

CITY OF SAN DIEGO, CALIFORNIA  
**COUNCIL POLICY**

**CURRENT**

SUBJECT: STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES AND RESPONSIBILITIES  
OF RECOGNIZED COMMUNITY PLANNING GROUPS  
POLICY NO.: 600-24  
EFFECTIVE DATE: April 5, 2012

BACKGROUND:

Community planning groups have been formed and recognized by the City Council to make recommendations to the City Council, Planning Commission, City staff, and other governmental agencies on land use matters, specifically, concerning the preparation of, adoption of, implementation of, or amendment to, the General Plan or a land use plan when a plan relates to each recognized community planning group's planning area boundaries. Planning groups also advise on other land use matters as requested by the City or other governmental agencies. This Policy applies to the 12 to 20 elected members of a recognized community planning group, herein referred to as members.

Planning groups are private organizations. The City does not direct or recommend the election of specified individual members, nor does the City appoint members to planning groups, or recommend removal of individual members of a planning group. The City does not delegate legal authority to planning groups to take actions on behalf of the City. Planning groups are voluntarily created and maintained by members of communities within the City. Council Policy 600-24 was created to provide the guidance for organizations operating as officially recognized community planning groups.

In 2006, it was determined that since planning groups are advisory bodies created by an action of the City Council, that they are subject to California's Open Meeting Law, the Ralph M. Brown Act ("Brown Act") (California Government Code Sections 54950 through 54963). The 2007 amendments to Council Policy 600-24 incorporate clear direction to planning groups about compliance with the Brown Act.

Bylaws of recognized community planning groups shall be amended to conform to the 2007 amendments to Council Policy 600-24 within 6 months from the enactment of the 2007 amendment. Until the expiration of 6 months, or adoption of bylaws amendments, whichever comes first, a planning group operating in conformance with bylaws that were previously approved by the City Council, shall be deemed to be operating in conformance with this Policy.

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PURPOSE:

The purpose of Council Policy 600-24 is to identify responsibilities and to establish minimum operating procedures governing the conduct of planning groups when they operate in their officially recognized capacity.

POLICY:

It is the policy of the City Council to require each recognized community planning group, as a condition of official recognition by the City of San Diego, to submit a copy of its own operating procedures and responsibilities, otherwise known as "bylaws," to the City. These bylaws must contain, at a minimum, all the provisions addressed in this Policy, and conform to the criteria contained herein, including the standardized bylaws shell attached to this Policy. Individual planning groups' bylaws may utilize options within the standardized bylaws shell and may also expand on provisions in this Policy to better meet the needs of diverse communities. However, all bylaws must remain in conformance with the provisions of this Policy to maintain official recognition by the City. The original bylaws for each planning group and the initial members and terms of each planning group seat and member will be submitted for approval by resolution of the City Council.

Community planning groups that are also incorporated under the laws of the State of California shall maintain corporate bylaws separate from the planning group bylaws.

Subsequent amendments to adopted bylaws may be proposed to the City by a majority vote of the elected membership of a community planning group. Amendments shall be approved by the Mayor's Office and City Attorney if determined to conform with this Policy. Bylaws amendments that cannot be approved by the Mayor's Office and City Attorney will be taken to the City Council for consideration. A planning group's proposed revisions to their adopted bylaws, to bring them into conformity with the 2007 revisions to this Policy, to the extent such bylaws are inconsistent with this Policy, do not go into effect, and may not be used by the planning group, until the City has approved the bylaws and has notified the planning group of the effective date of the amendment. Failure of a planning group to comply with the approved operating procedures and responsibilities will be cause for the City Council to withdraw official recognition.

Planning groups must utilize Council Policy 600-24 and their adopted bylaws to guide their operations. City staff is assigned to prepare and maintain Administrative Guidelines in consultation with the Community Planners Committee.

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The Administrative Guidelines are intended to explain this Policy’s minimum standard operating procedures and responsibilities of planning groups. The Administrative Guidelines provide the planning groups with explanations and recommendations for individually adopted bylaws and planning group procedures. Robert’s Rules of Order Newly Revised should be used when this Policy, the Administrative Guidelines, and planning group bylaws do not address an area of concern or interest. It is also the policy of the City Council that the City shall indemnify, and the City Attorney shall defend, a recognized community planning group or its individual members in accordance with Ordinance No. O-17086 NS entitled “An Ordinance Providing for Legal Representation to and Indemnification of Community Planning Committees Against Claims for Damages,” as discussed further in Article X, Section 1, and any future amendments thereto.

The intent of the Brown Act, as stated in section 45950, is that the actions of public bodies, “. . . be taken openly and that their deliberations be conducted openly. . .” This is consistent with the goals of the City and planning groups operating pursuant to this Policy. Accordingly, community planning groups shall ensure that all meetings are open to the public, properly noticed, and conducted in compliance with each of the Brown Act provisions as identified in this Policy.

**ARTICLE I Name**

- Section 1. A recognized community planning group shall adopt an official name which shall be subject to the approval of the City Council.
- Section 2. All activities of a recognized community planning group shall be conducted in its official name.
- Section 3. A boundary for a recognized community planning group’s area of authority is based on the boundary of the applicable adopted community plan. The boundary is intended to give a planning group the advisory responsibilities over an area that has been established based on logical, man-made, or geographic boundaries. In some cases, the City Council may determine that a boundary other than that of an adopted plan is the appropriate boundary for a planning group’s oversight, and may identify an area either smaller than, or more encompassing than, an adopted community plan.

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The community planning area boundaries which are applicable to each recognized community planning group shall be shown on a map to be included in the bylaws as Exhibit "A."

In accordance with Brown Act section 54954(b), meetings of recognized community planning groups shall be held within these boundaries. When however a community planning group does not have a meeting facility within its boundary that is accessible to all members of the public, they may meet at the closest meeting facility.

- Section 4. The official positions and opinions of a recognized community planning group shall not be established or determined by any organization other than the planning group, nor by any individual member of the planning group other than one authorized to do so by the planning group.

**ARTICLE II Purpose of Community Planning Group and General Provisions**

- Section 1. Community planning groups have been formed and recognized by the City Council to make recommendations to the City Council, Planning Commission, City staff and other governmental agencies on land use matters, specifically, concerning the preparation of, adoption of, implementation of, or amendment to, the General Plan or a land use plan when a plan relates to each recognized community planning group's planning area boundaries. Planning groups also advise on other land use matters as requested by the City or other governmental agency.

Pursuant to the provisions of Council Policy 600-33, a recognized community planning group will be asked to review a park general development plan or capital improvements within the park only if there is no City recognized park advisory group.

- Section 2. A recognized community planning group reviewing individual development projects should focus such review on conformity with the adopted Community Plan and/or the General Plan. Preliminary comments on projects may be submitted to the City during the project review process. Whenever possible, a formal planning group recommendation should be submitted no later than the end of the public review period offered by the environmental review process.

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Substantive changes in projects subsequent to completion of the environmental review process will sanction further evaluation by the planning group. This will provide staff and the project applicant the opportunity to respond to the comments or concerns and potentially resolve possible conflicts before the project is noticed for discretionary action.

- Section 3. Insofar as the efforts of the recognized community planning group are engaged in the diligent pursuit of the above purpose, City staff assistance, if any, shall be provided under the direction of the Mayor's Office.
- Section 4. All activities of recognized community planning groups shall be nonpartisan and nonsectarian and shall not discriminate against any person or persons by reason of race, color, sex, age, creed or national origin, or sexual orientation, or physical or mental disability. In addition, Brown Act section 54953.2 requires that meeting facilities must be accessible to persons with disabilities.
- Section 5. A recognized community planning group shall not take part in, officially or unofficially, or lend its influence in, the election of any candidate for political office. Planning group members shall not identify affiliation with a planning group when endorsing candidates for public office. A planning group may take a position on a ballot measure.
- Section 6. Pursuant to the provisions of City Council Policy 600-5, a recognized community planning group's consistent failure to respond to the City's request for planning group input on the preparation of, adoption of, implementation of, or amendment to, the General Plan or a community, precise, or specific plan, or failure to review and reply to the City in a timely manner on development projects shall result in the forfeiture of rights to represent its community for these purposes. Such a determination resulting in the forfeiture of rights to represent its community for these purposes shall be made only by the City Council upon the recommendation of the Mayor's office.
- Section 7. A recognized community planning group may propose amendments to its bylaws by majority vote of the elected members of the group. Proposed amendments shall be submitted to the offices of the Mayor and to the City Attorney, respectively, for review and approval. Any proposed amendments that are inconsistent with the standardized bylaws shell, attached to this Policy, shall be scheduled for consideration by City Council.

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**ARTICLE III Community Planning Group Organizations**

Section 1. A recognized community planning group shall consist of a specific number of members that is not fewer than 12 nor more than 20, provided, however, that when a larger membership shall give better representation to a community, the City Council may approve such larger membership. Upon recognition by the City Council, the members of the planning groups shall constitute the official planning group for the purposes set forth in Article II.

Section 2. The members of the recognized community planning group shall consist of the members as of the date of recognition by the City Council, and of such additional members as shall thereafter be elected by eligible community members in the manner prescribed by this Policy.

