

**To the Mayor and Members of the City Council****March 22, 2016**

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SUBJECT: NEIGHBORHOOD AND ALLIANCE REGISTRATION POLICIES

The City of Fort Worth has a registration process for neighborhoods and other community groups managed through the Community Engagement Office. This registration is voluntary and is governed by the attached document.

We offer the registration process to those who wish to receive zoning notifications from the city and up-to-date information about free training, resources etc. from the Community Engagement Office. Registered groups also receive the Community Engagement Weekly Bulletin.

The city does not control the individual organizations in our community – specifically neighborhood associations and alliances. Participation in an alliance and/or neighborhood association is voluntary by all involved. Alliances are made up of associations who reside within their stated boundaries (per their bylaws) but those associations are not required to join. However, the City does provide training and assistance to neighborhoods that are working to form an association.

The city has set standards if an organization wants to register with the city. We have approximately 300 that are currently registered with us; but we believe there is an additional 20-25 percent that are not.

In order to remain registered with us, groups must share updated officer contact information once a year, hold at least one meeting per year and be inclusive of all residents within their stated boundaries. There is nothing in our current policies that states groups must attend any type of training prior to registration. The only consequence for failing to comply with the registration guidelines is that the association would be removed from the registry.

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact Michelle Gutt, Director of Communication and Public Engagement, at 817-392-6248.

David Cooke
City Manager



City of Fort Worth Registration Policies for Community Organizations

The City of Fort Worth has policies for community organizations that desire to be registered with the City. These policies set forth minimum requirements to maintain registered status, thereby providing more effective communication between neighborhoods and the City and ensuring an open, inclusive and democratic process. By institution of these policies the City encourages residents to work within existing registered associations and use the democratic process to do so to achieve neighborhood and community revitalization goals.

The City of Fort Worth Community Engagement Office assists residents as they organize associations, provides support to existing associations, facilitates communication between residents and City departments, provides useful information to neighborhoods, and develops educational opportunities for associations to continue to grow and be successful. Questions concerning these policies should be directed to the Community Engagement Office.

Benefits of Registration

Inclusion in the Community Engagement Database—The Community Engagement Database provides contact information pertaining to each organization registered with the City. The database is widely used by all City departments for public outreach. It is the key communication tool to keep organizations informed.

Inclusion in the weekly distribution of the Community Engagement Weekly Bulletin and other special email notifications sent by the city - These tools help to keep residents informed on issues that could impact their neighborhood.

Inclusion in the Neighborhood Organization Map—This map documents the official boundaries for each neighborhood and is used by the City for many purposes.

Registration in the Early Courtesy Notification System—The Early Courtesy Notification System provides early notification of Board of Adjustment, Planning Commission and Zoning Commission cases that fall within a Registered Association's boundaries or a ¼ mile of the association's boundaries. The notification is in addition to City notification of adjoining property owners within 300 feet. Voluntary and Mandatory Neighborhood Associations, Neighborhood Alliances, Neighborhood Redevelopment Organizations and Business Associations are eligible for this benefit.

Support and Training—The Community Engagement Office provides free training opportunities for

registered organizations as well as technical assistance on organizational issues and City service issues.

Registration Policies for Voluntary Neighborhood Associations

Voluntary Neighborhood Association is defined as an association that collectively represents all residents in the neighborhood and operates through an open, democratic process to improve or maintain the overall quality of life for all individuals within those boundaries. Membership is open to all adults residing in the neighborhood, but participation is optional.

Requirements for registration with the City of Fort Worth:

- **New associations shall be established** following rules for mass meetings as outlined in the most current edition of Robert's Rules of Order. New associations shall be established at a meeting publicly advertised to the residents within the boundaries of the proposed neighborhood association. Interim officers may serve for a period not to exceed six months. An association's first election shall be held within six months of establishing the association using generally accepted democratic election principles such as those listed in the most current edition of Robert's Rules of Order.
- Within six months of registration, the membership of a newly organized association **must adopt bylaws** using generally accepted democratic principles and provide a copy to the Community Engagement Office. The office can assist neighborhoods with samples of bylaws and training on how to develop bylaws for their neighborhood.
- **Election procedures** shall be clearly expressed in the association's bylaws and elections shall be held at least every two years.
- The **boundaries** of the organization shall be clearly described in the bylaws and shall not overlap the boundaries of any existing registered association.
- **Membership** shall be open to all persons ages 18 and over who reside permanently within the association's boundaries.
- The association shall hold at least one **general membership meeting** per year.
- **Notice** of meetings shall be provided 72 hours or more prior to meetings. The association must make a reasonable attempt to notify all households in the association's boundaries. Acceptable methods of notification are visible yard signs, fliers, newsletters or establishment of a regularly scheduled meeting. If the association chooses to use regularly scheduled meetings, rather than yard signs, fliers or newsletters, the association must publish a schedule at least once per year and distribute to all households within the boundaries. Associations are also encouraged to post their meetings on the neighborhood calendar located on the City's website.
- All association **meetings** shall be open to all people living within the association's boundaries.
- The association shall **notify the Community Engagement Office of changes** to boundaries, bylaws, officers and contacts within 30 days of such change.
- The association shall provide an **annual update** to the Community Engagement Office. The annual update shall include contact information, date of next election, date, time and location of general membership meeting(s). This information will be used by all City departments for outreach purposes.

