



Alliance for Community Enrichment Program Handbook

"Your Resource Guide to Strong Neighborhoods"



Dear Neighborhood Leader,

One of the most valuable resources in our community is our neighborhoods. The goal of the Alliance for Community Enrichment Program is to foster a higher quality of life for our residents. We believe that this can be achieved through better communication and collaboration between our City and our citizens through partnership with Recognized Communities. Not only is this a goal for the Alliance but also part of our City's strategic plan.

The City of Gastonia has a rich history steeped in resilience and innovation. We are excited to work with you to continue creating inclusive, sustainable, and safe neighborhoods where everyone can thrive both now and in the future.

On behalf of our mayor, city council, and city leaders, I want to encourage you to use this handbook to get involved and consider how resources from the City can make stronger, sustainable neighborhoods that we can all be proud to call home.

Good luck to you!

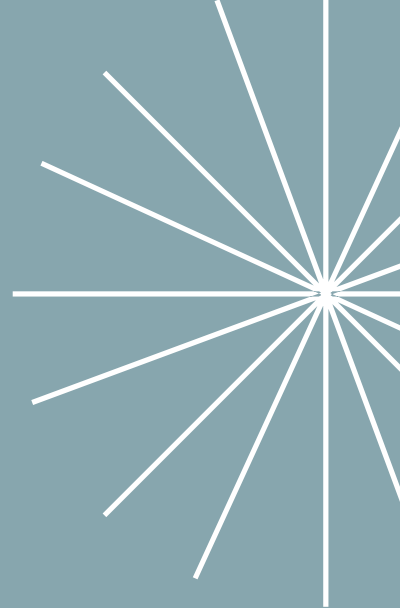
Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Michael C. Peoples". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Michael C. Peoples
City Manager



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ABOUT THE ALLIANCE FOR COMMUNITY ENRICHMENT (A.C.E.) PROGRAM

The Alliance for Community Enrichment (A.C.E.) Program is designed to strengthen relationships with residential communities and the City of Gastonia to enhance the quality of life for all. This program was prioritized as one of the City Council's goals in the 2020-2022 Strategic Plan.

The program encourages residential communities to become officially recognized by the Gastonia City Council and commit to a partnership with the City. The partnership includes identifying solutions to community concerns, providing information, receiving updates from the City, sharing feedback on public improvement projects, and participating in City-sponsored programs and activities.

The A.C.E. program encourages neighbors to work together in identifying common concerns and desires for their neighborhood or residential community, with the outcome resulting in a greater sense of community and civic duty being fostered. Through open communication and collaboration with communities and the local government, decision-making opportunities can be enhanced as public input and engagement increases.



RECOGNIZED COMMUNITIES

A Recognized Community is a residential community group with distinct geographic boundaries that meet a set of standards, and has been formally recognized by Gastonia City Council. These Recognized Communities can include Neighborhood Associations, Property Associations, Homeowner Associations, and other residential community groups with identifiable geographic boundaries.

Recognized Communities are assigned a City staff member, who serves as the Community Liaison and is the main point of contact between the City and the community. These liaisons will regularly attend community meetings to provide information and assist residents in identifying solutions to concerns.

Participants of the A.C.E. Program have access to a number of services and resources which enhance community identity and can help with implementing neighborhood improvements.

Recognized Communities will also receive official communication from various City departments about a variety of programs, services, and improvement activities that directly impact participating communities.

By partnering with participating communities, the City of Gastonia can more effectively deliver services tailored toward the individual needs and desires of communities, as well as receive feedback regarding proposed improvement projects throughout the City.





GETTING STARTED HOW TO BECOME A RECOGNIZED COMMUNITY

BEFORE YOU APPLY

Step 1

Review the Standards for Community Recognition to ensure that your residential community meets the needed standards for formal recognition. These standards are listed on the next page.

Step 2

After your community verifies that it meets the basic criteria for recognition, discuss the idea with the community leaders and/or the organizations' general membership. If desired, the Neighborhood Program Administrator can present the A.C.E. program to your community. Ensuring that there is a forum for community feedback is necessary to understand concerns and the desire to support the program.