Section 3. Members of recognized community planning groups shall, to the extent possible, be representative of the various geographic sections of the community and diversified community interests. Planning group members shall be elected by and from eligible members of the community. To be an eligible community member an individual must be at least 18 years of age, and shall be affiliated with the community as a:

- (1) property owner, who is an individual identified as the sole or partial owner of record, or their designee, of a real property (either developed or undeveloped), within the community planning area, or
- (2) resident, who is an individual whose primary address of residence is an address in the community planning area, or
- (3) local business person, who is a local business owner, operator, or designee at a non-residential real property address in the community planning area.

Demonstration of individual eligibility to vote as a property owner, resident, or local business person, as described in (1) through (3) above, may be achieved through an application showing evidence of qualifications. Eligibility (and demonstration of eligibility) to vote may be further defined in planning group bylaws. This may include minimum attendance requirements. Once eligibility to vote in an election is established, an individual remains eligible until he or she does not meet the eligibility requirements.

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Section 4. Members of a recognized community planning group shall be elected to serve for fixed terms of two to four years with expiration dates during alternate years to provide continuity. This can vary for the purpose of the selection of initial group members for new groups. No person may serve on a planning group for more than eight consecutive years if members are elected to two- or four-year terms, or nine consecutive years if members are elected to three-year terms. The eight or nine year limit refers to total service time, not to individual seats held. After a one-year break in service as a planning group member, an individual who had served for eight or nine consecutive years shall again be eligible for election to the committee.

This Policy provides an exception for a planning group to retain some members who have already served for eight or nine consecutive years to continue on the planning group without a break in service if not enough new members are found to fill all vacant seats as follows:

A planning group member who has served eight or nine consecutive years may appear on the ballot with new candidates. After open seats are filled with qualified new members, and if open seats still remain, the following provisions may be utilized: A member may serve in excess of eight or nine consecutive years (as specified above) if that person is reelected to a remaining open seat by at least a two-thirds majority of the votes cast by eligible community members participating in the regular election. The number of individuals on a planning group serving more than eight or nine consecutive years shall in no case exceed twenty-five percent of the voting committee membership.

The term of a member elected by a two-thirds vote serving beyond eight or nine years shall count as time served beyond the required break in service as required by this section. Future consecutive election of the member who has served beyond eight or nine years is subject to the requirements of this section.

Section 5. A member of a recognized community planning group must retain eligibility during the entire term of service. A planning group member may be removed from the planning group, upon a majority vote of the planning group, if, during a regularly scheduled public meeting, the Secretary presents documentation to the planning group and has notified the member in question that the member is no longer eligible to serve. Ineligibility may be due to not meeting the membership qualifications found in Article III, Section 3 or Article IV, Section 1 of this Council Policy and in the group's adopted bylaws.

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Section 6. A planning group member or planning group found to be out of compliance with the provisions of this Policy, or the planning group's adopted bylaws, risks loss of indemnification [legal protection and representation] pursuant to Ordinance No. O-17086 NS, and any future amendments thereto.

Violations of the Brown Act may, in some circumstances, carry civil or criminal consequences as described in this Policy at Article IX, Section 2. However, as stated in a memorandum prepared by the City Attorney, by implementing bylaws and operating in compliance with this Policy, planning groups will be considered to be in substantial compliance with the Brown Act. (City Att'y MOL No. 2006- 26)

**ARTICLE IV Vacancies**

Section 1. A recognized community planning group shall find that a vacancy exists upon receipt of a resignation in writing from one of its members, or upon receipt of a written report from its secretary reporting the third consecutive absence, or fourth absence in the 12-month period of April through March each year, of a member(s) from regular meeting as established under Article VI, Section 2 below.

Section 2. A single vacancy that occurs on a recognized community planning group shall be filled by the planning group in a manner specified by the bylaws of the planning group.

Two or more concurrent community planning group vacancies shall be filled by a vote of all eligible members of the community by secret written ballot. Vacancies shall be filled no later than 120 days, following the date of the determination of the vacancy, unless the end of the 120 day period would occur within 90 days of the annual March election as described in Article V.

The term of office of any member filling a vacancy in accordance with the procedure established in Article III, Section 4 above shall be for the balance of the vacated term.



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Section 3. When a recognized community planning group is unable to fill a vacancy within the 120 days, as specified above, and the planning group has more than twelve members, the planning group shall either leave the seat vacant until the next planning group election, or amend its bylaws to permit decreased membership to a minimum of twelve members. If a vacancy remains for more than 60 days from the time a vacancy is declared, and the planning group has less than 12 members in good standing, the planning group shall report in writing the efforts made to fill the vacancy to the City. If, after 60 additional days, the planning group membership has not reached 12 members, the planning group will be deemed inactive and the City shall notify the City Council that the planning group will be inactive until it has attained at least 12 members in good standing. The City shall assist with the planning group election in the attempt to regain the minimum Policy membership requirement of 12 members.

**ARTICLE V Elections**

Section 1. Elections of recognized community planning group members shall be held during the month of March in accordance with procedures specified in adopted planning group bylaws. Planning groups shall hold elections every year or every other year. In the election process, the planning group shall seek enough new candidates to exceed the number of seats open for election in order to allow those who have served for eight or nine consecutive years to leave the group for at least one year.

In order to be a candidate in the March election, an eligible member of the community must have documented attendance at three of the planning group's last 12 meetings prior to the February regular meeting preceding the election.

Planning groups may establish voting procedures that include opportunities for multiple voting times on the date of the election, or for multiple locations, or both, provided those procedures allow for the completion of the election during the month of March and they demonstrate an ability to assure fair access and avoidance of voting improprieties. Where an opportunity to vote on more than one date is proposed, then the voting procedures for such an election shall be submitted, at least forty-five (45) days in advance of the first day that voting is proposed to occur, to the office of the Mayor and to the City Attorney, respectively, for review and approval. All voting procedures must insure that voting is done only by eligible members of the community.

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Section 2. The City shall publicize the elections of recognized community planning groups through the City website, City TV24 programming, electronic mail, the City's webpage, and other available effective means.

The planning group shall make a good faith effort to utilize means appropriate to their communities to publicize the planning group's eligibility requirements for candidacy and the upcoming elections.

Section 3. Voting shall be by secret written ballot. Recognized community planning groups may establish bylaw provisions to address procedures for mailing in ballots for elections if the planning group determines that this procedure, or another specified procedure, would increase community participation in the election process. Under no circumstances is proxy voting for elections allowed. At a minimum, ballots shall be available for a specified period at the noticed planning group meeting at which the election will be held.

Section 4. Unless otherwise explicitly provided for in a recognized community planning group's bylaws, an election becomes final after announcing the election results at a noticed planning group meeting. New members shall be seated in April.

**ARTICLE VI Community Planning Group and Planning Group Member Duties**

Section 1. It shall be the duty of a recognized community planning group to cooperatively work with the Mayor's staff throughout the planning process, including but not limited to the formation of long-range community goals, objectives and proposals or the revision thereto for inclusion in a General or Community Plan.

In accordance with the Brown Act section 54953(a) it shall be the duty of all recognized community planning group members to meet in open and in public, and all persons shall be permitted to attend any meeting of the planning group except as otherwise noted in this Policy.

The community planning group members shall conduct official business of the planning group in a public setting. It is recognized that the officers of the planning group may oversee administrative business of the planning group, such as the assembling of the draft agenda, in preparation for public discussions. However, all substantive discussions about agenda items or possible group positions on agenda items shall occur at the noticed planning group meetings.

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It shall be the duty of a planning group as a whole, and of each individual planning group member, to refrain from conduct that is detrimental to the planning group or its purposes under this Policy. No member shall be permitted to disturb the public meeting so as to disrupt the public process as set forth on the planning group's agenda.

Section 2. Recognized community planning groups and planning group members are responsible for assuring compliance of meeting procedures and meeting records requirements under this Policy.

**(a) Meeting Procedures**

It shall be the duty of each recognized community planning group member to attend all planning group meetings.

- (1) **Regular Agenda Posting.** In accordance with Brown Act section 54954.2(a), at least 72 hours before a regular meeting, the agenda containing a brief general description of each agenda item. The brief general description of each agenda item need not exceed 20 words per item unless the item is complex. The agenda shall also provide notice of the date, time, and location of the meeting. The agenda shall be posted in a place freely accessible to the general public and shall include information on how a request for accessible accommodation may be made.

The listing of an agenda item shall include the intended action of the planning group regarding that item, for example, stating that the item is an information item only or it is an action item.

- (2) **Public Comment.**

1. Agenda Items: Any interested member of the public may comment on agenda items during regular or special planning group meetings. (Brown Act section 54954.3(a))

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2. Non Agenda Items: Each agenda for a regular planning group meeting shall allow for a public comment period at the beginning of the meeting for items not on the agenda, but that are within the scope of the planning group. (Brown Act section 54954.3(a)) Planning group members may respond by asking for more factual information, or by asking a question to clarify, and also may schedule the item for a future agenda. However, no discussion, debate, or action may be taken on such items. (Brown Act section 59454.2)
3. A planning group may adopt time limits for individual items and for individual speakers to ensure operational efficiencies but such time limits must be reasonable and give competing interests equal time. (Brown Act section 54954.3(b))

- (3) **Adjournments and Continuances.** In accordance with Brown Act section 54955, planning group meetings may be adjourned to a future date. Within 24 hours, a notice of adjournment must be clearly posted on or near the door of the place where the original meeting was to be held.

