



Neighborhood Connections Frequently Asked Questions

What is a Neighborhood Association?

A Neighborhood Association is a group of residents or property owners who advocate for or organize activities within a neighborhood.

What is the difference between a Homeowners Association and a Neighborhood Association?

The term neighborhood association is sometimes incorrectly used instead of homeowners association (HOA). Some key differences include:

- HOA membership is mandatory generally through rules tied to the ownership of property like deed restrictions. Neighborhood association membership is voluntary or informal. HOAs often own and maintain common property, such as recreational facilities, parks, and roads, whereas neighborhood associations are focused on general advocacy and community events.
- The rules for formation of a neighborhood association in the United States are sometimes regulated at the city or state level. Neighborhood associations are more likely to be formed in older, established neighborhoods, whereas HOAs are generally established at the time a residential neighborhood is built and sold. In some cases, neighborhood associations exist simultaneously with HOAs, and each may not encompass identical boundaries.
- A city-recognized neighborhood association serves a fundamentally different purpose than a homeowners association. Homeowner associations generally exist to govern common areas or to oversee covenants for the development. Neighborhood associations bring residents together from a larger area to address community goals. A neighborhood association would also serve as a conduit for information between the city and area residents. Homeowner associations and neighborhood associations can co-exist very successfully.

Why did Edina create a city supported neighborhood program?

The City of Edina believes that people are what make a neighborhood a living community rather than just a group of buildings. Neighborhood engagement is a vehicle for community and social building. People talking in their front yards, children playing on the sidewalks, walking dogs, mowing lawns, and similar activities are all part of being neighbors. Many other cities support resident neighborhood organization efforts as a means of enhancing neighborhood engagement.

The City also encourages the voluntary formation of Neighborhood Associations for the purpose of creating an open channel for communication from the City to residents and from residents to the City. This partnership can fashion a venue for building a better community and increasing neighborhood engagement.

What can neighborhoods do?

Neighborhood associations foster communication by:

- Distributing information so that residents can make informed decisions
- Enable two-way communication between neighborhoods and city government
- Create smaller venues for interactions

Neighborhood associations also build community through cooperative action by:

- Organize voluntary projects based on community interests
- Support other City programs such as Adopt-a-Park, Neighborhood Watch and Night to Unite
- Promote social activities
- Ensure neighborhood safety and security

What does a Neighborhood Association get “recognized” by the City?

A recognized Neighborhood Association is dedicated to enhancing the quality of life for residents and benefits all citizens within the Edina community. The City has assembled basic requirements for the formation of a Neighborhood Association.

A recognized Neighborhood Association has:

- Held a neighborhood meeting to vote on becoming recognized
- Submitted a recognition application along with their bylaws and meeting minutes
- Elected one member of the neighborhood to be the primary contact for the City

The requirements outlined in the Recognized Neighborhood Association policy were designed to provide the neighborhood with a foundation for future success as an organization.

Why should we organize? What are the benefits?

The City has made a commitment to notify and consult with Neighborhood Associations on matters of neighborhood interest. For example, Neighborhood Associations will be notified when:

- Significant neighborhood projects are being discussed or proposed such as a street reconstruction, park development or redevelopment or land use planning.
- There is a City matter or public hearing.
- The City is seeking resident input and organizes a neighborhood group for this purpose.

Other benefits include

- Communication Support – Even though the City is not the primary communication vehicle for Neighborhood Associations, the City will ensure residents are aware of the recognized neighborhood associations in the community.
- Meeting Space – City-owned meeting space is available and free of charge for Neighborhood Association meetings or events.
- Guest Speakers – City staff may be requested as a guest speaker for the Neighborhood Association.
- Annual Workshop – the City will coordinate an annual workshop for the recognized Neighborhood Associations to share ideas and best practices.
- Annual Award – Each year the Mayor will give a Neighborhood Association Award to recognize a neighborhood for their excellent effort in community building.

Does the City provide any funding to neighborhood associations?

At this time, the City does not have funds or a grant program to support Neighborhood Associations.

What are Association bylaws?

Bylaws are guidelines for the operation of the Neighborhood Association. The bylaws define the duties of the various offices of the neighborhood’s leadership, terms of leadership, the membership’s voting rights, required meetings and notices of meetings, as well as other specific items that are necessary to run the Neighborhood Association as an organization. The City has “sample” bylaws to review; however, neighborhoods are encouraged to customize them for their needs. When a neighborhood association changes or amends their bylaws they must provide an updated copy to the City’s Neighborhoods Liaison.

What is a Neighborhood Board or Steering Committee?

Every organization needs a core group of dedicated individuals who are committed to maintaining the group's vitality.. Neighborhood Boards or Steering Committees convene meetings, maintain records, and generally ensure that the association is meeting its member's needs. The Board or Steering Committee is elected by the members of the Association, or as otherwise specified in the bylaws. A neighborhood's leadership will not assume the role of an administrative or legislative body.

Why are we required to hold one annual meeting and give notice to all residents?

It is important for Neighborhood Associations to hold at least one annual meeting for all neighbors to attend. An annual meeting is a good forum for Neighborhood Associations to change bylaws, vote on new leadership, and allow members to take part in the decision making process that directs the neighborhood's actions.

Why are we required to provide a primary contact to the City?

In keeping with the purpose of supporting neighborhood organizing, the City desires to stay connected with the recognized Neighborhood Associations. The method of maintaining a primary contact ensures the City always has an accurate contact for the Association.

How is membership determined?

The City recognized neighborhood association policy outlines that any neighbor over the age of 18 has the right to belong and to vote as a member. Neighbor is defined as people or legal entities owning or occupying property within a neighborhood.

Why can't an Association mandate membership dues?

The City was purposeful in making sure that if desired, all residents were able to participate in the Neighborhood Association's activity. Membership dues are only allowed to be voluntary to ensure no obstacle in membership. This does not preclude Neighborhood Associations from collecting voluntary dues or charging for events or activities that are purely social in nature.

Does the City cover an Association's liability insurance?

The City requires that recognized neighborhoods have bylaws to ensure the organization is open to everyone and a basic governance system is in place. Outside of an annual meeting, the City does not dictate how, when or where the association meets or what activities the association chooses to pursue. Neighborhood Associations are organized by area residents to meet their needs. As a result, they are outside of the City's control and not covered under City liability policies or legal counsel.

The opportunities for liability should be fairly limited. The risk involved should be akin to any group gathering in a private home (e.g. book club, holiday party) or with any event organized by a group (e.g. block party).

The City is researching potential resources to assist Neighborhood Associations who are concerned about the liability issue. Please check with the Neighborhoods Liaison on any new developments.