Step 3

Once the members agree to move forward, complete the application located on the City of Gastonia's website:
<https://gastonianc.seamlessdocs.com/f/communityrecognitionapp>, or contact the Neighborhood Program Administrator for access to a copy of the application.

Next Steps

Once the application has been submitted, the Neighborhood Program Administrator will review the documentation and ensure that all standards have been met and information has been submitted. Should there be any questions or concerns, the Neighborhood Program Administrator will contact a community leader and discuss these concerns.

If the residential community meets the criteria for formal recognition, the Neighborhood Program Administrator will prepare all necessary council paperwork, and inform the community leader about when the community recognition request will be considered by City Council.

Once formerly recognized, the Mayor will present the residential community with a Certificate of Recognition and a Community Liaison will be assigned. The liaison will serve as the Recognized Community's single point of contact with the City. Community Liaisons will regularly attend community/neighborhood meetings to listen, provide information about City services and programs, and assist in identifying City resources that help address any concerns.



STANDARDS FOR COMMUNITY RECOGNITION

A residential community must meet a certain set of standards and provide the following information to become a Recognized Community by the City Council:

1) Name of the Residential Community/Neighborhood

2) Residential Community/Neighborhood Boundaries:

The residential community must occupy a geographically distinct and specific area that is within the City of Gastonia. Only one Recognized Community is allowed in an area—boundaries for newly established Recognized Communities will not be allowed to overlap with the boundaries of an existing Recognized Community.

3) Membership: A recognized community's membership must be open to anyone who lives or owns property in the residential community/neighborhood regardless of race, creed, color, sex, age, national origin, or physical and mental disability.

4) Residential Community Leadership: Recognized Communities should provide a contact list when submitting the application, which includes the names, addresses, phone numbers, and email addresses for each community leader or officer. There should be one or two designated points of contact for your Community Liaison.

5) Meeting Requirements: Recognized Communities must host at least one general membership meeting annually. It must also provide the location, time, and number of community/neighborhood meetings held each year.

6) Statement of Support: Provide a letter or other documentation to show that the general membership of the community supports the application for formal recognition. An example of a statement of support can be found at the end of this handbook.

BENEFITS OF BECOMING A RECOGNIZED COMMUNITY

Community Liaisons

A City of Gastonia staff member will be designated as a liaison between the City and your community. Community Liaisons are City employees that have the knowledge and experience to assist your community in different ways. These liaisons will regularly attend community meetings to listen and respond to community concerns that can be addressed through City services and resources. And they will provide important information regarding upcoming events and projects that desire citizen feedback and participation. These liaisons will also be the single point of contact between your Recognized Community and the City.

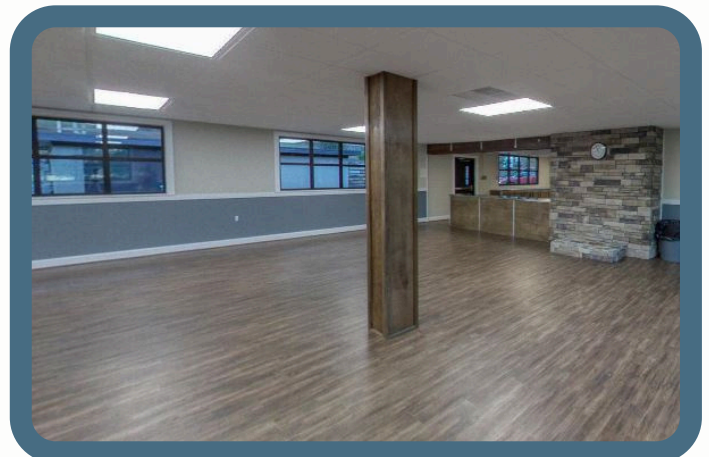


City Staff Attendance at Meetings

If your Recognized Community has a specific concern or interest about services provided by the City, the Community Liaison will identify a City employee to attend your next meeting. To ensure that the speaker is available, we suggest a 30-day minimum notice to request City staff to attend/speak at community meetings.

