



# City of Tacoma Standards and Guidelines Neighborhood Councils

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2013 Neighborhood Council Program  
December 17, 2013

City of Tacoma  
Community and Economic Development Department  
747 Market Street, Room 900



## Introduction

The Neighborhood Council Program was established by Ordinance 25188 in 1992 with the stated intention to “foster a partnership of open communication between the City and its neighborhoods; to enhance the environment in which citizens are afforded an opportunity to participate in government decisions in an advisory role; to foster cooperation and consensus among diverse interests; to assist the City and neighborhoods in developing solutions to mutual problems; and to develop in the citizens a sense of personal pride and responsibility for their neighborhood.”

Since that time the Neighborhood Council Program has succeeded in developing a sense of pride and responsibility in neighborhoods as well as developing grass roots leadership for the advancement of neighborhood issues and has played a strong role in creating a solid partnership culture between Tacoma citizens and their local government.

The purpose of developing Standards and Guidelines for the oversight of the Neighborhood Council Program is to ensure that the civic gains made through the formation of the Neighborhood Council structure remain and that the resources and responsibilities of the program continue to reflect the policy intentions of the City Council while recognizing the changing community engagement architecture and neighborhood priorities.

The Standards will continue as a tool for ensuring that Tacoma’s Neighborhood Council Program is accountable and transparent along with the goal of building Neighborhood Councils that are accessible to residents who want to contribute to improving the livability of their communities.

## Neighborhood Councils Formation

The basic building blocks of citizen participation in City Government are the various neighborhood groups, i.e., neighborhood improvement organizations, block watch groups, SAFE Streets and Hilltop Action Coalition Groups, advisory boards etc. These organizations consistently demonstrate an interest in neighborhood communities and the City of Tacoma.

These groups along with other residents and community based organizations were called upon to assist the City of Tacoma in the initial formation of the 8 existing Neighborhood Councils.

The initial 8 Neighborhood Councils corresponded to the existing nine (9) Planning Areas of the then called “Planning and Development Department” with minor adjustments to coincide with the historic community ties or boundaries.

## Neighborhood Council Program Overview

The Neighborhood Council Program supports Neighborhood Councils through a Program Coordinator who provides technical assistance to the Neighborhood Councils and Community Councils of Tacoma (CCOT), administers contracted funding to the Neighborhood Councils and CCOT; implements the Small Neighborhood Innovative Grant program, supports organization wide communications to Neighborhood Councils, promotes neighborhood involvement within the Neighborhood Councils and implements outreach and communication strategies to the neighborhood groups and stakeholders within the Neighborhood Council boundaries.

The Neighborhood Council Program Coordinator also serves as a clearing house for neighborhood referrals and inquiries in regards to neighborhood services and community involvement within their Neighborhood Council area. The Neighborhood Council Program Coordinator and the Neighborhood Council Liaisons will be assigned to the appropriate Departments by the City Manager.

## Neighborhood Council Program Goals

The goals of The Neighborhood Council Program are to support cooperation and consensus among diverse interests that result in solutions to mutual problems and build a sense of personal pride and responsibility for Tacoma's neighborhoods. The desired outcome is to enhance community involvement in efforts to improve neighborhood livability, sense of community and public safety, organizational and self-empowerment and representation at the neighborhood level to implement neighborhood priorities in projects and policies.

The Neighborhood Council Program will strengthen neighborhood involvement through the following functions:

1. Strengthen community capacity by supporting Neighborhood Councils and the leadership potential of individuals to initiate, coordinate and implement effective advocacy efforts;
2. Increase the number and diversity of people involved in neighborhood and community livability issues to ensure Neighborhood Councils are reflective of the community; and utilize best practices that reflect Racial and Social Equity community engagement objectives.
3. Foster networking and collaboration between Neighborhood Councils, Business District Associations, Identified Neighborhoods, historically under-engaged communities and other community groups;
4. Encourage and facilitate communication among Neighborhood Councils, neighborhoods, community members, and public and private agencies and groups;

## Neighborhood Council Program Goals (cont.)

5. Provide information and referral assistance for Neighborhood Councils, neighborhoods and the general public to facilitate public awareness of their community and government;
6. Provide transparency and opportunities for maximum citizen and neighborhood participation.

