



# **Registered Neighborhood Organization Program**

***Policy & Procedures***

*Amended - May 2023*

***Hampton Neighborhood Commission***

***[www.hampton.gov/neighborhoods](http://www.hampton.gov/neighborhoods)***

# Registered Neighborhood Organization Program

## I. HAMPTON NEIGHBORHOOD INITIATIVE OVERVIEW

The Hampton Neighborhood Initiative (HNI) is a partnership of neighborhood organizations, the Neighborhood Commission, and the City of Hampton, that is dedicated to improving the quality of life in Hampton's neighborhoods. The Neighborhood Commission is a council-appointed board comprised of neighborhood representatives, non-profit, faith-based, business, youth, schools, police, and other city leaders.

Any organization can participate in the Hampton Neighborhood Initiative through a variety of different partnerships and networking opportunities. The basic criterion for participation in the HNI is that eligible organizations must be inclusive groups of residents working at a neighborhood level to improve the quality of life in their neighborhood, and following the guiding principles of the Hampton Neighborhood Initiative. A participating neighborhood organization must demonstrate practices that allow everyone in the organization's area to participate.

The Guiding Principles of the Neighborhood Initiative are listed below:

- *Hampton neighborhoods are valuable community assets.*
- *City government should be flexible enough to serve the unique needs of individual neighborhoods.*
- *Partnerships are critical. Everyone has a stake in neighborhoods, and everyone has a contribution to make.*
- *Neighborhoods should be places where families are strengthened, and youth are supported.*
- *Neighborhoods should be safe, offer economic opportunity, support social interaction and civic involvement, and provide recreation and education opportunities to all residents.*
- *Neighborhoods should be places where people want to live.*

## II. REGISTERED NEIGHBORHOOD ORGANIZATION [RNO] PROGRAM POLICY

### A. Purpose of Program

The primary purpose of the Registered Neighborhood Organization (RNO) program is to serve as a tool to identify and develop relationships with key organizations and networks that make up the Hampton community. The registration program helps to initiate and maintain current contact information for neighborhood organizations throughout Hampton. These organizations represent a variety of interests, concerns, and perspectives but all are actively involved in improving the community through their ongoing efforts. The benefits listed below represent a portion of resources that the city and schools have offered to support the work of neighborhood organizations.

### B. Benefits of Registration

#### 1. Benefit Overview

Participation in the Registered Neighborhood Organization Program gives neighborhood organizations access to several benefits from various city agencies. These benefits are offered because an organization is considered a community partner in improving the places where they live through volunteerism, representation, building relationships, encouraging community resiliency, and fostering inclusive and caring communities. The following benefits may change or be suspended based on the ability of the agency to offer them, changes in staffing capacity, or unforeseen circumstances (state of emergency, closures...). An organization that does not embody the guiding principles or operate as a good partner with the organizations below may be restricted in their access to such benefits at the discretion of the partner agency or the responsible Neighborhood Commission committee.

# Registered Neighborhood Organization Program

## 2. Potential Benefits

### a) Neighborhood Funding

- (1) Eligible to apply for Community Connections Program funding for social events
- (2) Eligible to apply for the Places and Spaces Program funding for physical improvements in their community

### b) Recognition & Promotion

- (1) Recognition by the Hampton Neighborhood Commission at various times of the year
- (2) Opportunity to spotlight your organization. For example: Neighborhood Commission meetings, City media, Channel 47 special event promotions, and communication to Council

### c) Events & Meetings

- (1) Application fee waived for neighborhood-scale special event permit ([www.hampton.gov](http://www.hampton.gov))
- (2) The waiver of insurance requirements for school division facility uses or rental for qualified meetings and events ([www.hampton.k12.va.us/](http://www.hampton.k12.va.us/))

### d) Communication & Awareness

- (1) Automatically signed-up for the Hampton E-News for neighborhood related events, opportunities, and news
- (2) Notified of rezoning petitions and planning processes by the Community Development Department
- (3) Added to official contact lists for neighborhood-level public meetings related to rezoning and land use cases
- (4) Notification from local agencies that may interest residents, including special events, training, grants and other neighborhood opportunities
- (5) Opportunity to build organizational coalitions and obtain community input on private sector projects

### e) Coaching & Other Support

- (1) Priority access to training opportunities, including the Neighborhood College, Hampton 101, Hampton Leadership Academy and neighborhood-related workshops
- (2) Opportunity for technical assistance (dependent upon the availability of staff/commissioners) in improving:
  - (a) Outreach efforts and effectiveness of your organization, and
  - (b) Methods to address complex community issues

## C. Eligibility

A neighborhood organization is defined as an inclusive group of neighborhood stakeholders who work to make their local neighborhood or community better. Neighborhood organizations are primarily place-based organizations that serve a self-identified area within the city of Hampton. While these inclusive organizations represent unique interests and participate in various social activities, generally, they focus their efforts on improving the quality of life within their community. While the Commission and staff may provide coaching and guidance to organizations, they do not determine or oversee neighborhood

# Registered Neighborhood Organization Program

organizations' by-laws, rules, or enforcement. Applicants must be able to demonstrate to the Neighborhood Commission that the group is:

- organized (I.e., by-laws, founding documents, organization summary...),
- representative of the area that they serve, and
- making efforts towards improving the broad quality of life for their residents.

