

Taskforce on Community Planning Group Reform

Draft Findings & Recommendations

Introduction

In April of this year, the Land Use and Housing Committee vote to establish an ad hoc group to review and compile recommendations for revisions to Council Policy 600-24. The task force consisted of eleven members with the following backgrounds: three representative of the Community Planners Committee (Dike Anyiwo, Barry Schultz, Albert Valasquez), two representatives of small businesses (Carla Farley, Angela Landsberg), a current or past member of the Planning Commission (Vicky Granowitz), a current or past employee of the Department Services Department or Planning Department (Dan Normandin), a member of a Mass Transit/Mobility advocacy organization (Maya Rosa), a member of the Building Industry Association (Matt Adams), a member of an Environment/Climate Change advocacy organization (Matthew Vasilakis), and an Urban Infill developer (Rammy Cortez).

The Taskforce on Community Planning Group Reform convened to review existing recommendations that were proposed in the City Audit, the Grand Jury report, and the Democracy in Planning report produced by Circulate San Diego. The Taskforce also considered additional recommendations proposed by its members. The purpose of the Taskforce is to find recommendations that are supported by diverse stakeholders in land use and transportation issues. Then present the consolidated recommendations to the Community Planners Committee (CPC) for a vote, and ultimately present recommendations that have been vetted by the Taskforce and CPC to the City Council.

To make clear the source of the recommendations, the Taskforce intentionally voted on each individual recommendation, sometimes with modifications, instead of consolidating or writing new recommendations from scratch. The below findings and recommendations were supported by a majority of Taskforce members. Recommendations that were not supported by the Taskforce were not included except for two that were tie votes (located in the Other Recommendations section). There are several recommendations with varying levels of overlap that the Taskforce did not consolidate, and therefore there will be repetition if a specific issue was addressed in more than one of the sources of recommendations.

The Grand Jury report included a number of findings. The Taskforce voted on the findings as well as the recommendations, and those findings are included separately below. The recommendations are broken down into major categories and numbered for ease of reference. The original source is also included with each recommendation. Recommendations that have been modified from the original source will be demarcated by **bold** for insertions.

Findings

Any request with a marginal **change to a project, outside the scope of the project, must be validated by city staff if requested by the applicant before it can** form the basis for satisfactory compromises between the developer and the CPG. **Appropriate requests will be further defined in the administrative guidelines.** *(A finding by the Grand Jury with minor modifications by the taskforce.)*

Community Planning Groups that are unable to meet CP 600-24 quorum and attendance requirements should be considered for disbandment or consolidation with a neighboring CPG. While this would be unlikely to increase diversity, as suggested by the Grand Jury, it could facilitate the review and processing of development proposals and community plans. *(A finding by the Grand Jury with major modifications by the taskforce.)*

If members of the City Planning Department attended all CPG meetings **when a discretionary land use item is before them then** issues could be resolved in a timely manner. *(A finding by the Grand Jury minor modifications by the taskforce.)*

In some cases, there are insufficient volunteers to allow CPGs to maintain a diverse membership. *(A finding by the Grand Jury).*

Membership of some CPGs is not sufficiently diverse to represent their communities. *(A finding by the Grand Jury).*

Neither the CPGs nor the City has recruitment procedures that meet the stated goal of increased diversity. *(A finding by the Grand Jury).*

Periodic training **of board members would help them** stay current on the Brown Act and changes in City policies. *(A finding by the Grand Jury with minor modifications by the taskforce).*

Policy, procedure, or development issues sometimes arise during CPG meetings, and if left unanswered or incorrectly answered, it can result in confusion or delays. *(A finding by the Grand Jury).*

San Diego City Council Policy 600-24 DOES NOT provide sufficient guidelines on appropriate additions or modifications to development projects. *(A finding by the Grand Jury with major modifications by the taskforce).*

Council Policy 600-24 and the Administrative Guidelines shall be updated to define the acceptable scope of additions and/or modifications that may be requested by a CPG, as well as an appropriate range of ancillary requests. If after reviewing the guidelines the parties still cannot reach an agreement, the Planning Department will make a final determination on the efficacy of a CPG request(s). *(A finding by the Grand Jury with major modifications by the taskforce)*

The degree to which members of CPGs are representative of the geographic sections of the community and diverse community interests cannot be determined. *(A finding by the Grand Jury).*

The work of some Community Planning Groups can be **impaired** by a lack of diverse membership and citizen interest. *(A finding by the Grand Jury with a minor modification by the taskforce).*

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Recommendations

Conduct of Meetings

- 1) Ensuring that Community Planning Group (CPG) rosters, annual reports, and meeting minutes contain all the required elements as described in Council Policy 600-24 through proactive monitoring of those documents. *(A recommendation from the City Audit).*
- 2) Establishing a **72-hour** due date for receipt of CPG **formal action** recommendations **to the** Development Services Department Project Managers. *(A recommendation from the City Audit with minor modifications by the taskforce).*
- 3) Developing a formal mechanism for recording and posting CPG project review recommendations, either using a revised annual report that includes all project recommendations or using the Bulletin 620 Distribution Forum revised to include the number of times the applicant presented to the group per project and any major **conditions** to the project proposed by the group. **The reporting mechanism should be uniform and mandatory for all CPGs.** *(A recommendation from the City Audit with minor modifications by the taskforce).*
- 4) Identifying deadlines for CPGs to provide the Planning Department with rosters, minutes, and annual reports, so that the Planning Department can post them online to ensure this information is available to the public in a centralized location *(A recommendation from the City Audit).*
- 5) Including election results in the record retention *requirements.* *(A recommendation from the City Audit).*
- 6) Making member applications mandatory, subject to record retention requirements, **and submitted to the City Clerk.** *(A recommendation from the City Audit with minor modifications by the taskforce.)*
- 7) Require that CPGs determine a maximum duration for meetings, with the ability to extend the time by a majority vote of the CPG. *(A recommendation from Democracy in Planning).*
- 8) The Planning Department should coordinate with the Development Services Department to communicate a consistent message to project applicants of the role of CPGs in the project review process. *(A recommendation from the City Audit).*