If a meeting is adjourned because less than a quorum was present, a new regular meeting agenda must be prepared. If a meeting is adjourned because no members of the planning group were present, the subsequent meeting, if not a regular meeting, must be noticed as if a special meeting.

In accordance with Brown Act section 54954.2, if a subsequent meeting is held more than 5 days from the original meeting, a new regular meeting agenda must be prepared (\*); otherwise if shorter, the original meeting agenda is adequate.

- (4) **Continued Items.** In accordance with Brown Act section 54955.1, if an item is continued from a prior regular meeting to a subsequent meeting more than 5 days from the original meeting, a new agenda must be prepared as if a regular meeting; otherwise the original meeting agenda is adequate.

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(5) **Consent Agenda.** In accordance with Brown Act section 54954.3(a), for items to be considered for a “Consent Agenda” all of the following are required:

1. A subcommittee of the planning group has discussed the item at a noticed subcommittee meeting,
2. All interested members of the public were given an opportunity to address the subcommittee, and
3. The item has not substantially changed since the subcommittee’s consideration.

The comments of the subcommittee and those made by interested members of the public should be reflected in the minutes of the subcommittee. Any interested member of the public may comment on a consent agenda item. Any interested member of the public may take a consent agenda item off the consent agenda by request.

(6) **Quorum and Public Attendance.** This Policy defines a quorum as a majority of non-vacant seats of a planning group. In accordance with Brown Act section 54952.2, a quorum must be present in order to conduct business, to vote on projects, and to take actions at regular or special planning group meetings.

In accordance with Brown Act section 54953.3, no member of the public shall be required, as a condition of attendance at any meeting of a planning group, to register or provide any other information. Any attendance list or request for information shall clearly state that completion of such information is voluntary. No member of the public may be charged a fee for admittance.

(7) **Development Project Review.** Planning groups may not, as a condition of placing an item on their agenda, require applicants to submit additional information and materials beyond **which** the applicant has been required to submit as part of the City's project review application process.

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It shall also be the duty of a planning group, when reviewing development projects, to allow participation of affected property owners, residents and business establishments within proximity to the proposed development.

The planning group shall directly inform the project applicant or representative in advance each time that such review will take place and provide the applicant with an opportunity to present the project.

- (8) **Action On Agenda Items.** In accordance with Brown Act section 54954.2(b)(2), an item not noticed on the agenda may be added if either two-thirds of the entire elected membership, or every member if less than two-thirds are present, determine by a vote that there is a need to take an immediate action, but only if the need for action came to the attention of the planning group subsequent to the agenda being posted.

In accordance with Brown Act section 54953(c), planning groups shall not engage in, or allow, secret ballot or proxy voting on any agenda item. Other methods of absentee voting on agenda items, such as by telephone or by e-mail are also prohibited.

Votes taken on agenda items shall reflect the positions taken by the elected or appointed positions on the planning group identified in Article III, Section 1 of this Policy.

- (9) **Collective Concurrence.** In accordance with Brown Act section 54952.2, any attempt to develop a collective concurrence of the members of a planning group as to action to be taken on an item by members of the planning group, either by direct or indirect communication, by personal **intermediaries**, by serial meetings, or by technological devices, is prohibited, other than at a properly noticed public meeting.

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- (10) **Special Meetings.** In accordance with Brown Act section 54956, the chair of a planning group, or a majority of planning group members, may call a special meeting. An agenda for a special meeting shall be specified as such, and shall be prepared and posted at least 24 hours before a special meeting. Each member of the planning group shall receive the written notice of the meeting at least 24 hours before the time of the meeting as specified in the notice unless the member files with the planning group secretary a written waiver of notice at, or prior to the time of, the meeting.

Written notice shall be delivered to each local newspaper of general circulation and radio or television station requesting notice in writing at least 24 hours before the time of the meeting. The notice shall identify the business to be transacted or discussed at the meeting. No other business shall be considered at this meeting.

Public testimony on agenda items must be allowed; however, the non-agenda public comment period may be waived.

- (11) **Emergency Meetings.** Brown Act section 54956 describes emergency meetings for matters related to public health and safety. These matters are outside of the purview of a planning group and are prohibited under this Policy.
- (12) **Right To Record.** In accordance with Brown Act sections 54953.5 and 54953.6, any person attending a meeting of the planning group must be allowed to record or photograph the proceedings in the absence of a reasonable finding by the planning group that the recording cannot continue without noise, illumination, or obstruction of view that constitutes, or would constitute, a persistent disruption of the meeting.
- (13) **Disorderly Conduct.** In accordance with Brown Act section 54957.9, in the event that any planning group meeting is willfully interrupted by a person or group of persons, so as to make the orderly conduct of the meeting infeasible, the planning group may first cause removal of the individual or individuals.

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If that is unsuccessful then the planning group may order the meeting room cleared and continue in session on scheduled agenda items without an audience, except that representatives of the media shall be allowed to remain. The planning group may also readmit an individual or individuals who were not responsible for the disruption.

**(b) Subcommittees**

Recognized community planning groups are encouraged to establish standing and ad hoc subcommittees when their operation contributes to more effective discussions at regular planning group meetings.

- (1) **Standing Committees.** Standing subcommittees are on-going subcommittees tasked with reviewing specific issue areas, such as development review. In accordance with Brown Act section 54952(b), all standing subcommittees of a planning group are subject to Brown Act public noticing and meeting requirements as set forth in Council Policy 600-24, Article IV, Section 2(a).
- (2) **Ad Hoc Subcommittees.** Ad hoc subcommittee meetings are established for a finite period of time to review more focused issue areas and are disbanded following their review. While the Brown Act does not impose requirements upon ad hoc subcommittees when made up entirely of members of the planning group and constituting less than a quorum of the planning group (Brown Act section 54952) , this Policy requires all subcommittee meetings be noticed and open to the public by inclusion of the meeting announcement on a regular meeting agenda, by an electronic notice, or by announcement at a regular planning group meeting.
- (3) **Committee Composition.** All committees and subcommittees shall contain a majority of members who are members of the planning group. Any member of a committee or subcommittee, who is not a member of the planning group, shall have completed formal training by the City in the duties and responsibilities of community planning groups, before serving on any such committee or subcommittee.



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- (4) **Recommendations.** All committee and subcommittee recommendations must be brought forth to the full planning group for formal vote at a noticed public meeting. In no case may a committee or subcommittee recommendation be forwarded directly to the City as the formal recommendation of the planning group without a formal vote of the full planning group.

**(c) Abstentions and Recusals**

- (1) **Recusals.** Any member of a recognized community planning group with a direct economic interest in any project that comes before the planning group or its committees or subcommittees must disclose to the planning group that economic interest, and must recuse himself or herself from voting and must not participate in any manner as a member of the planning group for that item on the agenda.
- (2) **Abstentions.** In accordance with the Brown Act section 54953(c), all action taken by the planning group including votes must be taken in public.

In limited circumstances, from time to time, planning group members may abstain from either voting on an action item, or from participating and voting on an action item. The member must state, for the record, the reason for the abstention.

**(d) Meeting Documents and Records**

- (1) **Agenda by Mail.** In accordance with Brown Act section 54954.1, requests to mail copies of a regular agenda, and any accompanying material, shall be granted. Such materials shall be mailed when the agenda is posted, or upon distribution to a majority of the members of the community planning group, whichever occurs first. A request to receive agendas and materials may be made for each calendar year and such request is valid for that entire year, but must be renewed by January 1 of the following year. A cost-recovery fee may be charged for the cost of providing this service.

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(2) **Agenda at Meeting.** In accordance with Brown Act section 54957.5, any written documentation, prepared or provided by City staff, applicants, or planning group members, that is distributed at a planning group meeting, shall be made available upon request for public inspection without delay. If such material is distributed at a planning group meeting, then it shall be made available upon request at the meeting. If such material is prepared by someone other than City staff, applicants, or planning group members, or is received from a member of the public during public testimony on an agenda item, then the material shall be made available for public inspection at the conclusion of the meeting. Further, the planning group may charge for the cost of reproduction of any materials requested by an individual or individuals.

(3) **Minutes.** For each planning group meeting, a report of planning group member attendance and a copy of approved minutes shall be retained by the planning group, and shall be available for public inspection. The minutes of each planning group meeting shall include the votes taken on each action item, and should record the names of the speakers, the nature of the public testimony, and whether each project applicant (whose project was subject to planning group action) appeared before the planning group. If an applicant did not appear before the planning group then the meeting minutes must indicate the date when and type of notification (e.g., electronic, telephonic, facsimile) provided to the applicant requesting his or her appearance at the planning group meeting. A copy of the approved minutes shall be submitted to the City within 14 days after approval by the planning group.

Planning groups are not required to audio or videotape their meetings but if they do then, accordance with Brown Act section 54953.6, they are subject to a public request to inspect without charge. A cost-recovery fee may be charged for copies of recordings.

(4) **Records Retention.** In accordance with Brown Act 54957.5, planning group records must be retained for public review. City staff will establish a records retention schedule and method for collection and storage of materials that will be utilized by all planning groups.

