to local interest groups
Communitarian	Elected officials Policy-making process Neighborhood organizations Fraternal and social organizations Nongovernmental organizations	Elected officials Discussions of local issues Links to various social organizations

Source: Musso, Weare, and Hall. 2000. *Designing Web Technologies for Local Governance Reform: Good Management or Good Democracy?* Political Communications, Vol. 17, pp. 1-19.

Interestingly, Musso et al. found that government agencies more typically engage in promoting the entrepreneurial style of governance through technology as opposed to focusing on increased participation through technology (2000). Despite the mixed results of the studies evaluating the impacts and benefits of electronic democracy, technology is viewed as a potentially effective tool to increase and mobilize citizen participation.

Appendix D
Certified Neighborhood Councils

Certification Order	Neighborhood Council Name	Certification Date	Number of Residents
1	Wilmington	11-Dec-01	63,466
2	Coastal San Pedro	11-Dec-01	27,628
3	Glassell Park	8-Jan-02	24,210
4	West Hills	22-Jan-02	45,936
5	Central San Pedro	12-Feb-02	31,614
6	Northwest San Pedro	12-Feb-02	21,312
7	West Adams	19-Feb-02	40,325
8	Mid City	19-Feb-02	42,368
9	Woodland Hills-Warner Center	6-Mar-02	62,479
10	Pacoima	7-Mar-02	73,966
11	Westchester/Playa del Rey	12-Mar-02	54,675
12	Grass Roots Venice	12-Mar-02	37,758
13	P.I.C.O.	12-Mar-02	23,222
14	Old Northridge	19-Mar-02	13,819
15	Empowerment Congress Central Area NDC	23-Mar-02	38,650
16	Empowerment Congress Southwest Area NDC	23-Mar-02	27,705
17	Empowerment Congress Southeast NDC	23-Mar-02	85,125
18	Empowerment Congress West Area NDC	23-Mar-02	44,609
19	Park Mesa Heights	23-Mar-02	36,648
20	Harbor City	26-Mar-02	23,270
21	Eagle Rock	2-Apr-02	32,729
22	Central Hollywood	9-Apr-02	18,740
23	Greater Echo Park Elysian	16-Apr-02	53,022
24	Empowerment Congress North Area NDC	27-Apr-02	38,650
25	Lincoln Heights	27-Apr-02	32,134
26	Downtown Los Angeles	27-Apr-02	25,355
27	Historic Cultural	27-Apr-02	16,065

28	Hollywood Hills West	7-May-02	46,844
29	Sun Valley Area	7-May-02	30,085
30	United Neighborhoods of the Historic Arlington Heights, West Adams, and Jefferson Park Communities	14-May-02	51,838
31	Boyle Heights	21-May-02	85,913
32	LA-32	21-May-02	46,456
33	Historic Highland Park	28-May-02	57,699
34	Westside	4-Jun-02	28,801
35	Greater Griffith Park	11-Jun-02	37,236
36	Canoga Park	18-Jun-02	49,416
37	Mid City West	25-Jun-02	54,619
38	Elysian Valley Riverside	9-Jul-02	7,323
39	Van Nuys	23-Jul-02	78,210
40	South Robertson	13-Aug-02	33,957
41	Mar Vista	13-Aug-02	50,417
42	Greater Valley Glen Council	27-Aug-02	47,520
43	Granada Hills North	10-Sep-02	28,563
44	Greater Toluca Lake	10-Sep-02	10,833
45	Valley Village	10-Sep-02	22,967
46	North Hollywood North East	24-Sep-02	39,670
47	Mid Town North Hollywood	24-Sep-02	69,026
48	Arroyo Seco	2-Oct-02	24,521
49	Encino	8-Oct-02	43,371
50	Reseda	8-Oct-02	62,174
51	Bel Air-Beverly Crest	8-Oct-02	26,636
52	Hollywood United	15-Oct-02	19,944
53	Arleta	22-Oct-02	32,586
54	Studio City	29-Oct-02	32,227
55	Sherman Oaks	29-Oct-02	60,921
56	Harbor Gateway North	12-Nov-02	30,875
57	Greater Cypress Park	19-Nov-02	13,147
58	Watts	3-Dec-02	34,806
59	Vermont Harbor	17-Dec-02	45,000
60	Tarzana	14-Jan-03	34,570

