



The City of El Paso, Texas



Neighbors Helping



Neighborhoods



Recognized Neighborhood Association Guidebook

Neighbors Helping Neighborhoods

The City of El Paso's Recognized Neighborhood Association Guidebook

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This Guidebook was produced by the City of El Paso's Community and Human Development Department - Neighborhood Services Division, June 2011.

For more information contact:

Neighborhood Services

2 Civic Center Plaza, 8th Floor - El Paso, TX 79901

Ph: (915)541-4377

Fax: (915)541-4893

Web: www.elpasotexas.gov and click on the "Residents" link



Get Involved In Local Government

Online at ELPASOTEXAS.GOV or City 15

The City of El Paso is striving to become more accessible for our citizens by expanding our online services. To learn more visit: www.elpasotexas.gov or tune into City 15, airing on Cable Channel 15, to view an array of government programming featuring public meetings and City services.

Know Your City Representative

Make your voice heard in city government by learning more about your city representative, their duties and meetings. The City Council meets at 8:30 a.m. every Tuesday in Council Chambers located on the second floor of City Hall in downtown. For more information click on the “**Government**” link on the City’s website.

Neighborhood Services Division

Background

In 2006, the City of El Paso created the Neighborhood Services Program within the Community and Human Development Department to implement neighborhood-oriented programs.

Purpose

To facilitate opportunities for citizens to be involved in local government.

Goal

Build strong and effective leadership at the neighborhood level.

Objectives:

- Provide outreach and assistance for the development of neighborhood associations
- Promote services and opportunities available to residents and neighborhood associations
- Implement small-scale improvement projects and revitalizations efforts to improve the quality of life in neighborhoods

Core services:

- **Neighborhood Associations** - formation, registration and continuation of neighborhood groups
- **Neighborhood Summit** - annual forum to highlight citizen involvement in the community through keynote speakers, workshops and an information fair
- **Neighborhood Leadership Academy** - annual educational program to teach residents how their city government functions and operates
- **Neighborhood Improvement Program** - competitive grant for small-scale neighborhood projects requested by neighborhood associations (*funding and availability based on annual budget*)
- **Neighborhood Revitalization** - City Council approved strategic plans to revitalize distress neighborhoods through community partnerships

What is a Neighborhood Association?

A **Neighborhood Association** is an organized group of residents who work together to improve and maintain the quality of life in their neighborhood and community.

Benefits of a Neighborhood Association:

- Builds stronger relationships and pride among neighbors
- Creates an organized and unified voice in city government
- Empowers residents to identify needs and initiate positive change

What is a Recognized Neighborhood Association?

The City of El Paso's **Citizen Involvement Policy** provides opportunities for residents to get involved in local government. The **Neighborhood Association Recognition Ordinance** (NARO) allowed for recognition of neighborhood groups and provides guidelines to improve communication between citizens and City government.

A **Recognized Neighborhood Association** is a neighborhood group registered under the City of El Paso's NARO. **Civic Associations** are also recognized, which are larger neighborhood groups whose boundaries cover an entire part of town and have 100 or more members.

Recognition requirements:

- Complete registration form
- Contact information of elected officers
- List of membership*
- Neighborhood boundary map**
- Signed copy of bylaws that govern the group
- Two designated members to receive City notices
- Host an annual neighborhood meeting
- Submit an Annual Neighborhood Report by June 30th of each year***

**Membership shall be open to all residents – homeowners, renters, property owners, business owners and community organizations – who reside within the neighborhood boundary – minimum of 15 members for neighborhood association and minimum of 100 members for civic association.*

***Neighborhood Boundary are main roads and natural landmarks that represent the physical and social characteristic of the neighborhood. Should be larger than 4 blocks and smaller than 1 square mile, unless membership is 100 residents or greater.*

****Annual Neighborhood Report ensures that the neighborhood association is still active and that the City has the current contact information to send City notices.*

Designated City Services:

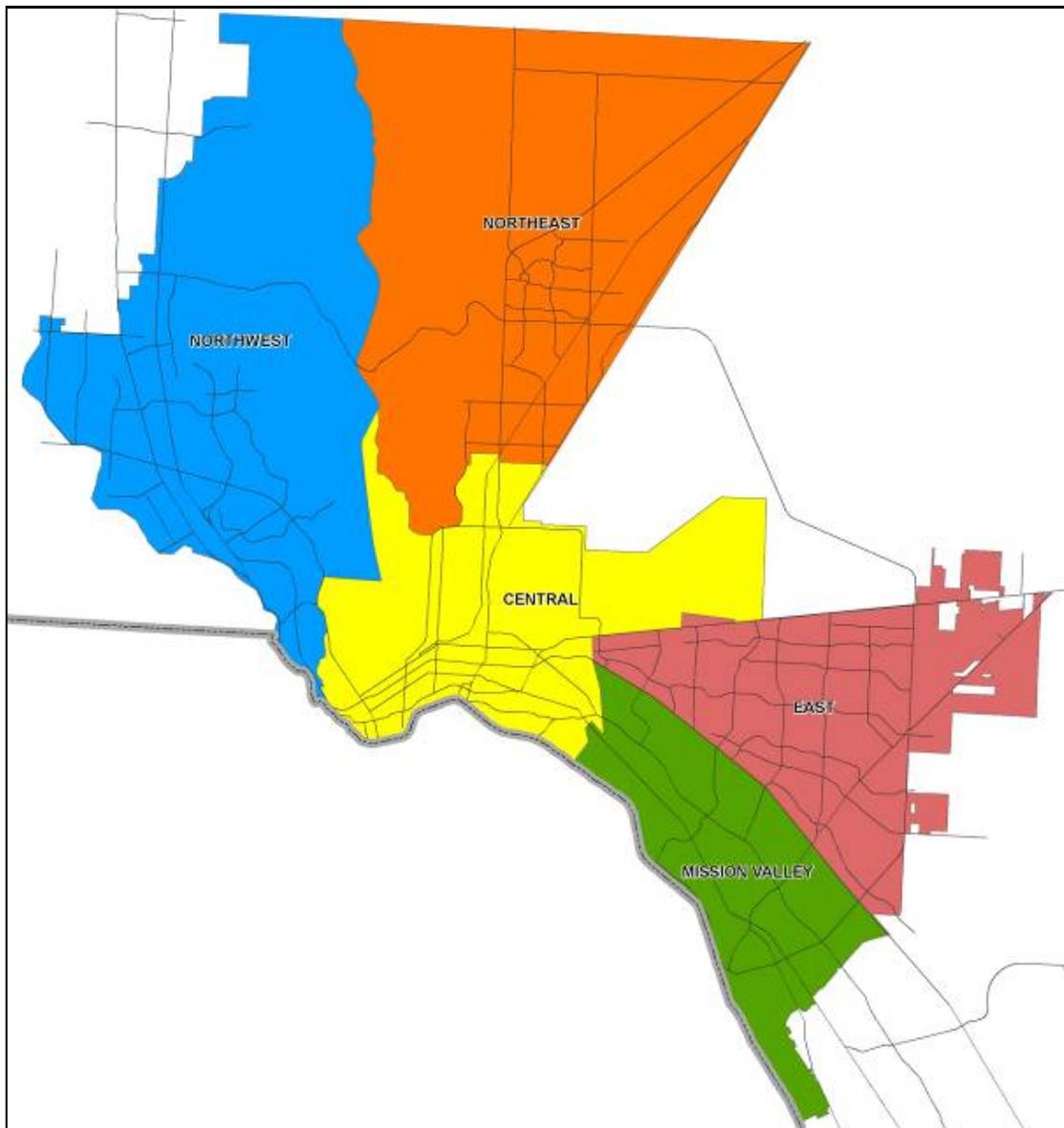
- General support from Neighborhood Services Division
- Notice of special City events, programs and services
- Notice of land use applications for properties within the neighborhood boundary*
- Notice of City Plan Commission (CPC) hearings**

**Land use is public policy to regulate land development. Neighborhood associations receive a statement of a proposed project's impact that a new development or rezoning (residential, commercial or industrial) may have on their neighborhood.*

***CPC reviews all land use applications and gives recommendations to City Council for final approval. Neighborhood associations may express their concern or support on proposed land use projects at CPC and City Council hearings.*

El Paso Neighborhood Coalition

The El Paso Neighborhood Coalition is a citywide network of neighborhood associations that communicate and support each other. Neighborhood associations in each of the City Planning Areas – *East, Northeast, Northwest, Central or Mission Valley* – elect a Neighborhood Council member and a Chairperson to represent neighborhood interests citywide. Contact Neighborhood Services to get in touch with your Neighborhood Council for additional support.



