

# PRO NEIGHBORHOODS

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

### ABOUT THE PLANNING & DESIGN SERVICE AWARDS

#### **How do I get an award application?**

Call us at 882-5885, e-mail us at [info@proneighborhoods.org](mailto:info@proneighborhoods.org), drop by our office in the Santa Rita Building at 310 N. Commerce Park Loop (part of the City Resource Campus west of the Santa Cruz River), or visit our web site at [www.proneighborhoods.org](http://www.proneighborhoods.org) for an electronic application that you can complete on a computer.

#### **What is the award?**

The Planning & Design Service Award matches neighborhood groups who want to develop and plan a public space, traffic mitigation, or landscaping project with local professionals. The professional team will help the group develop their common vision and outline opportunities and constraints to implementing the project. The end product of this project is literally a plan. For instance, if your group wants to build a neighborhood playground, the professionals might help with some or all of the following services:

- Facilitate a workshop to create a vision
- Identify a site
- Identify agencies and permits that may be involved
- Develop a concept plan
- Estimate construction costs
- Identify potential funding sources

The idea is to itemize and accomplish the planning steps that need to be done to move the project into the implementation/construction phase if all seems feasible.

#### **What kind of professional services will be provided and who will provide them?**

PRO Neighborhoods has partnered with a group of planners, engineers, architects, landscape architects, hydrologists, and other professionals who are interested in community projects and are willing to provide a certain number of hours of in-kind services. Depending on the proposed project, award recipients will be matched with one or more professionals who are best suited to the needs of that project.

#### **Do we actually get money?**

Your group does NOT receive funding. Instead, each member of the professional team agrees to give your project 20 to 40 hours of *pro bono* (free) services over a six- to nine-month period. If you expect the project to incur some costs – refreshments at community meetings, photocopies, postage – the group must be prepared to cover those costs. PRO Neighborhoods staff may have suggestions on how to get donations for some of these expenses.

#### **What does it mean that the group should be part of a “neighborhood”?**

Most members of the group driving the project need to live in the neighborhood or rural community where they are doing the project. A neighborhood doesn't have to have a name or be defined by a neighborhood association, but it should be generally contained by some recognized geographical boundaries such as streets or rivers. In rural areas, a town, village, or district may describe the area. For urban areas, people in a neighborhood generally should live within 2 miles of each other.

#### **How organized does the group have to be?**

The group can have a long history or be newly formed. Many of the groups that apply to PRO Neighborhoods have gotten together just to complete a single project. They've never done anything together before. It is not necessary for the group to have bylaws or officers, but it is required that the group have a name, that the group have held at least one meeting together where this project was discussed, and that at least five unrelated people are committed to moving the project forward.

**Do you support formal neighborhood or homeowners' association projects?**

Yes.

**Does our group need to have nonprofit status?**

No.

**Does a school, church, or scout troop qualify as a group?**

No. Projects must be initiated and led by neighborhood groups. However, collaboration with schools, congregations, or scout troops is encouraged whenever appropriate.

**PRO Neighborhoods says it wants to support projects, not programs. What's the difference?**

A "project" has a defined start and an end; we expect that it can be finished within approximately a year. A "program" is an ongoing activity that needs to be maintained year after year with continued resources. PRO Neighborhoods supports projects. That said, PRO Neighborhoods has supported small projects that are part of larger programs or pilot projects that will become self-sufficient programs in the future.

**Can PRO Neighborhoods support a project on private property?**

Yes. PRO Neighborhoods may consider supporting a project on property that belongs to a private school, church, apartment complex, or even a vacant lot, as long as the project can be shown to be community building and to benefit the neighborhood as well as the property owner. Your group should ask the owner to sign a contract granting you permission to use and/or change the property and guaranteeing community access to the project for a reasonable period of time. Submit the contract with your application.

**Can the same group apply to PRO Neighborhoods more than once?**

Yes. The same group may apply if they have spent all the funds from a previous grant and successfully completed the project. However, they may not receive support for the continuation of the same project.

**Can we submit additional information with our application?**

Yes. Pictures, maps, drawings, or lists are often submitted to give us additional information about projects. However, try to be as clear as possible in answering the questions on the application, so that additional information will not be necessary.

**What kinds of things will we be required to do if we get the award?**

A PRO Neighborhoods staff member and your professional team will meet with your group to develop a Memorandum of Agreement before the project begins. In order to keep in touch with groups and report back to our own funding sources and partners, we ask groups to

- Write reports every four months and submit a final report
- Host two separate visits (one is a final site visit) from a PRO Neighborhoods staff member
- Fulfill a requirement of 6 volunteer hours in the PRO Friends program. Any group member or combination of members can complete these hours in various ways. The group will be encouraged to organize and host an informal community meeting, inviting at least 10 people from the neighborhood who are not already involved in the project. This will give you an opportunity to tell neighbors about your project and maybe get them involved, and it will help us let more people know about PRO Neighborhoods. Hours can also be completed by helping PRO Neighborhoods present a workshop or mentoring other neighborhood groups.