61	Vernon/Main	28-Jan-03	48,490
62	Atwater Village	11-Feb-03	14,931
63	Silver Lake	11-Feb-03	34,675
64	North Hills West	25-Feb-03	19,381
65	Community and Neighbors for Ninth District Unity (CANNDU)	11-Mar-03	39,210
66	Foothill Trails District	25-Mar-03	18,899
67	Harbor Gateway South	8-Apr-03	22,613
68	Chatsworth	29-Apr-03	32,686
69	Sylmar	6-May-03	69,624
70	Sunland-Tujunga	27-May-03	42,319
71	MacArthur	3-Jun-03	23,711
72	Pico Union	3-Jun-03	42,248
73	Southeast/Central Avenue	24-Jun-03	44,156
74	Porter Ranch	1-Jul-03	15,834
75	Winnetka	22-Jul-03	45,220
76	Wilshire Center-Koreatown	5-Aug-03	103,364
77	Central Alameda	30-Sep-03	28,593
78	West Los Angeles	7-Oct-03	30,873
79	Del Rey	28-Oct-03	30,420
80	Olympic Park	2-Dec-03	20,122
81	Greater Wilshire	2-Dec-03	49,632
82	West Van Nuys/Lake Balboa	9-Sep-04	43,515
83	Northridge West	26-Oct-04	19,664
84	Northridge East	30-Nov-04	22,260
85	Palms	14-Dec-04	27,026
86	Mission Hills	19-Apr-05	21,370
87	Hollywood Studio District	1-Nov-05	32,118
88	Granada Hills South	17-Jan-06	26,528
		Residents represented:	3,343,133
		Average size:	37,990
		L.A. Residents*	3,845,541
		% of L.A. population represented:	86.94%

Source: Department of Neighborhood Empowerment
*Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2004 Population Estimates

Appendix E
Methodology

The project is a descriptive evaluation of civic participation in Los Angeles, California contextualized within an overview of local government in the United States as part of a larger study of civic participation in six cities throughout the world including: Berlin, London, Paris, Rome, Madrid, and Los Angeles. This project assesses federal, state, and local governance, focusing on California and Los Angeles through a discussion of governance structure in general with a more detailed discussion of general law cities and charter cities using secondary sources (books, journal articles, and website resources). Following the overview, there is a discussion and evaluation of the demographic, physical, and socioeconomic characteristics of Los Angeles, and their implications for civic involvement. Then the Los Angeles City Charter and Charter reform are discussed and evaluated, with an emphasis on the reform of 1999,which established the Department of Neighborhood Empowerment (DONE), the Neighborhood Council system, and an Early Notification System between the Neighborhood Councils and the City of Los Angeles ("About NPP," n.d.). This project uses both primary and secondary sources: data and publications produced by the Neighborhood Participation Project (NPP) in collaboration with the Civic Engagement Initiative and data resulting from fieldwork in the form of semi-structured interviews with relevant stakeholders such as representatives from businesses, social service organizations, faith-based organizations, civic organizations, and developers.

