
City of Houston Super Neighborhoods Handbook

Department of Neighborhoods



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Section 1

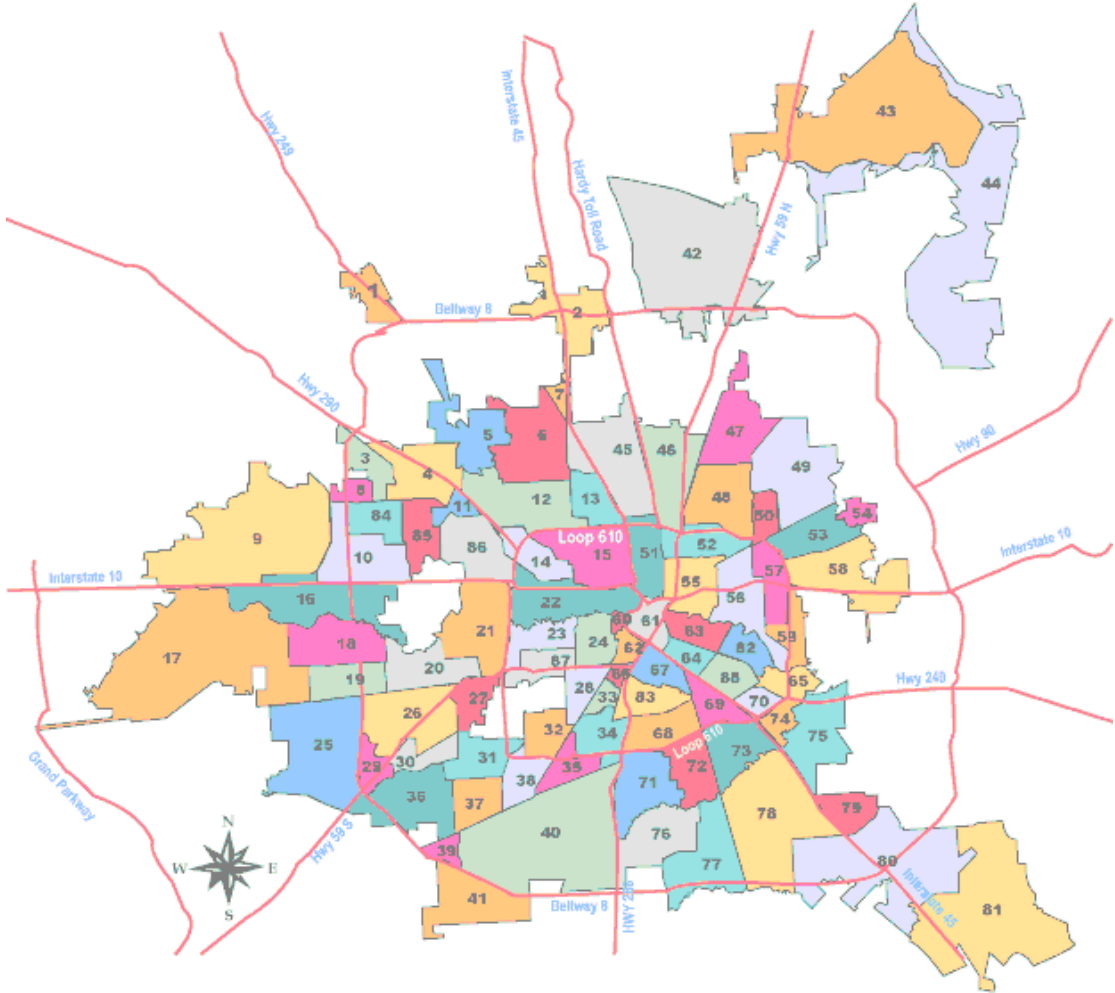
Super Neighborhood Overview



What is a Super Neighborhood?

Super Neighborhoods were created to encourage residents of neighboring communities to work together to address the needs and concerns of the broader community. This creates a manageable framework for community action and allows the city to work with neighborhoods and their stakeholders more efficiently. These stakeholders may include civic clubs, nonprofit organizations, community development corporations, schools, businesses, faith-based institutions and others.

Super Neighborhood boundaries are defined by major physical features (bayous, freeways, etc.) to group together communities which share common physical characteristics, cultural identities or infrastructure. Super Neighborhoods must be located within Houston city limits and may not change existing boundaries. The official list of SN and maps of their boundaries shall continue to be maintained by the director of the Department of Neighborhoods.