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Section 3. It shall be the duty of a recognized community planning group and its members to periodically seek community-wide understanding of and participation in the planning and implementation process as specified in Article II, Section 1 of this Policy. The planning group shall give due consideration to all responsible community attitudes insofar as these are deemed to be in the best long-range interest of the community at large.

Section 4. It shall be the duty of a recognized community planning group to maintain a current, up-to-date roster of the names, terms, and category/qualifications of planning group members in its possession, and to forward the current roster, as well as any updates, to the City. The planning group must also submit to the City, by the end of March each year, an annual report of accomplishments for the past calendar year and anticipated objectives for the coming year related to the duties enumerated in Article II, Section 1 of this Policy. Rosters and annual reports constitute disclosable records under the Brown Act.

Section 5. A recognized community planning group may develop a policy for financial contributions from the citizens of the community for the purposes of furthering the efforts of the planning group to promote understanding and participation in the planning process. However, no membership dues shall be required and no fee may be charged as a condition of attendance at any planning group meeting. All contributions must be voluntarily made, and no official planning group correspondence may be withheld based on any individual's desire to not make a voluntary contribution.

Section 6. It shall be the duty of each recognized community planning group member to attend an orientation training session administered by the City as part of planning group and individual member indemnification pursuant to Ordinance No. O-17086 NS entitled "An Ordinance Providing for Legal Representation to and Indemnification of Community Planning Committees Against Claims for Damages," as discussed further in Article X, Section 1, and any future amendments thereto.

It shall be the duty of the City to offer at least two orientation sessions each year as well as topic-specific sessions intended to advance the knowledge of planning group members in subjects within the scope of responsibilities of recognized community planning groups. Newly seated planning group members must complete an orientation training session within 12 months of being elected or appointed to a planning group, or the member will become ineligible to serve.

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**ARTICLE VII Planning Group Officers**

Section 1. The officers of a recognized community planning group shall be elected from and by the members of the planning group. Said officers shall consist of a Chairperson, Vice Chairperson and Secretary and, by policy, a planning group's bylaws may include such other officers as the planning group may deem necessary. Further duties of the officers may be defined in planning group bylaws.

The planning group shall determine the length of an officer's term in its bylaws, except that no person may serve in the same planning group office for more than eight or nine consecutive years. After a period of one year in which that person did not serve as an officer that person shall again be eligible to serve as an officer.

Section 2. Chairperson. The Chairperson shall be the principal officer of a recognized community planning group and shall preside over all planning group and communitywide meetings organized by the planning group.

Section 3. Vice Chairperson. In the absence of the Chairperson, the Vice Chairperson shall perform all the duties and responsibilities of the Chairperson.

Section 4. Secretary. The Secretary shall be responsible for the planning group's correspondence, attendance records, and minutes and actions [including identification of those planning group members that constitute a quorum, who vote on an action item, and who may abstain or recuse and the reasons], and shall assure that planning group members and members of the public have access to this information. The Secretary may take on these responsibilities or may identify individuals to assist in these duties.

Section 5. The Chairperson shall be a recognized community planning group's representative to the Community Planners Committee (CPC). However, by specific action vote of the planning group, some other member may be selected as the official representative to CPC with the same voting rights and privileges as the Chairperson. Each planning group should also vote to select an alternate CPC representative.

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Section 6. It shall be the duty of the officers of recognized community planning groups and of the Community Planners Committee representative to promptly disseminate to all elected planning group members pertinent information that is received by the planning group regarding its official business.

**ARTICLE VIII Planning Group Policies and Procedures**

In addition to incorporating the policies outlined in Articles I through VII into recognized community planning group bylaws, each planning group shall include policies and procedures found necessary for the group's effective operation under this Policy. The following topic areas are those to be addressed. Explanations of when and why to adopt procedures or policies are found in the Administrative Guidelines.

- (1) Community Participation, suggested but not limited to: community outreach; assurances of seeking diverse representation on the planning group.
- (2) Planning Group Composition, suggested but not limited to: methods for anticipated conversion of planning group seats, such as developer seats or appointed seats, as applicable; general membership eligibility and recordkeeping, as applicable; involving the community at large.
- (3) Conduct of Meetings, suggested but not limited to: meeting noticing, including subcommittees; meeting operations such as time limits on speakers and maintaining a civil meeting environment; subcommittee operations such as process for project reviews and bylaw amendments; role of the chair in voting; role of a general membership or the public in discussing agenda items.
- (4) Member and Planning Group Responsibilities, suggested but not limited to: filling vacant seats either during a term or following an election; how planning group positions will be represented to the City; discipline or removal of an individual member; bylaw amendment process, including the development of procedures companion to the bylaws.
- (5) Elections, suggested but not limited to: promoting planning group elections; determining eligibility of candidates and voters; ballot preparation, handling, and counting procedures; poll location and operation criteria; election challenges.

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**ARTICLE IX. Rights and Liabilities of Recognized Community Planning Groups**

Recognized community planning groups operating under this Policy are afforded certain protections for their activities within their identified scope of responsibilities.

As reviewed in a memorandum prepared by the City Attorney, issued November 3, 2006, (City Att'yMOL No. 2006-26), the Brown Act provides various remedies for violation of its provisions but by implementing bylaws and operating in compliance with this Policy, planning groups will be considered to be in substantial compliance with the Brown Act. Any planning group, or any of its individual members, may seek assistance and training, from the City Attorney to conform with the Brown Act.

Section 1. Indemnification and Representation

A recognized community planning group and its duly elected or appointed members have a right to representation by the City Attorney and a right to indemnification by the City under Ordinance O-17086 NS if: the claim or action against them resulted from their obligation to advise and assist the City and its agencies with land use matters as specified in Policy 600-24, Article II, Section 1; their conduct was in conformance with Policy 600-24 and the Bylaws of the community planning group; and all findings specified in the ordinance can be made.

Section 2. Brown Act Remedies

The Brown Act includes civil remedies (Brown Act sections 54960 through 54960) and criminal penalties (Brown Act section 54959) for violation of its provisions. Thus planning groups are encouraged to proactively cure violations themselves. This is to prevent legal actions that would void planning group actions, and it assures good faith, voluntary compliance with the Brown Act.

Both individual members of a planning group, as well as the planning group as a whole, could potentially be subject to civil remedies. Civil remedies may include relief to prevent or stop violations of the Brown Act, or to void past actions of the planning group, and may in some cases include payment of attorneys fees.

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Individual planning group members may potentially face criminal misdemeanor charges for attending a meeting where action is taken in violation of the Brown Act, but only if the member intended to deprive the public of information which the member knew or had reason to know the public was entitled. Action taken includes collective decisions or promises, and also includes tentative decisions, but does not include mere deliberation without taking some action. Alleged violations will be reviewed and evaluated on a case-by-case basis.

Any planning group, or any of its individual members, may seek assistance, as well as training, from the City Attorney to better understand, to implement, and comply with the Brown Act.

Section 3. Council Policy 600-24 Violations and Remedies

Council Policy 600-24 provides various remedies for violation of its provisions by recognized community planning groups or their elected members. Where a planning group does not cure a violation by itself, it may forfeit its status as a recognized advisory body and lose its right to indemnification and defense by the City.

Alleged Violations by a Member of a Recognized Community Planning Group

In the case of an alleged violation of this Policy or a recognized community planning group's adopted bylaws by a planning group member, the planning group shall conduct an investigation consistent with the Administrative Guidelines and adopted planning group bylaws.

If the planning group, after a thorough investigation, determines that the individual member has violated a provision of this Policy or the planning group's bylaws, the planning group shall, where feasible, seek a remedy that corrects the violation and allows the member to remain as a member of the planning group.

If corrective action or measures are not feasible, the planning group may remove a member by a two-thirds vote of the planning group. The vote to remove the group member shall occur at a regularly scheduled public meeting subject to the procedures outlined in the Administrative Guidelines and in adopted planning group bylaws.

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A member found to be not in compliance with the provisions of this Policy not subject to Brown Act or adopted bylaws risks loss of indemnification [legal protection and representation] pursuant to Ordinance No. O-17086 NS, as discussed further in Article X, Section 1, and any future amendments thereto.

**Alleged Violations by a Recognized Community Planning Group**

In case the of an alleged violation of this Policy or adopted planning group bylaws by a recognized community planning group as a whole or multiple members of the planning group, the violation shall be forwarded in writing to the City for investigation by the Mayor's office. The City will engage in a dialogue with the planning group, determining the validity of the complaint, and seeking resolution of the issue or dispute.

If a violation against a recognized community planning group as a whole is proven and there is a failure of the planning group to take corrective action, the planning group will forfeit its rights to represent its community as a community planning group recognized under Council Policy 600-24. Such a determination resulting in the forfeiture of a seated group's rights to represent its community shall be based on a recommendation by the Mayor's office to the City Council. A planning group shall not forfeit its recognized status until there is an action by the City Council to remove the status. The City Council may also prescribe conditions under which official recognition will be reinstated.

A planning group found to be out of compliance with the provisions of Council Policy 600-24 that are not subject to the Brown Act or with its adopted bylaws risks loss of indemnification [legal protection and representation] pursuant to Ordinance No. O-17086 NS.

