



Staff Report

DISCUSSION & DIRECTION REGARDING THE CITY COUNCIL SUBCOMMITTEE ORGANIZATION STRUCTURE

Honorable Mayor and Council Members:

Summary

This report transmits the organization chart for the existing Council Committee organizational structure as well as three alternative models for discussion at your May 12, 2009 City Council meeting. At a workshop in January, the City Council expressed a preference for “model 2.”

Staff suggests the Mayor and Council discuss the existing model and alternatives in order to provide staff with direction should you wish to modify the Council committee structure. We have also attached some examples of neighboring cities.

Background

Council Committees have the advantage of allowing for *in depth policy discussions and analysis* between Council, staff, vendors/contractors and the public in an informal setting. For complex issues, Council committees can vet issues and then produce meaningful policy proposals without taking up a great deal of time at regular City Council meetings that have time constraints where meetings routinely go until 10:30 or 11:00 pm at night. They are also a good platform to educate people prior to having a meaningful policy discussion. For controversial issues, committees are a place for the City Council to refer an issue when the Council is not yet ready to make a decision. A disadvantage of the committee system is it may be less “transparent” to the public than direct discussion with the full Council.

In the recent past, the City manager has suggested the Council consider evaluating how it organizes itself to conduct informal policy discussions in Council Committee meetings. Currently, the City of Belmont has two standing Council Committees: Economic Development and Infrastructure. There is also a San Juan Canyon Committee which has not met for some time now, as well as an Ad Hoc Committee on the Harbor Industrial Area. The HIA Committee’s work is essentially complete at this point. Further, by ordinance the City has established a Legal Audit Committee. At one point, we also had an Ad Hoc Committee on Garbage. This function eventually moved to the Infrastructure Committee as did the HIA function.

Neighboring Cities

We see from reviewing other neighboring cities that each municipality has a different approach to structuring their Council Committees. For example the City of San Carlos has only three Council Subcommittees which are all Ad Hoc Committees and include Council Revenue, Economic Development, and San Carlos Transit Village. On the other side of the spectrum is the City of San Mateo which has active Council representation on their 11 Subcommittees, Commissions, and Boards. The City of Redwood City has six Subcommittees which include Architectural Review, Child Care Advisory, Historic Resources Advisory, Pride & Beautification, Home Improvement Loan, and Housing & Human Concerns. Therefore, each municipality is able to determine the most suitable structure for their community.

Discussion

There is no ideal organization structure for how a City Council organizes itself to develop City policy. There is added value to staff by having sub-committee meetings. The Committees enable staff to air various ideas or approaches, enabling staff to provide a better and more focused product to Council. Without this opportunity, staff may fail to identify what the major concerns of Council may be. Here are some observations on the various models:

Existing - The existing structure is working, but has the potential to be modified in a way that would be beneficial from a policy development standpoint. One of the advantages of the existing structure is that it is transparent, as it pushes many policy issues before a TV camera at regular Council meetings early in the policy development process. Also, it is “tried and true,” so people are comfortable with it. The Finance Department administratively supports the Economic Development Committee and the Audit Committee. The Public Works Department administratively supports the Infrastructure Committee. These standing committees meet regularly. The Ad Hoc HIA committee has also held regular meetings. Functional topics that don’t fall into these existing committees either go directly to City Council for policy discussion or are referred to a City Commission. Disadvantages of the existing system are;

1. One Council Member has no sub-committee assignment; and
2. That it focuses on Economic Development and Infrastructure to the exclusion of almost everything else. This means things like capital projects, public safety, labor negotiations preparation, technology, parks maintenance, code enforcement, etc get little Council attention in an informal setting. If they do get time with the Council, they don’t get very much.

Alternative Model 1 - This model would simply add a third committee to handle everything not defined by the existing committees. It would effectively be the “everything else” committee. The committee would be responsible for policy issues related to Public Safety, Parks & Recreation, Budget, Human Resources, Technology, etc. It would have the advantage of capturing the policy issues missing in the existing model. This would be a minor modification from the existing system. One Council Member would have two committees.