City of El Paso Planning Areas

How to Form a Successful Neighborhood Association

Building a neighborhood association is a process and each neighborhood is unique. The purpose is to organize with your neighbors to identify manageable and realistic improvements for the overall good of the neighborhood. Neighborhood associations who are unorganized or form for single problems are more likely to disband than well rounded neighborhood association.

The following are suggested steps to organize a neighborhood association:

- ☑ **Talk to your neighbors** - Start with the neighbors you know and then approach the ones you don't to determine if there is an interest to start a neighborhood association. Talk to existing neighborhood associations for ideas and support.
- ☑ **Develop a core group** - Find 5 to 10 neighbors who are interested in starting a neighborhood association and share the initial tasks of organizing as a team.
- ☑ **Identify a general purpose** - With the core group, write a general mission statement that explains why the group should exist and what it hopes to accomplish.
- ☑ **Determine the boundary** - Set a manageable boundary size that the core group can easily communicate with other neighbors. Remember the boundary represents the character of the neighborhood and can expand as membership grows.
- ☑ **Develop a structure** - Draft bylaws or guidelines that govern the group's internal operations. Once membership has grown to 15 or more, host an election for officers and vote on approving the bylaws.
- ☑ **Host organized meetings** - Nobody likes to attend meetings that are a waste of their time. It's important to be organized, productive, brief, conveniently located and friendly.
- ☑ **Identify concerns and resources** - List nuisances as well as positive characteristics found in the neighborhood. Also try to identify talents, expertise, skills and special interest members might possess.
- ☑ **Set goals and objectives** - Prioritize the needs of the neighborhood and the group. Create an action plan to help identify the potential course of action, needed resources and tentative timeline.
- ☑ **Build support and image** - Make contact with local business, schools, churches or organizations in the neighborhood. Celebrate successes, recognize volunteer efforts and include the neighborhood's youth and elderly in activities.
- ☑ **Register with the City** - Neighborhood Services is here to assist neighborhood associations in their initial start-up meetings and to help establish effective communication with the City.

Procedures and Guidelines

Membership Recruitment

The task of recruiting members and developing leaders has to be an ongoing activity. Identify any special talents, expertise, skills and any special interest any member might possess. Keep the association open and flexible to bring in new members and potential leaders. Provide members a variety of ways to participate if they are not able to attend all the meetings.

In general, neighbors will participate if the following are present:

- Issues of importance to discuss
- Organized and competent leadership
- Attainable and visible accomplishments
- Social and community events to volunteer
- Events to recognize participants
- Members are heard and are not overburdened

Neighborhood Meetings

The initial meetings are very important and set the tone for future meetings. The way meetings are run will also affect membership and participation.

Set up a regular meeting schedule, which could be monthly, bi-monthly or quarterly. Arrange to meet at a convenient location like a park, library, school, church or restaurant. Arrange seating to allow open communication and allow time for refreshments and mingling. Also, try small icebreaker activities to encourage people to interact in a fun and comfortable way.

Running effective meetings:

- Keep the meetings organized, useful and focused
- Be positive, friendly and respect each other
- Start and end on time (Stay within 1 to 1½ hours)
- Encourage feedback and discussion
- Keep conversations on topic
- Set time limits on discussions and debates (5 or 10 minutes)
- Keep meeting minutes or notes
- End with a summary and plan of action
- Implement follow-up reminders for meetings and tasks

Bylaws

Bylaws are the instruction manual on how to run an organization. They outline the regulations that govern the internal affairs of the association. They should be tailored to fit the needs of the group and may be revised when needed.

Bylaws typically include:

- Name of the organization
- Purpose and mission of the organization
- Boundary of the organization

- Membership and dues, if any
- Board members, roles, duties, terms, and election process
- Conducting meetings, voting procedure and quorum (minimum number of members who must be present to vote)
- Committee guidelines and structure
- Fiscal responsibilities
- Amendment of bylaws and periodical review

Elected Officers

The structure and duties of a board may vary by the needs of the group, but at least have an elected leader and secretary at all times.

