

CITY OF LOS ANGELES

CALIFORNIA



DOWNTOWN LOS ANGELES NEIGHBORHOOD COUNCIL OFFICERS

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Charter Reform Commission
c/o Justin Ramirez, Executive Director

VIA EMAIL

RE: DLANC Recommendations for Los Angeles City Charter Reform

Commissioners:

At a regular public meeting on **February 10, 2026**, the Board of Directors of the Downtown Los Angeles Neighborhood Council ("DLANC") voted to provide the following comments below:

We recognize the historic magnitude of the Los Angeles Charter Reform Commission's (CRC) work to modernize our City's governance. As the most significant review of our municipal constitution since the adoption of the 1999 Charter, we view this as a generational opportunity to not only increase operational efficiency and clarify lines of authority but to fundamentally strengthen the democratic fabric of Los Angeles. Our recommendations are driven by a commitment to ensuring that Neighborhood Councils and local stakeholders are not merely observers, but active, codified participants in the City's decision-making processes. To that end, we have outlined our specific position recommendations by subject area below:

Planning and Infrastructure:

Public Works

- We support the preservation of the Board of Public Works Commissioners (BPW) as a governing body of the Department of Public Works (DPW).
- We support the creation of a position of Director of Public Works, who would be appointed by the Mayor, confirmed by the City Council, and answerable to the BPW.

- We support Charter language allowing for the consolidation of functions between the Bureau of Street Services and the Department of Transportation, or the movement of the Department of Transportation into the Department of Public Works by Council action through Ordinance.
- We support the inclusion of Charter language that would facilitate the reorganization of infrastructure and public works bureaus/departments to improve efficiency by Council action through Ordinance.

CIP

- We support a Charter mandate for the creation of a Capital Infrastructure Plan and a Capital Investment Plan.
- Responsibility for these plans should be shared by the Mayor and the City Administrative Officer (CAO), with the CAO acting as the primary coordinating entity between the Information Technology Agency (ITA), the Department of Recreation and Parks (RAP), the Department of Transportation (DOT), the Department of Public Works (DPW), the Department of City Planning (DCP), the General Services Department (GSD), and Proprietary Departments.
- The proposed Office of Infrastructure Management should be housed under the CAO, but it should not be mandated by the Charter.

Parks

- We support the RAPs' request regarding the protection of parkland and the clarification of the Department's authority to lease and acquire parkland.
- We caution against allowing the RAP to issue debt, as this may lead to uncoordinated debt obligations across City Departments.

Planning

- We support replacing Area Planning Commissions with a citywide appeals body, such as a "Board of Neighborhood Appeals."
- We support codifying a time limit for all City Council Land Use actions in the City Charter, such that actions are automatically deemed approved if the Council fails to act.
- We support the elimination of Charter Section 104(e), specifically the Floor Area Ratio limit of 13:1.
- We support Charter language that would, through ordinance, enable the Mayor or City Council to consolidate functions between the Department of Building and Safety (LADBS) and the Department of City Planning (DCP), should the City Council choose to do so.

Government Structure:

Chief Operating Officer (COO)

- We support Charter language delegating the COO role to the CAO by way of Council Ordinance.
- We support the Mayor's authority to appoint, and the City Council's authority to ratify, General Managers and the Chief Operating Officer (COO). The COO role should be viewed as analogous to a City Manager position, as found in council-manager forms of government.

Chief Financial Officer (CFO)

- We support Charter language delegating the CFO role to the CAO by way of Ordinance.
- Alternatively, we advise delegating the title to the City Treasurer or the Office of Finance for apolitical functions.
- We support maintaining the City Controller existing functions for financial oversight and accountability for financial management and projections.

City Controller

- We support the request to allow the City Controller to retain outside legal counsel.
- We strongly support protecting the City Controller's audit and "watchdog" functions.
- We caution against granting full budget independence to the City Controller's office.
- We caution against establishing minimum qualifications for the City Controller position.
- We support clarifying language in the Charter that affirms the City Controller's authority to audit all city programs.

City Attorney

- We support maintaining an elected City Attorney
- We caution against creating a City Prosecutor or bifurcating the duties of the City Attorney.
- We advise adding clarifying in the Charter regarding the City Attorney's lack of authority to dictate policy or impede City Council decisions.
- We support Charter language allowing all independent City Elected Offices to have in-house counsel, with the City Attorney serving as General Counsel for the City as a Municipal Corporation.

- We support Charter language allowing the City Council, by way of the Chief Legislative Analyst (CLA), to have an Office of Legislative Counsel.
- We support Charter language allowing the Mayor to have in-house counsel.
- We support Charter language allowing the City Controller to retain outside counsel.
- We support Charter language allowing independent Commissions and entities, such as the Los Angeles City Employees' Retirement System or Los Angeles Fire and Police Pensions, to seek independent counsel by way of a City Council approval process.