The Civic Engagement Initiative

The Civic Engagement Initiative is an organization at the University of Southern California that supports research about projects addressing issues of civic engagement ("About the Civic," n.d.). The Civic Engagement Initiative is supporting the Neighborhood Participation Project (NPP) in an evaluation of Neighborhood Councils in Los Angeles ("The Neighborhood Council," n.d.). NPP has researched neighborhood involvement since 1996, and after the Los Angeles City Charter reform of 1999, has focused on the evolving role of Neighborhood Councils in local governance. The research of NPP includes assessments of the creation and implementation of Neighborhood Councils, examination of communication between Neighborhood Councils and the City, and ascertaining best practices for Neighborhood Councils ("About NPP," n.d.). In order to provide an in-depth description and evaluation of civic engagement in Los Angles and because of time constraints and the size and diversity of Los Angeles, the project team utilizes to the extent possible data previously collected by NPP. In addition, this report uses resources on DONE's website in order to describe the history, the planning and implementation, and the progress of the Neighborhood Council system in Los Angeles.

Our research includes the use of a wide variety of resources provided by NPP including policy briefs, working papers, publications, NPP reports, interview data, survey data, focus group data, meeting notes, and content analyses. Specifically this report relies heavily on the following NPP reports and working papers:

1. *Neighborhood Councils in Los Angeles: A Midterm Status Report* (2004) by Musso et al.,
2. *Planning Neighborhood Councils in Los Angeles: Self-Determination on a Shoestring* (2002) by Musso et al.,
3. *Community Governance Reform in Los Angeles: Evaluating the Neighborhood Council Experiment* (2004) by Musso and Weare,
4. *Implementing Electronic Notification in Los Angeles: Civic Participation by Other Means* (2005) by Musso and Weare,
5. *Implementing Participatory Budgeting: The Case of Neighborhood Councils in Los Angeles* (2005) by Musso et al.

Additionally, the research team relies on NPP data collected from a network survey of elected board members conducted in 2003, data from a survey given to DONE project coordinators, interviews with City Council staff, meeting notes from Neighborhood Council meetings, and an analysis of the Early Notification System to evaluate the process of civic engagement in Los Angeles.

The network survey of board members supplies data assessing the "representativeness" of boards, the political perceptions of board members, and the emergence of political networks, as a result of the Neighborhood Council system (Musso and Weare, 2004). The surveys of DONE Project Coordinators and interviews of city administrators provide data that assists in determining the awareness of the Neighborhood Council system and related activities, as well as assessing the perceptions of these stakeholders (Musso and Weare, 2004). To further discuss and evaluate the role of Neighborhood Councils, this report uses content analysis of news articles and Neighborhood Council agendas.

Semi-structured Interviews

In order to supplement NPP data from the Civic Engagement Initiative, the researchers have conducted 10 semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders from local businesses, social service organizations, developers, faith-based organizations, and civic organizations in Los Angeles. In Madrid, the team interviewed civic engagement administrators and leaders of community organizations. The goal of these interviews was to increase the team's understanding of the general context of civic participation in Madrid and to gauge the extent to which the experiences of Los Angeles can inform the civic engagement process in Madrid.

The semi-structured interview, as a qualitative analysis method, has become

very common and has proved to have many advantages (Wholey, Hatry, and Newcomer, 2004). That is, because the semi-structured interview has flexibility (University of Southern Maine, 2005); convenience to focus on the important and detailed data collection about interviewees' attitudes and experiences; advantages over the acquirement of rich information within a reasonable time frame; and easiness for longitudinal research (Bryman, 2004), it is appropriate to the objectives of this project.

Interview Selection Criteria

The selection of interviewees is based on a purposive sample selected to complement NPP's previous semi-structured interview data (e.g. interviews with City Council Staff and City Administrator in Los Angeles). The interviewees were selected based on recommendations made by experts in the area, including input from staff members at the Department of Neighborhood Empowerment and with the purpose of sampling stakeholders from a variety of interest areas such as businesses, social services, faith-based organizations, development, and other civic organizations. In the interests of maintaining confidentiality, all responses from each interviewee have been coded with unique identifiers and information from interviewees has not been identified with the individual.