Alternative Model 2 - This model would reinvent the existing system and create three new committees. It could combine Economic Development and Infrastructure (Development related activities) into one committee and then create two new ones, Public Safety, Parks & Neighborhoods (Operations related activities) as well as one encompassing Budget, Finance, Human Resources, Technology and Administration (support activities). This model would represent significant change from the existing system. One Council Member would have two committees.

Alternative Model 3 - This model would also reinvent the existing system, but would only have two committees. However, instead of combining Economic Development and Infrastructure, this model keeps them separate and expands their scope to include other functions. The Infrastructure committee would expand its scope to include parks, public safety and neighborhoods (An external view of the community) while Economic Development would expand its scope to include the Admin functions of Budget, Finance, etc. (An external view of development, redevelopment and its related financing. This model would represent moderate change from the existing system. One Council Member would have no committee assignment.

General Plan/Vision Statement

We get involved in town matters because we care about living here.

Fiscal Impact

No fiscal impact to this report.

Public Contact

Posting of City Council Agenda

Recommendation

Staff suggests the City Council discuss the existing organization structure as well as possible alternatives and provide staff with direction as to possible changes you are interested in seeing developed further. Should the City Council wish to make changes to the existing system, staff will return with a resolution for Council consideration

Alternatives

1. Retain existing structure
2. Request additional staff research

Attachments

- A. Organization Chart – Existing Belmont Council Organizational Structure
- B. Organization Chart – Three possible alternate models
- C. Organization Chart – Neighboring Cities Council Organizational Structure
 1. Foster City Council Advisory Committee Structure
 2. Redwood City Council Committee Structure
 3. San Carlos City Council Committee Structure
 4. San Mateo City Council Committee Structure

Respectfully submitted,

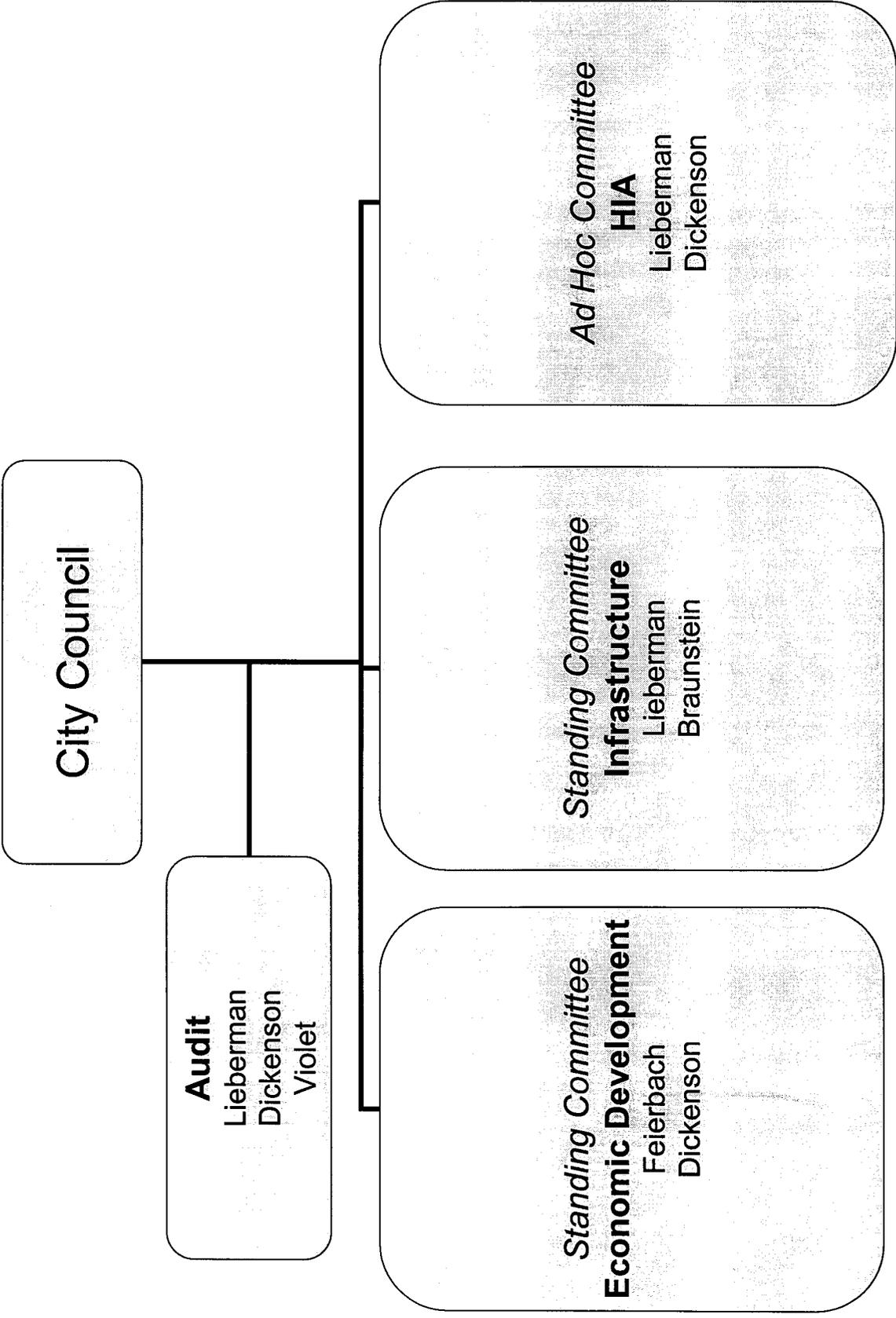
A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jack R. Crist", written over a horizontal line.

