



THE NEIGHBORHOOD PARTNERING PROGRAM: EMPOWERING NEIGHBORHOODS, BUILDING COMMUNITY



Program Process and Rules – 2015

PURPOSE

This document establishes the procedures to be used for the implementation of the City of Austin's Neighborhood Partnering Program (NPP).

REFERENCES

The Neighborhood Partnering Program supports the vision and actions of **Imagine Austin**. Specifically:

- **Imagine Austin Vision for Austin's Future:** As it approaches its 200th anniversary, Austin is a beacon of sustainability, social equity, and economic opportunity; where diversity and creativity are celebrated; where community needs and values are recognized; where leadership comes from its citizens, and where the necessities of life are affordable and accessible to all. Austin's greatest asset is its people: passionate about our city, committed to its improvement, and determined to see this vision become a reality (p.82).
- **Austin Values and Respects Its People:** Austin is its people. Our city is home to engaged, compassionate, creative, and independent thinking people, where diversity is a source of strength, and where we have the opportunity to fully participate and fulfill our potential (p.84).
- **Complete Communities:** These places will be safe and affordable; promote physical activity, community engagement, and inclusion; make amenities and services easily accessible to everybody; and contribute to Austin's unique community spirit (p.88).
- **Action S A21:** Develop the capacity of geographically-based communities of interest (i.e., neighborhood associations, community organizations, schools) to take ownership of their areas and share information and best practices with one another to achieve shared goals (p. 259).

Council Resolution No. 20090924-72 directing the City Manager to develop a neighborhood matching fund program to provide City support for neighborhood improvement projects (Attachment 1).

The Ash Center for Democratic Governance and Innovation at the John F. Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University recognized the City of Austin's Neighborhood Partnering Program as a "Bright Idea in Government" for 2012.

SCOPE

The NPP was established to provide a mechanism for assisting neighborhood groups in developing, resourcing, and executing small to medium sized improvement projects in the City's right-of-way or on City-owned property. The program is also intended to provide assistance to neighborhood groups in identifying and applying for federal, state, and/or private funding grant opportunities. The NPP consists of four funding subprograms:

- The **Neighborhood Cost Share Program (NCSP)** will provide City cost sharing for two categories of projects, located on City property, and based upon size:



THE NEIGHBORHOOD PARTNERING PROGRAM: EMPOWERING NEIGHBORHOODS, BUILDING COMMUNITY



- **Standard** projects with a total cost of under \$150,000. Typical standard projects include sidewalk and curb repairs, street furniture, tree planting, play grounds, pocket parks, and community gardens.
- **Large** projects over \$150,000 and up to \$500,000. Large projects must have a significant and large-scale multi-community benefit. Large projects are typically enhancements to commonly accessed public spaces such as park amenities, or provide enhanced connectivity amongst multiple communities such as urban trails.

Interested applicants will be expected to share in the cost of the project, beginning with a minimum of 25% of the total project cost. Cost sharing may be achieved through cash contributions, the market value of in-kind services, or a reasonable estimate of donated labor (“sweat equity”). Contributions may be included as any part of the project, from planning and design, to construction and through an extended maintenance period.

- The **Grant Assistance Program (GAP)** will provide City matching funds that will enable applicants to meet cost sharing or matching requirements for external grant opportunities. The GAP can fund up to 50% of any local match requirement, with the expectation that the applicant will provide at least a portion of the remaining amount.
- The **Parking Benefit Project Coordination Program (PBPCP)**: In 2011, City Council approved the establishment of Parking Benefit Districts to allow residents and/or merchants to create boundaries of newly metered area with City of Austin approval. Parking Benefit Districts dedicate a portion of the revenue, less City expenses, for local improvements that promote walking, cycling and transit use, such as sidewalks, curb ramps, lights and bicycle lanes. The Parking Benefit Project Coordination Program assists the associated neighborhood organization identify, scope, and coordinate local improvement projects for which Parking Benefit District revenue can be dedicated. Following the establishment of a Parking Benefit District by City ordinance, the associated neighborhood must submit public improvement proposals through the Neighborhood Partnering Program Manager to be reviewed by the Director of Public Works and the Director of the Austin Transportation Department. The timing and order of implementing the approved public improvements is at the discretion of the Public Works Director.
- The **Adopt-A-Median Program (AAMP)** provides an approval mechanism for community groups interested in adopting, beautifying and maintaining a median or other right-of-way areas. Adopters of medians and other rights of way agree to install a previously approved pallet of landscape and to maintain that installation for the life of the median.

