

City of Des Moines Neighborhood Services Department

NEIGHBORHOOD RECOGNITION POLICY

(Amended by City Council on May 10, 2021)

DEFINITIONS

This policy defines neighborhoods and neighborhood organizations that are Recognized by the City of Des Moines for the purposes of:

1. Establishing official points of contact for the neighborhood to receive communication and notification from the City and community.
2. Delivering various City department services and programs.
3. Eligibility for the City's Neighborhood Revitalization Program.

Definition of a Neighborhood: A neighborhood can be defined by, but not limited to, the following:

- A neighborhood may have geographic or man-made boundaries.
- Its residents share a common link such as a school, public street pattern, parks, architectural styles or time periods, or infrastructure.
- A neighborhood is typically not a single residential development.
- Neighborhoods may include businesses, churches, and other community entities.

Definition of a Recognized Neighborhood Organization: A recognized neighborhood organization is a group of people who identify with a common area, who share common goals and concerns, and who meet the standards for neighborhood recognition. Recognized organizations represent the position of the collective neighborhood and provide input to the City Council, Boards and Commissions, and City Staff on issues affecting neighborhoods.

ROLE OF A RECOGNIZED NEIGHBORHOOD ORGANIZATION

Neighborhood organizations play a key role in building community, sharing ideas, and working cooperatively to make their neighborhood a better place to live. To do this, recognized neighborhoods:

- Conduct regular meetings to share information or discuss topics of neighborhood interest.
- Organize events or activities that engage neighborhood residents socially.
- Promote leadership and volunteerism within the organization.
- Receive official communication and notification from City departments on a variety of programs, services, and development activities that directly impact the neighborhood(s), and share information with neighborhood residents.
- Provide input to the City Council, Boards and Commissions, and City Staff on issues affecting neighborhoods.
- Provide input on new and existing City programs and services on behalf of the collective neighborhood.

To strengthen communication between the Neighborhood Association and the City, specific tasks of a Neighborhood Association that are helpful to City leaders often include:

- Notifying your local NBSD officer when you believe there are code violations or nuisance properties that need City attention.
- Contacting your City Councilmember or appropriate City Department to address other concerns that may affect your neighborhood.
- Developing positive relationships with public safety and code officials and distributing “Who to Contact” information to residents.
- Inviting City staff to neighborhood meetings to discuss and promote City programs and services.
- Promoting meeting attendance to residents in the association via e-mail lists, social media, neighborhood signage, phone calls, newsletters, and/or flyers. The City can also post your meeting information in City Hall on our bulletin board by emailing notices to cityclerk@dmgov.org.
- Subscribing to City alerts, notifications, publications, and meeting agendas through the City’s Email Subscription List at <https://subscribe.dsm.city>
- Distributing public meeting and hearing notifications to residents in the association. Make sure to check post office boxes and email inboxes regularly for notices from the City.
- Coordinating with developers to discuss proposed projects at neighborhood meetings and consider conducting special meetings if necessary to help keep projects moving forward.
- Attending public meetings or providing written comments of the neighborhood position regarding such proposed projects. Survey the neighborhood to ensure that the neighborhood position represents the majority of residents rather than a vocal or active minority.

Additionally, the City requests that the neighborhood association conduct all business in a respectful and courteous manner. While diverse views and opinions are to be expected—and even celebrated—the following Code of Conduct will help ensure a safe and effective environment for meaningful discussion.

- Recognize that City personnel issues are not of a political nature.
- Be aware that all public hearings are broadcast on the City’s cable channel and are watched by visitors as well as Des Moines residents. Public discourse is perfectly acceptable, but please remain considerate of others.
- Understand that compromises may be necessary to help achieve multiple goals and be willing to work with all parties to create win/win projects for all.

BENEFITS OF NEIGHBORHOOD RECOGNITION

Recognized neighborhood organizations receive the following benefits, including but not limited to:

- Receives an official certificate of recognition from the Mayor and City Council, as well as annual recertification to maintain recognition status.
- Priority by City Leaders and Staff for attending regularly scheduled neighborhood meetings. For ad hoc meetings or special events, recognized neighborhoods will also receive priority by City Leaders and Staff over non-recognized neighborhoods or groups.
- Priority given for use of City Facilities according to department policies and City Code.

- Opportunity to participate in the Neighborhood Revitalization Program, such as but not limited to Spring Cleaning to Reduce Urban Blight (SCRUB), Neighborhood Based Service Delivery (NBSD), Neighborhood Infrastructure Rehabilitation Program (NIRP), Neighborhood Finance Corporation (NFC) lending, and other neighborhood planning services.

STANDARDS FOR NEIGHBORHOOD RECOGNITION

A neighborhood organization must provide the following information to receive official recognition from the City:

- A. Name of the organization;
- B. Neighborhood boundaries;
- C. Names, telephone numbers, and addresses of all officers, designating a primary and secondary contact;
- D. At least one of the following: Bylaws, Articles of Incorporation, or 501(c)(3) status. These documents should include A and B above in addition to:

Meetings: State the location, time, and number of neighborhood meetings held during each year. The minimum standard is four (4) meetings per year with one meeting held to elect and/or appoint officers.

Membership: State the requirements for membership in the organization, including any fees. Membership should be available to all residents, landowners, and businesspeople who represent the social, economic, and ethnic make-up of the neighborhood. (Note: Organizations charging membership dues must describe voting requirements in their bylaws. It is encouraged that voting be as inclusive as possible.)