Jack R. Crist
City Manager

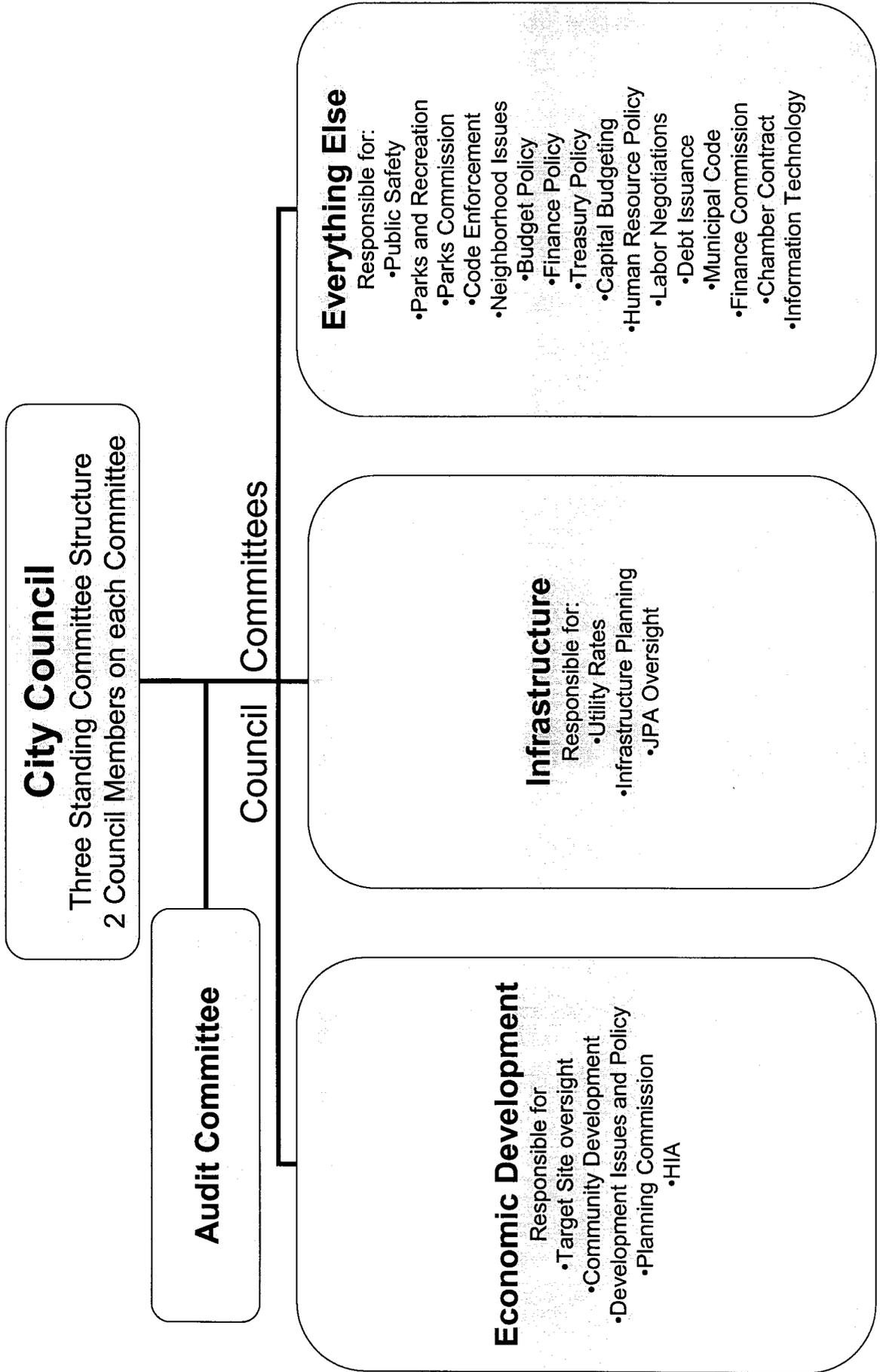
Staff Contact:

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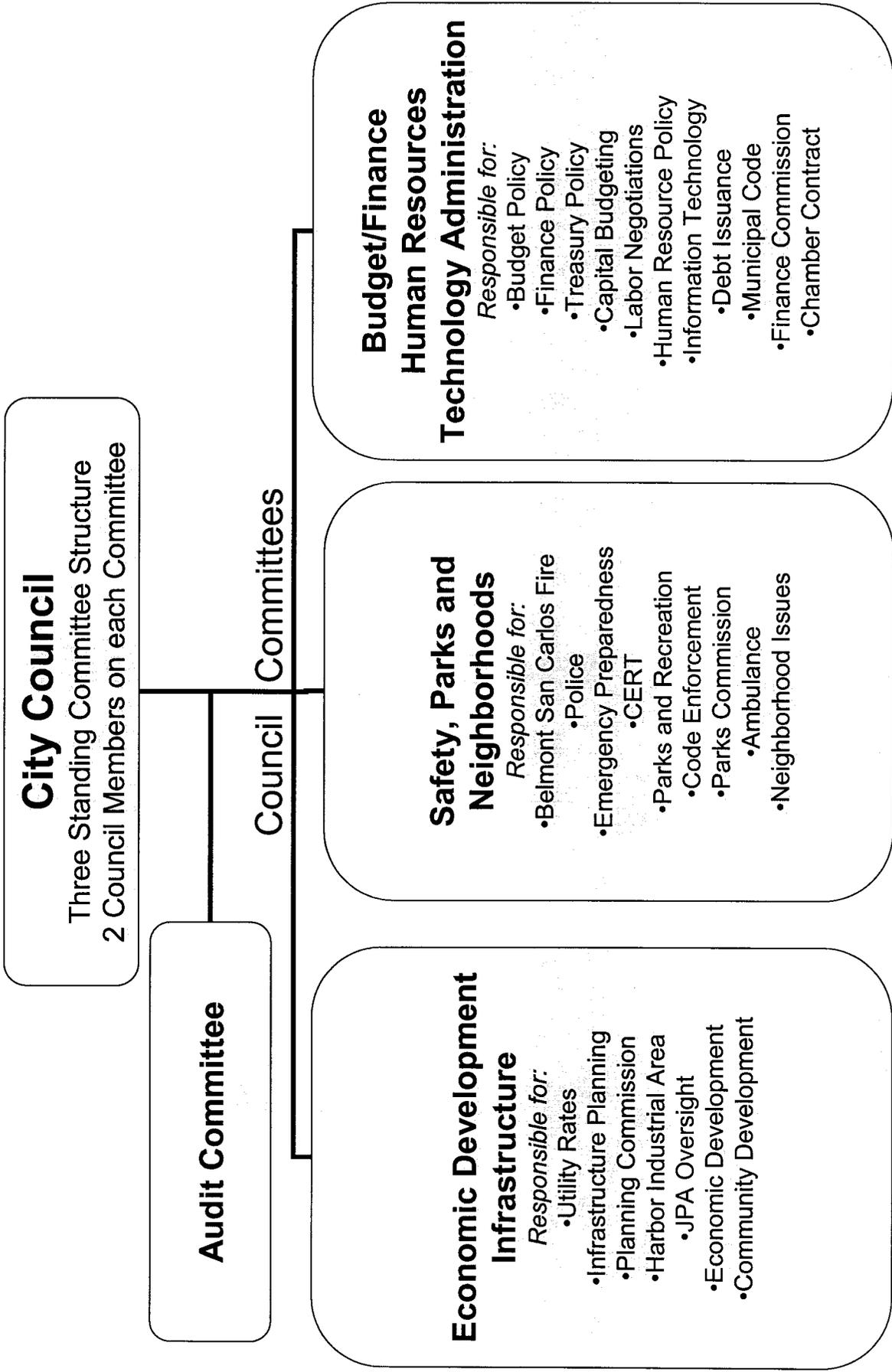
Existing Belmont City Council Committee Organization



