

# Neighborhood Engagement Unit

Culture & Neighborhood Services Council Committee  
January 7, 2021



CITY OF SAN ANTONIO  
**NEIGHBORHOOD & HOUSING  
SERVICES DEPARTMENT**

Verónica R. Soto, FAICP  
**Director**

# Background

Neighborhood Engagement division was created to:

- Strengthen relationships and communication with neighborhoods and provide training and resources to neighborhood associations to build organizational capacity.
- Created as part of the Fiscal Year 2018 budget-included funding to hire four (4) new positions for neighborhood engagement
  - A Neighborhood Engagement Administrator
  - Three (3) Neighborhood Engagement Officers
- All positions hired in 2018 & remained filled



# Accomplishments

- Neighborhood Leadership Academy (NLA) graduated 80 leaders city wide in the first virtual program Sept. 2020
  - 175 neighborhood leaders have graduated NLA to date since 2018;
  - Invited 850+ residents to apply for NLA and 40,000+ social media impressions
- 403 Neighborhood Associations & HOAs registered, a significant increase from 277 associations in 2018
- 44 Community Organizations registered
- Over 150 attendees for HOA Symposiums held in 2019
- 250 community events & neighborhood association meetings attended since 2018
- June 2019, NHSD partnered with local stakeholder to host a Neighborhood Summit, providing resources and presentations to over 100 neighborhood residents and leaders.
- Developed marketing material for NHSD programs and services, outreach for the COVID-19 Emergency Housing Assistance Program

Due to the Pandemic, the Neighborhood Engagement Team activities were placed on hold and staff was redirected to assist the COVID-19 Emergency Housing Assistance Program.



# Neighborhood Leadership Academy

The Neighborhood Engagement team delivers the **Neighborhood Leadership Academy**, a six-month program designed to equip residents with the knowledge, network opportunities, and skills to be effective neighborhood leaders.



# Outreach

We attend neighborhood association **meetings** and community **events**, to reach people where they are.

We share **information** on policies, events, and initiatives, and connect residents with various City departments.

Attended over 250 events since unit was created.

In FY 2020, staff attended 22 community events, due to the pandemic all in-person meetings were cancelled.



# Education

Neighborhood Engagement delivers **workshops** and **presentations** on topics such as conflict resolution and HOA rights and responsibilities.

Prepares and distributes neighborhood news as needed, carefully curated with content that helps neighborhoods.

No workshops were held in FY 2020 due to the Pandemic



# Civic Engagement

Neighborhood Engagement team convenes the **Neighborhood Summit**, a one-day event of informational sessions led by and for neighborhood leaders.

Neighborhood Summit was cancelled in FY 2020, in lieu of the Summit staff participated in a virtual event focused on neighborhoods in June.



# Resource Navigators

Members of the Neighborhood Engagement Unit serve as **liaisons** and **navigators** for community organizations.

Responsible for maintaining a growing, ever-changing **registry** of contact information for 403 neighborhood associations.



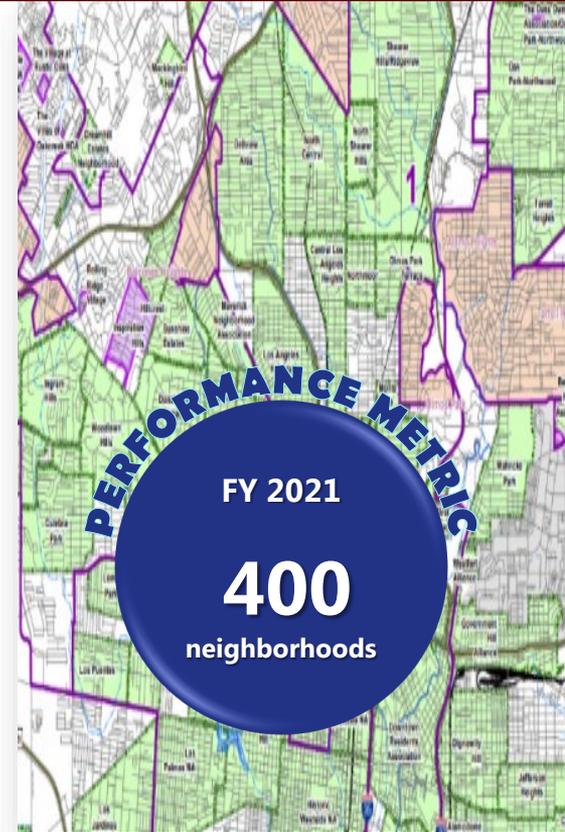
# Neighborhood Registry (Communication Tool)

