

# San Diego Community Planners Committee

City Planning Department • City of San Diego • 202 C Street, MS 413 San Diego, CA 92101  
SDPlanningGroups@sandiego.gov • (619)-235-5200

January 29, 2026

San Diego City Council  
San Diego City Clerk  
San Diego City Development Services Department  
San Diego City Planning Department  
Attn: Council President, Joe LaCava and Honorable Councilmembers, City Clerk, Diana Fuentes, DSD Director, Elyse Lowe, Planning Director, Heidi Vonblum  
202 C Street, MS  
San Diego, CA 92101

## **Subject: Request for Designated Community Presentation Time at City Decision-Making Hearings**

Honorable Council President, Council Members, City Clerk, DSD Director, and Planning Director:

On behalf of the Community Planners Committee (CPC), I respectfully request that the City Council, its committees, and Planning Commission each adopt a policy giving community representatives equal time as current policies allow project applicants, developers and other like proponents (collectively referred to hereafter as “project proponents”) to ensure equitable participation at public hearings.

### **Issue: Current Public Comment Procedures Limit Community Representation**

At present, project proponents are typically provided with structured presentation periods—often ten minutes or more—to outline their proposals, respond to questions, and engage directly with decision-makers. At the conclusion of their presentations, the proponent remains at a desk near the deciding body and is accessible for further inquiry and discussion.

In contrast, community members offering their viewpoints or modifications of a project generally receive **one to three minutes** each during a public comment period. When the community needs to present a coherent position, it must recruit large numbers of residents to cede their individual time, a process that is not required of the project proponents. This framework disproportionately limits the community’s ability to provide intelligently organized input—particularly on complex land-use matters where impacts are significant and where community recommendations require explanation that cannot reasonably fit within a brief public comment period.

The result is a structural imbalance: those seeking approval receive ample time to present, while those affected by the consequences of that approval often struggle to present their viewpoints and recommendations coherently within strict time limits.

## **Solution: A Designated Presentation Block for the Community**

We respectfully propose that the City Council, its committees, and the Planning Commission establish meeting procedures granting formal, structured presentation times for community representatives—equal in duration and substance to the proponent’s presentation—when an item has neighborhood or citywide impact. Equal time should be granted for the community representatives to make presentations, do so in a comprehensive manner, to utilize power point presentations, field questions, and to remain accessible to planning commissioners, councilmembers, or council committee members if needed for further engagement.

### **For neighborhood-specific items:**

The relevant **Community Planning Group (CPG)** should be allotted an organized presentation period, ensuring the decision-making body receives a complete understanding of community analyses, upsides, concerns, and recommendations. CPGs are in the best position to make such offers as members are elected representatives of their communities, deeply steeped in knowledge about their communities.

### **For citywide policy issues:**

The CPC should be allotted similar structured time to present the collective community perspective. The CPC wholly functions as the sum of its parts; together CPG representatives discuss and deliberate over citywide topics to produce cohesive and equitable recommendations. It is to the advantage of all for this collective voice to be heard in an organized fashion.

This approach aligns with widely used governance practices in which diverse viewpoints of a project or proposal receive balanced, organized, and substantive time before a deliberative body.

## **Why This Reform Is Important**

### **1. Ensures fairness and balanced access**

CPGs—recognized by the City as advisory bodies—should not be limited to brief individual comments when project proponents are allowed full presentations. The opportunity for equal duration and substance supports public trust, transparency and balanced decision-making.

### **2. Improves decision-making**

CPGs are composed of dedicated volunteers with rich knowledge of and experience in their neighborhoods. Allowing these groups to have structured time to present their findings provides decision makers with more complete, relevant, and context-specific information.

### **3. Encourages early collaboration**

When project proponents know that CPGs will have an equal opportunity to present and access before planning commissioners and councilmembers, they are likely to engage more robustly

with communities early in the process, collaborate with purpose and intention, and resolve potential issues before a final vote.

## **Conclusion**

The CPC respectfully requests that the City Council and City Planning/DSD along with the City Clerk direct staff to:

1. **Develop meeting procedures for Planning Commission and City Council** that establish structured, equivalent presentations in terms of time and substance for Community Planning Groups on neighborhood-specific items.
2. **Extend such procedures to Committee meetings** where land-use decisions or major policy matters are heard; and
3. **Permit CPC to serve as the designated community voice** on issues affecting multiple neighborhoods or the city as a whole.

This policy would reinforce the City’s commitment to fair, transparent, and community-centered planning and ensure that San Diego residents—through their recognized community groups—have a meaningful voice in decisions that shape their neighborhoods.

Respectfully,



Chair, Community Planners Committee  
City of San Diego

cc:

San Diego City Council  
San Diego City Clerk, Ms. Diana J.S. Fuentes  
Development Services Department, Ms. Elyse Lowe, Director  
City Planning Department, Ms. Heidi Vonblum, Director  
City Planning Department, Mr. Marlon Pangilinan, Program Coordinator