



**Neighborhoods Commission  
of the City of San Jose**

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**Business of Building Communities**

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**Workproduct  
Development  
Process**

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**Summarized with Commissioner Edits: September 6, 2015**

**Neighborhoods Commission  
of the City of San Jose**

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## **Work Product Development Process**

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To: Chair, Neighborhoods Commission

cc: Staff, CMO  
Liaison, City Council  
City Attorney

# **Commission Work Product Development Process**

## **Introduction**

This document will enable commissioners, members of the community and city staff to work together effectively, inclusively and with greater ease by clarifying the work and expectations of the Commission.

It may be given to prospective Commissioners prior to elections or appointment to ensure comprehension of the work and responsibilities of the Commission.

This document enables faster on-boarding of new Commissioners, providing incoming commissioners a guide for effective use of Commission meetings and volunteer resources.

It will aid in development of best practices for a Commission entrusted with the voice of the people and help the Commission head off surprises and misunderstandings.

## **Purpose of the Commission**

As an important conduit for flow of information between City residents and City government, the Neighborhoods Commission is unique. Few large cities have a Commission rooted in City neighborhoods and empowered by City Council. The Neighborhoods Commission exists and operates with the permission of City Council and under supervision and support of City Manager's Office.

The 20-person volunteer Commission generally meets the second Wednesday of the month – except in July and December. In each Council District, delegates from the neighborhood associations caucus to select two Commissioners to serve a four year term.

With continuous focus on improving meeting effectiveness, 25 hours of annual meeting time enables the Commission to discuss and synthesize information and ideas on pressing issues regarding Budget, Public Safety, Transportation, Code Enforcement & Compliance and Quality of Life.

Each Commissioner will typically volunteer 5-10 or more hours a month with his/her neighborhood and fellow commissioners. Collectively, these thousands of hours of service provide one-of-a-kind outreach, critical thinking and support in making our City a great place to live and work.

## **The Work: What the Neighborhoods Commission Does**

The work of the Neighborhoods Commission is varied, complex and often time-sensitive. It is managed in conjunction with the City Manager's Office (CMO).

Guidelines, templates and examples of prior work are used to facilitate workflow, collaboration and full participation by all members of the Commission.

In August the Commission finalizes a workplan for the coming year. This one-to-two page plan has three major elements:

- Annual business of the NC:
  - Selection of a chairperson and other key positions;
  - Providing input into Mayor's Budget Plan;
  - Reporting the work of the Commission to the Council and neighborhoods
- Every-other-year business of the Commission:
  - Planning district caucus meeting and elections;
  - Onboarding new Commissioners to be seated
- Projects pertaining to the authorized scope of work of the NC related to Budget, Public Safety, Transportation, Code Enforcement & Compliance and Quality of Life.

Occasionally, the City Manager's Office, individual Commissioners or residents may request issues or projects to be undertaken by the Commission. Due to limited time, issues should have broad and long-lasting impacts on neighborhoods throughout San Jose to be considered by the Commission.

To assist in the work of the Commission, suggested examples, templates and Commissioner Feedback forms are provided in the Exhibits.

## **Selecting Work: How Issues are Selected**

Issues, concerns or Policy questions brought to the NC for consideration, whether by neighborhoods, Commissioners or the City should be noticed to the Chair of the Neighborhoods Commission three weeks before being considered for placement on the Agenda and should:

- Include an explanation, background of the subject, known relevant data and concerns or information published by the City Auditor's office;
- Include a specific, actionable request of the Commission (what is expected);
- Be made available to all Commissioners ten business days prior to requestor's presentation to the Commission;
- Or may be included as part of the Commission's annual work plan

In response to requested work brought before the Commission, each Commissioner:

- should receive the requestor's presentation and request with an open mind;
- should have a general understanding the issue;
- should be given the chance to develop notes questions and constructive thoughts;
- email comment to the CMO Staff

- **Commissioners will act in accordance with the Brown Act.**
- and give it fair consideration as a possible work project of the Commission

To promote full participation among Commissioners during the review process, a form or worksheet may be used to garner commissioner input relative to:

- the significance of the issue;
- its impact on their neighborhood and the City at large;
- its importance relative to work in process, planned or under consideration;
- and other comments and suggestions as appropriate.

## **Processing Work & Commissioner Participation**

Work of the Commission entails planning, organizing, researching and writing. An Ad-Hoc committee of Commissioners with skill, interest and time will collaborate to process and produce the final workproduct. Guidelines, templates and examples of prior work can make this process more efficient and effective.

Members of the Commission represent neighborhoods each Council District in San Jose. Each Commissioner brings his/her own passion, concerns and ideas in the service of making the City of better place to live. It is incumbent on the Commission to listen, consider all viewpoints and to be active and participate in Commission meetings.

Small, well-focused work groups can be effective at developing quality work in a timely manner. All Commissioners are expected to serve and contribute on one or more projects or tasks each year.