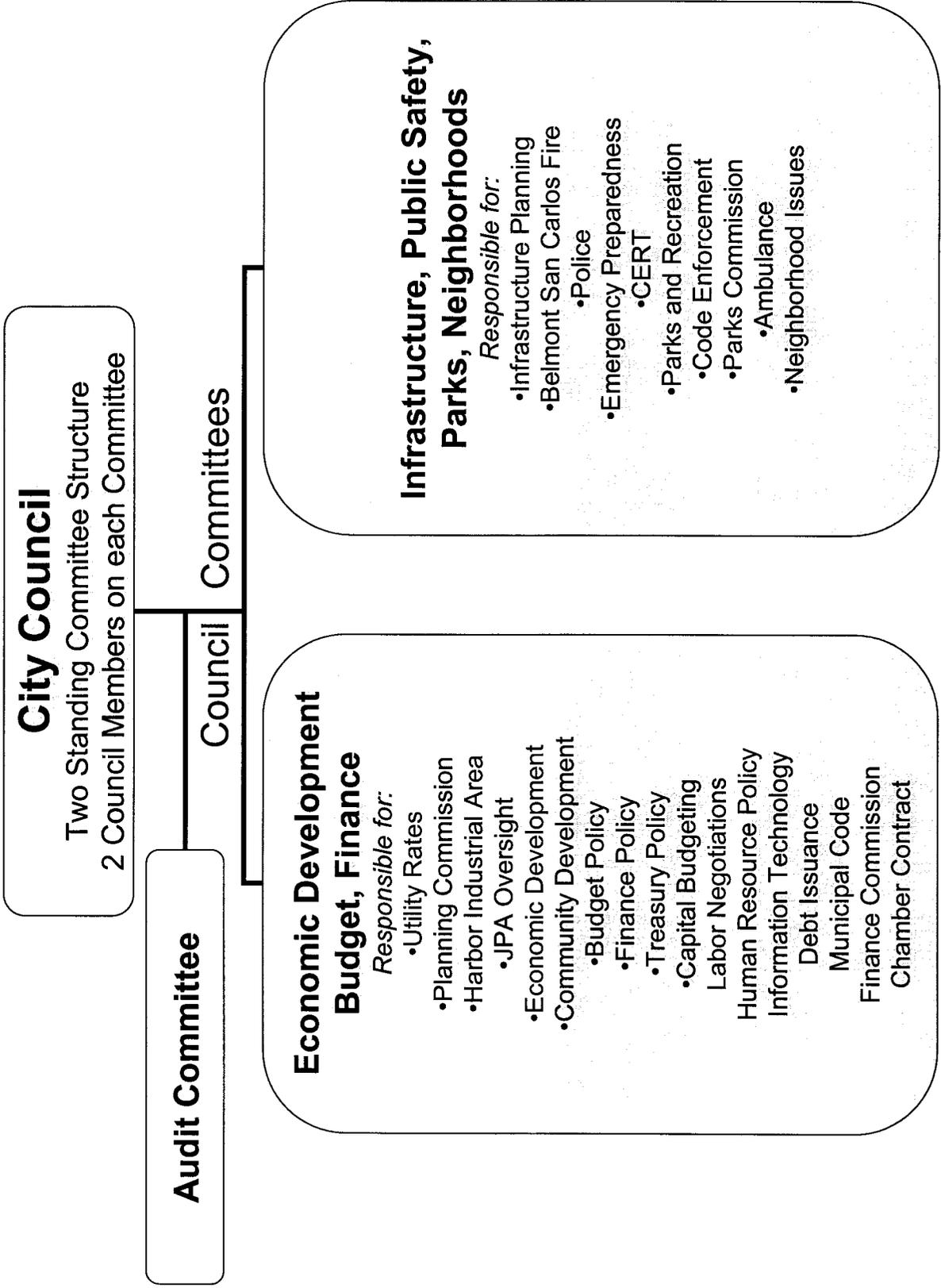
Model #1 - Alternative Belmont City Council Committee Organization



