


COUNCIL COMMUNICATION

	Number:	25-158	Meeting:	April 21, 2025
	Agenda Item:	17	Roll Call:	25-0568
	Submitted by:	Chris Johansen, Neighborhood Services Department Director		

AGENDA HEADING:

Amendments to the Neighborhood Recognition Policy.

SYNOPSIS:

Neighborhood Services staff recommends proposed amendments to the Neighborhood Recognition Policy, including: (1) requiring neighborhood organizations to establish a financial management and internal controls policy to outline the board of directors' fiduciary duty to safeguard the organization's funds; (2) renaming the Annual Neighborhood Survey the Annual Application for Recertification; (3) requiring the submission of meeting minutes from all general membership meetings held in the previous calendar year as part of the Annual Application for Recertification; and (4) requiring that general membership meeting minutes must document that a financial report was provided to members.

FISCAL IMPACT: NONE

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

- The Neighborhood Recognition Policy outlines the criteria and process by which the City of Des Moines recognizes neighborhood organizations. It establishes specific requirements that recognized neighborhoods must meet and maintain.
- The proposed amendments serve to strengthen the operational capacity of neighborhood organizations.
- The Neighborhood Services staff recommends the following amendments:
 - Under Standards For Neighborhood Recognition, insert standard F:

“F. A Financial Management and Internal Controls Policy which outlines the board of directors' fiduciary duty to safeguard the organization's funds. The policy must include: how financial institutions and investment of funds are approved; use of credit cards; financial reporting practices; and a separation of duties and responsibilities for receiving, depositing, and spending the organization's funds.”
 - Change the section heading Submission of Annual Survey to “Annual Application for Recertification.”

- In the same section, amend Item 5:

“5. General membership meeting minutes provided for each general membership meeting. General membership meeting minutes must document that a financial report was provided to members.”

- In the same section, insert Item 7:

“7. Copy of a Financial Management and Internal Controls Policy.”

- Change Annual Neighborhood Survey to Annual Application for Recertification as applicable throughout the Policy.

- Sample minutes and policy templates are available in the Neighborhood Association Toolkit.
- Policy changes are effective with the Annual Application for Recertification due March 30, 2026.

PREVIOUS COUNCIL ACTION(S):

Date: December 18, 2023

Roll Call Number: [23-1747](#)

Action: [Approving](#) amendments to the Neighborhood Recognition Policy. ([Council Communication No. 23-550](#)) Moved by Gatto. Seconded by Boesen. Motion Carried 7–0.

BOARD/COMMISSION ACTION(S): NONE

ANTICIPATED ACTIONS AND FUTURE COMMITMENTS: NONE

For more information on this and other agenda items, please call the City Clerk’s Office at 515-283-4209 or visit the Clerk’s Office on the first floor of City Hall, 400 Robert D Ray Drive. Council agendas are available to the public at the City Clerk’s Office on Thursday afternoon preceding Monday’s Council meeting. Citizens can also request to receive meeting notices and agendas by email by calling the Clerk’s Office or sending their request via email to cityclerk@dmgov.org.

City of Des Moines Neighborhood Services Department
NEIGHBORHOOD RECOGNITION POLICY
(Amended by City Council on April 21, 2025)

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 organization 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 the 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 organizations and the City, specific tasks of a neighborhood organization that are helpful to City leaders often include:

- Notifying the assigned Neighborhood Based Service Delivery (NBSD) officer when potential code violations or nuisance properties need City attention.

- Contacting City Councilmember(s) or appropriate City departments to address other concerns that may affect the 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 neighborhood via e-mail, social media, neighborhood signage, phone calls, newsletters, and/or flyers. The City can post meeting information in City Hall. Email 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 neighborhood. 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 organization 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:

- 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 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, addresses, telephone numbers, and email addresses of all officers, designating a primary and secondary contact;
- D. Bylaws. Bylaws must include A and B above in addition to:

Purpose: A defined purpose/mission statement for the neighborhood organization.

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

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.

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.

- E. A bank account established in the name of the neighborhood organization with a minimum of two (2) signers on the account.
- F. A Financial Management and Internal Controls Policy which outlines the board of directors' fiduciary duty to safeguard the organization's funds. The policy must include: how financial institutions and investment of funds are approved; use of credit cards; financial reporting practices; and separation of duties and responsibilities for receiving, depositing, and spending the organization's funds.

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 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 there is 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 organizations.

APPLICATION PROCESS FOR NEIGHBORHOOD RECOGNITION

Neighborhood organizations that meet the above standards can complete a Neighborhood Recognition Application. The Neighborhood Outreach Coordinator will review the application and forward a 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.

CHANGE IN BOUNDARIES OF A RECOGNIZED NEIGHBORHOOD

A Recognized neighborhood interested in changing its boundaries must meet with the City's Neighborhood Outreach Coordinator to review proposed boundaries and discuss the organization's outreach plan. The neighborhood organization 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 organization 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 organization may consider additional voting mechanisms to facilitate participation.
4. Upon an affirmative vote, the neighborhood organization 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 neighborhood association(s) shall submit a memo declaring an agreement to merge boundaries.

ANNUAL APPLICATION FOR RECERTIFICATION

The Neighborhood Services Department will request that all Recognized neighborhoods complete an Annual Application for Recertification, which includes the following information:

1. Names, addresses, telephone numbers, and email addresses of contact persons and officers elected and/or appointed at the annual election;
2. Dates of neighborhood meetings held during the previous calendar year;
3. Dates of the neighborhood meetings scheduled for the upcoming calendar year;
4. Any changes to the approved bylaws;
5. General membership meeting minutes provided for each general membership meeting. General membership meeting minutes must document that a financial report was provided to members.
6. Confirmation of a bank account established in the name of the neighborhood organization with a minimum of two (2) signers on the account.
7. Copy of a Financial Management and Internal Controls Policy.

In 2011, the following process for distributing and receiving the Annual Neighborhood Survey was established.

- March 1 Annual Application for Recertification distributed to all Recognized Neighborhoods
- March 30 Annual Application for Recertification 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 Council De-Recognition of any Recognized Neighborhood that has not met the requirements of the Annual Application for Recertification Neighborhood Recognition Policy
- July 1 Recertification of all neighborhoods that are found to be in compliance with the Annual Application for Recertification and Neighborhood Recognition Policy

The requested information is used to maintain contact and meeting information for Recognized neighborhoods. Information is listed on the City of Des Moines' website and used by City departments and the public.

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

ANNUAL RECOGNIZED NEIGHBORHOOD RECERTIFICATION

The City of Des Moines will issue a letter of recertification to Recognized neighborhoods that are found to be in compliance with the Annual Application for Recertification and Neighborhood Recognition Policy. This will be done after 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 Application for Recertification, the Neighborhood Services Department will advise the City Council that the Recognized neighborhood is not in compliance with the Neighborhood Recognition Policy and recommend that the 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.