**Examples:** Examples of eligible organizations include neighborhood watch associations, neighborhood associations, block groups, homeowners' associations, civic leagues, etc.

## D. Related Considerations

When considering organizations for registration, three key elements should be examined to ensure alignment with the principles and mission of the Neighborhood Commission.

### 1. Organizational Structure:

Each neighborhood formulates its own organizational structure consistent with fulfilling their unique needs and goals.

- a. The Neighborhood Commissioners and Neighborhood Services staff do not dictate the process or structure that organizations choose, nor do they grant any special authority to these organizations through registration. Commissioners and staff commit to offer coaching and support to neighborhood groups to help them reach their full potential.
- b. Organizational structures should encourage and align with the guiding principles of partnership, empowerment, democracy, and flexibility while avoiding overly authoritarian structures that focus too heavily on top-down styles of leadership.

### 2. Inclusive Outreach:

Each neighborhood organization must be open for all residents within its defined territory to participate either as members, participants, decision-makers, or partners.

- a. Some organizations may include businesses or other organizations within their method of engaging neighborhoods.
- b. Approaches and methods for encouraging membership as well as information exchange within the neighborhood must be included as part of the structure of the organization and defined in any organizational documents.
- c. Creating inclusive but defined outreach areas does not preclude organizations from allowing members from outside of their boundaries to join, nor does it prevent organizations from requiring dues of its membership, nor does it preclude an organization from setting rules or establishing expectations of its membership.

### 3. Inclusive Perspectives:

Each neighborhood is made up of a variety of individuals, households, and institutions, each with unique experiences, diverse backgrounds, and a range of worldviews. Neighborhood groups should strive to include these varied perspectives that reflect the sentiments of a broad range of representation in their community and demonstrate that inclusiveness in their organizational structure, outreach methods, and actions.

- a. The Commission acknowledges that individuals may belong to one or more neighborhood organizations. Potential members of one group should not be

# Registered Neighborhood Organization Program

prevented from joining an organization just because they belong to another organization in the same geographic area.

- b. Inclusion also encourages organizations to welcome the views and support of other organizations within a neighborhood in carrying out their stated purposes.

## E. Definitions

Often times, the term “neighborhood organizations” is used interchangeably to describe a variety of different groups that serve the local community. These groups range in scale, capacity, structure, purpose, and formality. The following definitions will serve as a guide for decisions related to RNO eligibility but may not be the only factors considered.

### 1. Neighborhood Organizations:

Organizations take different forms and structures to support change in their community and are able to distribute information and serve as an inclusive representative organization for residents of a geographically defined area. For purposes of addressing this variety, some of the most common organizations and the expectation for these organizations is defined below:

#### a) Civic/Block Organizations

These organizations are often voluntarily created by residents who are interested in improving the quality of life in a variety of aspects of their community (i.e., safety, walkability, commercial, beautification, social, leisure...). Membership is most often voluntary and comprised of residents within a defined geographic area. The goals of the organization and activities it pursues are defined by the membership. Civic groups are often guided by a set of by-laws or other founding documents adopted by the membership that define their purpose, mission, and scope.

#### b) Neighborhood Watch Organizations

Neighborhood Watch organizations are a unique type of civic organization that focuses primarily on the block-level engagement of residents to address safety and security concerns within a community. Membership is voluntary and is often led by an Area Coordinator who recruits Block Captains who are then trained by HPD. Groups may serve as subcommittees of larger Civic organizations, or they may serve a broader social purpose beyond reporting safety concerns.

#### c) Home Owner Associations (HOA's) or Condominium Association

Homeowner's associations are designed to manage common or shared property, perform property maintenance oversight, provide services to residents, and develop a sense of community through social activities and amenities. HOA's generally have compulsory dues for all property owners within the subdivision. They are usually empowered to take enforcement action beyond local codes and ordinances, often in the form of deed restrictions, covenants, or architectural standards.

