

City of Fort Worth Registration Guidelines 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 establishing 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

There are many benefits to being registered with the City. These include:

- 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 quarterly distribution of the Community Engagement 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 Community 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 ½ mile of the registered 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 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.
- 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. It is recommended that elections 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 should be provided 72 hours or more prior to meetings. The association should make a reasonable attempt to notify all households in the association's boundaries. Suggested 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 should publish a schedule at least once per year and distribute to all households within the boundaries.
- All association meetings should be open to all people living within the association's boundaries.
- In January of each year, the association will provide an annual update to the Community Engagement Office. The annual update shall include contact, meeting and election information. This information will be used by all City departments for outreach purposes.
- The association should notify the Community Engagement Office of changes to boundaries, bylaws, officers, Management Company and contacts within 30 days of such change.

Boundary changes of Voluntary Neighborhood Associations

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

Expansion can only take place if the new geographic area is not part of another association.

Residents of the proposed expansion area who are at the meeting will vote on the expansion. If the majority of the attendees agree on the expansion, officers will 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. The map will then be updated in the database and map.

Petition Process for changes to Voluntary Neighborhood Associations

If a group of residents wishes to petition out of their neighborhood association and establish their own association, the following processes will 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 will 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 must 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.
- The Community Engagement Office will verify each signature collected and provide updates to the petitioner.
- Once a petition fails, the petitioner must wait 90 days before another petition is circulated to the residents.

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/HOAs).

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.
- In January of each year, the association shall provide an annual update to the Community Engagement Office, to include contact, election and meeting information. This information will be used by all City departments for outreach purposes.
- The association should notify the Community Engagement Office of changes to boundaries, bylaws, officers, Management Company and contacts within 30 days of such change.

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 them to the Community Engagement Office
- The list of organizations who belong to the alliance will be clearly stated in the bylaws.
- The Community Engagement Office will confirm that each organization listed is in agreement on membership.
- The alliance will hold at least one general membership meeting per year.
- In January of each year, the alliance will provide an annual update to the Community Engagement Office. The annual update will include contact and meeting information and a list of member organizations. This information will be used by all City departments for outreach purposes.
- The alliance should notify the Community Engagement Office of changes to boundaries, bylaws, and contacts within 30 days of such change.
- Those desiring to organize a new alliance will notify all registered neighborhood organizations within the alliance's proposed area. Each neighborhood organization located within the boundaries of the alliance will 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.
- Geographic boundaries will no longer be used to identify alliances. This will eliminate the confusion for organizations who do not belong to the alliance but are located within a geographic area.

Registration Policies for Redevelopment Organizations

Redevelopment Organization is defined as an organization with community-based leadership that was formed to revitalize a community. 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 Community Engagement Office.
- The boundaries of the organization will be clearly described in the bylaws.
- The organization will hold at least one general membership meeting per year.
- In January of each year, the organization will provide an annual update to the Community Engagement Office. The annual update shall include contact, meeting and membership information. This information will be used by all City departments for outreach purposes.
- The organization should notify the Community Engagement Office of changes to boundaries, bylaws and contacts within 30 days of such change.
- 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. Community organizations do not have to agree to participate in the redevelopment organization.
- 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 will adopt bylaws and provide a copy to the Community Engagement Office.
- A list of businesses who belong to the association will be clearly described in the bylaws.
- The association will hold at least one membership meeting per year.
- In January of each year, the association will 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.
- The association should notify the Community Engagement Office of changes to members, bylaws, and contacts within 30 days of such change.

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 will provide a description of geographic boundaries to the Community Engagement Office.

- In January of each year, 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.
- The organization should notify the Community Engagement Office of changes to boundaries and contacts within 30 days of such change.

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. This can also include auxiliary organizations whose members are part of a faith-based organization.

- In January of each year, the organization will 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.
- The organization should notify the Community Engagement Office of changes to contacts within 30 days of such change.

Registration Policies for Community Organizations

Community Organization is defined as a group of people that serve, represent, or advocate for the interests of a defined community. These organizations are typically nonprofit, volunteer-led, or mission-driven and focus on improving quality of life, addressing shared concerns, or providing services within a specific geographic area or population.

- In January of each year, the organization will provide an annual update to the Community Engagement Office, to include contact information for the organization. This information will be used by City departments for outreach purposes.
- The organization should notify the Community Engagement Office of changes to contacts within 30 days of such change.

Registration Policies for Multi-Family Housing Developments (Apartments/Condo)

A multi-family housing development is a residential property designed to house multiple households within one or more buildings on a single site. Each household occupies a separate dwelling unit, while residents may share common areas, facilities, or amenities.

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

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 reach out to the organization, using the last known primary contact for the organization and one other registered officer, if one exists.

The Community Engagement staff will send two follow-up communications. 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 considered inactive and will no longer receive any benefits for a registered organization. The boundaries of the organization will be removed from the City's Neighborhood Organization map. They can renew their registration by once again coming into compliance.

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.

Exceptions and Special Circumstances

We understand that there are sometimes special circumstances that arise in an organization, where residents are not allowed to be a member because of past behavior. These will be examined on a case-by-case basis, in consultation with City leadership and the City Attorney.

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. The Community Engagement Office is neutral and does not get involved in these types of situations.

Facilitated Resolution Services

If necessary, the parties involved in a grievance, complaint or conflict may request the assistance of the Community Engagement Office in 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.

**Guidelines for many meeting procedures are considered best practice and are taken from Robert's Rules of Order. <https://robertsrules.org/>*

***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.