Interview Questionnaires

In terms of the interview process, twelve questions, adapted from those developed by Iglesias, Sanz, Pérez, and Llorente (2005), were used to gather information about civic engagement in Los Angeles. Survey questions, originally in Spanish but translated into English and then adapted to fit the needs of the Los Angeles portion of the study, seek to obtain information such as equity and effectiveness of civic engagement, economic cost, and organizational impact, etc. More specific questions focus on the impression of the local government concerning civic engagement, diagnosis of the local surroundings (the opportunities and threats of civic participation), the capacity of municipalities, motivations to carry out civic engagement, approaches and methods of participation, internal diagnosis of civic participation (strengths and weaknesses), the results of evaluation of the benefits and disadvantages of participation, and the future of civic participation (See questionnaire below).

Validity and Reliability

Most of NPP's data has been collected using purposive sampling techniques, including snowball sampling. In addition, due to Los Angeles' large population and diversity, difficulties arise when researchers attempt to generalize their findings regarding social, cultural or political leanings. However, NPP has used triangulation and multiple methods of data collection in order to increase both the internal validity and reliability of their findings and this project employed similar techniques. Peer review was used as a method of ensuring internal validity (Creswell, 1994).

Even though this research selects interviewees based on specific selection criteria, self-selection issues arise. Data resulting from surveys and interviews experience bias due to non-responsiveness and the type of stakeholder who is likely to agree to an interview. This project considers validity of interview questionnaires in order to reduce non-response or overstated bias in interview results. In order to ensure content validity, empirical validity, and construct validity (Frankfort-Nachmias and Nachmias, 2000) as well as minimize the potential for self-selection bias, this research will mainly follow NPP's interview protocols, as it is proven to be suitable. By using NPP's detailed interview protocols, this report increases the appropriateness of replication in a different setting (Creswell, 1994).

Ethical Considerations and Human Subjects

As stated above, this research project relies on both primary and secondary sources, specifically on data collected and produced by the Neighborhood Participation Project (NPP) in collaboration with the Civic Engagement Initiative. The research includes policy briefs, working papers, publications, NPP reports, interview data, survey data, meeting notes, and content analyses. The research team also utilizes data and findings gathered from surveys conducted by the project client, Dr. Ángel Iglesias and his collaborator, Mr. Garcia. Through descriptive analysis, Iglesias and Garcia seek to identify specific characteristics of individual civic participation policies, including their methods and technologies. Their findings provide an explanation of the causes of the policies' possible success and the identification of the strategic variables that permit the elaboration of a model that includes key elements common to various citizen participation processes (2000). The data produced by both the NPP and the research team of Iglesias and Garcia offered the students an invaluable resource as they sought to find how Los Angeles and Madrid encourage civic participation as well as determine what results have developed in these two cities. These data provide insight into primary actors and respondents' views and roles on particular issues, but reduced expensive and time-consuming resources that the student team could not provide during this term.

In addition to the aforementioned primary and secondary sources, the student research team conducted fieldwork and semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders in Los Angeles and in Madrid. In Los Angeles, the team spoke with developers, as well as with leaders in civic organizations, social service organizations, faith-based organizations, and local businesses. In order to avoid replication of interviews that NPP researchers have already conducted, the students did not interview Los Angeles city administrators. In Madrid, the team interviewed two city administrators and two community group leaders. The interviews followed the NPP protocol established by Dr. Juliet Musso and her research teams as well as the guidelines set out by Frankfort-Nachmias' *Research Methods in Social Science* when conducting field research and Golembiewski's *Handbook of Organizational Consultation* when conducting its interviews. The Spanish administrators and community group

leaders met with all four researchers. This allowed the entire team to better understand the roles and perceptions of these stakeholders.

These primary sources provided the team with in-depth resources that enabled them to assess local governance in Los Angeles. The team did conduct interviews in a way in which risk and/or burden was placed on respondents. Each person the team contacted received a verbal and written clarification of the objective of the research matter and the role of the interview within the larger project. To ensure confidence in the analysis, each respondent was assured strict confidentiality. All respondents, in accordance with the NPP Protocol, are coded with unique identifiers. The researchers did not share their notes with anyone outside of the team and all notes are maintained in a centralized, secure location within NPP's databases. The fieldwork conducted by the research team consists of expert interviews and focuses on professional opinions and experiences. It should be noted that this research project is an amendment to NPP's application to the Institutional Review Board.