For a city that is over 650 square miles, this neighborhood-oriented approach gives communities more input into City government. There are currently 88 recognized Super Neighborhoods in the City of Houston. Super Neighborhoods are codified in the city’s Municipal Code under [Chapter 33, Article VIII](#).

Super Neighborhood boundaries

Super Neighborhoods must be located within Houston city limits and may not change existing boundaries. The official list of SN and maps of their boundaries shall continue to be maintained by the director and can be found at www.houstontx.gov/superneighborhoods/.

The director of the Department of Neighborhoods, exclusively, may create additional SNs to accommodate changes in the corporate limits of the city. Super neighborhoods may not change the existing boundaries.

What are Super Neighborhood Councils and how do they work?

A Super Neighborhood Council is a group of residents and stakeholders from a Super Neighborhood who form an organization which serves as a forum to discuss issues, develop Super Neighborhood Action Plans (SNAP), and identify priority projects with City staff. Each Super Neighborhood has a governing board. Standard positions include, but are not limited to, president, vice president, secretary, and treasurer. The Presidents of the recognized Super Neighborhood Councils form the Super Neighborhood Alliance, and they serve as the formal advisory board to the Mayor and City Council members. A Super Neighborhood Council may be formed in each of the defined super neighborhood areas, or they have the option to partner with adjacent super neighborhoods and become a joint super neighborhood council.

What is the Super Neighborhood Alliance and how does it work?

The Super Neighborhood Alliance (SNA) is an advisory board to the mayor and city government on community matters and its purpose is to bring together the voices of the individual Super Neighborhood Councils. The Alliance is comprised of the presidents of the Super Neighborhood Councils and they meet on the second

Monday of each month at 6:30 p.m. via [Facebook Live](#) or [HTV Houston Television](#). The meetings serve as forums for education, networking, and advocacy addressing community concerns. To request SNA monthly meeting notices, email snacoh@gmail.com.

Super Neighborhood Alliance Mission Statement

The Super Neighborhood Alliance, a meaningful partner of the City of Houston, will act as an advisory council to the Mayor focusing on issues of community impact and community outreach, will speak with one voice to the city, and will participate in decisions of local significance made by the city.

How does the City work with Super Neighborhoods?

The City of Houston provides oversight of the Super Neighborhood Initiative through the Mayor's Assistance Office (MAO), a division of the Department of Neighborhoods. The city's authority, influence, and/or assistance is limited to general information and guidance to Super Neighborhood Councils in formation, by-laws, and operation.

Guidelines

The director of the Department of Neighborhoods develops written guidelines for Super Neighborhood participation. Additionally, the director recommends to the mayor whether stakeholders of a proposed Super Neighborhood Council have satisfied the criteria needed to achieve recognition. The mayor will make the final determination regarding recognition.

Super Neighborhood Initiative Coordinator

- Provides bylaws assistance for all Super Neighborhoods
- Maintains the SN database and website
- Works alongside of stakeholders to activate Super Neighborhoods
- Coordinates the SN grant program, as funding allows
- Processes administrative reimbursement funds for SN, as funding allows

Mayor's Assistance Office Community Liaisons

Mayor's Assistance Office Community Liaisons (CLs) are assigned to work with each Super Neighborhood Council. The role of the liaisons is to:

- Assist with super neighborhood council formation
- Attend SNC meetings to educate and update SN stakeholders on city and neighborhood concerns
- Ensure the SN calendar information is accurate and up to date
- Provide direct city government access and coordination
- Communicate with City departments on community concerns
- Assist with the handling of community concerns and providing appropriate follow ups
- Assist SNs with community events as requested

Resources

The Department of Neighborhoods provides access to classes, presentations, and training to super neighborhood councils to help super neighborhood councils implement their goals.

Super Neighborhood Funding

As the budget allows, the City of Houston may provide funds for administrative costs and grant funds for project costs. Applications for each fund may be found at www.houstontx.gov/superneighborhoods.

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Section 2

Formation/ Activation Process and By-laws



Submit Activation Application

To form or reactivate an SNC, organizers shall complete the SNC application found below and on the Department of Neighborhoods (DON) website under the Mayor's Assistance Office (MAO) division web page.