Typical roles and duties of elected officers:

- ***Chair/President***
 - Leader and manager of the association
 - Responsible for running meetings
 - Serves as a spokesperson for the group
- ***Vice-Chair/Vice-President***
 - Assumes the president's duties in their absence
 - Serves as an alternative and support to the president
- ***Secretary***
 - Prepares meeting notices
 - Takes minutes of meetings and records voting results
 - Maintains records of membership, sign-in sheets and other important records
- ***Treasurer***
 - Keeps financial records
 - Prepares budget reports
 - Collects membership dues (if required)

Committees

Neighborhood associations work best when project work is divided and shared among members. This helps prevent leadership burnout and shares the accomplishments as a whole. Utilize committees and subcommittees to handle the bulk of the work.

Committee examples:

- ***Crime & Safety Committee***
 - Work with the Police Department to organize block watches
 - Educate residents on crime prevention
- ***Neighborhood Improvement Committee***
 - Work with various City departments and community organizations to educate residents on available programs and services

- **Publicity Committee**
 - Promote and recruit membership
 - Communication (door-to-door, phone-tree, e-mail, newsletter or website)
 - Advertisement (flyers, announcements local bulletins or newspaper)
- **Special Project Committee**
 - Organize neighborhood events (fundraisers, block parties, cleanups, picnics, holiday socials or recognitions)
 - Organize neighborhood social activities (hobbies, baking, sports, book club, gardening, etc...)

Agenda

Have an agenda before each meeting that lists or gives a brief description of what will happen at the meeting.

A typical agenda may cover the following:

- **Call to Order or Introduction** – Chair calls the meeting to start, makes brief opening remarks, welcomes any guests or new members, and members may briefly introduce themselves.
- **Approval of Minutes** – Secretary may read the main highlights of the last meeting and members vote to approve the minutes.
- **Officer and Committee Reports** – Treasurer and committee chairs give brief status reports. A committee may give recommendations for action that the group may vote on.
- **Guest Speaker** – Guest speakers may be from the City or the community that have information to share on an available service. (This is optional and depends on the interest of the group.)
- **Discussion and Action** – Important business requiring group discussion followed by a formal vote.
- **Unfinished or New Business** - Any unfinished or new topics may be open for discussion.
- **Announcements** - Open to public comment on any upcoming events or news to share with the group.
- **Adjournment** - Chair recaps the main points of the meeting, calls the meeting to an end and reminds members of the next meeting.

Meeting Minutes

Minutes are a written record and reference to decisions and actions agreed upon at meetings. Use the same outline as your agenda and take notes on the main information.

Minutes may cover the following:

- **Heading** – Name of organization, date, location, start time and meeting type (general, board, or committee)
- **Attendance** – Board members present or absent, and state if quorum was established

- **Reports** – Approval of previous meeting’s minutes, and highlight main points from board or committee reports
- **Discussions and Actions** – Highlight main points from current, old and new business, and state agreed actions, motions, voting and person(s) responsible
- **Closing** – Time the meeting was adjourned and next scheduled meeting

Motions and Votes

Robert’s Rule of Order is a standard resource for the rules of parliamentary procedure that facilitate discussions and decision-making among members of a group.

Basic elements of *Robert’s Rules*:

- **Chair is Facilitator** – group addresses the Chair for structure
 - “*Call to floor for a...*” chair asks for proper responses from group
- **Motion** – proposes a decision, action or new business
 - “*I move that...*”- (member, never the chair; only discuss one motion at a time)
- **Second Motion** – supports a motion, group may discuss and vote
 - “*I second the motion*”- (member), “*It has been moved and seconded...*”, “*Call to debate*” and “*All in favor/opposed*”- (Chair), “*Yea or Nay*”- (group)
- **Amend** – change a motion under consideration
 - “*I move to amend the motion by...*”, seconded and majority vote
- **Table** – discuss item later in the meeting or at another time
 - “*I move to table this item until...*”, seconded and majority vote
- **Postpone Indefinitely** – discuss a motion at a later date
 - “*I move to postpone the motion to...*”, seconded and majority vote
- **Question** - end debate immediately so group may vote on motion
 - “*I call the question*”, seconded and two-thirds vote
- **Commit** – place a motion in committee
 - “*I move to commit to committee*”, seconded and majority vote
- **Point of Order** – enforce the rules for meeting structure
 - “*Point of order*”, interrupt discussion and Chair enforces rules
- **Adjourn** – end the meeting
 - “*I move to adjourn*”, seconded and majority vote

Communication and Publicity

Establishing effective communication and publication is essential to any group. Groups should take advantage of all media types to make people aware of the group’s goals and events.