City Council Expansion

- We support City Council expansion, as this will allow for greater representation, smaller Council Districts with more similar communities of interest, like Downtown, and closer City Council coordination with Neighborhood Councils and the community.
- Expansion should be investigated and tied to financial impacts, including an investigation of salaries, staffing, discretionary dollars, and supportive services.
- We advise reviewing impacts to City Departments regarding increased bureaucracy to support the Council, as well as impacts on the delivery of city services and reduced financial services.
- We advise that Council expansion be tied to investigating and increasing Mayoral authority.
- We recommend examining the role of the CLA to assist in rightsizing Council expansion and the consolidation of individual City Council Office support functions under the CLA.

Better Government

Ethics Commission & Anti-Corruption Measures

- We support the reform requests submitted by the Ethics Commission.
- We caution against punitive measures against Councilmembers without robust protections for unintended impacts on constituent services.
- We support the legislative recall of a Councilmember following a censure vote by the City Council for serious offenses. However, to safeguard the democratic process and protect voters, the recall must be subject to effective checks and balances by other citywide elected officials and Neighborhood Council bodies, within a clearly defined timeline.

Neighborhood Councils

- We support the Department of Neighborhood Empowerment's request relative to Los Angeles Administrative Code cleanup.
- We support codifying Los Angeles Administrative Code Section 22.819 into the Charter and expanding its application to include the City Council and all Council-controlled committees.
- We support strengthening Neighborhood Council participation in the City Budget Process under Los Angeles Administrative Code Section 909.
- We support codifying Neighborhood Council Board Members as "Elected Advisory Officials" or an equivalent designation.
- We advise engaging comparable national models, especially the New York City Community Board System, for potential expansion of Neighborhood Council authority while maintaining its advisory functions.
- We support the additional reforms recommended by the Los Angeles Neighborhood Council Coalition.
- We advise clarifying and codifying the Department of Neighborhood Empowerment as a support body for Neighborhood Councils and not a management or oversight body; such functions should be codified with the Board of Neighborhood Commissioners.

Office of Public Accountability (Los Angeles Ratepayer Advocate)

- We request that the CRC investigate Charter language amendments to allow the Ratepayer Advocate to have authority over Los Angeles Bureau of Sanitation's assessments for Sewer and Solid Waste Collection, as well as authority over the Bureau of Street Lighting for lighting assessments.

Personnel & Budget

Budget

- We support Charter language shifting toward a two-year budget cycle.
- We support strengthening Neighborhood Council participation in the City Budget Process under Los Angeles Administrative Code Section 909, as a participatory form of budgeting.
- We support a five-year capital infrastructure plan that is updated bi-annually to align with the multi-year budget.
- We support Charter language to protect and codify a minimum Reserve Fund of 5% of the total city budget.

Periodic Charter Review

- We support Charter language mandating a periodic Charter review every 10 years, to occur after the census and redistricting commission process.

Police Reform

- We support Charter language for enhanced police accountability to the City Council and the Mayor.
- We support expanding the Police Commission to include seats that are reflective of diversity and demographic characteristics of the City.
- We support Charter language allowing for more flexibility regarding discipline issues for egregious violations by the Board of Rights, Chief of Police, and General Managers for police and other sworn officers within the Port and Airport Police, Fire Department, Park Rangers, and Public Works Investigators, and to create an appeals process to the Civil Service Commission.

Civil Service & Personnel

- We support language from the Personnel Department to modernize the Civil Service system and hiring.
- We support developing alternate pathways into Civil Service positions.
- We support reforming the Civil Service examination process, allowing candidates to be reviewed for their knowledge, skills, and qualifying work experience rather than relying solely on traditional examinations.
- We support Charter language ensuring transparent and open labor negotiations of City employees

Sincerely,

*** SUBJECT TO APPROVAL BY DLANC BOARD OF DIRECTORS ON FEBRUARY 10, 2026***

Jens Midthun
President,
DLANC

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Cc:

Office of the Mayor (via email)
Office of the City Attorney (via email)
Office of the City Controller (via email)
Members of the Los Angeles City Council (via email)
City Administrative Officer (via email)
Chief Legislative Analyst (via email)
Board of Public Works (via email)

Board of Neighborhood Commissioners (via email)
Board of Police Commissioners (via email)
Board of Civil Service Commissioners (via email)
Los Angeles Ethics Commission (via email)
Department of Neighborhood Empowerment (via email)
Department of City Planning
Department of Building & Safety (via email)
Department of Recreation & Parks (via email)
Office of Public Accountability (via email)
Personal Department (via email)
Los Angeles Alliance of Neighborhood Councils (via email)
Los Angeles Neighborhood Council Budget Advocates (via email)