Fee-Free Meeting Space

Should a meeting space not be readily accessible in the immediate community, such as a neighborhood clubhouse, City staff may assist in locating a facility near the community that could accommodate the gathering without a venue fee. These venues will primarily be city-owned facilities, such as recreation centers, police department community rooms, clubhouses, etc. Some locations may not be near the neighborhood's direct vicinity.



BENEFITS OF BECOMING A RECOGNIZED COMMUNITY



Community and Neighborhood Cleanups

The City of Gastonia makes continuous strides in keeping Gastonia aesthetically beautiful through litter clean-ups and beautification projects. Through a partnership with Keep Gastonia Beautiful, neighborhoods can request litter clean-up supplies, at no charge, for community litter sweep projects.

Priority to Join the Gastonia Municipal Citizens Academy

Each year the City of Gastonia sponsors a Municipal Academy for up to 20 Gastonia residents to learn firsthand how local government operates. Participants attend 12 informational and interactive sessions that provide insight about how each department within the City operates on a day-to-day basis. Participants may see how firefighters bring unruly flames under control, test a flight simulator at Gastonia's local airport, or venture on a ride-along with a police officer. This program provides a wealth of information and allows participants to become a better resource to their family, friends, and neighbors.



Up-to-Date City News and Communication

On a monthly basis, Recognized Communities of the A.C.E. Program will receive emailed newsletters providing information about upcoming City-sponsored events, opportunities for public participation, highlights from neighboring Recognized Communities, and other news regarding the City of Gastonia. This continuous flow of information will keep residents informed and provide greater opportunities for citizens to be more involved in programs and decision-making.

Direction in Creating Crime Watch Group

Many neighborhoods appreciate the opportunity to take an activate role in keeping their community safe while being proactive in keeping crime to a minimum. If a Recognized Community desires assistance in organizing a neighborhood watch group, resources and direction can be provided to community members on how to get the program started. This can be a great way to build a positive relationship with neighbors and local law enforcement.



BENEFITS OF BECOMING A RECOGNIZED COMMUNITY

Movie-in-a-Box

As part of being a Recognized Community, an additional benefit is access to outdoor movie equipment (including an inflatable screen, projector, speaker system, Blu-ray player) at no charge. This is just one resource that is accessible for communities in order to encourage neighbors to come together and enjoy time with one another. Relationship building is key to having a strong neighborhood, and pairing the use of this movie equipment with food, or an ice-cream social, is a great way to bring people together.

For more information, visit:

<https://gastonianc.gov/movie-in-a-box-program.html>.



A.C.E. Matching Grant

The goal of the grant program is to facilitate neighborhood self-improvement. The program gives eligible Recognized Communities an incentive to raise funds, build partnerships, cultivate volunteer and community support to complete projects that improves the neighborhood physically or addresses a need through active involvement of the neighborhood residents themselves. Community building is core to the project success

For more information, visit:

<https://gastonianc.gov/a-c-e-matching-grant-program.html>.

Block Party Trailer

As an additional way to help strengthen relationships within communities, this Block Party Trailer provides Recognized Communities a free resource that containing all the essentials for hosting a block party in your community.

For more information, visit:

<https://gastonianc.gov/block-party-trailer>



QUICK REFERENCE GUIDE

Here are some frequently asked questions about City Services.

Q: When will my Trash and Yard Waste be collected?

A: The City of Gastonia has an interactive app that can be installed on your smart phone or mobile device, called WasteWise. Once this app is installed, open the application and simply type in your residential address and your next pick-up date will appear. As well, annually, during the first full week of Spring and the first full week of Fall, the City offers excess trash collections for bulk items. For more information, you can contact the Solid Waste Customer Service Center at 704-866-6774.

Q: When will my Leaves be collected?

A: Loose leaf collection takes place between October 15th and February 15th each year. Although there is not a set daily schedule showing which streets will be collected, staff work diligently to collect curbside leaves as quickly as possible. For more information, you can contact the Solid Waste Customer Service Center at 704-866-6774.

Q: There is a lot of speeding in my neighborhood, what can I do about this?