Effective forms of communication:

- **Flyers** – use large, bold and legible fonts to be read from a distance of 10 feet; post in community centers, libraries, markets, schools, churches and other local businesses

- **Newspaper/Bulletins** – local publications have announcement sections to advertise meetings and events
- **Newsletters/Websites** – come up with creative and easy ways to reach current and potential members
- **Telephone/E-mail Tree** – set up a contact database for faster networking and information sharing with members
- **Surveys** – use a survey when you are just getting started and when new members attend; tailor the survey to find out what issues are important to neighbors and what events they would be willing to volunteer for; collect contact information for notices
- **Neighborhood Walk-Through** – assign pairs and blocks to go door-to-door to introduce the association and up coming events; ask them about their concerns and invite them to attend meetings
- **Block Representatives** – volunteer a member or two from each street or block to serve as a liaison to other neighbors; they can develop into Neighborhood Watch Captains

Conflict Resolution

There may be times where communication breaks down and conflicts develop. Difficult behaviors, such as, gossiping, refusing to talk or listen, being rude, ignoring protocol or procrastinating are often unmet needs for control, recognition or respect. Conflict can be an opportunity for new understanding, growth and change.

Tips for handling conflict:

- Stay centered, relax and listen (don't yell back or shut down)
- Be respectful and mindful of behavior (tone and body language)
- Make constructive comments (don't blame or name call)
- Talk directly to each other (not to other people)
- Discuss issues and concerns (not personalities)
- Be realistic and open to compromises
- Admit and learn from mistakes

Dealing with difficult people at meetings:

- Act for the benefit of the group
- Credit a person's contribution or idea
- Summarize a person's main points (shows they're being heard and understood)
- Ask politely to hold points until later (after meeting or put on next agenda)
- Table long or heated discussions
- Bring discussion back to topic by using related idea as transition
- Accept group decisions and votes
- Consider mediation

Working with local government:

- **Meet your public officials** – contact your officials and form a positive ongoing relationship; keep copies of all transactions between the group, officials and staff; show your appreciation as well as dissatisfaction in a respectful manner
- **Become acquainted with structure, purpose and procedure of city government** – understand how the city operates and discover the guidelines and regulations each department has to follow
- **Know your issues** – determine which issues will be addressed by local government and which will need to be addressed by the association itself
- **Be open to suggestions and follow up** – talk to informed people, take their suggestions seriously, follow up any discussion with a letter or email and check back with the appropriate staff or official

Finances and Non-Profit Status

The Treasurer should keep track of all finances, records of contributions and receipts of spending. For large sums of money a neighborhood association may consider a bank or savings account. Research and compare bank requirements.

The City does not require non-profit status of neighborhood associations or provide technical support for neighborhood associations to apply for non-profit status; it is solely the decision and responsibility of the neighborhood association to do so.

The State of Texas provides non-profit incorporation and the IRS provides a federal tax exemption for non-profits under tax code section 501(c)(3).

For more information on non-profit and exemption requirements, please visit www.sos.state.tx.us and www.irs.gov.

Neighborhood Projects and Special Events

Annual and special social events can aid in building neighborhood support for improvement projects, such as, street repairs, street lighting, removing blight, speeding issues and park improvements.

Select neighborhood projects that will demonstrate action and results that are visible in the neighborhood. Promote a range of short- and long-term activities that are balanced out around a calendar year.

Project ideas:

- Guest speakers
- Community tree planting
- Philanthropic/charity project
- Back-to-school party or school supply drive
- Neighborhood Crime Watch Program
- National Night Out Celebration
- Neighborhood picnic or potluck
- Holiday celebrations
- Yard cleaning or porch painting for elderly or disabled neighbor
- Neighborhood clean-up*

To organize a neighborhood clean-up, please contact **Keep El Paso Beautiful (KEPB) at 546-6742. KEPB is a local non-profit organization dedicated to educating the community regarding litter prevention, illegal dumping and the impact of solid waste on our community. They also work to involve citizens, businesses, schools and local government in community clean-ups and beautification projects.*

Fundraising

Some projects require raising funds and can be a way to develop teamwork and image.

