



# City of Tacoma

## Neighborhood Council Program

### Standards and Guidelines

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City of Tacoma

Neighborhood and Community Services  
Department 747 Market Street, Room 836



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## **Section 1: Neighborhood Council Program Overview**

The Neighborhood Council Program was established by Ordinance 25188 in 1992, and 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.

The purpose of developing Standards and Guidelines for the Neighborhood Council Program is to provide detailed functions of the program and expectations of the Neighborhood Councils, and to ensure that the resources and responsibilities of the program continue to reflect the policy intentions of the City Council while recognizing the changing community engagement strategies and neighborhood priorities.

This document will serve as a tool to ensure that Tacoma's Neighborhood Council Program is accountable and transparent, and meets the program goals to create an environment in which residents are afforded an opportunity to meaningfully discuss City programs and policies that affect the neighborhood, bring neighborhood concerns, priorities, and goals to the attention of the City, and encourage diverse relationships and representative participation where residents feel included and empowered to contribute to improving the livability of their communities.

## Section 2: Neighborhood Council Program and Tacoma 2025

The Neighborhood Council program engages residents across Tacoma and creates opportunities for residents to engage civically with their government and better advocate for their neighborhoods. The Neighborhood Council program will support the goals and metrics for civic engagement, equity, and accessibility contained in the Tacoma 2025 Strategic plan in the following areas:



### Civic Engagement Goals

- Increase the number of residents who participate civically through volunteering and voting.
- Increase the percentage of residents who believe they are able to have a positive impact on the community and express trust in the public institutions in Tacoma.



### Equity and Accessibility Goals

- Elected officials, boards, commissions, and volunteer leadership will reflect the diversity of the Tacoma community.
- Representation at public meetings will reflect the diversity of the Tacoma community.

### **Section 3: Bylaw Requirements**

Neighborhood Councils (NCs) and the Community Council of Tacoma (CCOT) must adopt bylaws that, at a minimum include the following provisions. These requirements must be adopted in NC and CCOT bylaws in order to be eligible for City support.

1. NCs and CCOT must have bylaws on record with the City which include a description of the governance structure and decision making mechanisms employed by the Neighborhood Council. Bylaws must be reviewed by the membership annually and must not contain provisions which restrict board representation or participation based on protected classes or tenure of service to the Neighborhood Council.
2. NC bylaws must clearly state geographic boundaries of the neighborhood that do not overlap with other Neighborhood Council boundaries that have been established by the City Council.
3. NC and CCOT bylaws must contain provisions stating terms limits for years of service and number of terms allowed for members of the governing board. NCs may choose the number of terms allowed and years of service per term (ex, 2 4-year terms, 4 2-year terms, 8 1-year terms, etc.), so long as the total years of continuous service on the board in any capacity does not exceed 8 years.
4. NC bylaws must outline a process for internal mediation of conflicts and a method of addressing community complaints. Complaints will be received by the City and provided to the Neighborhood Councils when received.
5. NC and CCOT bylaws must outline an election process that concludes near the end of the calendar year with terms beginning in January for consistency. This provision must also outline a process for filling leadership vacancies mid-term.

## **Section 4: Neighborhood Council Essential Duties and Expectations**

To be effective the Neighborhood Councils (NCs) should be aware of the duties and expectations the City has of them. Any expectation the City has for the Neighborhood Councils will be supported with technical assistance and training.

1. NCs should encourage all participants in the program to actively engage and be involved in Neighborhood Council decisions and actions.
2. NCs are independent organizations that work closely with the City of Tacoma to support the success of the program and the intent of TMC 1.45. NCs may receive funding or contract with the City and must adhere to those contracting requirements to receive resources.
3. NCs may review and recommend an action, policy, or plan to the appropriate Council Committee, department, or committee, board, or commission on matters that affect the neighborhood.
4. NCs provide effective community participation in government by articulating, defining, and addressing neighborhood problems by advising, consulting with, and cooperating with various City departments and the City Council, and by notifying and relaying information to NC participants regarding matters that affect their respective neighborhoods.
5. NCs must provide contact information for all board members for all official communications from the City via email, and at least one physical address for mailings. NCs will be accountable to participants within the neighborhood in which they represent. They will be responsible for disseminating information and notifying participants about meeting times and location, elections, Neighborhood Council events, and when decisions will be voted on at least three days in advance. This is intended to address planned elections and votes, not matters brought up by the community or board members during a meeting. .
6. The governance and decision-making mechanisms and processes utilized by the Neighborhood Council to elect leadership or submit letters of support and/or opinions to the City must be transparent, equitable, well documented, and provide adequate opportunity for participation by the Neighborhood Council participants.
7. NCs will develop an Annual Report, Annual Action Plan and Budget, and if applicable provide a current long-range neighborhood plan. NCs will also provide notes and/or minutes with comments and votes adopting Action Plan, Annual Report, Budget, or changes to the

long-range neighborhood plan to the City. NCs must demonstrate significant community outreach and equitable inclusion in the development of the annual action plan, annual report, budget, or long-range neighborhood plan.