A: If the speeding offender is identified as a neighbor, and you have a positive relationship with this individual, politely request the neighbor to reduce their speed through the area. However, if the repetitive speeding drivers cannot be identified, contact the non-emergency police at 704-866-3300 and see if increased community patrolling can take place to encourage slower speeds. Alternatively, you can contact the Engineering Department Customer Service and see if the issue could be resolved through requesting a speed hump or speed limit reduction. Both of these options will require certain criteria to be met and an analysis to be conducted prior to implementing a solution. The Engineering Customer Service phone number is 704-866-6943.



Q: How can I become involved in the decision-making process with the City?

A: The City of Gastonia encourages residents to serve on boards and commissions to offer direction on how to enhance the quality of life citizens. Below is a list of some of the boards and commissions that you could be a part of:

- Airport Advisory Committee
- Community Development Citizens Advisory Board
- Historic District Commission
- Keep Gastonia Beautiful Board of Directors
- Gastonia Planning Commission
- Recreation Advisory Commission
- Tourism Development Authority

There are many more options available to become involved and engaged with your local government. For more information, contact the Mayor's office at 704-866-6720 or email candice.owenby@gastonianc.gov.



QUICK REFERENCE GUIDE



Q: My neighbors have let their yard get out hand and the grass is disturbingly tall; how can this be addressed?

A: If you have a positive relationship with your neighbors, kindly asking them to mow their yard might resolve this concern. By sharing the reasons with your neighbor why having a maintained yard is important, such as deterring pest or increasing property value, this might encourage your neighbor to be more proactive in property maintenance. As well, if it seems like your neighbors could use a helping hand, offer to assist in maintaining their yard for them, and only do so with their permission.

If the first suggestion does not work, the Code Enforcement Division is responsible for enforcing the Minimum Housing Code and other City ordinances involving public nuisances, weeded lots, illegal dumping, hazardous waste, and abandoned motor vehicles. You can report a code violation by visiting this website:

<https://gastonianc.gov/report-code-violations2.html> and filing a complaint, electronically. Please note that grass that is 12 inches or higher is considered noxious and can be reported.

Q: There is a power outage in my neighborhood, how can I report this?

A: The City of Gastonia and Two Rivers Utilities strive for zero outages; however, they are inevitable. You can call 704-866-6823 to report an electric, water, or sewer outage. As well, the COG-TRU Outages app is the City's free mobile app that can be downloaded and installed on a mobile device. This app will allow you to report outages and receive updates on reestablishing services in your area.

Q: There is an excessive amount of litter on the sides of the road in my neighborhood, how can this be tended to?

A: This concern can be addressed in a multifaceted approach. Community members can contact Keep Gastonia Beautiful to request litter clean-up supplies (trash bags, gloves, vests, etc.) and conduct their own litter sweep for their neighborhood. As well, if your road is regularly littered upon, you may request a "Do Not Litter" sign to be added in the area in order to draw attention to and deter future littering. Keep Gastonia Beautiful also encourages the "Adopt-A-Street" Program. All of these requests can be made through Keep Gastonia Beautiful, at 704-869-1008.