Responsibilities

The NPP is part of the Community Services Division in the Public Works Department (PWD). The Neighborhood Partner Program Manager is responsible for maintaining and executing the program and for its maintenance and continued improvement. The Manager will track performance metrics and produce annual reporting. The manager will revise the NPP procedures as necessary to maintain its effectiveness and relevance.



THE NEIGHBORHOOD PARTNERING PROGRAM: EMPOWERING NEIGHBORHOODS, BUILDING COMMUNITY



The PWD Director, as the Program Sponsor, is responsible for establishing a supportive environment for the NPP and providing program oversight through the PWD Chief of Staff's office.

Specific individual roles, responsibilities, and authorities are itemized in Attachment 2.

Procedures

PWD's intent is to keep administration of NPP streamlined and straight-forward. Therefore, the procedures are characterized by the "five A's" below:

Advertisement: A primary key to success for the NPP is a sustainable public awareness and outreach program. The PWD Public Information Office will support the NPP Program Manager in communicating the program guidelines, goals and success using a multi-media approach that incorporates advertising through local outlets, web-access, and community interaction. The NPP will have a dedicated web page that provides program information, application instructions, notice of project and grant awards, project status reports, and community interest articles.

Assistance: The NPP Manager will provide assistance services to neighborhood groups in identifying candidate projects and funding opportunities, developing the scopes of work and cost estimates, and explaining neighborhood fiduciary responsibilities. Assistance will be available through multiple areas, such as information provided on the NPP web site, technical memoranda, advertised workshops, and scheduled appointments with appropriate staff members. Assistance will be made throughout the entire life cycle of the project, from conceptual design through project completion, and ongoing maintenance requirements. However City staff will not directly prepare the NPP program application for neighborhoods.

Application: The NPP Manager will accept applications for NCSP funds on a bi-annual basis; October 1st and June 1st of each year, or the first business day thereafter. Assistance in preparing applications for AAMP and GAP funds will be provided as necessary. NPP staff will work to help neighborhoods meet grant application deadlines. Application information concerning NPP funding will be available in both printed and electronic formats, and will provide the following minimum guidance:

- **Eligible Projects:** The NPP Manager will post a table of eligible projects on the NPP web site and include the listing on hard copy application packets. A preliminary listing of eligible project types is provided as Attachment 3, and can be amended as necessary.
- **Application and Award:** The NPP Manager will submit the number of eligible project through the awards process along with a report detailing the program's available funding. Written notification via electronic or paper mail will be sent to both successful and unsuccessful applicants, and a listing of successful applicants will be posted on the NPP web site. Unsuccessful Qualifying Proposals (proposals that meet the threshold requirements but did not receive funding) can be resubmitted in the following two application cycles for funding. Successful applicants will enter into a Project Agreement with PWD within 60 days of receiving notice of award or they may surrender their opportunity to obtain funds. Pledged cash matches must be delivered within 180 days of the signed project agreement.



THE NEIGHBORHOOD PARTNERING PROGRAM: EMPOWERING NEIGHBORHOODS, BUILDING COMMUNITY



Submission Requirements: The NPP Manager will establish the requirements for applications for NPP funds. At a minimum, the package will include the following documentation:

- Completed and signed Application Form and Project Agreement
- Scope of Work for the project and associated technical documents
- Project Cost Estimate
- Cost Sharing Proposal
- Endorsement(s) from applicable neighborhood association
- For applications where awarded grant funds are utilized, copies of grant award letters and terms of grant monies must be provided

For GAP applications, the following additional documentation is required:

- Copies of grant application
- Terms of grant award from granting agency
- Identify the total amount of local matching funds required along with the proposed City cost share

- **Threshold Requirements:** Submitted projects will be required to meet or exceed the following specified threshold requirements:

- Projects must fall within one of the approved project categories (see Attachment 3). Exceptions must be submitted to the NPP Manager and approved in advance by the Public Works Director.
- NCSP project applications must fall within the standard (\leq \$150,000) and large ($>$ \$150,000 and \leq \$500,000) size categories. Applicants must state which category is applicable to their projects at the time of submittal.
- Projects must be consistent with approved Neighborhood Plans, if applicable, and must meet all City design criteria.
- Projects must be approved by the appropriate neighborhood association/organization and demonstrate approval by a minimum of 60% of the stakeholders directly impacted by the project. Neighborhood Contact Teams from the Planning and Development Review Department can assist in identifying the impacted stakeholders and in resolving conflicts due to overlapping geographic boundaries and other disputes.
- Projects in the Large category must demonstrate broad-based benefit to the community.

- **Responsible Entity:** Applications must specify the entity responsible for the project and for meeting the cost share requirements. The responsible entity must demonstrate that it has the ability to meet its financial obligations as a threshold requirement. Responsible entities must fall into one of the following categories to be eligible for the NPP:

- Commonly recognized Neighborhood Association, including subgroups endorsed by a parent association (e.g. a block or group of residents within a Neighborhood Association);



THE NEIGHBORHOOD PARTNERING PROGRAM: EMPOWERING NEIGHBORHOODS, BUILDING COMMUNITY



- Commonly recognized civic and community service associations (e.g. boy/girl scouts, youth athletic associations; bicycling or rowing clubs, fraternal organizations);
- Educational, ethnic, cultural, or religious organizations (e.g. colleges, school associations, churches)

Responsible entities do not have to have standing as a formal tax exempt organization (e.g. 501(c)(3)) to qualify for the NCSP funds. However, they must meet financial requirements of all third party grant applications (i.e. federal, state, or private grants) as stated in the grant requirements if they applying for GAP funds, and if they will be responsible for managing funds under the grant program.

- **Project Agreement:** As stated above, the Responsible Entity must submit a signed project agreement. The Responsible Entity must concur with and sign the agreement within 60 days of notice of award, unless the PWD provides an extension to the time period.
- **Scope of Work/Cost Estimate:** Projects in the application phase must provide sufficient documentation to describe the project to the point at which an estimate of the cost can be obtained; however professional drawings are not required. Through the initiatives described above, NPP/PWD may assist applicants in preparing scoping documents and cost estimates.
- **Cost Share Proposal:** Each application will contain a Cost Share Proposal, with the neighborhood matching component meeting the following criteria:
 - **NCSP Standard Projects:** Neighborhood cost share must exceed 30% of the project cost.
 - **NCSP Large Projects:** Neighborhood cost share must exceed 50% of the project cost.
 - **GAP Projects:** Neighborhood cost share must exceed 50% of the local match requirement.

Project costs associated with the design and construction of the project will be included in the proposal as the base against which the cost share percentage will be calculated. Maintenance costs will not be included in the project cost base but may be included as part of the neighborhood contribution towards their cost share.

Neighborhoods may count the following types of contributions towards their cost share:

- Cash contributions
- Fair market value of donated professional or construction services
- Donated materials or supplies
- Estimated value of volunteer labor (“sweat equity”) for construction or maintenance and repair (up to 2 years).

The cost and effort required to prepare the project proposal will not be eligible to count toward the cost share amount. Established criteria for valuating non-cash contributions will be used, and will be available for review by applicants.

The cost share proposal will specify the schedule for neighborhood contributions and provide appropriate assurances that the neighborhood component will be made, however all cash contributions must be paid to the City prior to the start of construction. If a specific project type



THE NEIGHBORHOOD PARTNERING PROGRAM: EMPOWERING NEIGHBORHOODS, BUILDING COMMUNITY



does not lend itself to a direct “sweat equity” contribution, the applicant(s) can propose earning cost share credit for another volunteer effort near the project site or within the surrounding community.