Neighborhood Engagement team is responsible for the administration of the Neighborhood Registry

The Registry is a communication tool used by NHSD and other City Departments to communicate information regarding zoning cases, neighborhood plans, permit requests and public meetings

On February 10, 2020, staff presented information on the Neighborhood Association and Community Organization Policy to the Culture and Neighborhood Services Council Committee (CNSCC)

- Staff presented information on background, history and intent of the policy
- No policy recommendations were made
- Sought input on how to improve the policy



# Neighborhood Registry (Communication Tool)

- Efforts to review the policy were placed on hold in March due to the pandemic, the process was reinitiated on November 2, 2020 after briefing the Culture and Neighborhood Services Council Committee
- Board of Adjustment, Zoning Commission and Planning Commission briefed on November 15<sup>th</sup> – November 17<sup>th</sup> on how they use the registry and thoughts on improving communication
- NHSD issued a survey and hosted three facilitated Virtual Community Input Sessions to better understand how the community uses the registry and what communication methods they would prefer and resources they would like the City to provide.
  - Community Input Sessions
    - December 1<sup>st</sup> , December 2<sup>nd</sup> and December 3<sup>rd</sup>
    - 164 community participants registered for the input sessions
  - Survey
    - Release on December 4<sup>th</sup>
    - 197 responses received



# Neighborhood Survey Results

## Results:

- Most respondents lived in Council District 2 (34.5%) and Council District 7 (17.3%)
- 90% of respondents confirmed their association was registered on the City Neighborhood Registry
- Neighborhood association meetings, city e-mails, and councilmember e-mails were the top 3 cited sources for receiving information when it comes to zoning, improvements, and other city initiatives
- E-mail, mail, councilmember were the top 3 preferences for getting information
- 90% of respondents WOULD sign up for an email notification system that provides information related to projects and zoning cases happening in the area
- 59% of respondents felt their voice was heard when speaking to Planning Commission, Zoning, Commission, or City Council. 41% did NOT feel their voice was heard
- When providing feedback to the City about certain projects and zoning cases, 45% of respondents work with their neighborhood association, 35% talk to their councilmember, and 20% sign up to speak
- Communication could be improved with timely notification (ex. E-mail, mailouts, Nextdoor, text, meetings and improvements on city website), emphasis on zoning/developments notices
- 67% of residents feel it is important that only one organization represent one geographic area



# Neighborhood Registry Preliminary Recommendations

- Policy language regarding **overlapping boundaries** in the Neighborhood Registration Policy will remain **unchanged**
- Educate neighborhood associations and community groups on the purpose of the registry and the process to register as a neighborhood association and the option to register as a community organization.
- Enhance communication between residents, neighborhood associations, community organizations, city staff, development community, and other stakeholders through diverse methods and strategies.
- Provide technical assistance and workshops on topics like website development, planning, and zoning, and conflict resolution.



# Preliminary Concepts

- **Resident Connect System** - Coordinate with COSA Government & Public Affairs (GPA) & Information Technology Services Depart. (ITSD) to utilize the Resident Connect System as an enhanced communication & notification system, estimated launch is Fall 2021
- **President Power Hour** – Monthly meetings with presidents of neighborhood associations, HOAs, community organizations.
- **Neighborhood Leaders Quarterly** – Quarterly meetings with coalition leadership, community organizations, neighborhood associations, and other community leaders to facilitate discussions with City leadership & partner agencies leadership to address issues and develop collaborative solutions
- **Neighborhood Mentor Program**- Create a pipeline of neighborhood association mentors who can mentor other neighborhood association members who need help strengthening their associations
- **Residential and Commercial Development Roundtable** – Host developer workshops/meetings to allow developers to share project information with residents and neighborhoods associations
- **Neighborhood Engagement Stakeholder Group** – Establish a small group of neighborhood and community organization leaders that meet quarterly or as needed to review the neighborhood engagement strategy and provide feedback
- **District specific input** - Host District specific input sessions to get feedback since every District and every association is different and have varying needs



# Next Steps

- **Additional Neighborhood Engagement (January –March)**
  - Present survey results and community input session takeaways
  - Present preliminary concepts for feedback and discussion
  - Additional surveys to help identify training needs and resources for neighborhoods
- **Return to Culture and Neighborhood Services Council Committee (April)**
  - Present recommended strategies
  - Neighborhood Registry Policy briefing



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