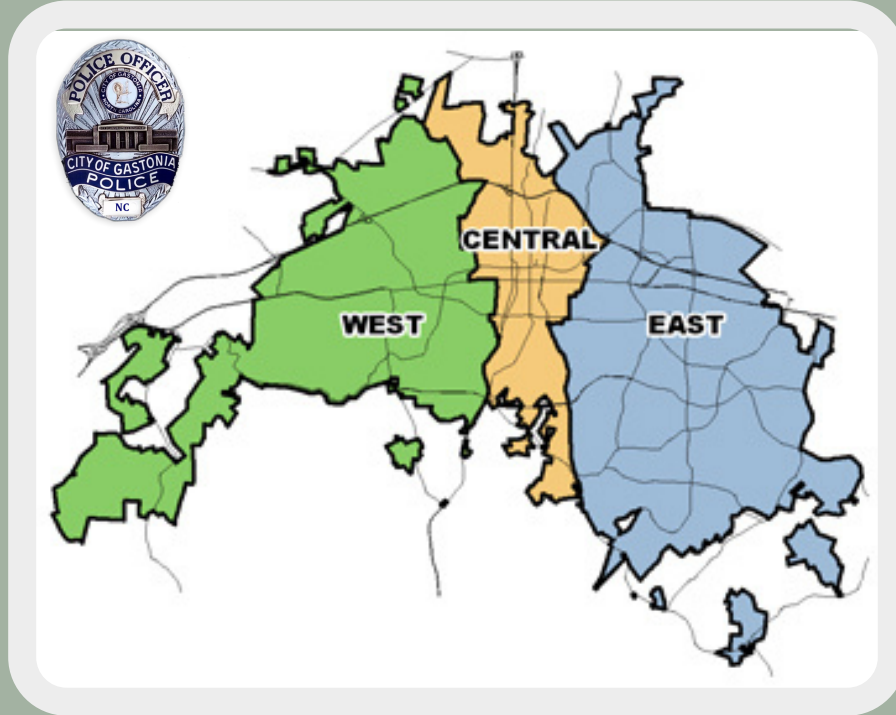
Q: A tree planted in the right-of-way is becoming hazardous and may need to be removed, who can I contact to address this concern?

A: Gastonia has been designated a "Tree City" by the National Arbor Day Foundation for efforts to preserve and plant trees. For information or to request removal or maintenance of trees on the street right-of-way, call the City Arborist at 704-869-7870.

For more information about City services, the A to Z City Services Guide is a great resource and can be accessed by visiting this website:

<https://gastonianc.gov/a-to-z-city-services-guide.html>

GASTONIA POLICE DISTRICTS



Residents of the City of Gastonia live in one of the three police districts: East, West, and Central. Each district is staffed by Gastonia Police officers and community coordinators. Calls for police services are answered by District Patrol officers who serve as first responders to 911 or non-emergency calls. Neighborhood Leaders should take time to know who their Police Captains and Community Coordinator Sergeants are, in order to learn how to work with one another to fight crime and address public safety concerns in their neighborhoods.

WEST DISTRICT

Captain Jordan Reese
704-854-6616

CENTRAL DISTRICT

Captain Chris Waldroup
704-842-5145

EAST DISTRICT

Captain Craig Singer
704-866-6933

Community Coordinator

Captain Adrian Walker
704-854-6634

For more information about the Gastonia Police Department, visit:

<https://gastonianc.gov/police-main.html>

WELCOME TO THE HOUSING AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT DEPARTMENT

The Alliance for Community Enrichment Program is managed by the Neighborhood Program Administrator and is part of the Housing and Community Engagement Department of the City of Gastonia. The Housing and Community Engagement Department encompasses four divisions including Keep Gastonia Beautiful, Gastonia Sister Cities, the Neighborhoods Program, and Community Development. Each division offers an array of services to Gastonia residents and the general public.



Danette Dye
Housing and Community Engagement Director
Danette.Dye@gastonianc.gov



Juliann Lehman
Keep Gastonia Beautiful Administrator
Gastonia Sister Cities Coordinator
Juliann.Lehman@gastonianc.gov



Karely Chavez-Callejas
Neighborhood Program Administrator
Karely.Chavez@gastonianc.gov



Kenny Gehrig
HUD Administrator
Kenny.Gehrig@gastonianc.gov

KEEP GASTONIA BEAUTIFUL

Keep Gastonia Beautiful, Inc. is an affiliate of Keep America Beautiful, Inc., which is a national non-profit, public education organization dedicated to protecting natural beauty and improving waste handling practices in American communities. Keep Gastonia Beautiful engages community members through volunteer opportunities and strives to educate citizens in natural resource conservation, solid waste handling, recycling, litter abatement and beautification. For more information about Keep Gastonia Beautiful, visit:

<https://gastonianc.gov/home-keep-gastonia-beautiful.html>

THE NEIGHBORHOODS PROGRAM

The Neighborhood Program focuses on creating and enhancing relationships with residents of Gastonia directly through connecting with citizens in their communities and neighborhoods. One goal of this division is to encourage residents of Gastonia to participate in City-sponsored events and activities as well as take part in decision-making opportunities with the local government. Through partnerships and participation through the Alliance for Community Enrichment Program, residents can receive up-to-date information about these opportunities and how to get involved. For more information about our Neighborhood Program division, visit:

<https://gastonianc.gov/ace.html>

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Community Development Housing Programs seeks to improve the quality of life for Gastonia residents by helping to provide safe, decent, warm and affordable housing for qualified low and moderate income persons through public and private partnerships with lenders and other service providers; community economic development projects; and building communities using new innovative tools and programs. For more information about our Community Development division, visit: <https://gastonianc.gov/community-development.html>

City of Gastonia
Statement of Support for Becoming a Recognized Community

_____ supports the mission and intent of the
(name of community/neighborhood)

Alliance for Community Enrichment (A.C.E.) program, sponsored by the City of Gastonia's Neighborhood Program Division. Our community membership commits to partnering with the City to identify solutions to community concerns, provide information, receive updates regarding City services, share feedback on public improvements, and participate in City sponsored programs and events. In order to encourage a higher quality of life for our community, our members will work together and take strides in making our neighborhood a more sustainable, inclusive, and attractive place to live, work, and play. As well, our community members will strive to be involved in public comment periods and decision-making processes, not only for our neighborhood, but for the greater Gastonia.

This statement of support has been shared with the majority of our community members and by submitting this letter to the City of Gastonia for formal Community Recognition, I certify that our community desires to proceed with the recognition process and become partners with the City through the A.C.E. program.

(Community Leader Printed Name)

(Community Leader Signature)

(Community Leader Phone Number)

(Community Leader E-Mail Address)

(Date)



Application for Formal Recognition of Community/Neighborhood

1. Name of the Community or Neighborhood. (Desired Identifying Name for Recognition)

2. Community or Neighborhood Boundaries. Please include all street names and block numbers for partial streets. (Additional pages and/or map may be attached)

3. Estimated number of households in Community or neighborhood: _____
4. Please provide the Community Leader/s's contact information below for the primary point/s of contact for your Community or Neighborhood.

Community Leader 1

Name: _____
Address: _____
Phone Number: _____
Email: _____

Community Leader 2

Name: _____
Address: _____
Phone Number: _____
Email: _____

5. What is your Community/Neighborhood's meeting schedule? If possible, please provide the date, time, and location/s for future meetings.
Regular Meetings (Date, Time, Frequency & Location): _____
6. If your Community or Neighborhood has a website, please list it so that we can link to the City's Neighborhood Program page.

7. Is membership to your Community/Neighborhood Organization open to anyone who lives or owns property in the community or neighborhood regardless of race, creed, color, sex, age, national origin or physical and mental disability?
_____ Yes _____ No
8. Permanent email address for your organization: _____

9. Is your community/neighborhood associated with any of the following: (Check all that apply)

☐ Homeowners Association

☐ Property Owners Association

☐ Neighborhood Association

☐ City of Gastonia Community Watch Group

10. Please attach the following:

Map of Community or Neighborhood Boundaries

Paragraph About the History/Character of the Community or Neighborhood

List of Community or Neighborhood Goals (if known)

Statement of Support: Provide a letter or other documentation to show that the membership supports the application for formal recognition. (example provided on City of Gastonia webpage)

By signing below, to the best of my knowledge and understanding, I certify that I am accurately representing the community or neighborhood in which this application is being completed in order to be formally recognized by the City of Gastonia's Alliance for Community Enrichment (A.C.E.) program. The community/neighborhood members have been properly informed and are in support of becoming partners with the City of Gastonia through joining the A.C.E. program.

Applicant's Name (Please Print)

Applicant's Title

Applicant's Signature

Date of Application

PLEASE RETURN FORM AND DIRECT QUESTIONS TO:

Karely Chavez-Callejas
Neighborhood Program Administrator
City of Gastonia
150 S. York Street
PO Box 1748
Gastonia, NC 28053-1748

Phone: (o) 704-866-6907 (c) 704-214-7401 | Email: Karely.Chavez@gastonianc.gov

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