8. NCs must also include in their annual reports their board recruitment, participant outreach, and leadership development strategy documents that demonstrate a commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion practices that recruits and engages members from diverse backgrounds that represent the neighborhood in the Neighborhood Councils and leadership roles.
9. NCs must seek the views of people affected by proposed policies or actions and shall consider all proposed options before adopting any final recommendations or actions.
10. NCs will designate at least one representative to the Community Council of Tacoma who will attend each meeting, and distribute information received from Community Council meetings to Neighborhood Council board members and participants.
11. NCs and CCOT must maintain a physical or digital copy of current bylaws and/or governing documents that must be made available at each Neighborhood Council and/or Community Council meeting for reference.



## **Section 5: Community Council of Tacoma Essential Duties and Expectations**

The Community Council of Tacoma (CCOT) is an independent body that brings together the eight Neighborhood Councils to share information and work together to address larger citywide issues. Like Neighborhood Councils, the expectations of CCOT will be supported by the City through training and technical assistance.

1. CCOT will support and advocate for the needs of the individual Neighborhood Councils.
2. CCOT will support the citywide strategic plan and support the individual Neighborhood Councils in doing the same.
3. CCOT may review and recommend an action, policy, or plan to the appropriate Council Committee, department, or committee, board, or commission on matters that affect neighborhoods across Tacoma.
4. CCOT will collaborate with the City to complete the five-year reviews of the TMC and Standards and Guidelines document for the Neighborhood Council program.
5. CCOT will review proposals for new Neighborhood Councils or boundary adjustments and make recommendations to staff and the City Council.

## Section 6: Neighborhood Council Program Support

The Neighborhood and Community Services Department (NCS), which will administer the program in a manner that best serves neighborhoods and effectively uses City resources, will provide support for the Neighborhood Council program. The responsibilities of the department are outlined below.

1. Contact and Coordination – NCS will identify a point of contact for all Neighborhood Council business. This may be a specified employee or program email maintained by the department specifically for this program.
2. Information Resource – NCS will support NCs in accessing information through publically available reports, dashboards, data sets, and notification listservs.
3. Publicizing Program – NCS will publicize the dates, times, locations, bylaws, as well as events and elections of the Neighborhood Councils on the City webpage, TV Tacoma, or City Social Media as appropriate.
4. Reporting and Requests – NCS will create and make available standard forms and templates for annual reports, budgets, agendas, and other items as they emerge.
5. Complaint System – The City will host an online system Neighborhood Council participants can use to submit complaints. NCS will provide all complaints to the appropriate Neighborhood Council to address as their bylaws outline.
6. Meeting Liaisons – The City Manager’s Office will identify a liaison to attend NC meetings to be the connection between City leadership and the neighborhoods. Liaisons may provide technical assistance and provide information, but are not expected to take minutes or provide direct staff support to the Neighborhood Councils.
  - Other City departments may send representatives, such as Tacoma Police Department, Tacoma Fire Department, and Tacoma Public Utilities.
  - The City will assist in inviting outside agencies to send liaisons as requested, though it cannot compel those agencies to attend. Such liaisons include the Tacoma School District, Metro Parks Tacoma, and the Port of Tacoma, for example.
7. Training and Development – NCS will provide annual training and development opportunities to Neighborhood Councils in areas of:
  - Board Governance
  - Community Outreach

- Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion
- Other areas identified as needs by staff or the Neighborhood Councils.

These trainings will be open to all leaders and participants of the Neighborhood Councils.

Upcoming training opportunities are found on the Neighborhood Councils webpage.

- NCS will provide an annual orientation for new board members after elections to include board governance, annual action plans and reports, and budgeting.
8. New Board Member Handbook – NCS will develop, and update annually, a handbook for all new board members that outlines the relationship of the Neighborhood Council to the City, available resources and timelines for reoccurring funding opportunities, and tips for being a successful board member.
  9. City Engagement with Neighborhood Councils – NCS will assist city officials and staff in developing methods to more effectively engage neighborhoods through the Neighborhood Council Program and act as a liaison between the Neighborhood Councils and the City as a whole.

## **Section 7: Funding Opportunities**

In some instances, funding resources may be available to the Neighborhood Councils through the City or other source. Neighborhood and Community Services may provide opportunities for operational funding to Neighborhood Councils and will make a good faith effort to publicize the availability of various public grants. In any case where the Neighborhood Councils receive funding from the City the contracts will detail the use of funds and spend-down requirements of the funding.

1. Operational Funding – NCS may provide annual operational funding that cover basic expenses of the Neighborhood Council such as insurance, printing, and space rental.
2. Capacity Funding - NCS may provide additional funding to support activities beyond basic operations such as board development trainings, community events, and community projects. Capacity funding is based on the size of the Neighborhood Council boundaries, the participants represented by the Neighborhood Council, and the existing treasury. Capacity funding activities and details are outlined in contract documents.
3. Grant Opportunities – The City of Tacoma may provide a number of grants with various purposes that would be available to the Neighborhood Councils to support projects, development, outreach, and more. The City will make a good faith effort to inform Neighborhood Councils of the opportunity to apply in a timely manner and support them in sharing that information within their boundaries.