Each Commissioner has special skills and perspectives, both as a Commissioner of his/her district, and as a resident of the City. Committee members are advised to participate in projects and in roles where each feels he/she brings a special strength, is willing to learn, and give adequate time to participate fully.

Once a work task or project has been identified, Commissioners volunteer to serve on the project as an Adhoc committee member. A framework for processing that work is outlined below.

The Ad Hoc work committee shall consist of less than a quorum of the Commission. Participants meet as appropriate via face-to-face meetings, teleconference, video conference or email to plan, coordinate and process work, while keeping the Chair and City Manager's Office informed. Ad Hoc committees may include non-commissioners, including subject matter experts. The Ad Hoc committee must be led by a Commissioner, with any work product submitted by the Ad Hoc committee leader.

Other issues or projects may entail much less work; yet given the complexity and gravity of some issues this may take much more. The job of the Chair and the Commission is assess the requested issue or project and define the workproduct required and what that may entail.

The following is an example of how one project was processed:

Meeting #1 Kick off working meeting designed to:

- Define the scope and nature of the work product;
- Set a timeline for completion with major milestones;
- Agree on how the end product should look: its size, shape, structure, etc.;
- Divide up the work and discuss how to:
  - Develop research, survey, meet with Staff, refine expectations, etc.;
  - Process outreach, notice community, gather input (as required, if required);
  - Create rough drafts of the end product

Meeting #2 or more: Working meeting to:

- Revisit work schedule; refine it if necessary;
- Sharpen project scope and work product as required;
- Review progress; assess what's needed and next steps;
- Refine key elements and agree on DRAFT #\_\_
- Online by email, phone or both, work effort to:
  - Polish up latest draft;
  - Review with City Manager Office Staff as required;
  - Share the review and feedback with Ad Hoc Committee as appropriate
  - Revise and agree on revisions as needed;
  - Prepare final work product for Commission review and approval

Final Meeting: A face-to-face meeting of the Ad Hoc Commission to discuss what worked, what didn't work and what would work better for future projects.

## Exhibit A – Commissioner Feedback to Commission Chair

The Feedback form is used to encourage and enable the full range of each Commissioner's feedback. This feedback tool enables each Commissioner to share his/her view on the topics presented at the meeting. This tool also enables the Chair and leaders on specific issues time to absorb and synthesize feedback from across the entire Commission.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

What's Being Asked: \_\_\_\_\_

Please give this document to the Neighborhoods Commission Chair the night of the meeting.

### Questions:

1. What specific strengths or value does the idea presented bring to our City?
2. What risks or benefits does this idea present for our City?
3. What would you like to be sure the Work Product includes or highlights related to this issue?
4. What data should the Department and City Auditor use to manage this issue in the future?
5. How would you rank the **importance** of this issue to the future of San Jose over the next one, two or three generations?  
 Critical    Very important    Somewhat important    Little importance
6. How would you rank the **urgency** of this issue in light of all other matters before the Commission, Community or Council?  
 Drop everything for this    Fit it in this year    Consider it for next year
7. To become fully informed and respond appropriately, I see this issue requiring:  
 Much research and work;    Moderate amount;    Minimal work
8. In light my current volunteer workload and available time, is this an issue I would love to work on and give whatever time is required?  
 Yes;    Probably;    Don't know;    Not likely;    No

## **Exhibit B – Feedback & Timelines for Presenters to Commission**

The issues presented to the Neighborhoods Commission are complex and varied. Commissioners are generally not subject matter experts on the wide range of issues presented. The Commission often relies on the department or group presenting to provide context and data to enable comprehensive consideration of the topic presented.

The Commission cares about and wants to understand the important topic being presented.

To enable best use of Commission meetings, the Commission requests that presenters consider:

- What course of action do you want the Neighborhoods Commission to pursue (aka “what’s the ask”)
- Include Context:
  - > Why is this issue important to the City of San Jose? i.e. How does this impact public safety, transportation, quality of life and the financial health of the City?
  - > Who are or would be most affected by this issue and why?
  - > How would action on this issue impact or influence quality of life in San Jose for the next several generations?
- Providing numbers, facts, comparisons, best practices and such may seem obvious, but they are essential to enabling the Commission to understand and contextualize the issue.
- If possible, as appropriate to the issue, limit any presentation power point slides to 8. Backup information, data, examples and other material should be included in the advance information packet for Commissioners.
- Include pictures, graphs, visuals and video where possible. Limit the presentation to a brief summary of the issue focusing how action on this influences or impacts life in San Jose now for years to come.
- The twenty-member Commission typically has dozens of questions for each group of presenters. Where possible, test drive the presentation to non-subject matter experts and integrate the questions into the presentation.
- Provide any materials (an advance packet) to the CMO 3 weeks prior to the meeting so Commissioners can review and start to understand the important information to be presented prior to the Commission meeting.