#### d) Resident Councils

Resident councils exist primarily in publicly or privately managed housing developments. A resident council is an independent, self-determining group comprised primarily of residents. The council is generally designed to represent the collective voice of residents to the property owner and support activities that

# Registered Neighborhood Organization Program

create a sense of community.

e) **Historical Societies**

Neighborhood-based historical societies are generally formed in the interest of preserving and maintaining the places, traditions, and stories of historical importance to a neighborhood to improve the overall quality of life within a geographic area.

f) **Civic Leagues/Coalitions**

Civic leagues or coalitions most often consist of a collection of organizations within a defined community area with common purposes and goals to improve and the overall quality of life within a broader area. Civic leagues provide broader collective representation and advocacy around issues that benefit the organizations in the area in which they serve. Some leagues and coalitions may work to develop smaller representative groups within under-represented areas or assist with building the capacity of groups that lack organization. The strategies and positions of civic leagues and coalitions are generally determined and driven by the member organizations.

**2. City-wide Organizations:**

City-wide Organizations refer to organizations that are open to membership from all neighborhoods within Hampton and generally serve multiple geographic areas. Such organizations deal with large quality of life issues that may affect all residents. While they may have target or primary areas that they are serving in, efforts are largely made up of efforts by employees or volunteers that do not live within the focus area. These may often be considered "Neighborhood-Serving Organizations." Examples: NAACP, Urban League, Kiwanis, 200+ Men, Exchange Clubs, fraternities, sororities, faith-based organizations, some non-profits, charities, foundations, institutions, etc.

**3. Special Interest Organizations:**

Interest-based organizations may support specific neighborhood areas but are focused on a single issue or area of quality of life. The boundaries of these groups may change based on the issue or service area changes. Such groups are often considered "Neighborhood-Serving Organizations." Examples: recreation associations, non-profit service organizations, garden clubs, motorcycle club, Adopt-A-Spot groups, neighborhood center boards, etc.

**4. Boundaries:**

Boundaries are dividing lines that define the area, territory, or community served by a neighborhood organization. The boundaries generally relate to areas of outreach or representation and often align with natural features, roadways, or intersections. A neighborhood organization's geographic reach must be clearly defined. Therefore, By-laws and other foundational documents must contain clearly defined boundaries and purpose.

**5. Overlapping Boundaries:**

Boundaries are overlapping when two or more organizations include all, or part, of the same geography and same purposes, as defined within their by-laws or organizational documents.

- a) The HNI discourages overlapping boundaries of organizations because they confuse identification and representation, as well as create duplication in

# Registered Neighborhood Organization Program

communications, membership, and the ability of the city to provide service delivery.

- b) While the HNI does discourage overlapping organizations, it does not prohibit such organizations from participating in Neighborhood Commission programs.

## F. Guidelines for Overlapping Neighborhood Organization Boundaries

### 1. Background:

Since the Hampton Neighborhood Initiative was established in 1993, the registration of organizations with the Hampton Neighborhood Commission has been a key initiative. Each organization provides its own geographic boundaries within which its areas of interest, purposes, or territories are established. Sometimes boundaries of adjacent organizations overlap, while at other times several niche-specific organizations are included within the territory of a much larger umbrella organization. While overlapping boundaries may, at times, conflict, it is the intent of the Neighborhood Commission to encourage the formation of neighborhood-based organizations which embrace and operate in a manner consistent with the values of the Hampton Neighborhood Initiative. The purpose of this section is to articulate how the Neighborhood Commission will address issues that arise from organizations with overlapping boundaries.

2. When addressing requests for support (registration, grant funding, coaching) from any neighborhood organization which overlaps with another organization, the Hampton Neighborhood Commission shall use its resources to the extent possible to facilitate collaboration between the overlapping organizations.
3. While each situation should be carefully evaluated based on the facts and merits of the request, the following guidelines should be used to inform the Commission's decisions:
  - a) The highest preference should be given to applications for support when the overlapping organizations jointly submit the request so that all overlapping organizations support such request and will contribute toward the fulfillment of the goals, objectives and guiding principles embodied by the Hampton Neighborhood Initiative.
  - b) When overlapping organizations do not submit a joint application,
    - (1) evidence shall be provided which demonstrates two-way communication between the organizations regarding the proposed request has occurred, as well as,
    - (2) formal acknowledgement that two-way communication has occurred (in writing) from the appropriate officer of the overlapping neighborhood organization not submitting the request
  - c) The Hampton Neighborhood Commission shall generally refrain from approving registration, assistance, or resources to a neighborhood organization with overlapping boundaries who has not demonstrated a level of collaboration described in #1 and #2 above.
4. The Neighborhood Commission realizes that policies cannot adequately address all possible situations, therefore the Commission may deviate from the above guidelines if they believe approval of the request:
  - a) Does no harm to or jeopardize the success of the other overlapping neighborhood organization; and

## Registered Neighborhood Organization Program

- b) The request clearly furthers the goals, objectives and guiding principles of the Hampton Neighborhood Initiative even if little or no collaboration occurred.

