

MEMORANDUM



TO: DANIELLE MAHONEY, ASSISTANT CITY MANAGER
FROM: SHERYL WALSH-MOLLOY, DIRECTOR OF COMMUNICATIONS
SUBJECT: NOVI YOUTH COUNCIL TRANSITION
DATE: JULY 15, 2025

Background

The Novi Youth Council was established in 2005 with the intention of providing teens an opportunity to engage with local government, build leadership skills, and represent youth voices in the community. While the mission remains commendable, the structure and operation of the Youth Council have remained largely unchanged for nearly two decades.

Current Challenges

In the years since its inception, the world has evolved significantly. Today's high school students are immersed in a highly connected, fast-paced environment shaped by academic rigor, extracurricular commitments, part-time jobs, and digital saturation. As a result:

- Many Youth Council members are overcommitted and unable to fully engage in meetings or initiatives.
- Participation often wanes after appointment, with attendance and follow-through becoming inconsistent.
- The current model caps involvement at 13 members, leaving many interested students without a voice.
- For some, participation is pursued primarily to enhance college or job applications, rather than to contribute meaningfully.

Despite these challenges, the input and perspectives of Novi's youth remain critically important — particularly on issues directly impacting their lives, such as sustainability, mobility, community safety, and recreation.

Recommendation: Establish a Mayor's Youth Forum

To create a more effective, inclusive, and sustainable model of youth engagement, I recommend dissolving the current Youth Council as well as the designated student representative positions on the Library Board and Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services Commission. In their place, we would establish a **Mayor's Youth Forum**, a new initiative open to all Novi high school students.

Key features of the proposed Mayor's Youth Forum:

- **Open Participation:** No application or appointment process—any high-school-aged resident of Novi can attend.
- **Quarterly or Biannual Meetings:** Flexible scheduling allows students to attend as their schedules permit.

- **Topic-Focused Dialogue:** Each session would center around a specific issue, initiative, or area of interest identified by City Council, City departments, or community partners.
- **Broader Reach:** This model invites a wider range of voices, reflecting Novi's diversity and ensuring more equitable representation.

The Library and Parks, Recreation & Cultural Services Directors support this transition. The Library has an established Teen Advisory Committee and would consider appointing a student representative to their Board, if desired. Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services staff believe the Mayor's Youth Forum will more optimally meet their engagement needs with a broader reach, particularly from a recreation and programming standpoint.

Next Steps

If supported by City Council, staff will return with a resolution to formally dissolve the existing Youth Council and student board representative roles, and to create the Mayor's Youth Forum framework.

Conclusion

After 20 years, it is time to evolve our approach to youth engagement. A Mayor's Youth Forum aligns with the realities of today's high school students while amplifying the voices of those most impacted by the policies and programs we shape. It reflects our commitment to innovation, inclusion, and responsive local government.