**HISTORY:**

Amended by Resolution R-300940 - 10/17/2005

Amended by Resolution R-302671 - 05/22/2007

Amended by Resolution R-307347 - 04/05/2012

Attachment "Bylaws Shell"



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**Attachment – Bylaws Shell**

***[CPG NAME] Bylaws  
Amended [insert date]***

**ARTICLE I Name**

- Section 1. The official name of this organization is the *[insert CPG name]*.
- Section 2. All activities of this organization shall be conducted in its official name.
- Section 3. The community planning area boundaries for the *[insert CPG name]* are the boundaries of the *[insert community name]* community, as shown on Exhibit "A."
- Section 4. Meetings of the *[insert CPG name]* shall be held within these boundaries, except that when the *[insert CPG name]* does not have a meeting facility within its boundary that is accessible to all members of the public, they may meet at the closest meeting facility.
- Section 5. The official positions and opinions of the *[insert CPG name]* shall not be established or determined by any organization other than the planning group, nor by any individual member of the planning group other than one authorized to do so by the planning group.

**ARTICLE II Purpose of Community Planning Group and General Provisions**

- Section 1. The *[insert CPG name]* has been formed and recognized by the City Council to make recommendations to the City Council, Planning Commission, City staff, and other governmental agencies on land use matters, specifically concerning the preparation of, adoption of, implementation of, or amendment to, the General Plan or a land use plan when a plan relates to the *[insert community name]* community boundaries. The planning group also advises on other land use matters as requested by the City or other governmental agency.

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- Section 2. In reviewing individual development projects, the *[insert CPG name]* should focus such review on conformance with the adopted community plan and/or the General Plan. Preliminary comments on projects may be submitted to the City during the project review process. Whenever possible, the formal planning group recommendation should be submitted no later than the end of the public review period offered by the environmental review process. Upon receipt of plans for projects with substantive revisions, the planning group may choose to rehear the project and may choose to provide a subsequent formal recommendation to the City.
- Section 3. All activities of the *[insert CPG name]* shall be nonpartisan and nonsectarian and shall not discriminate against any person or persons by reason of race, color, sex, age, creed or national origin, or sexual orientation, or physical or mental disability. In addition, meeting facilities must be accessible to disabled persons.
- Section 4. The *[insert CPG name]* shall not take part in, officially or unofficially, or lend its influence in, the election of any candidate for political office. Elected members shall not identify affiliation with a planning group when endorsing candidates for public office. The planning group may take a position on a ballot measure.
- Section 5. Pursuant to the provisions of City Council Policy 600-5, the *[insert CPG name]'s* failure to respond to the City's request for input on the preparation of, adoption of, implementation of, or amendment to, the General Plan or a community, precise, or specific plan, or failure to review and reply to the City in a timely manner on development projects shall result in the forfeiture of rights to represent the *[insert community name]* community for these purposes. Such a determination resulting in the forfeiture of rights to represent the community for these purposes shall be made only by the City Council upon the recommendation of the Mayor's Office.
- Section 6. The *[insert CPG name]* operates under the authority of the Ralph M. Brown Act which requires that meetings of the planning group are open and accessible to the public. In addition, Council Policy 600-24 "Standard Operating Procedures and Responsibilities of Recognized Community Planning Groups" and these bylaws govern the operations of the planning group. Several provisions of these bylaws constitute Brown Act requirements as outlined in the Policy.

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In addition, the Administrative Guidelines provide explanations of the Policy's minimum standard operating procedures and responsibilities of this planning group. *Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised* is used when the Policy, the Administrative Guidelines, and these bylaws do not address an area of concern or interest.

Section 7. The *[insert CPG name]* may propose amendments to these bylaws by majority vote of the elected members of the planning group. Proposed amendments shall be submitted to the offices of the Mayor and City Attorney for review and approval. Any proposed amendments that are inconsistent with Council Policy 600-24 shall not be approved by the Mayor and City Attorney and shall be forwarded to the City Council President who shall docket the matter for Council consideration. Bylaw amendments are not valid until approved by the City.

**ARTICLE III Community Planning Group Organizations**

Section 1. The *[insert CPG name]* shall consist of: INSERT a specific number between 12-20 and CHOOSE ONE OPTION: (A.) elected; or (B.) elected and appointed members to represent the community. These members of the planning group shall constitute the officially recognized community planning group for the purpose of these bylaws and Council Policy 600-24.

Section 2. Council Policy 600-24 requires that elected members of the *[insert CPG name]* shall, to the extent possible, be representative of the various geographic sections of the community and diversified community interests.

On the *[insert CPG name]* elected seats are filled: CHOOSE ONE OPTION: (A.) by any eligible member identified below. There is no further restriction on the distribution of seats among interests in the community; or (B.) by distribution of seats among the following interests that represent the community: \_\_\_ seats for property owners; \_\_\_ seats for residents; and \_\_\_ seats for business representatives. [go on to describe any further segmentation of these overall categories]; or (C.) by a geographic distribution of seats among [census tracts or neighborhoods or other geographic subdivisions] as follows: \_\_\_ seats for [area]; \_\_\_ seats for [area]; etc. [go on to describe any further segmentation of these geographic seats].

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Planning group members shall be elected by and from eligible members of the community. To be an eligible community member an individual must be at least 18 years of age, and shall be affiliated with the community as a:

- (1) property owner, who is an individual identified as the sole or partial owner of record, or their designee, of a real property (either developed or undeveloped), within the community planning area, or
- (2) resident, who is an individual whose primary address of residence is an address in the community planning area, or
- (3) local business person, who is a local business or not-for-profit owner, operator, or designee at a non-residential real property address in the community planning area.

An individual may become an eligible member of the community by: CHOOSE ONE OPTION: (A.) attending [insert one, two or three] meeting/s of the [insert CPG name] and submitting [identify whether demonstration of eligibility may be accomplished by an application and/or by documented meeting attendance] prior to the March general election; or (B.) demonstrating qualifications to be an eligible member of the community to the planning group Secretary or Election Committee prior to the March election or at the time of voting.

Once eligibility to vote is established, an individual remains an eligible member of the community until a determination is made that the individual does not meet the planning group's criteria and formal action is taken by the planning group. However, the [insert CPG name] shall require proof of eligibility during elections.

INSERT IF APPLICABLE: in addition to elected members, the [insert CPG name] has \_\_\_ appointed seats to better represent specific interests of the community. This/these seat(s) are appointed by \_\_\_\_\_ [identify appointing agency]. Appointed seats are: CHOOSE ONE OPTION: (A.) counted in the [insert number of members] planning group membership and vote on planning group business; or, (B.) are not counted in the \_\_\_ [insert number of members] planning group membership and function in an advisory capacity.

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Section 3. Members of the *[insert CPG name]* shall be elected to serve for fixed terms of: **CHOOSE ONE OPTION: (A.) 2 years; or (B.) 3 years; or (C.) 4 years** with expiration dates during alternate years to provide continuity.

No person may serve on the planning group for more than: **CHOOSE ONE OPTION: (A.) eight; or (B.) nine consecutive years.**

The: **CHOOSE ONE OPTION: (A.) eight; or (B.) nine** year limit refers to total maximum consecutive years of service time, not to individual seats held.

After a one-year break in service as a planning group member, an individual who had served for: **CHOOSE ONE OPTION: (A.) eight; or (B.) nine** consecutive years shall again be eligible for election to the planning group.

The planning group will actively seek new members to the extent feasible. If not enough new members are found to fill all vacant seats the planning group may retain some members who have already served for: **CHOOSE ONE OPTION: (A.) eight; or (B.) nine** consecutive years to continue on the planning group without a break in service. Refer to Council Policy 600-24 Article III, Section 4 for further clarification.

Section 4. A member of the *[insert CPG name]* must retain eligibility during the entire term of service.

Section 5. A member of the *[insert CPG name]* found to be out of compliance with the provisions of Council Policy 600-24 or the planning groups adopted bylaws risks loss of indemnification [legal protection and representation] pursuant to Ordinance No. O-17086 NS, and any future amendments thereto.

Section 6. Some provisions of these bylaws constitute requirements under the Brown Act, as outlined in Council Policy 600-24. A member of the *[insert CPG name]* who participates in a meeting of the planning group where actions are alleged to have been in violation of the Brown Act may be subject to civil or criminal consequences.

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**ARTICLE IV Vacancies**

Section 1. The *[insert CPG name]* shall find that a vacancy exists upon receipt of a resignation in writing from one of its members or upon receipt of a written report from the planning group's secretary reporting the third consecutive absence or fourth absence in the 12-month period of April through March each year, of a member(s) from the planning groups regular meetings.

Section 2. Vacancies that may occur on the *[insert CPG name]* shall be filled not later than 120 days following the date of the determination of the vacancy. The term of office of any member filling a vacancy shall be for the balance of the vacated term.

The *[insert CPG name]* shall fill vacancies at the time the vacancies are declared *[provide detail and timeframe]*. Vacancies shall be filled by: **CHOOSE ONE OPTION: (A.) selection by planning group members at the time the vacancies are declared. [provide detail and timeframe]; or (B.) an advertised general election pursuant to Article V. [provide detail and timeframe].**

Section 3. When the *[insert CPG name]* is unable to fill a vacancy within 120 days, as specified above, and the planning group has more than twelve members, either the seat may remain vacant until the next planning group election, or these bylaws may be amended to permit decreased membership to a minimum of 12 members. If a vacancy remains for more than 60 days from the time a vacancy is declared, and there are less than 12 elected planning group members in good standing, the planning group shall report in writing the efforts made to fill the vacancy to the City. If, after 60 additional days, the planning group membership has not reached 12 members, the planning group will be deemed inactive until it has attained at least 12 members in good standing.