## Standards for being recognized as a Neighborhood Council

In order to be recognized as the Neighborhood Council representing specific boundaries set by City Council Resolution and acting in an advisory role to the City, each Neighborhood Council shall meet the following standards:

- **Membership:** Neighborhood Councils shall maintain membership, leadership and, in the event that a Board of Directors structure is chosen - Board representation which is open to all residents, business owners and property owners within the recognized boundaries of the Neighborhood Councils. Other individuals or organizations may be members as further set forth in each Neighborhood Council bylaws.
- **Non-Discrimination:** Neighborhood Councils shall not discriminate against individuals or groups on the basis of race, religion, color, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, age, or disability.
- **Governance:** Neighborhood Councils may govern themselves in a manner of their choosing and which best suits the needs of the members. In the event that a Board of Directors structure is chosen, Board membership must be established in an open and transparent manner, subject to a vote of the Neighborhood Council members. Regardless of the specific governance structure elected by a Neighborhood Council, the governance and decision making mechanisms and processes utilized by the Neighborhood Council must be transparent, documented and provide adequate opportunity for participation by the Neighborhood Council membership.
- **Bylaws:** To be formally recognized in an advisory capacity to the City Council and/or to receive funding, a Neighborhood Council must have bylaws which include a description of the governance structure and mechanisms employed by the Neighborhood Council which are reviewed by the membership bi-annually and do not contain provisions which unfairly restrict board representation or participation if a Board of Directors governance structure is selected. In the event a Neighborhood Council is organized as a Washington State
- **Nonprofit corporation under Chapter 24.03 RCW** any corporate bylaws adopted by the corporate board of directors may not unfairly restrict participation on the Neighborhood Council Board of Directors, if the Neighborhood Council chooses to govern itself by a board. Copies of current bylaws must be available at each Neighborhood Council and/or Community Council meeting.

## Standards for being recognized as a Neighborhood (cont.)

- Meeting Requirements: Neighborhood Councils shall set forth meeting requirements in their bylaws and have a consistent outreach strategy to publicize the dates, times and locations of meetings. Meetings where decisions will be made to act in an advisory capacity or to recommend funding to the City shall be posted online as well as publicized by the Neighborhood Council's standard outreach strategies.
- Reporting Requirements: Documentation of membership input at Neighborhood Council meetings, including, but not limited to minutes, shall be submitted along with any official communication pertaining to final decisions regarding funding and/or advisory recommendations.

## Standards for Receiving Contracted Funding

In consideration of the funds provided by the City, the Neighborhood Council and/or Community Council of Tacoma agrees to perform the following actions and/or spend funds in the following ways

- Maintain an organizational structure that meets the City of Tacoma contracting requirements. In the event the Neighborhood Council selects the organizational structure of a non-profit corporation formed under the Washington Nonprofit Corporation Act, Chapter 24.03 RCW, any such corporation should designate in its articles of incorporation that it does not have corporate members, in order that the term "member" as it is used in this Standards and Guidelines document will dictate the membership of the Neighborhood Council.
- Obtain and provide proof of insurance that meets the City of Tacoma contracting requirements.
- \*Implement a recruitment strategy from identified neighborhood groups within the Neighborhood Council Boundaries or in the case of the Community Council, through Neighborhood Council representatives to establish membership on the Board of Directors or in participation other leadership posts or roles if a Board of Directors model is not utilized.
- \*Implement a leadership development and recruitment strategy that results in proactive Board or leadership turnover and Officer or other leadership roles that rotate through neighborhood membership, and in the case of the Community Council, through the Neighborhood Councils.
- \*Promote Neighborhood Council Board or other governing body elections at least 30 days prior to any act that closes a list of members eligible to be elected to the Board or other leadership roles to each of the identified Neighborhood Groups within the Neighborhood Council Boundaries in addition to the general promotional methods used by the Neighborhood Council.

