

# BEST PRACTICES FOR SOCIAL MEDIA

## Part 1 - Account Setup & Administration

### ACCOUNT SETUP & SHARING

Neighborhood Council social media accounts need to be able to be accessed by multiple people and passed down from one person to the next as boardmembers change. Here's how to facilitate that:

- **Don't lose access when board membership changes or when people are out of town:** Tie social media accounts to an official (vs personal) email address that does not change no matter who is on the board. Use a generic, enduring address like OutreachChair@YourNC.com or Info@YourNC.com rather than one that is specific to a certain individual, such as AlfredENeumann@YourNC.com. Advantages include:
  - » If the person maintaining your social media accounts is unavailable, you can do a password reset to the shared email address and regain access
  - » Multiple people can share the social media workload
  - » PRA requests related to your Council's social media will not delve into your personal email or social media accounts
- **Usernames:** should be short but clear about who you are
- **Profile/header images:** Use your logo for small profile pics and a pic of your board for the larger, wider cover images on apps like Facebook and Twitter.  
TIP: images can be very small on social media apps, especially profile photos, which can be as small as 1/4" in diameter. One quick way to see if your flyers and profile pics still make sense when they are very small is to email them to yourself and look at them on your phone before sharing them with the public.

### ACCOUNT SETTINGS & ADMINISTRATION

- Turn off posts from non-administrators
- Consider using a social media disclaimer on NC accounts (e.g. "Retweet does not = endorsement"). See the **Social Media Policy** section at the end of this guide for a sample disclaimer from the City Attorney's office.

#### No need to have an account on every single platform

A few well-maintained accounts mean more than multiple accounts with missing or outdated info.

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## Part 2 - Posting and Content Tips

### POSTING

- **When to post:** day of week/time of day can affect the number of people who see your posts. Post when people have time to look at their social media accounts: Weekdays before work / during lunchtime / after work are good posting times, as are weekend daytimes.
- **Prepare posts in advance:** use your time efficiently by writing post content and gathering graphics by doing some pre-assembly of your social media posts for a few days or a week ahead.
- **Cross-promoting vs cross-posting:** It's better to take the time to repost content individually and tailor your presentation to each outlet's parameters, vs cross-posting automatically. For example, if you use the Share to Twitter button on Instagram, the tweet that is created only contains a link with no picture. Very few people will care enough to open that mystery link. It's much more exciting to share the actual picture to Twitter directly. You can still save composition time by copying and pasting the caption you created into Twitter, then editing to fit Twitter's character count limit if needed.
- **Commenting:** be aware of the potential for accidental serial meetings that violate the Brown Act, if too many board or committee members comment on a post
- **Responding to comments:** stakeholders may comment on your social media posts the way they would during the public comment section of a meeting. As with public comments, it may not always be necessary to respond to every comment someone makes. Don't worry about pulling down negative comments unless they are profane or otherwise offensive. Build stakeholder engagement by liking responses that are not negative, and thanking people for commenting, when you can. In particular, thank people who take time to share your posts.

### Event invitations & flyers: Checklist of elements

These should be brief but complete. Include the following to make sure someone can find your event; park; and get in the door with only the info in your post to guide them:

- Event name
- Sponsor/host name(s)
- Date + day of week
- Start & end times
- Parking info
- Brief summary of what event is about

### CONTENT TIPS

#### #Hashtags:

Are a social media indexing tool that help people find your posts.

#### Shortlinks:

Reduce long, awkward links for social media & print use. Custom short links can also allow you to track interactions.

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## Part 3 - Legal Considerations and Policy

### LEGAL CONSIDERATIONS: BROWN ACT & PRA REQUESTS

- **Brown Act violations:** a serial meeting can occur when multiple board members comment on a social media discussion of a matter that should have been agendized for a public meeting
- **Public Records Act (PRA) requests** can be made for Neighborhood Council social media posts, so it's helpful to conduct yourself with that in mind
- **Always post facts, not opinions,** in order to keep content professional in tone and informative
- **When in doubt,** you can always consult the **City Attorney** to ask how to handle a problematic social media post or comment. Share a screenshot of the post in question.

### SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY / DISCLAIMER

Posting a Social Media Policy on your website and social media accounts is a good way to shape stakeholder interactions and expectations.

For Twitter and Instagram, something short and simple such as **“Repost does not equal endorsement”** is all you have room for.

For your website and Facebook, you have more space for a fuller statement of policy. Below is a version of the policy on the Los Angeles City Attorney’s website that has been adapted for Neighborhood Council use. (To see the original City Attorney’s policy, visit <https://www.lacityattorney.org/careers> and scroll down.)

The \_\_\_\_\_ Neighborhood Council welcomes you and your comments to our social media channels, which include but are not limited to Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and Nextdoor. The purpose of these social media channels is to present information from the Neighborhood Council to the public. Comments posted to the \_\_\_\_\_ Neighborhood Council social media channels are public, and no right of privacy should be expected. A comment posted by a member of the public on the \_\_\_\_\_ Neighborhood Council’s social media is the opinion of the commenter or poster only, and publication of a comment does not imply endorsement of, or agreement by, the \_\_\_\_\_ Neighborhood Council, nor do such comments necessarily reflect the opinions or policies of the \_\_\_\_\_ Neighborhood Council.

Comments containing any of the following shall not be permitted and are subject to removal and/or restriction; comments not related to the original topic; obscene or sexual content and or language; content that promotes fosters or perpetuates discrimination on the basis of race, creed, color, age, religion, gender, marital status, status with regard to public assistance, sexual orientation, physical or mental disability, or national origin; defamatory attacks; threats to any person or organization; Comments in support of, or in opposition to any candidates for elective office or ballot measures; solicitation of commerce, including but not limited to advertising of any business or product for sale; conduct in violation of any federal, state or local law; Encouragement of illegal activity; information that may tend to compromise the safety or security of the public or public systems; or content that violates a legal ownership interest, such as a copyright, of any party.