Super Neighborhood Activation Application: www.bit.ly/SNCapp

Once the application is completed, a MAO liaison will be assigned to the super neighborhood. They will assist the by-laws committee, provide research for key community players, and help coordinate the necessary community meetings needed when forming/reactivating a SNC.

Formation of Super Neighborhood Councils and By-laws

"The super neighborhood councils previously established and recognized by the mayor on or before November 5, 2003, are hereby recognized for purposes of this article as super neighborhood councils. Additional super neighborhood councils may be recognized by the mayor upon determination that the requestors have satisfied the following:

- (1) Identification of stakeholders within the super neighborhood and demonstration of efforts to invite them to participate in the formation of the proposed council;*
- (2) Demonstration that no stakeholder was denied representative participation on the proposed super neighborhood council;*
- (3) Creation of an organizational structure that will provide representative participation on the council by all stakeholders desiring to participate; and*
- (4) Adoption of written by-laws that address the manner in which the business of the proposed council is to be conducted and the procedures for election of officers.*

The director shall promulgate written guidelines that further describe how super neighborhood stakeholders can satisfy the criteria listed above."

- Sec. 33-311, Houston, Texas, Code of Ordinances

1. Identification of stakeholders within the super neighborhood and demonstration of efforts to invite them to participate in the formation of the proposed council

The Department of Neighborhoods can help you identify major stakeholders in your community. All stakeholders must be located within the City of Houston and there is no minimum requirement for the number of stakeholders to start.

Residents and other stakeholders of each super neighborhood will partner and form an SNC. Residents are defined as individual community members who reside within their super neighborhood boundaries. Stakeholders means the residents, civic clubs, non-profit associations, community development corporations, business associations, school districts or systems, faith-based institutions, and other institutional organizations located or operating in a super neighborhood.

2. Demonstration that no stakeholder was denied representative participation on the proposed super neighborhood council

To be recognized as an SNC, you must demonstrate that identified stakeholders were given ample opportunity to participate and that no interested and qualified stakeholder was denied participation.

The following list of actions can be taken to prove stakeholder engagement:

1. **Meeting Records:** Maintain detailed records of stakeholder meetings, including attendance sheets, minutes, and any documented contributions or feedback.
2. **Surveys and Feedback:** Conduct surveys or gather feedback forms to collect stakeholders' opinions and insights, providing tangible evidence of their engagement.
3. **Email Correspondence:** Keep a record of email communications with stakeholders, demonstrating their involvement through active discussions, questions, or responses.
4. **Workshops and Focus Groups:** Document participation in workshops or focus groups, highlighting the stakeholders' direct involvement in collaborative sessions.
5. **Social Media Interaction:** Track and compile instances of stakeholder engagement on social media platforms, such as comments, shares, or discussions related to the project.

6. **Endorsements or Statements:** Collect written endorsements, statements, or letters of support from stakeholders, showcasing their commitment and involvement.
7. **Project Contributions:** Highlight specific contributions made by stakeholders to the project, whether through expertise, resources, or collaborative efforts.
8. **Attendance at Events:** Record stakeholders' attendance at relevant events, conferences, or project-related gatherings as evidence of their active engagement.

3. Creation of an organizational structure that will provide representative participation on the council by all stakeholders desiring to participate

There are various forms of organizational structures. The SNC may choose to simply adopt "Articles of Association" with the approval of all participating entities. As others join, they too would agree to the articles of association. In a more structured approach, stakeholders may agree to form a tax exempt 501 (c)(3) non-profit corporation or similar entity.

Neighborhood entities such as businesses, schools, churches, and hospitals should be represented through their umbrella organizations and coalitions rather than as single entities. Where there is no coalition organization, one could be formed, and a representative elected to serve on SNC as outlined within the by-laws of the corresponding super neighborhood area. This encourages enhanced cooperation and collaboration between similar groups. Each stakeholder organization has the option to designate a delegate among their group. The designated person doesn't necessarily need to be the president of their organization or a standing board member.

During this process, we ask for each participating stakeholder organization to submit an authorization letter designating their delegate to participate in the Super Neighborhood Council. Once identified, some or all of the stakeholders can begin the process of forming an organization. Stakeholder organizers will spearhead the process of forming or re-organizing the organization.