### G. Annual updates

#### 1. Requirements for Renewal:

- a) Registered Neighborhood Organizations (RNOs) are required to update their contact information annually online with the Housing and Neighborhoods Division.
- b) RNO updates are required between January 1 and March 31 of each year. Updates may include, but are not limited to, primary and secondary contacts and organizational self-assessments.

#### 2. Removal from Registration:

- a) If a registered organization does not respond to requests for updates or a current update is not provided within a three (3) month period, the organization will be removed from the current RNO listing.
- b) Prior to removal, the organization will be notified in writing of their pending removal from the listing. Those removed from the listing will be required to resubmit their registration for review by the Commission.
- c) Organizations that demonstrate a pattern of actions or decisions that do not reflect the Guiding Principles or support the mission of the Neighborhood Commission, may be removed from registration.
- d) General guidelines and procedures for removal and reconsideration can be found in Section III.F & Section III.G.

### III. NEIGHBORHOOD ORGANIZATION REGISTRATION PROCEDURES

#### A. Registration Form Submission

All forms are to be submitted to and reviewed by Community Development staff electronically.

#### B. Follow-up

Either Community Development staff, the District Commissioner, or other designated Commissioner, will then make direct contact with the organization to discuss the group's history, purpose, goals, and any potential partnership opportunities in which the Commission may assist in helping the organization to achieve their goals. This initial conversation should be done prior to reviewing the registration by the committee responsible.

#### C. Committee Review

Community Development staff will then submit the form to the chair of the Committee and share any additional relevant information with the Committee.

1. At the following meeting, the Committee may request additional information from the Neighborhood Commissioner or directly from the organization regarding the registration. Additionally, they may provide information regarding specific resources and/or potential partnerships that may assist the neighborhood group in achieving their organization's goals.



## Registered Neighborhood Organization Program

2. The Committee will then forward additions to the list of the registered organizations to the Hampton Neighborhood Commission at their next regular meeting.
3. The Committee will be responsible for ensuring the list is updated, the process is effective, and expectations are communicated clearly.

### D. Neighborhood Commission Recognition

The newly identified organizations may be invited to attend a Neighborhood Commission Meeting to be recognized as a registered neighborhood organization and a new partner in the Hampton Neighborhood Initiative.

### E. Renewal Steps

1. Neighborhood staff will notify the organization annually of the need to renew their registration.
2. Fill out the RNO renewal online form.
3. The Neighborhood Commission, or it's designated committee, will review the RNO renewal form for completeness and continued eligibility based on current criteria.
4. Once approved, the RNO is eligible for maintaining the related benefits including the ability to apply for neighborhood funding
5. Failure to respond to request for renewal within 90 days will result in removal from the RNO list and loss of related benefits. See section III.F. for removal process.
6. Organizations removed from registration due to failure to respond may request to re-register at a future date.

### F. Removal From Registration

Organizations that 1) have failed to respond to communications from the Commission or related staff for more than 90 days or 2) have demonstrated a pattern of actions or decisions that do not align with the Commission's Guiding Principles or mission, may be removed from the Registration.

#### 1. Administrative Removal from Registration:

- a) Organizations failing to respond to re-registration requests from City staff or the Commission will be notified of their pending removal from registration by mailed letter and/or email to the primary and secondary contacts.
- b) Should an organization still fail to respond to requests for information, Staff will remove the organization from the Registration list and update the Commission or designated committee at their next regularly scheduled meeting.

#### 2. Committee Removal from Registration:

- a) Concerns that an organization is demonstrating a pattern that is contrary to the Commission's Guiding Principles or mission may be submitted in writing to the Chair of the Commission, designated Committee, or the related staff support.
- b) The Chair of the Commission, or designated Committee, and the Executive Director, or designated staff, will meet with the organization to discuss the concerns and draft

## Registered Neighborhood Organization Program

a recommendation to designated committee.

- c) At the next regular meeting of the designated committee, the Chair will share the recommendation with the designated committee, to take any suggested actions related to the disputed Registration.
- d) Should the designated committee decide to remove the organization from the Registration, the Chair will contact the primary organization contact to inform them of the decision and written letter will be submitted outline the decision and any recommended corrective actions.

### **G. Reconsideration of Committee Decisions**

1. Should the organization disagree with the designated committee's decision, they may ask the full Commission to reconsider that decision. The organization must do so by letter to the Chair of the Committee or Community Development Staff within 30 days of receipt of the designated committee's decision letter.
2. A hearing shall be conducted by the full Commission at their next regularly scheduled meeting.
3. The Commission will determine any protocols for the hearing including procedures for the organization to address the body during their hearing.
4. All meetings and discussions will be held in open session in accordance with any city, state, or federal public meeting regulations regarding closed session practices.
5. All decisions by the full Commission are final.