

**RECOMMENDATION OF DENVER INTER-NEIGHBORHOOD COOPERATION
COMMITTEE ON DENVER ORDINANCE – ARTICLE III – REGISTERED
NEIGHBORHOOD ORGANIZATIONS**

TO: Loretta Koehler, President, Inter-Neighborhood Cooperation (INC)
INC Board of Directors and INC Delegates

I. INTRODUCTION

In 1979, the ordinance establishing Registered Neighborhood Organizations was passed by City Council with Mayor Bill McNichols signing the ordinance. In 1975 and prior to the adoption of the ordinance, INC had incorporated as a consortium of Denver neighborhood organizations from all parts of the city. INC strongly supported the ordinance. The ordinance is codified as Sections 12-91 through 12-98 of the Denver Revised Municipal Code. Since then, INC has supported a number of amendments to the ordinance, the last of which were adopted in 2005.

II. INTER-NEIGHBORHOOD COOPERATION COMMITTEE

In January 2020, INC established a committee to: (1) examine and review the RNO Ordinance and recommend possible improvements; and, (2) recommend ways in which the inclusivity and effectiveness of Denver Registered Neighborhood Organizations can be improved.

The 12-person committee, co-chaired by Margie Valdez and Michael Henry, had two in-person meetings and two telephone/Zoom meetings. City Councilman Paul Kashmann attended the committee’s first meeting and discussed some broad ideas for amending the ordinance. Romaine Pacheco of the Mayor’s Office attended the second meeting.

III. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

A. Recommended Amendments to RNO Ordinance. The existing RNO ordinance is essentially sound and has served the residents of Denver, its neighborhoods and the city government well for 45 years. However, the committee recognizes that there are improvements which, if addressed, will result in RNOs’ efforts to better achieve equity, fairness, outreach, disclosure and transparency. Our recommendations to achieve these goals are included in the summaries provided below. The recommendations for amending the ordinance are set forth in **Attachment A** and summarized as follows:

(a) Sec. 12-91 - Legislative Intent – The cultivation of neighborhood membership and participation should include furthering the ethnic and socio-economic composition of the neighborhood as well as ensuring fairness, health and the well-being of the neighborhood are included as goals which neighborhoods should strive to attain.

(b) Sec. 12-92 - Definitions – The current provisions set forth in this section of the ordinance were thoroughly discussed and debated. The committee, at this time, does not recommend any amendments should be made to this section of the ordinance.

(c) Sec. 12-93 – Eligibility and boundaries - The committee considered the question of overlapping boundaries of RNOs and concluded that such overlaps of RNOs do not cause significant problems. However, RNOs should be encouraged to communicate with each other about matters of mutual concern.

(d) Sec. 12-94 - Registration – The committee recommends RNOs should be allowed to organize and register at any time during a calendar year with renewals limited to January or July of each calendar year. If this recommendation is adopted by the City, the CPD registration application will require revision.

(e) Sec. 12-95 – Duties of community planning and development - Includes the recommendation regarding registration requirements set forth in Sec. 12-94 be included in Sec. 12-95. The recommended registration requirements should also include the current requirement advising RNOs that the list of RNOs is available on Denver’s website.

Notifications should include curb-cut applications, entertainment districts, social consumption tasting rooms, demolition applications for structures which have been deemed by the Landmark Preservation Commission to have potential for designation as landmark structure, ZPIN notification, properties with pending site development plans and mobility studies.

(f) Sec. 12-96 – Notification - An open data platform should be formed/developed by CPD. All notices sent to RNOs would be archived here for the public to search (such as by time, geographic area, and/or topic), and for any person or group to subscribe to in order to receive notices (again, based on interest in specific geographic area and/or topic area of interest). This will broaden the ability for the public to receive information, while removing an incentive for groups not intending to behave as neighborhood groups to register as RNOs simply to get notices.

This section needs updating. Many of the actions required by City agencies which are included in this section are outdated as a result of the adoption of the 2010 zoning code.

(g) Sec. 12-97 – Public hearings - The committee strongly recommends that this section be amended to require RNO representatives to provide at all public hearings the position taken by the RNO on matters presented as well as the representative’s authority to testify to the position taken by the RNO.

In order to provide transparency and disclosure in hearings, the committee recommends that a description of an RNO’s outreach and position-taking be included in RNO testimony at hearings, as well as efforts taken by the RNO to contact all RNOs

within the designated area. This will allow the person presiding at the hearing to consider the weight (probative evidence) to be given testimony offered at hearings for inclusion in recommended or final decisions.

Sec. 12-97(8) includes the committee recommendation to better define businesses and renters in RNO outreach.

A suggested checklist to simplify the information recommended in Sec. 12-97 is found in **Attachment B**.

Sec. 12-98 – De-listing and re-listing. The committee does not recommend any amendments to this section of the ordinance.

B. How Can RNOs Be More Inclusive? Almost all RNOs are and have for many years been eager to find ways to be more inclusive and diverse in their membership, leadership and participation to better reflect the diversity of the residents of their neighborhoods, including age, ethnicity, renter/owner housing situation and income levels. INC will strongly encourage all RNOs to share ideas about how to encourage such inclusivity and equity.

We welcome assistance for the implementation and development of these ideas from the Mayor's Office, City Council, CPD and the Mayor's Office of Human Rights and Community Relations as well as RNOs who have had success with implementing this type of outreach.

We believe that RNOs' inclusivity will be made more transparent, and improvement encouraged, by the requirement for the RNO position sheet checklist (Attachment B) in all matters where RNOs take positions. Successful broad participation in developing positions will be apparent, as will less-inclusive practices, and this should be taken into account by departments, boards, Council and others receiving positions from RNOs.

C. How Can RNOs Communicate Better? INC recognizes that RNOs are not the only groups which can and should communicate with city government. INC should and will encourage all RNOs to collaborate with religious groups, schools, businesses, civic and environmental groups about matters that affect neighborhoods and their residents, and seek their active involvement as well.

D. Effective Communications. Effective RNOs need effective communication methods with the residents of their neighborhoods and with city government, especially as communication methods are rapidly changing. INC requests technical and/or financial assistance for RNOs from city government to improve communication methods, such as mailing and printing costs for newsletters, use of social media, language translation for newsletters and at meetings where needed, improved websites, and access to teleconferencing methods for neighborhood residents to communicate among themselves

and with city government. Training for RNOs on computer applications and the latest computer technology is required.

The City Librarian has indicated a desire to establish a budget for printing to conduct outreach by RNOs. Outdoor bulletin boards with stands should be constructed so that they can be placed in City Parks and other public areas for the dissemination of RNO outreach efforts. Workshops should be conducted for RNOs by the appropriate City agency or department on how to accurately establish the appropriate demographics in neighborhoods and how to estimate this information.

The committee recommends to the Delegation of INC that this report and attachments should be sent to Mayor Michael Hancock, all members of City Council and to the Executive Director of the Community Planning and Development Department (CPD) as the department primarily responsible for administering the RNO ordinance.

Margie Valdez and Michael Henry
Co-Chairs INC Committee on Registered Neighborhood Organizations

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