Interview Questionnaire with Prompts
Adapted from the questionnaire provided by Dr. Ángel Iglesias Alonso.
Translated from the original Spanish by Angelo Reyes.

INTERNAL DIAGNOSIS OF CIVIC PARTICIPATION (STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES)

1. To what extent have the Neighborhood Councils been effective?

The purpose is to obtain information about the following subjects:
a) The existence of local groups
b) Motivated and/or competent and organized civil employees
c) The importance of trying out the subject
d) Practical support to those who participate
e) Strong political engagement
f) Abundant resources
g) Clear regulation
h) Effective advising
i) Intend to prioritize what is most important

2. What factors have either helped or hindered the effectiveness of Neighborhood Councils?

The purpose is to obtain information about the following subjects:
a) Participation infrastructure
b) Civic education
c) Organization and qualification
d) Advisement
e) To allocate resources (public funds as well as personnel)
f) Plan a strategy within a framework in the short and medium term
g) To obtain a political commitment
h) Bonds with social groups
i) Regulation
j) Intend to prioritize what is most important

3. What factors (materials, management techniques, etc.) might improve the effectiveness of Neighborhood Councils?

The purpose is to obtain information about the following subjects:
a) Basic or advanced
b) Training, materials

4. What municipal organizations do you think promote civic participation?

The purpose is to obtain information about the following subjects:

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a) What types of organizations are there?
b) What relations currently exist?
c) They benefit and reinforce or they cause harm

AN EVALUATION OF THE BENEFITS AND DISADVANTAGES OF PARTICIPATION

5. In your opinion, how should city hall evaluate whether Neighborhood Councils have been successful?

The purpose is to obtain information about the following subjects:
a) Equality (process)
b) Effectiveness of the process (the objective of the civic participation has been achieved)
c) Effectiveness of the decision
d) Economic cost
e) Organizational impact

6. How do you evaluate the Neighborhood Councils?

The purpose is to obtain information about the following subjects:
a) Equality (refer to an opportunity where affected or interested groups assumed one legitimate function the decision-making process)
b) Effectiveness of the process (understand the capacity of the process in order to reach the best possible decision when considering the information available under the current conditions)
c) Effectiveness of the decision (technically, it is the better decision)
d) Economic cost
e) Organizational impact
f) Impact on other policies in the process
g) Public perception (there has been a generated excess of expectations, repetitiveness)
h) They will repeat themselves
i) Justice

7. Are there specific types of persons or groups that have dominated Neighborhood Councils?

The purpose is to obtain information about the following subjects:
a) Inclusion/exclusion
b) Individuals or groups
c) Types of organized groups
d) Are there initiatives from city hall that will help solve this problem?

8. Are there certain social groups that have been difficult to involve?

The purpose is to obtain information about the following subjects:
a) Inclusion/exclusion
b) What groups remain on the outside?
c) Why have some groups remained on the outside?
d) Are there incentives for the city council to solve this problem?

9. How would you characterize the opinions of council members about their efforts to promote Neighborhood Councils?

The purpose is to obtain information about the following subjects:
a) They tend to support the initiatives
b) They consider it a threat to their role

10. How would you characterize the efforts of public servants in promoting Neighborhood councils?

The purpose is to obtain information about the following subjects:
a) They tend to support the initiatives
b) They consider it a threat to their role

THE FUTURE OF CIVIC PARTICIPATION

11. In the long term, what would you consider are the general benefits of the increase in public engagement in the local government? Do you think that promoting civic participation can create problems in the long run?

12. Have there been changes in how city hall views civic participation since the program began? What are some of the reasons? How do you think the views about civic participation amongst the city council will change over the next few years?