Officers or Positions: List any elected and/or appointed positions, include a brief job description and any requirements for the position(s). All elected and/or appointed positions must be Des Moines residents or own a property or business in Des Moines.

Open Meeting Policy: All meetings shall be open to all interested persons and this shall be reflected in the bylaws.

CAPACITY OF A RECOGNIZED NEIGHBORHOOD ORGANIZATION

Recognized neighborhoods must establish and maintain the capacity to represent the views of the neighborhood. Recognized neighborhoods must meet the minimum standards for meetings annually. Additionally, recognized neighborhoods must conduct ongoing outreach to all residents twice a year. This outreach can include newspaper announcements, public service announcements, mailings, and meeting notices posted in conspicuous places. Recognized neighborhoods must also maintain regular communication with members of the organization. Neighborhood meetings must be open to anyone who is interested in attending.

CONSIDERATIONS FOR PROPOSED NEIGHBORHOODS

- Only one recognized neighborhood organization is allowed in an area. Boundaries for a newly established recognized neighborhood organization will not be allowed to overlap with the boundaries of existing recognized neighborhoods.
- Neighborhoods often vary by size. Recognized neighborhoods should be large enough that they have the capacity to carry out organizational duties; however, neighborhoods

should not be so large that residents do not share amenities such as schools, parks, or commercial centers. Sharing common goals and connections ultimately helps to maintain strong neighborhood associations.

APPLICATION PROCESS FOR NEIGHBORHOOD RECOGNITION

Neighborhood organizations that meet the above standards can complete a Neighborhood Recognition Application. The Neighborhood Revitalization Board (NRB) will review the application and forward its recommendation to City Council. City Council then makes the final decision on recognition. Once formally recognized, the Mayor will present the neighborhood with a Certificate of Recognition.

1. Neighborhood boundaries;
2. Names and telephone numbers of the neighborhood's contact persons;
3. A statement encouraging all residents, landowners, and business people within the neighborhood to participate in meetings, and other activities providing input to the City

CHANGE IN BOUNDARIES OF A RECOGNIZED NEIGHBORHOOD

A Recognized neighborhood interested to change its boundaries must meet with the City's Community Development staff to review proposed map and discuss the association's outreach plan. The neighborhood association shall provide evidence of support from existing neighborhood members, and the capacity to organize and represent the proposed area of expansion to the satisfaction of city staff. Thereafter, the following steps shall be taken, along with any additional requirements agreed upon by the neighborhood and City Staff:

1. The neighborhood association shall hold an informational meeting for residents of existing area and proposed area of expansion.
2. The City shall assist with notification of the said meeting to each household within the proposed area of expansion through an appropriate medium.
3. Residents of the proposed area of expansion in attendance shall vote on the expansion. The neighborhood association may consider additional voting mechanisms to facilitate participation.
4. Upon an affirmative vote, the neighborhood association shall submit a request for boundary expansion along with a summary of outreach efforts and minutes of the informational meeting.
5. Efforts shall be made to elect board officers that are inclusive and representative of the proposed neighborhood.

If the proposed expansion boundaries include areas of an existing, Recognized neighborhood, the incoming neighborhood association shall submit a memo declaring its agreement to merge boundaries.

SUBMISSION OF ANNUAL SURVEY

The Neighborhood Services Department will request that all recognized neighborhoods submit the following information:

1. Any changes in neighborhood boundaries;
2. Names, telephone numbers, and addresses of contact persons and officers elected and/or appointed at the annual election;
3. Dates of neighborhood meetings held during the previous calendar year;
4. Any changes to the approved bylaws;
5. Completion of the annual neighborhood survey form provided by the City;

6. Minutes from the organization's annual meeting or one regular meeting.

In 2011, the NRB established the following process for distributing and receiving the annual survey.

- March 1 Annual Survey distributed to all Recognized Neighborhoods
- March 30 Surveys due
- April 1 Remaining neighborhoods sent warning letter and given until April 30 to come into compliance
- April 30 Final notice letter sent to all listed neighborhood association officers with a due date of May 15th
- June NRB Vote to de-Recognize any neighborhood that has not responded to the Annual Survey
- June Council De-Recognition of any Recognized Neighborhood that has not met the requirements of the Annual Survey or Neighborhood Recognition Policy
- July 1 Recertification of all neighborhoods that are found to be in compliance with the Annual Survey and Neighborhood Recognition Policy

The requested information will update the listing of recognized neighborhoods. The Neighborhood Services Department provides this information on the City of Des Moines website for use by City departments and the public.

If any neighborhood organization's update is significantly different from the neighborhood's original information, the NRB and the City Council will receive the changes for their review, comment, and re-evaluation of recognition status.

ANNUAL RECOGNIZED NEIGHBORHOOD RECERTIFICATION

The City of Des Moines will issue a letter of recertification to all recognized neighborhoods that are found to be in compliance with the Annual Survey and Neighborhood Recognition Policy. This will be done on or around July 1 each year. This recertification will show that the neighborhood is in good standing and will continue to maintain Recognized status for the next year.

LOSS OF NEIGHBORHOOD RECOGNITION

If the recognized neighborhood organization does not return the annual neighborhood survey, the Neighborhood Development Division will advise the NRB and City Council that the recognized neighborhood is not in compliance with the Neighborhood Recognition Policy and recommend that the NRB and City Council no longer formally recognize the neighborhood. The loss of neighborhood recognition or "de-recognition" requires approval by resolution of the City Council. This action does not prevent the neighborhood organization from reapplying in the future to again become recognized. To reapply, the neighborhood organization would have to submit a completed application and go through the necessary approval process.