**ARTICLE V Elections**

Section 1. General elections of *[insert CPG name]* members shall be held during the month of March in accordance with the elections procedures found in Exhibit \_\_\_ of these bylaws.

The *[insert CPG name]*'s general elections shall be held: **CHOOSE ONE OPTION: (A.) annually; or (B.) every two years.**

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The deadline to qualify for candidacy in the March general election shall be prior to the February noticed regular or special meeting of the full planning group membership preceding the election. The planning group's Election subcommittee shall be established no later than January and shall begin soliciting eligible community members to become candidates. In February, the Election subcommittee shall present to the planning group a complete list of interested candidates collected up to that point in time. Candidates may be added at the February meeting. A candidate forum may be advertised and held at the February meeting.

In order to be a candidate in the March election, an eligible member of the community [see Article III, Section 2] must have documented attendance at: **CHOOSE ONE OPTION: (A.) one; or (B.) two; or (C.) three** meeting/s of the *[insert CPG name]*'s last 12 meetings prior to the February regular meeting preceding the election.

Section 2. The *[insert CPG name]* shall make a good faith effort to utilize means appropriate to publicize the planning group's eligibility requirements for candidacy and the upcoming elections.

In the election process, the planning group shall seek enough new candidates to exceed the number of seats open for election in order to allow those who have served for: **CHOOSE ONE OPTION: (A.) eight; (B.) nine** consecutive years to leave the group for at least one year.

The *[insert CPG name]* holds its election: **CHOOSE ONE OPTION: (A.) at the March regular meeting. [provide details]; or (B.) at a special meeting in March. [provide details]; or (C.) at multiple locations the day of the regular March meeting [provide details]; or (D.) at multiple locations prior to the regular March meeting. [provide details]; or (E.) on multiple days prior to the regular March meeting. [provide details]; or (F.) utilizing a combination of mail-in ballots and voting at the regular March meeting. [provide details]**

**INCLUDE IF 'E' SELECTED:** The *[insert CPG name]* shall submit procedures to vote on more than one day to the Mayor and the City Attorney 45 days in advance of the 1<sup>st</sup> day of voting for review and approval.

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The *[insert CPG name]* will require proof of identity of those eligible community members who are seeking to vote in the election. The planning group shall ensure that voting is only by eligible members of the community.

The ballot presented to eligible community members to vote will clearly identify which seats individual candidates are running for, how many candidates can be selected, whether there are limitations on which candidates various categories of eligible community members can vote for and which candidates, if any, must receive a 2/3 majority of the vote due to service beyond eight or nine consecutive years of service.

The *[insert CPG name]* planning group's policy related to write-in candidates is that: **CHOOSE ONE OPTION: (A.) write-in candidates are not allowed; or (B.) write-in candidates are allowed.** If it is later determined that the write-in candidate is ineligible, any vote cast for an ineligible write-in candidate is an invalid vote and will not be counted.

Section 3. Voting shall be by secret written ballot. Proxy voting for elections is not allowed under any circumstances. Development and promotion of "slates" of candidates is contrary to the intent of Council Policy 600-24 and is not allowed.

Section 4. The *[insert CPG name]*'s election becomes final after announcing the election results: **CHOOSE ONE OPTION: (A.) at the conclusion of the noticed, regular March monthly planning group meeting; or (B.) at a noticed, special meeting of the planning group prior to the start of the regular April monthly meeting.** The Chair is responsible for preparing, certifying and forwarding the election report to the City. New members shall be seated in April at the start of the regular meeting in order to allow their full participation as elected members at the April planning group meeting.

Any challenge to the election results must be filed with the chair of the Elections subcommittee in writing within 24 hours of the counting of the ballots in order to allow enough time to resolve the issue.



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Section 5. Article VIII, Section 1(e) contains all voting procedures, including: CHOOSE ALL THAT APPLY: voting time/s; voting locations/s; voting eligibility; candidate eligibility; elections committee establishment and responsibilities; promotion of elections; counting votes [plurality, etc.]; ballots; write-in candidates; poll locations/s; mail-in ballots [if applicable]; managing polls and counting ballots; reporting election results to the Chair, and, election challenge criteria and procedures.

**ARTICLE VI Community Planning Group and Planning Group Member Duties**

Section 1. It is the duty of the *[insert CPG name]* to cooperatively work with the City throughout the planning process, including but not limited to the formation of long-range community goals, objectives and proposals or the revision thereto for inclusion in a General or Community Plan.

It is the duty of all planning group members to conduct official business of the planning group in a public setting. It is recognized that the officers of the planning group may oversee administrative business of the planning group, such as the assembling of the draft agenda, in preparation for public discussions. However, all substantive discussions about agenda items or possible group positions on agenda items shall occur at the noticed planning group meetings.

It is the duty of a planning group as a whole, and of each individual member, to refrain from conduct that is detrimental to the planning group or its purposes under Council Policy 600-24. No member shall be permitted to disturb the public meeting so as to disrupt the public process as set forth on the planning group's agenda.

Section 2. **(a) Meeting Procedures**

It shall be the duty of each member of the *[insert CPG name]* to attend all planning group meetings.

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(i) **REGULAR AGENDA POSTING** - At least 72 hours before a regular meeting, the agenda containing a brief general description of each agenda item shall be posted. The brief general description of each agenda item need not exceed 20 words per item unless the item is complex. The agenda shall also provide notice of the date, time and location of the meeting. The agenda shall be posted in a place freely accessible to the general public and shall include information on how a request for accessible accommodation may be made.

The listing of the agenda item shall include the intended action of the planning group regarding that item [e.g., information item, action item].

(ii) **PUBLIC COMMENT**- Any interested member of the public may comment on agenda items during regular or special planning group meetings. In addition, each agenda for a regular planning group meeting shall allow for a public comment period at the beginning of the meeting for items not on the agenda but are within the scope of authority of the planning group. Planning group members may make brief announcements or reports to the planning group on their own activities under the public comment section of the agenda. The planning group may adopt time limits for public comment to ensure operational efficiencies.

(iii) **ADJOURNMENTS AND CONTINUANCES** – If the *[insert CPG name]* does not convene a regularly scheduled meeting, there shall be a copy of the "Notice of Adjournment" of the meeting posted on or near the door of the place where the adjourned meeting was to be held within 24 hours after the time the meeting was to be held.

If a meeting is adjourned because less than a quorum was present, a new regular meeting agenda must be prepared. If a meeting is adjourned because no members of the planning group were present, the subsequent meeting, if not a regular meeting, must be noticed as if a special meeting.

(iv) **CONTINUED ITEMS** - If an item is continued from a prior regular meeting to a subsequent meeting more than 5 days from the original meeting, a new agenda must be prepared as if a regular meeting; otherwise the original meeting agenda is adequate.

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(v) CONSENT AGENDA - For items to be considered for a “Consent Agenda” all of the following are required:

1. A subcommittee of the planning group has discussed the item at a noticed subcommittee meeting,
2. All interested members of the public were given an opportunity to address the subcommittee, and
3. The item has not substantially changed since the subcommittee’s consideration.

The comments of the subcommittee and those made by interested members of the public should be reflected in the minutes of the subcommittee. Any interested member of the public may comment on a consent agenda item. Any interested member of the public may take a consent agenda item off the consent agenda by request.

(vi) QUORUM AND PUBLIC ATTENDANCE - A quorum, defined as a majority of non-vacant seats of a planning group, must be present in order to conduct business, to vote on projects, and to take actions at regular or special planning group meetings.

No member of the public shall be required, as a condition of attendance at any meeting of the planning group, to register or provide any other information. Any attendance list or request for information shall clearly state that completion of such information is voluntary. No member of the public may be charged a fee for admittance.

(vii) DEVELOPMENT PROJECT REVIEW - The *[insert CPG name]* may not, as a condition of placing an item on the agenda, require applicants to submit additional information and materials beyond which the applicant has been required to submit as part of the City's project review application process.

When reviewing development projects, the planning group shall allow participation of affected property owners, residents and business establishments within proximity to the proposed development.

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The planning group shall directly inform the project applicant or representative in advance each time that such review will take place and provide the applicant with an opportunity to present the project.

(viii) ACTION ON AGENDA ITEMS - An item not noticed on the agenda may be added if either two-thirds of the entire elected membership, or every member if less than two-thirds are present, determine by a vote that there is a need to take an immediate action, but only if the need for action came to the attention of the planning group subsequent to the agenda being posted.

The *[insert CPG name]* planning group's chair: CHOOSE ONE OPTION: (A.) fully participates in planning group discussions and votes on all action items; or (B.) participates in discussions but does not vote except to make or break a tie; or (C.) does not participate in discussions or vote on action items.

The planning group shall not engage in, or allow, secret ballot or proxy voting on any agenda item. Other methods of absentee voting on agenda items, such as by telephone or by e-mail are also prohibited.

Votes taken on agenda items shall reflect the positions taken by the elected or appointed positions on the planning group identified in Article III, Section 1 of Council Policy 600-24.

