

HOW TO CREATE A STRATEGIC PLAN FOR YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD COUNCIL

A strategic plan can act as a **living blueprint** for your Neighborhood Council (NC), outlining clear, actionable goals and the steps necessary to achieve them. The primary purpose of this guidance document is to provide a **structured, step-by-step methodology** for Neighborhood Council stakeholders—such as staff and/or board members—to gather the necessary content, build consensus, and ultimately **draft a comprehensive strategic plan** that enhances their NC's effectiveness and community impact. Below are 5 basic steps to creating a strategic plan for your NC.

1. Forge Strong Connections with Your Leadership

Start by building a solid relationship with your Neighborhood Council (NC) President and/or other active members, especially those on the executive board.

- **Find Your Groove:** Tailor your approach to what works best for you and your NC's unique style. Some ideas can be found in the NEA Best Practices document [here](#).
- **Routine Check-ins:** Schedule regular one-on-one meetings to keep alignment strong.
- **Stay Responsive:** Keep communication lines open and practice good customer service.

2. Become a Keen Observer at NC Meetings

Your meeting notes are a vital resource for spotting trends and opportunities.

- **Track Engagement:** Note the number of attendees to gauge community interest.
- **Identify Themes:** Jot down recurring "hot topics" that signal community priorities.
- **Seek Opportunities to Support:** Be proactive! Look for moments to lean in and offer assistance. Being proactive builds trust and establishes you as an essential resource, not just a reactive one.
- **Trust Your Instincts:** Be confident in the insights and observations you gather during the meeting.

3. Leverage the City's Data Power

Harness the wealth of information available on the various City of Los Angeles Dashboards [here](#).

- **Drill Down:** Explore the dashboards and learn how to filter the information to be as specific and relevant to your NC's jurisdiction as possible. (Note: If you are having trouble

navigating the dashboard(s), identify the best point of contact to provide you with an overview of the system and/or the information you need.)

- **Site Your Sources:** Use the databases to create initiatives for the strategic plan, but help build capacity by adding the source and data interpretation into the “comments.”

4. Engage with Government Partners

Reach out to the respective government representatives who work with your NC.

- **Create a Presence:** Introduce yourself, demonstrate that you are a partner, and take initiative to identify opportunities to collaborate
- **Send an Email:** You can find sample email templates [here](#) to help schedule a meeting or start strategic planning discussions.
 - **Follow Up:** It might take a few attempts. If email isn't working, try touching base with the representative in person at the NC meeting.
- **Pick Up the Phone:** Don't hesitate to make calls. Sometimes, the most productive strategic plan discussions happen over the phone with departments like LAFD, RAP, NCAD, and the City Clerk's Office.
- **Explore Department Websites:** Learn about the different programs and services available by interested city departments to help guide conversations.

5. Strategize Your Presentation Approach

Once the plan is ready, determine the most effective way to introduce it to the Board.

- **Template Ready:** Use the strategic plan template [here](#).
- **Tailor the Delivery:** Consider which presentation style will resonate best and drive action. Some of the successful presentation methods used previously include:
 - **General Board Meeting:** Presenting the draft plan to the full board, allowing a committee chair to commit to bringing it to their subsequent committee meetings for deeper discussion.
 - **Presidential Check-in:** Reviewing the plan privately with the President so they can distribute the information to the executive committee and collectively determine the next steps.
 - **Peer Example:** Providing a compelling sample of another Neighborhood Council's completed strategic plan to illustrate the possibilities.

Take Into Consideration

- Clearly communicate that EmpowerLA does not mandate the strategic plan, nor is the NC required to take action on the strategic plan.
- Emphasize that the draft strategic plan is exactly as it's described a draft. Although the strategic plan is tailored to that specific NC, NCs know their communities best, so they are encouraged to thoroughly review and edit as they see fit.
- Preparing a strategic plan is laborious. The preparation starts once you start supporting an NC, but leveraging the city's databases and gathering insight from government partners takes time. It is recommended to allocate at least 4 months of preparation, starting in February.

Example of a completed Strategic Plan - Reseda Neighborhood Council Strategic Plan:

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1rwYXwrWhvzUEmLIL3Un9zHBI111fz8e7clobuzzvDH0/edit?tab=t.0>