Award: The PWD Director, as the Program Sponsor, will establish and publish the procedure for evaluating and awarding City matching funds. These criteria will comply with the following guidelines:

- The NPP Manager will receive applications and review them for compliance with the threshold criteria. The applications that meet or exceed the threshold criteria will be carried forward to the next step as “Qualifying Proposals.”
- The NPP Manager will coordinate with the appropriate reviewing agencies to gain approval of the Qualifying Projects. Reviewing agencies are those City entities with technical oversight and responsibility for the specific project type and scope (e.g. Parks & Recreation Department, Transportation Department, et al). Projects that are deemed not feasible owing to budgetary or technical constraints will be removed from consideration. If it is reasonable to modify the project scope and achieve the original purpose, then the project can remain eligible if the applicant approves the changes.
- Upon notification from the NPP Manager that all Qualifying Proposals have been approved by the reviewing agencies, the Program Manager will distribute the completed applications to the Department Director NPP Review Board. The Board consists of Department Directors of Public Works, Austin Transportation, Planning and Development Review, Parks and Recreation Departments, and the Watershed Protection Department. The review of NPP projects is non-delegable by directors. The NPP Review Board will be asked to approve projects for funding.

Project awards will be announced on the City’s Neighborhood Partnering Program website. Recipients and project donors may be recognized, as appropriate.

- **Special Consideration for Grant Assistance and Adopt-A-Median Projects:** Projects that have been submitted for GAP funding and Adopt-A-Median adoption will be considered on case-by-case bases outside of the above award procedures by the PWD Director. However, these projects must still meet the threshold and technical requirements exclusive of the project size designation.

Analysis: To promote accountability and transparency of the NPP, the manager will:

- On an on-going basis
 - Post the current status of in-process NPP applications on the NPP website.
 - Post a current map of proposed, awarded and completed NPP projects on the NPP website.
 - Be available to present the program’s status to the Austin Neighborhood Council, appropriate City agencies, and other interested stakeholders.
 - Provide clarification and establish detailed requirements as necessary to the administrative instructions.



THE NEIGHBORHOOD PARTNERING PROGRAM: EMPOWERING NEIGHBORHOODS, BUILDING COMMUNITY



- On a bi-annual basis:
 - Establish performance measures for the program and report on the status of those measures following each bi-annual awards cycle. This report will be posted on the NPP website.
 - Develop a community outreach plan to target underrepresented areas following the bi-annual awards cycle.

- On an annual basis:
 - Conduct an assessment of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats to the program.
 - Conduct a detailed review and revision of NPP's administrative instructions to ensure the program's efficient and equitable execution.

Resources

The PWD Director, as the Program Sponsor, is responsible for programming the resources necessary to ensure the success of the NPP.

Funding: NPP projects will be funded from from the appropriate City capital and operating budgets.

Staffing: The full time equivalent (FTE) positions necessary to administer the NPP will be provided within Community Services Division. Staffing support from other Divisions within PWD and from other impacted agencies directly related to the execution of approved projects will be calculated into the cost of each project proposed for funding. However, staff time for the review of NPP proposals and participation in Evaluation Panels are considered to be part of ongoing and routine operations and will not be reimbursed from the NPP.

Inspection: NPP will coordinate construction inspection of large or complex NPP projects through PWD's Construction Inspection Division (CID). If indicated for the project, the inspection effort will be included in the total project cost. NPP will be responsible for monitoring and validating the long term maintenance obligations pledged by the Responsible Entity for each project. In the event the maintenance obligations are not being met, NPP will work with the Responsible Entity to cure the deficiencies. If the deficiencies cannot be cured and the neighborhood improvement becomes a liability, PWD will coordinate removal of the improvement and the appropriate responsible entity will be ineligible to receive additional funds under the NPP for a period of ten years or until the City recovers the costs of its participation in the project, including the costs to remove the asset.

Execution: The City, through PWD, will be responsible for the management and execution of NPP projects. NPP will ensure that internal City support and appropriate contractual mechanisms are in place to support rapid execution of the project, and that all required permits and approvals are obtained. All projects approved under the NPP must complete within 18 months of the project agreement approval date or cash match receivable date, unless the PWD Director specifically approves changes to the schedule.

Coordination/Reconciliation of Projects

The PWD Director will reconcile projects undertaken by the NPP with existing City master plans and priority listings, including but not limited to the annual work plans of the Transportation, Parks and Recreations,



THE NEIGHBORHOOD PARTNERING PROGRAM: EMPOWERING NEIGHBORHOODS, BUILDING COMMUNITY



Watershed Protection and Public Works Departments; sidewalk, trails, and bicycle master plans; parks master plan; 5-year Capital Improvement Plan, and the neighborhood priorities recommended by the Planning Commission.