## Standards for Receiving Contracted Funding (cont.)

- \*Promote Small Neighborhood Innovative Grants at least 30 days prior to applications being due to each of the identified Neighborhood Groups within the Neighborhood Council Boundaries as well as 30 days prior to any vote being taken on the selection of qualified applicants to forward to the City of Tacoma.
- Provide at least one representative to the Community Council, participate in a consistent manner, and distribute information received from Community Council participation to Neighborhood Council Board, leadership or membership.
- \*Develop an Annual Action Plan and Budget.
- Involve Neighborhood Council/ Community Council Board, leadership or membership as a whole in the development of the annual action plan and annual report. Provide minutes with Council votes adopting Action Plan, Annual Report and Budget.
- \*Provide a Neighborhood Council Board or leadership post orientation after elections.
- Provide Neighborhood Council Program Coordinator with quarterly attendance summaries.
- The following activities will be required in addition to the above from the Community Council of Tacoma (CCOT) in order to be eligible for contracted funding:
  1. \*Convene presentations and educational topics of general interest to Neighborhood Council Representatives at monthly CCOT meetings.
  2. Promote civic engagement.
  3. \*Conduct a joint meeting annually with the Cross District Association of Tacoma to discuss overlapping issues including but not limited to the 6 Year Transportation Plan and Community Policing.

\*These standards are expected to need City resources and/or technical support to fully achieve desired results.

## Neighborhood Council Program Support

In consideration of the important civic engagement role of the Neighborhood Councils the Neighborhood Council Program will support the following objectives with technical assistance, resource coordination and/or direct funding when appropriate:

Increase community involvement. Provide tools, methods and best practices to assist Neighborhood Councils in increasing general community involvement in their activities, including outreach, and recruitment and retention of new members and leaders.

## Neighborhood Council Program Support (cont)

Increase involvement by historically under-engaged groups. Provide tools, methods and best practices to assist Neighborhood Councils increasing the involvement by members of under-engaged groups in their activities and leadership.

Community organizations: Provide information and opportunities to foster networking, collaboration, and partnerships between Neighborhood Groups and Business Districts, under-engaged groups, schools, faith-based organizations, and other community groups.

Business District Associations: Provide information and opportunities for partnerships that encourage the participation of businesses and Business District Association representatives in activities and meetings.

Promote Effective Communication: Work strategically and collaboratively with Neighborhood Councils to achieve the following:

Contribute to Communication Strategies: Establish an annual funding and technical assistance strategy that encourages and increases communication between Neighborhood Councils members, and neighborhood groups.

Publicize meetings and activities. Publicize the dates, times and locations of meetings, Neighborhood Council bylaws, and other related activities of Neighborhood Councils on City of Tacoma website and social media, TV Tacoma and/or other media and communications opportunities where appropriate.

Standard Reporting Templates: Provide standard templates and forms for reporting, including, but not limited to Neighborhood Council action plans, budgets and annual reports.

Advocacy with City Council: Neighborhood Council Program Coordinator will advocate with City Council for continued funding to support the Neighborhood Councils and the Neighborhood Council Program to maximize its potential.

Alternative Funding Source Identification: Neighborhood Council Program Coordinator will notify Neighborhood Councils wherever possible of alternative funding sources for expanding public participation services.

Neighborhood leadership training. Neighborhood Council Program will work with Neighborhood Councils and other stakeholders to develop a citywide neighborhood leadership training strategy and implementation system, including identification of training needs and development of training materials.

Identification of Neighborhood Groups. The Neighborhood Council Program Coordinator will provide the contact information for identified neighborhood groups to the Neighborhood Councils in order for them to conduct outreach and required notification for voting and official advisory actions.

Resource Guide. The Neighborhood Council Program shall produce a current “Resource Guide” of important services and resources for neighborhoods with the purpose of being distributed through Neighborhood Councils and other methods .

## Neighborhood Council Program Revisions and Updates

The Neighborhood Council Program Coordinator will conduct reviews of the Neighborhood Council Program to ensure that City Council goals and objectives are being met as well as the goals and objectives of the Neighborhood Councils and the neighborhood groups within the Neighborhood Council boundaries.

60 days’ notice will be provided to the Community Council and Neighborhood Councils in advance of consideration for any revisions or updates.

## Neighborhood Council Program Coordinator

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## Existing Neighborhood Councils

Central Neighborhood Council

Eastside Neighborhood Council

(Eastside Advisory Council of Tacoma or ENACT)

New Tacoma Neighborhood Council

Northeast Tacoma Neighborhood Council

North End Neighborhood Council

South End Neighborhood Council

(SENCO)

South Tacoma Neighborhood Council

West End Neighborhood Council



Neighborhood Council Map