Development Process

9) CPG meetings, when discretionary land use items are on the agenda, must be taped (either video or audio). *(A recommendation by the taskforce).*

10) For a development project that requires an Environmental Impact Report (EIR), the CPG must submit their recommendations before the public review period closes. If a CPG doesn't provide recommendations during the public review period their recommendations will not be considered for the project. *(A recommendation by the taskforce).*

11) Prioritize action items that inform City decision making in the order of the agenda. *(A recommendation from Democracy in Planning)*

12) **We determine** that members of the Planning Department staff **should attend when a discretionary land use item is before the CPG.** *(A recommendation by the Grand Jury with major modifications by the taskforce.)*

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Elections

13) Candidates should not be required to have attended more than one meeting in the past 12 months to be eligible to join a CPG board. *(A recommendation from Democracy in Planning)*

14) Community members should not be required to have attended previous CPG meetings to be eligible to vote. *(A recommendation from Democracy in Planning)*

15) Define CPG **resident** representation as **renters or homeowners** *(A recommendation from the City Audit with major modifications by the taskforce).*

16) In-person voting should be available for at least two hours and should run at least two hours after the stated time of a CPGs regularly scheduled meeting **if voting can run concurrently with the meeting.** *(A recommendation from Democracy in Planning with minor modifications by the taskforce)*

17) Make explicit that CPGs are allowed to use social media. *(A recommendation from Democracy in Planning)*

18) The City shall develop and implement a robust outreach plan to publicize CGP elections. *(A recommendation by the taskforce).*

Membership

19) **Community Planning Groups that are unable to meet CP 600-24 quorum and attendance requirements should be considered for disbandment or consolidation with a neighboring CPG.** *(A recommendation by the Grand Jury with major modifications by the taskforce).*

20) Gather relevant demographic data of CPG board members in an audit immediately and require new CPG board members to complete a demographic survey at every election or time of appointment. **The survey should include: Age, Business Owner or Property Owner, Ethnicity, Gender, Length of Residence, Neighborhood, Professional Background, Race, Religion, Renter or Owner, Years of Service on CPGs.** *(A recommendation from Democracy in Planning with major modifications by the taskforce).*

21) Require a termed-out board member to wait two years until they can run for their CPG again without exceptions. *(A recommendation from Democracy in Planning).*

22) The Planning Department should develop methods and provide resources to improve recruiting that could result in more diverse CPG membership. *(A recommendation by the Grand Jury)*

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Training

23) **All** CPG members should be required to complete the eCOW **or** COW training **annually** each time they are reelected or reappointed. *(A recommendation by the Grand Jury with minor modifications by the taskforce).*

24) Provide required ongoing education for decision-making processes and planning. *(A recommendation from Democracy in Planning)*

25) Requiring annual training for all CPG members, not just new members.

The COW will include:

A mandatory Brown Act training for all members.

A separate advanced curriculum for returning members

There should be specific training at the COW and/or offered during the year which might include:

For Chairs and Vice-Chairs of CPG's and any CPG subcommittee/Ad Hoc Committee.

Advanced training in the Development Review Process specific to CPG responsibilities and limits.

CEQA review training.

An interactive component where new members can learn from experienced CPG members.

(A recommendation from the City Audit with major modifications by the taskforce).

26) The Planning Department, in conjunction with relevant City departments, should provide a comprehensive training program that includes:

- 1) Mandatory training segment focused entirely on project development reviews
- 2) Sessions **for** CPG members and the public to increase understanding of the review process and roles and responsibilities.

(A recommendation from the City Audit with minor modifications by the taskforce).

Oversight

27) CPG members must file statements of economic interest, per the Political Reform Act. *(A recommendation from the taskforce).*

28) Direct the San Diego City **Planning** Department staff to closely monitor CPG actions and provide timely guidance to preclude requests for inappropriate project additions or modifications. *(A recommendation by the Grand Jury with minor modifications by the taskforce).*

33) If a CPG violates the Brown Act then the CPG will be referred to the City Attorney's Office for disciplinary review. *(A recommendation from the taskforce).*

28) Revise the bylaws shell in 600-24. *(A recommendation from Democracy in Planning).*

29) The annual report should be a **standardized electronic fill-in template** with expanded components for the annual report, **a member summary would include: number of members and member categories (i.e. homeowners, renters, property owners, and business representatives), turnover, mid-term election** *(A recommendation from the City Audit with major modifications by the taskforce).*

30) The City Auditor should conduct a review of CPGs **every five years**. *(A recommendation from Democracy in Planning with minor modifications by the taskforce).*

31) The Planning Department, in conjunction with the Development Services Department, should improve its documentation of CPG recommendations and post all CPG documents, including project review recommendations on the City website. *(A recommendation from the City Audit).*

Other Recommendations that the Taskforce deadlocked on:

Councilmembers should appoint new board members when a CPG vacancy occurs in their council district. *(A recommendation from Democracy in Planning).*

Consider incorporating appointed positions to CPGs by Councilmembers to provide balance with the elected board members. *(A recommendation from Democracy in Planning).*

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