Expansion of Boundaries of Voluntary Neighborhood Associations

If an association wishes to expand its boundaries, representatives designated by the association shall meet with the Community Engagement Office to review the map and discuss the organization's outreach plan prior to further action. Thereafter, the association shall hold an informational meeting and notify each household within the proposed expansion area of the time, date, and location of said meeting.

Residents of the proposed expansion area who are in attendance at the meeting shall vote on the expansion. Upon an affirmative vote, officers shall submit a request for boundary expansion along with a copy of the meeting invitation, summary of outreach efforts and minutes from the community meeting to the Community Engagement Office.

Petition Process for Boundary Disputes for Voluntary Neighborhood Associations

If a group of residents wishes to petition out of their neighborhood association and establish their own association, the following processes shall apply:

- Residents considering the petition process shall meet with the Community Engagement Office prior to initiating the petition.
- If a compromise or agreement cannot be reached between the affected parties, a petition of the residents living in the area being disputed can be initiated.
- The petition shall contain language stating that the intended purpose of the petition is to poll the neighborhood and allow the households the opportunity to determine which association will be able to claim the disputed boundaries. The petition shall clearly identify the disputed boundaries.
- The petition shall be circulated to all residents living within the disputed boundaries, giving everyone the opportunity to participate. The collected signatures shall represent at least 50% of the affected households within the disputed boundaries. Affected households shall be defined as one vote per address of those occupying the property at the time the petition is signed. Of the signatures collected, 50% + 1 shall be in agreement for the petition to pass.
- The signed petition shall be submitted, within 60 days of receipt of the first petition signature to the Community Engagement Office by 5 p.m. on the 60th day. After expiration of the 60-day time period, the petition shall become null and void and the results will not be honored.

Registration Policies for Mandatory Neighborhood Associations

Mandatory Neighborhood Association is defined as an association with a formal, legal structure, created to maintain common areas and enforce private deed restrictions and established pursuant to applicable state or federal law (e.g., mandatory homeowners associations).

Requirements for registration with the City of Fort Worth:

- The association must provide a copy of bylaws and covenants, conditions and restrictions (CC&Rs) to the Community Engagement Office.
- The development contact for the association shall be a resident of the mandatory association.
- The **boundaries** of the organization shall be clearly described in the bylaws.
- The association shall hold at least one **general membership meeting** per year.
- Reasonable **notice of meetings** shall be provided in accordance with the association's legal documents.
- **Election procedures** shall be clearly expressed in the association's bylaws.
- The association shall **notify the Community Engagement Office of changes** to boundaries, bylaws, officers, Management Company and contacts within 30 days of such change.
- The association shall provide an **annual update** to the Community Engagement Office, to include contact information, date of next election, date, time and location of general membership meeting(s). This information will be used by all City departments for outreach purposes.

Registration Policies for Neighborhood Alliances

Neighborhood Alliance/Coalition is defined as an umbrella organization of neighborhood organizations that organize to foster communication and/or advance common interests or initiatives.

Requirements for registration with the City of Fort Worth:

- The alliance will adopt **bylaws** and provide to the Community Engagement Office
- The **boundaries** of the alliance shall be clearly described in the bylaws.
- The alliance shall hold at least one **general membership meeting** per year.
- The alliance shall **notify the Community Engagement Office of changes** to boundaries, bylaws, and contacts within 30 days of such change.
- The alliance shall provide an **annual update** to the Community Engagement Office. The annual update shall include contact information, date, time and location of general membership meeting(s) and a list of member organizations. This information will be used by all City departments for outreach purposes.
- Those desiring to organize a new alliance shall notify all registered neighborhood organizations within the alliance's proposed boundaries. Each neighborhood organization located within the

boundaries of the alliance shall be given the opportunity to opt in or opt out of the alliance. A list of registered organizations may be obtained from the Community Engagement Office.

Registration Policies for Redevelopment Organizations

Redevelopment Organization is defined as an organization with community based leadership formed to revitalize communities. Typically the organization works to support key redevelopment projects, community planning, conservation, housing production and/or job creation.