Fundraising ideas:

- Raffle
- Holiday crafts
- Neighborhood garage sale
- Historical home tours
- Neighborhood t-shirts
- Curb numbering painting
- Garden/yard signs
- Driveway movie night

Sponsorships and Donations

Be professional and positive when asking for in-kind donations or sponsorship from local businesses or organizations for a special event. Prepare a one-page letter that briefly describes the group's mission, the purpose of the event, state what contribution is being requested of the business or organization, and how they will be recognized the day of the event. If possible, hand-deliver the letter and follow up.

City Permits

Parks and Recreation - Park Grounds and Shelters

Contact Parks and Recreation at 541-4331 to reserve park grounds and shelters. It's recommended to submit a request at least 30 days prior to event. Fees may apply pending size and type of event.

Some fees may be waived if a neighborhood association forms a Park Partnerships and adopts a neighborhood park. Contact Parks and Recreation to learn more about other benefits of forming a Park Partnership.

Public Health Department - Food Permits

Contact Food Inspection Program at 543-3645 for a food vendor permit if food will be handed out or sold at an event to the general public. This is to insure the public's health and safety. There are certain requirements and fees depending on the type of food being served. Private social events that are by invitation only would not require a food vendor permit.

Department of Transportation - Street Closure

Contact the Department of Transportation at 621-6750 to learn about the requirements for closing streets block parties. It's recommended to submit a request at least 30 days prior to the event to avoid late fees. Applications must be submitted at least 7 days prior to the event and application fees are due at the time of the application submittal, which are non-refundable.

City of El Paso Directory

City Hall **541-4000**

Mayor	541-4145
District 1	541-4151
District 2	541-4416
District 3	541-4515
District 4	541-4140
District 5	541-4701
District 6	541-4182
District 7	541-4108
District 8	541-4123

Aviation **780-4700**

Airport Operations	780-4749
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Community & Human Development

541-4643

(Community Development Block Grant)

Empowerment Zone	541-4629
Foster Grandparent Program	541-4371
Housing Rehab	541-4639
Neighborhood Services	541-4377
Neighborhood Stabilization Program	541-4820
Retired & Senior Volunteer Program	541-4374

Convention & Visitors Bureau **534-0601**

Department of Transportation **621-6750**

(streets, alleys, potholes, medians, markings, sweeping, streetlights, traffic management, traffic signs & signals)

Graffiti Hotline	621-6789
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Engineering & Construction Management

541-4200

Accessibility & ADA	541-4243
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Environmental Services **621-6700**

(collection sites, landfill, recycling, solid waste)

Air Quality	543-3599
Animal Services	842-1000
Code Compliance & Vector Control	599-6290
Property Maintenance	599-3698

Fire Department **485-5600**

Fire Prevention	485-5699
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Emergency Management	838-3260
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International Bridges **858-4673**

Mass Transit Department **533-1220**

Sun Metro schedule, routes & stops	533-3333
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Municipal Clerk's Office **541-4127**

(Municipals Court records, open records request, city elections, boards & commissions)

Museums & Cultural Affairs Department **541-4481**

Archeology Museum	755-4332
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Art Museum	532-1707
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History Museum	351-3588
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Park & Recreation **541-4331**

(City parks, shelter rentals, recreation & senior centers, swimming pools, recreational/leisure classes, adult/youth sports, park partnerships)

City Development **541-4670**

Economic Division	541-4670
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Planning Division	541-4056
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One-Stop-Shop (<i>Permits & Inspections</i>)	541-4825
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Police Department **564-7000**

Police (<i>non-emergency</i>)	832-4400
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File Report	832-4436
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Central Regional	577-5000
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Pebble Hills Regional	599-5500
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Mission Valley Regional	872-3600
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Northeast Regional	759-2000
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Westside Regional	585-6000
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Public Health **771-5702**

211Texas Information & Referral Center	211 or 800-644-1917
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Dental Program	331-8000
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Food Inspection Program	543-3645
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Health Education Program	771-5888
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Immunization Program	771-5822
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Tax Office **541-4054**

Zoo **521-1850**