(ix) COLLECTIVE CONCURRENCE - Any attempt to develop a collective concurrence of the members of the *[insert CPG name]* as to action to be taken on an item by members of the planning group, either by direct or indirect communication, by personal intermediaries, by serial meetings, or by technological devices, is prohibited, other than at a properly noticed public meeting.

(x) SPECIAL MEETINGS - The chair of the *[insert CPG name]*, or a majority of planning group members, may call a special meeting. An agenda for a special meeting shall be specified as such, and shall be prepared and posted at least 24 hours before a special meeting.

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Each member of the planning group shall receive the written notice of the meeting at least 24 hours before the time of the meeting as specified in the notice unless the member files with the planning group secretary a written waiver of notice at, or prior to the time of, the meeting. Written notice shall be delivered to each local newspaper of general circulation and radio or television station requesting notice in writing at least 24 hours before the time of the meeting. The notice shall identify the business to be transacted or discussed at the meeting. No other business shall be considered at this meeting. Public testimony on agenda items must be allowed; however, the non-agenda public comment period may be waived.

(xi) EMERGENCY MEETINGS - Emergency meetings, requiring no public notice, are called for matters related to public health and safety. These matters are outside of the purview of the *[insert CPG name]* and are prohibited under this bylaws.

(xii) RIGHT TO RECORD - Any person attending a meeting of the *[insert CPG name]* must be allowed to record or photograph the proceedings in the absence of a reasonable finding by the planning group that the recording cannot continue without noise, illumination, or obstruction of view that constitutes, or would constitute, a persistent disruption of the meeting.

(xiii) DISORDERLY CONDUCT - In the event that any planning group meeting is willfully interrupted by a person or group of persons, so as to make the orderly conduct of the meeting infeasible, the planning group may first cause removal of the individual or individuals. If that is unsuccessful then the planning group may order the meeting room cleared and continue in session on scheduled agenda items without an audience, except that representatives of the media shall be allowed to remain. The planning group may also readmit an individual or individuals who were not responsible for the disruption.

**(b) Subcommittees**

The *[insert CPG name]* may establish standing and ad hoc subcommittees when their operation contributes to more effective discussions at regular planning group meetings.

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(i) STANDING SUBCOMMITTEES - Pursuant to the purpose of the *[insert CPG name]* as identified in Article II, Section 1, the planning group has established: CHOOSE ONE OPTION: (A.) no standing subcommittees but will create, as needed, an ad hoc subcommittee to address a particular planning or operational matter [such as the Elections subcommittee]; (B.) the following standing subcommittees [provide list including: number of members; duties; duration of subcommittee]; or (C.) a combination [provide information as in (A) or (B)].

(ii) AD HOC SUBCOMMITTEES - Ad hoc subcommittees may be established for finite period of time to review more focused issue areas and shall be disbanded following their review.

(iii) SUBCOMMITTEE COMPOSITION – Subcommittees shall contain a majority of members who are members of the planning group.

Non-members, who are duly appointed by a planning group to serve on a subcommittee, may be indemnified by the City in accordance with Ordinance No. O-17086 NS, and any future amendments thereto, provided they satisfy any and all requirements of the Administrative Guidelines.

(iv) RECOMMENDATIONS – Subcommittee recommendations must be brought forth to the full planning group for formal vote at a noticed public meeting. In no case may a committee or subcommittee recommendation be forwarded directly to the City as the formal recommendation of the planning group without a formal vote of the full planning group.

**(c) Abstentions and Recusals**

(i) RECUSALS - Any member of the *[insert CPG name]* with a direct economic interest in any project that comes before the planning group or its subcommittees must disclose to the planning group that economic interest, and must recuse from voting and not participate in any manner as a member of the planning group for that item on the agenda.

(ii) ABSTENTIONS – In limited circumstances, planning group members may abstain from either voting on an action item, or from participating and voting on an action item. The member must state, for the record, the reason for the abstention.

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**(d) Meeting Documents and Records**

(i) AGENDA BY MAIL - Requests to mail copies of a regular agenda, and any accompanying material, shall be granted. Such materials shall be mailed when the agenda is posted, or upon distribution to a majority of the members of the community planning group, whichever occurs first. A request to receive agendas and materials may be made for each calendar year and such request is valid for that entire year, but must be renewed by January 1 of the following year. A cost-recovery fee may be charged for the cost of providing this service.

(ii) AGENDA AT MEETING - Any written documentation, prepared or provided by City staff, applicants, or planning group members, that is distributed at the planning group meeting, shall be made available upon request for public inspection without delay. If such material is distributed at the planning group meeting, then it shall be made available upon request at the meeting. If such material is prepared by someone other than City staff, applicants, or planning group members, or is received from a member of the public during public testimony on an agenda item, then the material shall be made available for public inspection at the conclusion of the meeting. A cost-recovery fee may be charge for the cost of reproducing any the materials requested by an individual or individuals.

(iii) MINUTES – For each planning group meeting, a report of *[insert CPG name]* member attendance and a copy of approved minutes shall be retained by the planning group, and shall be available for public inspection. The minutes of each planning group meeting shall include the votes taken on each action item and reflect the names for, against and abstaining when the vote is not unanimous. Recusals shall also be recorded. Minutes should record speakers and public testimony, and whether each project applicant (whose project was subject to planning group action) appeared before the planning group. If an applicant did not appear before the planning group then the meeting minutes must indicate the date when and type of notification (e.g. electronic, telephonic, facsimile) provided to the applicant requesting his or her appearance at the planning group meeting. A copy of the approved minutes shall be submitted to the City within 14 days after approval by the planning group.

The *[insert CPG name]* is not required to audio or videotape meetings but if recordings are made, they are subject to a public request to inspect without charge. A cost-recovery fee may be charged for copies of recordings.

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(iv) RECORDS RETENTION – *[insert CPG name]* records must be retained for public review. City staff will establish a records retention schedule and method for collection and storage of materials that will be utilized by all planning groups.

Section 3. It shall be the duty of the *[insert CPG name]* and its members to periodically seek community-wide understanding of and participation in the planning and implementation process as specified in Article II, Section 1. The planning group shall give due consideration to all responsible community attitudes insofar as these are deemed to be in the best long range interest of the community at large.

Section 4. It shall be the duty of the *[insert CPG name]* to maintain a current, up-to-date roster of the names, terms, and category/qualifications of planning group members in its possession, and to forward the current roster, as well as any updates, to the City. The planning group must also submit to the City, by the end of March each year, an annual report of accomplishments for the past calendar year and anticipated objectives for the coming year related to Article II, Section 1 above. Rosters and annual reports constitute disclosable records under the Brown Act.

Section 5. The *[insert CPG name]* may develop a policy for financial contributions from the citizens of the community for the purposes of furthering the efforts of the planning group to promote understanding and participation in the planning process. However, no membership dues shall be required and no fee may be charged as a condition of attendance at any planning group meeting. All contributions must be voluntarily made, and no official planning group correspondence may be withheld based on any individual's desire to not make a voluntary contribution.

Section 6. Each elected *[insert CPG name]* member is required to attend an orientation training session administered by the City as part of planning group and individual member indemnification pursuant to Ordinance No. O-17086 NS, and any future amendments thereto. Newly seated planning group members must complete a basic orientation training session within 12 months of being elected or appointed to a planning group or the member will be ineligible to serve.



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**ARTICLE VII Planning Group Officers**

- Section 1. The officers of the *[insert CPG name]* shall be elected from and by the members of the planning group. Said officers shall consist of a Chairperson, Vice Chairperson and Secretary. **OPTION: insert any other officer as defined by the planning group.** The length of an officer's term shall be: **OPTION: insert duration of term,** except that no person may serve in the same planning group office for more than eight or nine consecutive years. After a period of one year in which that person did not serve as an officer that person shall again be eligible to serve as an officer.
- Section 2. Chairperson. The Chairperson shall be the principal officer of a recognized community planning group and shall preside over all planning group and communitywide meetings organized by the planning group. **OPTION: insert any further duties as defined by planning group. Example duties would be setting the agenda, point of contact for development applicants, etc.**
- Section 3. Vice Chairperson. In the absence of the Chairperson, the Vice Chairperson shall perform all the duties and responsibilities of the Chairperson. **OPTION: insert any further duties as defined by planning group.**
- Section 4. Secretary. The Secretary shall be responsible for the planning group's correspondence, attendance records, and minutes and actions [including identification of those planning group members that constitute a quorum, who vote on an action item, and who may abstain or recuse and the reasons], and shall assure that planning group members and members of the public have access to this information. The Secretary may take on these responsibilities or may identify individuals to assist in these duties. **OPTION: insert any further duties as defined by planning group.**
- Section 5. The Chairperson shall be a recognized community planning group's representative to the Community Planners Committee (CPC). However, by vote of the planning group, a planning group member other than the chair may be selected as the official representative to CPC with the same voting rights and privileges as the chair. Designation of a member other than the chair for either representative, as well as for the planning group's alternate to CPC shall be forwarded in writing to the staff representative to CPC prior to extension of voting rights and member attendance.

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Section 6. The *[insert CPG name]* officers and representatives to the CPC shall promptly disseminate to all elected planning group members pertinent information that is received by the planning group regarding its official business.