Requirements for registration with the City of Fort Worth:

- The organization must adopt **bylaws** and provide a copy to the Neighborhood Office. The
- boundaries** of the organization shall be clearly described in the bylaws.
- The organization shall hold at least one **general membership meeting** per year.
- The organization shall **notify the Community Engagement Office of changes** to boundaries, bylaws and contacts within 30 days of such change.
- The organization shall provide an **annual update** to the Community Engagement Office. The annual update shall include contact information, date, time and location of general membership meeting(s). This information will be used by all City departments for outreach purposes.
- Upon establishment of a new redevelopment group, the organizers must notify all registered community organizations within their boundaries. A list of registered organizations may be obtained from the Community Engagement Office.
- Redevelopment organizations are encouraged to consult with registered neighborhood organizations on projects or activities that will impact the neighborhood.

Registration Policies for Business Associations

Business Association is defined as an alliance of businesses that come together to promote and improve relationships, leadership, networking and communication among businesses at the community level.

- The association must adopt **bylaws** and provide to the Community Engagement Office.
- The **boundaries** of the organization shall be clearly described in the bylaws.
- The association shall hold at least one **membership meeting** per year.
- The association shall **notify the Community Engagement Office of changes** to boundaries, bylaws, and contacts within 30 days of such change.
- The association shall provide an **annual update** to the Community Engagement Office. The annual update shall include contact information, date, time and location of general membership meeting(s) and a list of member organizations. This information will be used by all City departments for outreach purposes.

Registration Policies for Crime Prevention Organizations

Crime Prevention Organization is defined as an organization that is a collaborative effort between the police and the community, such as Citizens on Patrol or Crime Watch. It is founded on close, mutually beneficial ties between police and community members, and its primary focus is crime prevention.

- The organization shall provide a description of geographic **boundaries** to the Neighborhood Office.
- The organization shall **notify the Community Engagement Office of changes** to boundaries and contacts within 30 days of such change.
- The organization shall provide an **annual update** to the Community Engagement Office, to include contact information. This information will be used by all City departments for outreach purposes.

Registration Policies for Faith Based Organizations

Faith Based Organization is defined as a religious based organization or place of worship whose mission and purpose are faith and/or belief based.

- The organization shall **notify the Community Engagement Office of changes** to contacts within 30 days of such change.
- The organization shall provide an **annual update** to the Community Engagement Office, to include physical address and contact information for the organization. This information will be used by all City departments for outreach purposes.

Non-compliance with Registration Policies

All categories of registered organizations are required to maintain documentation of compliance with registration requirements. In the event that there is a claim of non-compliance, the Community Engagement Office may request documentation to resolve the dispute. If the registered organization is unable to provide appropriate documentation, the Community Engagement Office will send the organization a letter of non-compliance by certified mail and regular mail to the last known primary contact for the organization and one other registered officer, if one exists.

Organizations receiving letters of non-compliance will be given 30 days to respond with documentation of compliance and/or an action plan for reaching compliance. The 30-day deadline begins 7 days after the letter of non-compliance is postmarked. Action plans must be implemented within 60 days of submitting the plan to the Community Engagement Office.

If an organization has not responded to the letter of non-compliance, a letter of removal to designate the association inactive will be mailed certified mail and regular mail. This letter will be sent to the last known primary contact for the organization and one other registered officer, if one exists. The organization will be given 14 days to respond. The 14-day deadline begins 7 days after the letter is postmarked.

If no response is received by the Community Engagement Office, or if the organization fails to come into compliance with registration policies, the organization will be unregistered, removed from the Neighborhood Database and the organization's boundaries will be removed from the City's Neighborhood Organization map. If an organization is unregistered, they will no longer receive early courtesy notification from the City. Once an organization is unregistered, there is no prejudice against new or existing organizations from adjusting or claiming the area in question for inclusion in their boundaries.

Grievances, Complaints and Conflicts

Resolving grievances, complaints or conflicts against or within an organization is the responsibility of an organization. The leadership of each organization is responsible for following their bylaws to resolve a grievance, complaint or conflict.

Facilitated Resolution Services

If necessary, the parties involved in a grievance, complaint or conflict may request the assistance of the Community Engagement Office to assist with obtaining facilitated resolution services*. If the assistance of the Community Engagement Office is requested, both parties may agree to participate in the facilitated resolution process and abide by the resolution, if any.

Voluntary Withdrawal from City Registration

If a registered organization no longer wishes to be registered, they must send written notification to the Community Engagement Office. Upon receipt of a written request, the organization will be removed from the Community Engagement Database and Neighborhood Organization map.

**Facilitated Resolution Services - Facilitation is a process by which a mutually agreed-upon neutral third party helps to coordinate the activities of a group, acts as a process facilitator during meetings, or helps a group prevent or manage tension and move productively toward decisions. The facilitation role can be placed on a continuum from simple group coordination and meeting management to intensive multi-party dispute mediation.*

A facilitator is a neutral party who moderates discussions, monitors speaking time, records key discussion points, periodically summarizes the discussion, and provides constructive feedback. Facilitators help create an atmosphere of trust and fairness by ensuring that all groups have equal say in the discussion and that everyone understands each other. In contentious situations, the facilitator maintains civility and keeps the discussion focused.