

What Is A Neighborhood Council?

The question I am asked most often, when encountering someone who is hearing of the Mar Vista Community Council for the first time, is what does the Council do?

Although the Neighborhood Council system of L.A. is approaching its ten year mark, it is still finding its way in terms of how best it can represent the individual neighborhoods and communities of Los Angeles. On rare occasion the workings of individual councils actually break through and find their way onto the pages and airwaves of our local media. But for the most part we operate on a very local level, concerning ourselves with those issues and problems that only those who live on a particular street or neighborhood are aware. In these instances, our mission is to give voice to those stakeholders who otherwise would not have the means to get the attention of City Hall, and present their concerns to those who can actually make a difference. Likewise, a neighborhood council can sometimes facilitate the delivery of various City services to its stakeholders by engaging City departments in appropriate ways. And occasionally we can provide funds to assist in solving these issues, or moving a worthy project forward that is in need of financial assistance.

In addition, we provide a forum for all Mar Vista stakeholders to deliberate on issues of local and regional or city-wide consequence, and on occasion when consensus is reached, we communicate to political officials and government the results of those deliberations. This, of course, is an area where neighborhood councils must tread carefully, as there is always the danger of advocating for only a vocal few, rather than taking the time to fully discover the community consensus.

And sometimes a neighborhood council can act as an educational resource and conduit for various programs and activities that the City is providing to residents, or for activities that the community desires to increase the quality of life for our stakeholders.

And finally, neighborhood councils also provide a framework for increasing the community awareness and spirit of the stakeholders.

In all of these activities, the MVCC is nothing more than the combined energy of all the volunteers who choose to become involved in the process. The MVCC is only effective if stakeholders choose to become involved, both as elected leaders, and also as concerned residents who take the time to involve themselves in the activities, forums, and debates of the Council. It is my hope that many of you will choose to become even more involved in the future of your community.

Albert Olson
Chair
Mar Vista Community Council