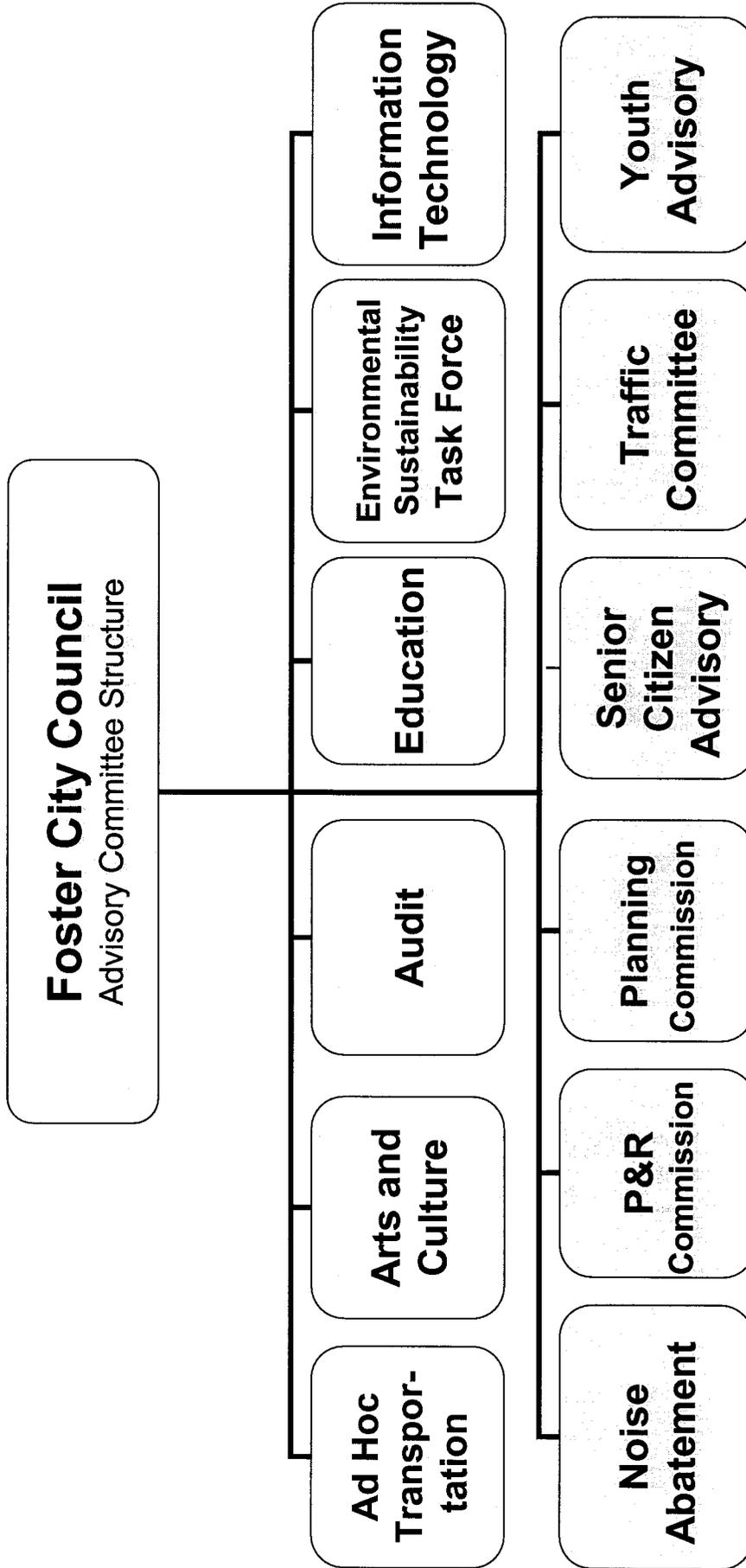
Model #2 - Alternative Belmont City Council Committee Organization