- Projects that are recognized requirements and are scheduled and fully funded are not eligible for the NPP
- Projects that are recognized requirements but are currently unfunded or underfunded will receive priority over new requirements in the competitive evaluation (see Attachment 4).



THE NEIGHBORHOOD PARTNERING PROGRAM: EMPOWERING NEIGHBORHOODS, BUILDING COMMUNITY



ATTACHMENT 1 COUNCIL RESOLUTION 20090924-72



THE NEIGHBORHOOD PARTNERING PROGRAM: EMPOWERING NEIGHBORHOODS, BUILDING COMMUNITY



RESOLUTION NO. 20090924-072

WHEREAS, the City Council believes partnering with community members to address neighborhood improvement priorities provides a cooperative and engaging approach to promoting, revitalizing, and enhancing communities and neighborhoods; and

WHEREAS, the City of Austin provides funding to neighborhood planning areas to address neighborhood improvement projects through the Neighborhood Enhancement Fund; and

WHEREAS, the City of Seattle's Neighborhood Matching Fund program should serve as a model for a new city-wide initiative, in particular its use of specific program goals and objectives; project application and eligibility requirements; and requisite match of city finances with neighborhood funds and/or volunteer services; and

WHEREAS, this new initiative will allow neighborhood residents and community members to identify and participate in projects that improve the quality of life in a specific neighborhood or community area while demonstrating public benefit; and

WHEREAS, projects funded through the program will match a significant contribution of human and financial resources of the neighborhood or community with small grants of city funding and staff expertise to form a cooperative partnership and reflect the City of Austin's



THE NEIGHBORHOOD PARTNERING PROGRAM: EMPOWERING NEIGHBORHOODS, BUILDING COMMUNITY



values of promoting the cultural arts, active public spaces, diversity, sustainability, energy efficiency, and neighborhood character; **NOW, THEREFORE,**

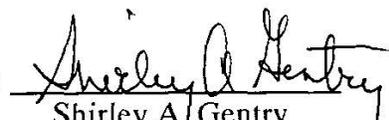
BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF AUSTIN:

The City Manager is directed to develop a program which supports and enhances neighborhood improvement projects while better leveraging public resources.

The City Manager is further directed to brief Council on development of the program on or before January 22, 2010, including identification of potential existing funding, and creation of a timeline for program implementation within this fiscal year.

ADOPTED: September 24, 2009

ATTEST:


Shirley A. Gentry
City Clerk



THE NEIGHBORHOOD PARTNERING PROGRAM: EMPOWERING NEIGHBORHOODS, BUILDING COMMUNITY



ATTACHMENT 2 ROLES, RESPONSIBILITIES, AND AUTHORITIES

PARTICIPANT	ROLE	RESPONSIBILITIES	AUTHORITIES
Director Public Works Department	Program Sponsor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide oversight of NPP • Program resources • Appoint Evaluation Board • Evaluation Board member 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appoint Evaluation Board • Approve matching funds for grants • Sign Project Agreements • Establish number of projects accepted each year
NPP Manager Office of the Director	Program Manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain NPP documents and practices • Report on status of program and projects • Provide assistance to neighborhood groups • Advertise and conduct outreach efforts • Review applications for compliance with threshold requirements • Coordinate internal support • Execute approved projects • Inspect projects for short and long term compliance • Prepare annual budget requirements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rank order Qualifying Proposals • Determine long term compliance with maintenance requirements • Assign staffing resources • Manager NPP budget
Reviewing Agency	Technical Approval	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review Qualifying Proposals for compliance with technical criteria and City plans 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Approve project scope within areas of expertise and authority
Responsible Entity	Project Applicant	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prepare and submit NPP application 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sign Project Agreement
Evaluation Board	Project Selection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review top-ranked Qualifying Proposals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Select projects to receive City matching funds



THE NEIGHBORHOOD PARTNERING PROGRAM:

EMPOWERING NEIGHBORHOODS, BUILDING COMMUNITY



ATTACHMENT 3 to NEIGHBORHOOD PARTNER PROGRAM LIST OF ELIGIBLE PROJECTS

CATEGORY	GENERAL DESCRIPTION	REVIEWING AGENCIES
Bicycle Facilities	Bicycle facilities promote both recreational and transportation uses of bicycles. Facilities may include bicycle lanes and path, racks, and other end of use facilities.	Public Works Transportation
Community Garden	A community garden is a single piece of land gardened collectively by a group of people. Community gardens provide access to fresh produce and plants as well as access to satisfying labor, neighborhood improvement, sense of community and connection to the environment. The gardens also serve the purpose of bringing vacant or underused City-owned properties into productive use.	Parks and Recreation Austin Parks Foundation (if garden will be on parkland) Planning & Development Review Watershed
Curbs and Gutters	Repairs or replacement of damaged or missing curbs and gutters may be accomplished using NPP funding.	Public Works
Gateways / Trail Heads	Gateway projects involve the installation of distinctive monuments, signage, or decorative features at the entrance to a neighborhood, commercial district, or subdivision.	Planning & Development Review Public Works
Green Streets	Green streets projects incorporate features that reduce run-off, provide water quality, and enhance neighborhood livability.	Public Works Watershed Protection
Neighborhood Park Improvements	Neighborhood parks improvements may entail the installation of trails, playgrounds, pavilions, and murals.	Parks and Recreation Austin Parks Foundation
Pocket Parks	A pocket park or mini-park is a small park accessible to the general public. Pocket parks are frequently created on a single vacant building lot or on small, irregular pieces of land.	Parks and Recreation



THE NEIGHBORHOOD PARTNERING PROGRAM:

EMPOWERING NEIGHBORHOODS, BUILDING COMMUNITY



CATEGORY	GENERAL DESCRIPTION	REVIEWING AGENCIES
Sidewalks and Pedestrian Improvements	Sidewalk projects may entail the installation of new sidewalks or the repair of existing sidewalks. Other pedestrian improvements can include pedestrian hybrid beacons, refuge islands and physical devices to enhance the streetscape, calm traffic and enhance the physical environment. All construction will be fully ADA-compliant.	Public Works Transportation
Street Furniture	Street furniture is a collective term for objects and pieces of equipment installed on streets and roads for various purposes, including barriers, benches, bollards, planters, post boxes, streetlamps, bus shelters, grit bins, tram stops, taxi stands, fountains, watering troughs and memorials, and waste receptacles.	Planning & Development Review Public Works
Trails	Trails are travel ways removed from roadways and not intended for automobile traffic. They may be paved or unpaved, and may serve both transportation and recreational purposes.	Parks and Recreation Public Works Transportation Watershed Protection
Tree and Flower Planting	Tree and Flower planting along the right of way contribute to the environmental quality of a neighborhood.	Public Works



THE NEIGHBORHOOD PARTNERING PROGRAM:

EMPOWERING NEIGHBORHOODS, BUILDING COMMUNITY



ATTACHMENT 4 TO NEIGHBORHOOD PARTNER PROGRAM EVALUATION CRITERIA

FACTOR	VALUE	DESCRIPTION
Community Participation	20	Points are awarded based upon the active participation of the responsible entity in the project. Indicators of participation are contribution of labor, services, and materials; fund raising efforts; the number of persons contributing financially; and the percentage of property owners indicating approval of the project.
Cost Share Proposal	20	Points are awarded to projects that assume a greater percentage of the project cost.
Quality of Life Enhancement	20	Points are awarded to projects based upon the degree that they contribute to physical environment improvement, neighborhood quality of life and neighborhood identity.
Incorporates or Meets City Initiatives	20	Points are awarded for projects that address an existing but under-funded requirement, implement adopted neighborhood plans, or incorporate City sustainability initiatives such as water and/or energy conservation, water quality enhancements, etc.
Geographic Equity	15	A secondary goal of the NPP is to provide opportunities for neighborhood groups City-wide to participate. Additional points will be awarded to neighborhoods from underrepresented areas based upon previous NPP project awards.
Reconsidered Qualifying Applications	5	Qualifying applications that have been previously presented but were unfunded, are eligible for 10 extra points when funding is available at staff discretion.
TOTAL	100	