4. Adoption of written by-laws that address the manner in which the business of the proposed council is to be conducted and the procedures for election of officers

After determining the SNC framework, stakeholders will formulate and adopt by-laws. By-laws are rules for conducting business and making decisions. A template will be provided for reference. By-laws should address the following criteria and adhere to the guidelines of the Super Neighborhood Initiative:

- ***SN boundaries*** - No change to the existing city-defined SN boundaries
- ***Right of Representation*** - The right of any stakeholder within SN boundaries to be represented, either through new or existing organizations. SNCs cannot exclude any stakeholder organization from participating. Participation includes but is not limited to meeting attendance and voting.
- ***Assignment of Seats and Voting Authority*** - The manner in which SNC seats and subsequent voting authority is assigned. One scenario might be that each stakeholder organization holds a seat within the SNC.
- ***Meetings*** - The manner in which the SNC meetings will be conducted. This may include meeting schedule, quorum, agenda, voting procedures, membership, committees, amendments, conflict resolution, and meeting conduct.
- ***Officer roles and responsibilities*** - Clearly defined terms regarding board and membership roles and processes, including but not limited to nominee, delegate, member, etc.
- ***Elections*** - Clearly illustrate a method for the election process and appeals.
- ***Meetings open to the public*** - The method for assuring that all SNC activity is conducted in open meetings where all residents may observe discussions and participate under defined circumstances. Meetings must be open to the public; whereas only delegates are allowed to vote but others are able to observe and participate within the defined by-laws of the SNC.
- ***No Imposition of Memberships or Fees*** - A declaration assuring that participation is not limited by the imposition of membership requirement or fees either by the organization or participations organizations. Participation includes but is not limited to formal and informal activities such as voting, volunteering, organization activities, attending meetings, etc.
- ***Inclusivity for all stakeholders*** - A prohibition against exclusion of any individual or organization based on race, creed, color, religion, gender, sexual orientation or national origin from participating in SNC activities or serving as

a SNA member.

- **Amendment process** - The clearly illustrated method which members will utilize to change existing by-laws that ensures every member has an opportunity to weigh in. A suggested process can be provided upon request.
- **Updates** - By-laws should be updated as often as needed or, at least, annually. All revisions to SN by-laws must be approved by the DON Director to ensure compliance with the program requirements before presenting to your SNC for a vote.

5. The director shall promulgate written guidelines that further describe how super neighborhood stakeholders can satisfy the criteria listed above.

SNC's are required to abide by all guidelines to be recognized as a super neighborhood council. The City can, at any time, withdraw its recognition of a SNC for failure to abide by the program guidelines. Once recognition is withdrawn, the entity can no longer identify itself publicly as a SNC nor receive the benefits of the program.

Approval and recognition by the City

Once all requirements have been met and approved by the DON Director, the super neighborhood will be granted an active status by the Mayor. The organization will be invited to City Hall to be recognized before City Council, usually on a Tuesday before Public Session begins. The Mayor will acknowledge their active status, and the organizing committee will receive certificates recognizing their work.

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Section 3

Objectives & Duties of a Super Neighborhood Council



Objectives and Duties of a Super Neighborhood Council

The Super Neighborhood Council (SNC) objective is to serve as a forum where stakeholders may identify and discuss broad-based issues that affect their super neighborhood, develop a consensus on community priorities for action, and formulate a plan to address, execute, and resolve the issues and priorities.

A SNC undertakes various activities and are required to do the following:

- (1) Conduct a minimum of four meetings annually, more meetings can be scheduled as often as preferred and outlined in their by-laws;
- (2) Promptly educate and update their stakeholders on city and neighborhood concerns;
- (3) Review bylaws and amendments annually, or when necessary.

A SNC may choose to participate in the following activities:

- (1) SNCs may develop a written Super Neighborhood Action Plan (SNAP) for review and consideration by appropriate city departments and funding sources. If they chose to, they may submit their SNAP annually to the Super Neighborhood Alliance (SNA) for inclusion in the SNA's annual report to the mayor and city departmental officials;
- (2) Research and identify public/private partnerships and resources to facilitate and execute SNAPs;
- (3) Designate a representative and alternate to the SNA.

Operational Guidelines for duly recognized Super Neighborhood Councils

An active super neighborhood is one that is acting in accordance with their own bylaws. A duly recognized super neighborhood is one that has been officially endorsed by the city and meets the criteria outlined in the ordinance.