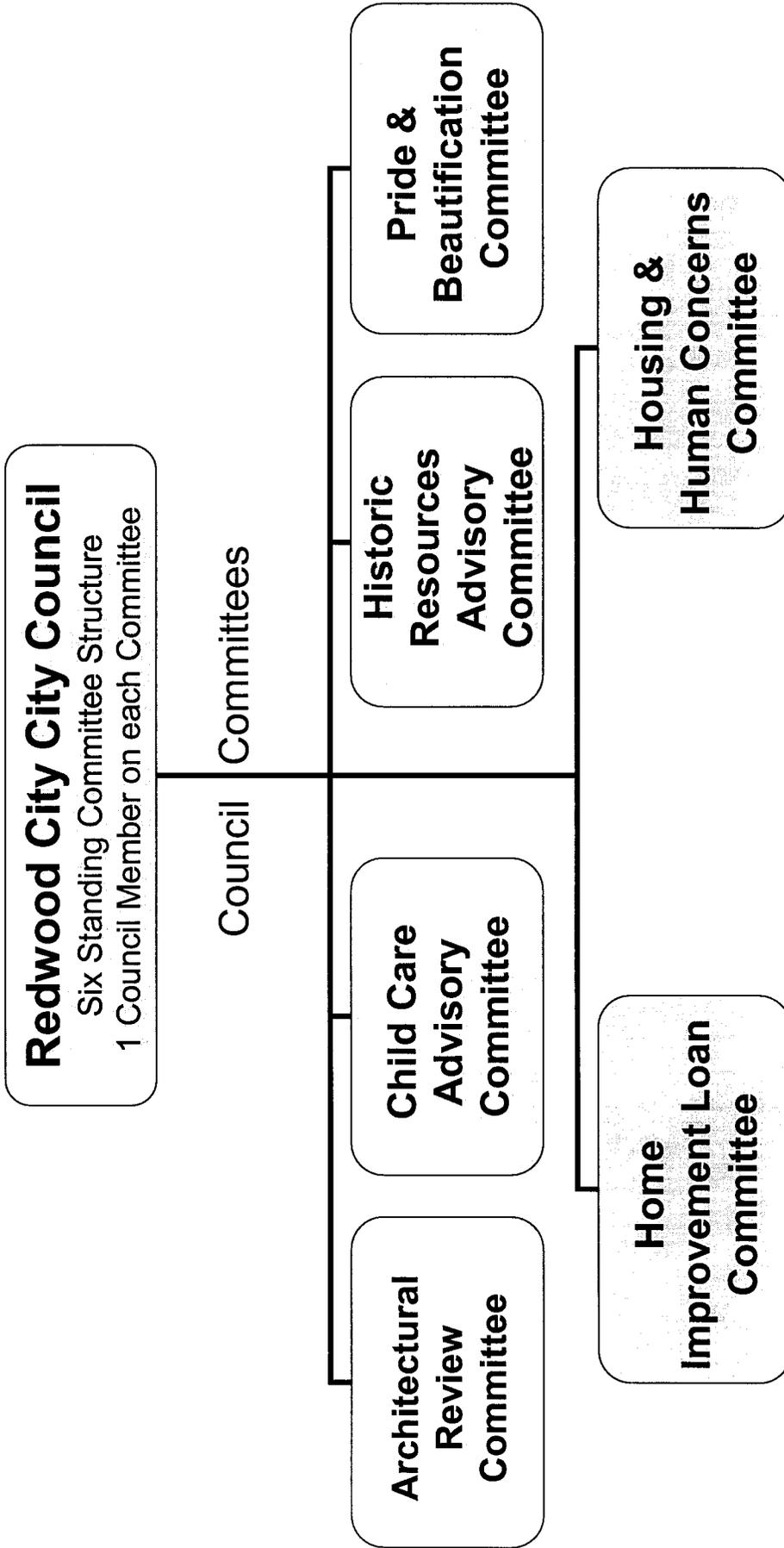
Model #3 - Alternative Belmont City Council Committee Organization