**ARTICLE VIII Planning Group Policies and Procedures**

Section 1. The *[insert CPG name]* bylaws incorporate policies and procedures directed by Article I through VII of Council Policy 600-24. These bylaws also contain some policies and procedures recommended in Article VIII of Council Policy 600-24. This bylaws Article lists additional procedures which are found in Exhibits attached to the bylaws.

Any procedures found in exhibits have the same effect as if they were incorporated directly into Articles I through VII of the bylaws. They are separated into exhibits for ease of understanding.

Listed procedures are grouped by category as follows: Community Participation; Planning Group Composition; Conduct of Meetings; Member and Planning Group Responsibilities; and Elections.

**(a) Community Participation**

The following are the *[insert CPG name]* procedures regarding community participation:

OPTION: Detail any community participation procedures the planning group has.

OPTION: List actions or state intent of planning group to grow interest in planning group activities and to encourage diversity.

NOTE: If it is necessary, separate procedures can be adopted by the planning group for topics in this Section.

**(b) Planning Group Composition**

The following are the *[insert CPG name]* procedures pursuant to Article III, Section 2 regarding planning group composition:

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OPTION: If planning group anticipates conversion of seats from one category to another, detail here.

OPTION: If any seats are appointed [rather than elected], discuss appointment process here.

OPTION: Refer to form used for determining eligible community member

**(c) Conduct of Meetings**

The following are the *[insert CPG name]* procedures regarding conduct of planning group meetings:

OPTION: Discuss efforts by the planning group to notice meeting agendas.

OPTION: Discuss meeting operation, including public comment [when on the agenda and how much time], how consent items are handled, maintaining a civil meeting environment, how the public/audience participates in discussion items on the agenda; order of items on the agenda.

OPTION: Discuss specifics of subcommittee membership and operation.

OPTION: Discuss operation of the planning group's development review subcommittee operations.

OPTION: Discuss the Elections Subcommittee.

OPTION: Discuss any detail about the chair's voting or non-voting option that isn't discussed in Article VI, Section 5.

**(d) Member and Planning Group Responsibilities**

The following are the *[insert CPG name]* procedures regarding member and planning group responsibilities:

OPTION: Discuss how the planning group's positions may be represented to the City on planning issues that are not project review recommendations.

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OPTION: Discuss internal bylaws amendment process, prior to submittal to the City staff.

OPTION: Discuss when procedures might be developed.

OPTION: Discuss any voluntary financial contributions, including purpose and use.

OPTION: Discuss any regular participation on other committees or with other organizations.

**(e) Elections**

The Elections Handbook, which is an attachment to the Administrative Guidelines, provides general guidance for planning group elections. The following are procedures pertaining to the elections provisions of these bylaws:

OPTION: Specifically detail procedures for ALL policies listed in Article V, Sections 1 and 2 related to planning group elections and voting.

**ARTICLE IX Rights and Liabilities of Recognized Community Planning Groups**

Section 1. Indemnification and Representation. The *[insert CPG name]* and its duly elected or appointed members have a right to representation by the City Attorney and a right to indemnification by the City under Ordinance O-17086 NS, and any future amendments thereto, if the claim or action against them resulted from their obligation to advise and assist the City and its agencies with land use matters as specified in Policy 600-24, Article II, Section 1; their conduct was in conformance with Policy 600-24 and these bylaws; and all findings specified in the ordinance can be made.

Section 2. Brown Act Remedies. The *[insert CPG name]* and its duly elected members may be subject to both Council Policy 600-24 violations as described in Section 3 below and penalties provided for in the Brown Act. The Brown Act includes criminal penalties and civil remedies. Both individual members of the planning group, as well as the planning group itself, may be subject to civil remedies.

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Under certain circumstances, individual planning group members may face criminal misdemeanor charges for attending a meeting where action is taken in violation of the Brown Act, and where the member intended to deprive the public of information to which the member knows or has reason to know the public is entitled. Alleged violations will be reviewed and evaluated on a case-by-case basis.

Section 3. Council Policy 600-24 Violations and Remedies.

**(a) Alleged Violations by a Member of the *[insert CPG name]***

In cases of alleged violations of the *[insert CPG name]* bylaws or Council Policy 600-24 by a planning group member, the planning group may conduct an investigation consistent with the Administrative Guidelines and these bylaws.

A complaint that an individual member of a planning group violated one or more provisions of the planning group's bylaws or Council Policy 600-24 may be submitted to the planning group chair by any individual, including another planning group member. The complaint should be filed within 90 days of the alleged violation.

If, after a thorough investigation, the planning group determines that the individual member has violated a provision of these bylaws or Council Policy 600-24, the planning group shall, where feasible, seek a remedy that corrects the violation and allows the member to remain as a member of the planning group.

If corrective action or measures are not feasible, the planning group may remove a member by a two-thirds vote of the planning group. The vote to remove the group member shall occur at a regularly scheduled public meeting subject to the procedures outlined in the Administrative Guidelines and these bylaws.

If the planning group member found to be out of compliance with the provisions of these bylaws or Council Policy 600-24, the planning group risks loss of indemnification [legal protection and representation] pursuant to Ordinance No. O-17086 NS, and any future amendments thereto.

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Investigation procedures for elected member violations are outlined below:

Any action by the *[insert CPG name]* to discipline or remove a member must occur at a scheduled planning group meeting and be advertised on the agenda as an action item. Due to the significant nature of removing an elected member, and to ensure a fair and public process, the procedures for investigating a violation of a member are listed below:

Documenting a violation:

- A complaint that a violation of bylaws of Council Policy 600-24 has occurred will be presented to the planning group chair. If the complaint is about the chair, it may be presented to any other officer of the planning group.
- The complaint should be detailed enough to provide a description of, and timeframe within which, the alleged violation was committed and who was responsible for the violation.
- The complaint should provide a citation of the bylaws or Council Policy 600-24 provisions of which the action is claimed to violate. If the complaint is from someone other than another planning group member, the chair [or other officer] may assist in providing appropriate citations to assist the complainant.
- The chair will confer with the planning group officers [exception: if an officer is the subject of the grievance or has a business or personal relationship with the alleged violator] regarding the complaint.
- The chair shall create a written record of the complaint and alleged violation to share with the alleged violator.

Procedures for administering and acting on investigating a violation: While the authority for this process rests with this planning group, City staff may be contacted for assistance at any point in the process.

- Once the information about an alleged violation is completed in writing, the chair, with assistance from the planning group officers, will meet and talk with the planning group member against whom the violation is alleged. The allegations will be presented and the planning group member shall be given opportunity for rebuttal.

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- If the chair, with assistance from the planning group officers, determines that no violation has actually occurred, the chair may record this in the written record of the complaint.
- If the chair, with assistance from the planning group officers, determines that a violation has occurred but the situation can be remedied either by action of the planning group or by the planning group member, then the chair will outline the necessary actions to achieve the remedy.
- If the chair, with assistance from the planning group officers, determines that the situation cannot be remedied and that the interests of the community and *[insert CPG name]* would best be served by the removal of the planning group member, then the chair shall set the matter for discussion at the next planning group meeting. The planning group member who committed the violation shall be given adequate notice about the meeting discussion, and will be given the opportunity to resign prior to docketing the matter for a planning group discussion.

Presenting a violation to the planning group:

- The matter of removing a seated planning group member will be placed on the planning group's agenda as a potential action item. Supporting materials from the chair or from the offending planning group member will be made available to the elected planning group members prior to the meeting.
- The matter will be discussed at the planning group's regular meeting with opportunity given to the planning group member who committed the violation to present their case and/or rebut documentation gathered by the chair with the assistance of the planning group officers. The member may also request a continuance of the item to gather more information to present to the planning group.
- At the end of the discussion, the planning group may, by a 2/3 vote, choose to remove the member.

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Recourse for expelled member:

- There is no appeal available to an elected planning group member removed by a 2/3 vote of their recognized community planning group.
- The planning group member's seat shall be immediately declared vacant and subject to provisions of Article IV.
- The removal of a planning group member by a 2/3 vote of their recognized community planning group will not prohibit the member from running for a planning group seat in future scheduled elections.

**(b) Alleged Violations Against the *[insert CPG name]* as a Whole**

In the case of an alleged violation of the planning group's bylaws or of Council Policy 600-24 by the planning group as a whole or multiple members of the planning group, the violation shall be forwarded in writing to the City. The Mayor's Office will engage in a dialogue with the planning group, determining the validity of the complaint, and seeking resolution of the issue or dispute. The *[insert CPG name]* will work with the City toward a solution and the planning group recognizes that, in accordance with Council Policy 600-24, the City may consult with the Community Planners Committee.

If a violation against the planning group as a whole is proven and there is a failure of the planning group to take corrective action, the planning group will forfeit its rights to represent its community as a community planning group recognized under Council Policy 600-24. Such a determination resulting in the forfeiture of a seated group's rights to represent its community shall be based on a recommendation by the Mayor's Office to the City Council. A planning group shall not forfeit its recognized status until there is an action by the City Council to remove the status. The City Council may also prescribe conditions under which official recognition will be reinstated.

If the planning group is found to be out of compliance with the provisions of this Policy not subject to the Brown Act or its adopted bylaws risks loss of indemnification [legal protection and representation] pursuant to Ordinance No. O-17086 NS, and any future amendments thereto.

Exhibit A: *[insert CPG name]* Boundary Map

Bylaws Shell Date: 6/1/07