SNC organizers are expected to work cooperatively with liaisons and fellow organizers. Organizers must observe and comply with all stated Super Neighborhood Initiative guidelines and objectives. Individuals demonstrating behavior that continually and unreasonably impedes the group moving forward can be removed by majority vote of the organizers. Discourteous and disruptive behaviors can include, but are not limited to:

1. **Lack of Communication:** Not keeping team members informed, ignoring messages, or withholding important information.
2. **Dominating Discussions:** Continuously monopolizing discussions without allowing others to contribute or express their opinions.
3. **Disrespectful Language:** Using offensive or disrespectful language that undermines team cohesion and creates a negative atmosphere.
4. **Missed Deadlines:** Consistently failing to meet deadlines without prior communication or valid reasons.
5. **Lack of Accountability:** Refusing to take responsibility for individual tasks or not acknowledging mistakes and working towards solutions.
6. **Ignoring Others' Ideas:** Disregarding or dismissing the input and ideas of other team members without proper consideration.
7. **Constant Criticism:** Offering criticism without constructive feedback, which can demoralize and hinder collaboration.
8. **Micromanaging:** Overly controlling or scrutinizing the work of others, leading to a lack of trust within the team.
9. **Non-Participation:** Consistently not contributing to discussions, tasks, or the overall project, leaving others to pick up the slack.
10. **Interrupting Others:** Continually interrupting or talking over team members, hindering effective communication and collaboration.

Addressing these behaviors promptly and promoting open communication can help maintain a positive and productive group dynamic.

Membership

- SNCs are NON-PARTISAN and may not be formed or operated as vehicles for special interests, personal interests, business interests and/or partisan interests, or personal causes. Non-partisan activities to encourage civic engagement are permitted.
- Residents of the community shall comprise at least a 51% majority, or simple majority of the members on super neighborhood council executive boards.
- Members of SNCs and the Super Neighborhood Alliance (SNA) will serve without compensation or conflict of interest. A conflict of interest for these purposes is any situation in which a person can derive personal and/or monetary benefit from actions or decisions made in their official capacity.

Board

- Outgoing council presidents should be given a seat on the new board in for a term of one year thereafter in an advisory and mentorship role to encourage smooth transitions and a willingness to work together. The outgoing president will be a non-voting member and may only vote to break a tie.
- SNCs must create a contact email for the SNC and feature the name of the SNC @ the chosen server. *Example: Superneighborhoodxx@gmail.com or yahoo.com.* A generic email makes new board transitions easier for the city and community members.
- All Board members of SNCs are required to submit all paperwork, records, email passwords, and transition documents within 30 days of election to newly elected executive board members.

Meetings

- Disputes within the SNC that impede organization operation and/or activities are required to submit to city-assigned mediation if available. If the City refers your SNC to mediation and the Harris County Dispute Resolution Center is not available, SNCs must assume the costs of private mediation.
- Each member of a SNC shall abstain from voting on matters in which there is or may be a conflict of interest, shall not participate in any activity of a SNC or the SNA in which there is or may be a conflict of interest, and shall not participate in any city contract that relates to the duties of the SNC or SNA.

Dispute resolution process

Conflicts are a natural part of human interaction. While uncomfortable at times, conflict provides opportunities to consider new ideas, innovation, and flexibility. However, unhealthy conflicts and disputes can impede processes and stagnate organizations if not properly addressed in a timely matter. Therefore, disputes within a SNC that impede operation and/or activities are required to submit to city-assigned mediation.

Currently, the Harris County Dispute Resolution Center offers free mediation services. If Harris County Dispute Resolution Center mediation is not available, organizations must assume the costs of private mediation. To request mediation services, go to the Dispute Resolution Center's website at www.drc.harriscountytexas.gov.

Once completed, your case will be referred to the Harris County Dispute Resolution Center for scheduling. Failure to participate in mediation can result in a stakeholder's removal from the super neighborhood council by the City.

Use of the City Seal or department logo

SNCs may not utilize the city seal and any department logo without written permission from the City of Houston. The city seal and department logos are the property of the City of Houston and may be used by city employees and elected or appointed city officials in connection with the performance of official city business or city sanctioned events.

The approval to use the city seal or any department logo shall be limited to only the event or item for which the approval is granted. The director of the Department of Neighborhoods, or their designee, will approve or deny requests. Failure to comply shall be grounds for the city's termination of permission to use the seal or department logo and the city attorney shall pursue all steps reasonably necessary to restrain the improper use of the city seal or department logo. (See [City of Houston Code of Ordinances Sec. 2-83. - Use of city seal and department seal for official use.](#))