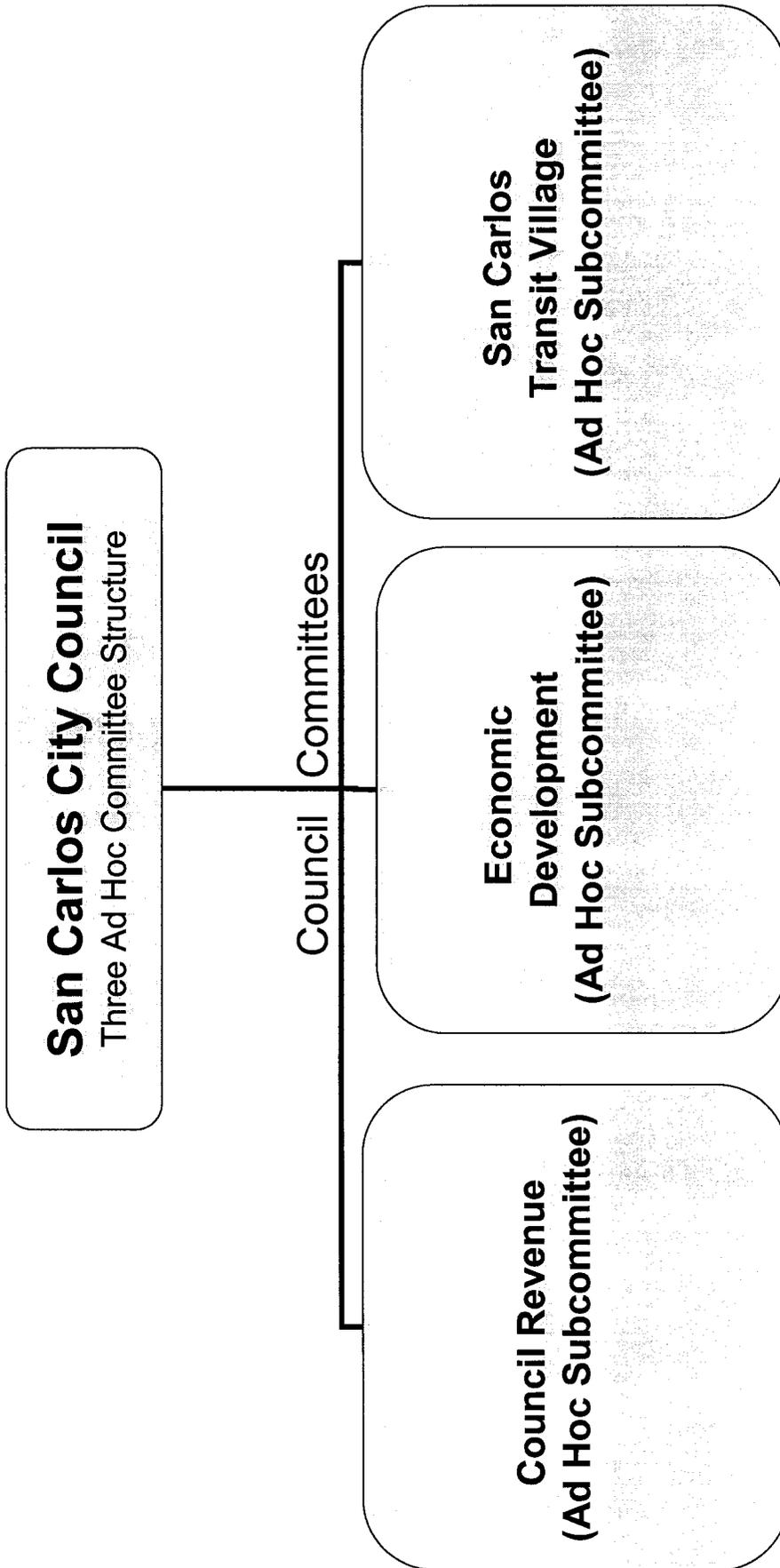
The Foster City Council Committee Organization



The Redwood City City Council Committee Organization



The San Carlos City Council Committee Organization



The San Mateo City Council Committee Organization

