

# COMMUNITY PLANNING GROUP REFORM

Updated 2/7/22

## *Frequently Asked Questions*



### **Q:** What are community planning groups (CPGs)?

**A:** Community planning groups (CPGs) are independent organizations recognized by the City that provide community input on land use decisions. They provide a structured forum for residents, property owners, and business representatives to advise the City and other decision-makers on housing projects, community plan updates, and a variety of transportation and infrastructure projects.

CPG voting members are elected by members of their community who are affiliated with the community as a property owner, resident or local businessowner.

The City currently recognizes 42 CPGs, composed of over 500 volunteers. Their work is a component of the City's community planning process.

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### **Q:** Why do we need CPG reform?

**A:** San Diego's City Charter serves as the constitution for San Diego and governs how the City operates, including how its advisory boards and commissions are created and maintained.

Currently, the Charter requires that advisory boards and commissions be created through an ordinance and that all members be appointed by the mayor and confirmed by city council. However, CPGs as governed by Council Policy 600-24, last updated in 2014, are neither created through an ordinance nor are its members appointed.

The City has a legal responsibility to comply with the Charter. Updating the policy offers the opportunity to make CPGs more transparent and representative of their respective communities.

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### **Q:** Why now?

**A:** In 2018, amidst a growing concern that CPGs were not representative of their communities, San Diego's Office of the City Auditor conducted an audit of CPGs. The audit recommended additional oversight and updates to Council Policy 600-24 to improve transparency, representation, and clarify CPGs' role in City decision-making. City staff accepted the auditor's recommendations; however, no action was taken at the time and compliance with the recommendations is still pending.

In 2018, the Grand Jury also weighed in, expressing concerns on areas of responsibility, diversity of voting members, city oversight, and training.

In December 2019, the City Attorney issued a legal analysis noting the current structure conflicted with the City Charter. Also in December 2019, the City's Land Use and Housing Committee recommended revisions to the policy.

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## Q: What are the potential solutions?

A: The City Attorney found that currently CPGs are not operating within the law. To bring them into compliance, the City has four potential solutions:

- **Amend the Council Policy and Municipal Code Amendments to make CPGs independent advisory bodies**
  - Amend the Charter and require financial disclosure requirements, which would require a vote of the people
  - Comply with the Charter and appoint hundreds of CPG members, create ordinances for each board, and institute financial disclosure requirements
  - Do nothing and subject the City to legal liability
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## Q: What is the preferred solution, and why?

A: Option 1 is the right solution as it maintains CPGs' position as advisory bodies to the City, retains the hundreds of volunteers and community leaders who serve, improves opportunities for broad community representation and transparency, and allows for an effective and supportive use of City resources.

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## Q: What will change?

- A:
- CPGs will independently take ownership of their own official documents such as bylaws, election procedures, operating procedures, ethical standards, and community participation and representation plan.
  - CPGs will be required to make agendas and documents publicly available in conformance to the Brown Act which could include posting on their website or a social media platform.
  - CPGs will be required to ensure CPG members are representative of their community and to occasionally gather demographic data from voting members and those attending CPG meetings.
  - Meeting attendance will no longer be a requirement to vote in the annual elections or to be eligible to run for a voting member seat.
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## Q: What will not change?

- A:
- All currently recognized CPGs will maintain the opportunity to seek City Council recognition under the new structure.
  - CPGs retain the opportunity to provide organized feedback on General Plan related issues, development projects, and infrastructure priorities, among other issues.
  - CPGs will still be required to follow Roberts Rules of Order and the Brown Act in meetings, and the City will continue to provide training on the Brown Act as well as the Community Orientation Workshop (COW).
  - CPG members will continue to be elected by those who live, own property, or own a business in the community.
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## **Q:** How will the City provide support?

### **A:** Will the City continue to provide an annual \$500 stipends to each CPG?

The City has committed to continuing the stipends through FY23, or June 30, 2023. A \$500 stipend will also be provided to the CPC as part of the FY23 budget. Stipends will pay for approved CPG expenditures. CPGs seeking reimbursement will be required to have a checking account. CPGs can continue to use their existing account, or one will be made available at no cost via individual bank accounts through a partnership the City has with a local bank.

### **Will City staff continue to attend Community Planners Committee (CPC) meetings?**

Yes. A dedicated staff person will continue to attend these monthly meetings.

### **Will CPGs be able to continue meeting in City facilities?**

Relevant City departments will work with CPGs to secure meeting space on a case-by-case basis, without charge whenever feasible.

### **Will the City provide templates for the new documents required through the updated policy?**

The City will provide templates for two documents: Ethics Standards and Community Outreach and Participation.

### **Will the City continue to post individual CPG agendas on its website?**

City staff can help CPGs post documents before each meeting if materials are sent ample time in advance.

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## **Q:** What are the proposed next steps in this process?

**A:**

November 30, 2021: Proposed CPG Reform measures presented to CPC

January 2022: Proposed CPG Reform measures presented to the City's Planning Commission

**March 2022:** Proposed CPG Reform measures presented to City Council Land Use & Housing Committee

**Spring 2022:** Proposed CPG Reform measures presented to City Council for final approval

**Six to seven months after Council updates 600-24:** CPGs seek recognition under the updated CP 600-24 by filing organizational documents

**Fall 2022:** City Council hearing to grant recognition under updated CP 600-24

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