



2026 Awards Competition

All applications MUST postmarked by February 27, 2026

Neighborhoods, USA (NUSA) is pleased to announce the opening of our 2026 Awards Competition. NUSA proudly presents awards in the following categories:

- Neighborhood of the Year
- Best Neighborhood Program
- Neighborhood Newsletters
- Who's Who in America's Neighborhoods

NEIGHBORHOOD OF THE YEAR (NOTY) AWARD

2026 celebrates the 51st year that NUSA will recognize the outstanding work of neighborhood organizations across the United States for their work toward improving the quality of life in their communities, including efforts to support neighbors during the COVID-19 pandemic and work to improve equity and access throughout their neighborhood and city. If your organization completed a neighborhood improvement project or activity in 2025, we invite you to enter the 2026 Neighborhood of the Year Award competition.

Neighborhood of the Year (NOTY) awards are given in three (3) categories:

1. Physical Revitalization/Beautification (Single Neighborhood)

Projects that focus on physical aspects of improving your neighborhood such as parks, lighting, litter control, traffic management, housing improvements, green spaces and business district enhancements.

2. Social Revitalization/Neighborliness (Single Neighborhood)

Projects focusing on the social or cultural aspects of a neighborhood like safety, youth and/or senior programs, and activities that make neighbors feel connected and foster neighbors working together like an ice cream social, holiday celebration, or festival.

3. Multi-Neighborhood Partnerships Projects produced in partnership by at least two neighborhoods or community organizations *addressing either physical or social concerns*.



Costs associated with taking part in the conference and making a presentation are the sole responsibility of each finalist organization.



NOTY - Judging Criteria

A panel of judges using the following criteria will evaluate each award application:

- **Self Help/Financial Capability (0-20 pts)** - *The extent of self-help is clear with minimal reliance on outside funding sources; the budget is documented and realistic.*
- **Grassroots Involvement (0-20 pts)** - *The project/activity included significant neighborhood and/or business involvement and cooperation; diversity of participants.*
- **Innovativeness (0-10 pts)** - *The project/activity was a creative and unique way to address the neighborhood (s) issue.*
- **Community Benefit (0-10 pts)** - *The project/activity benefited the neighborhood and addressed a need; it improved the health, safety and/or appearance of the neighborhood.*
- **Sustainability (0-10 pts)** - *The project/activity illustrated opportunities for self-sufficiency; project/activity included a low maintenance design and an ongoing maintenance plan.*
- **Leadership Development (0-10 pts)** - *The project/activity provided opportunities for volunteers to take on leadership roles and develop new skills.*
- **Partnership Building (0-10 pts)** - *The project/activity created partnerships with public and/or private entities; and/or with other neighborhoods and community-based groups.*
- **Volunteerism (0-5 pts)** - *The extent of volunteer contributions to the project.*
- **Replicable (0-5 pts)** - *The potential for the project/activity to be replicated in other neighborhoods.*



All Neighborhood of the Year award finalists will be notified by March 20, 2026 and invited to the NUSA Virtual judging session in April to present their entry. Awards will be announced during the 2026 Neighborhoods, USA Conference, held virtually May 28-29th, 2026.

Costs associated with taking part in the conference and making a presentation are the sole responsibility of each finalist organization.



NOTY – Application Submission

Any neighborhood, homeowners, or business association is eligible to apply to the Neighborhood of the Year award category if the organization has developed and completed a project or activity that benefited their neighborhood in 2025. Entries previously considered for this award are ineligible. To help us better understand your application, please answer the following questions using up to three (3) double-sided 8 " x 11" white pages.

1. Tell us about your neighborhood and neighborhood organization.

- Briefly describe your neighborhood.
- When was your neighborhood association formed? How many people live in your neighborhood? How many people are involved in neighborhood meetings on a regular basis?

2. Share about the nominated project or activity.

- Describe your project/activity. Identify when it started, who initiated it, and what you hoped to accomplish.
- What prompted your organization to develop this project/activity? Please describe circumstances and/or situations that made this a priority for your neighborhood residents.
- List the critical steps/tasks your group took to develop/implement this project/activity. Describe the role and level of involvement of neighborhood residents in each of the steps.
- Why do you think this project was successful? Describe why it was beneficial, how it changed the neighborhood, and any unexpected surprises resulting from the project/activity.
- If this project involved other partners, who took part, what role did they play, and how critical were they to the success of the project/activity?
- What advice and/or lessons would you give to other neighborhoods interested in replicating your project/activity?

3. Please attach the following items:

- A copy of the **Required Cover Sheet and Application** (see pages 9 and 10 of this packet).
- A budget showing income and expenses related to the project/activity including, but not limited to donations, grants, in-kind support and volunteer hours committed.
- Up to six (6) additional items that will help the judges better understand your project/activity.

4. Applications MUST be mailed using the following guidelines:

- Submissions must be on **8 ½ x 11** white paper.
- **Include the award entry fee of \$65, payable to NUSA.** Entry fees may also be paid electronically via PayPal at: <http://www.nusa.org/awards/>.
- Mail your original application plus two (2) paper copies to the address found on the **Required Cover Sheet.**

Costs associated with taking part in the conference and making a presentation are the sole responsibility of each finalist organization.



All applications MUST postmarked by February 27, 2026

BEST NEIGHBORHOOD PROGRAM (BNP) AWARD

The Best Neighborhood Program (BNP) award program recognizes the outstanding work of governmental entities, businesses, or corporations in the United States who work to improve the quality of life in their communities and neighborhoods, including efforts to support neighbors during the COVID-19 pandemic and increase equity and access throughout their neighborhood and city.

If your organization completed a neighborhood improvement project or activity in 2024 we invite you to enter the Best Neighborhood Program Award competition and bring national attention to the program that makes your community a better place to live.

Last year's finalists included a matching grant program, a neighborhood involvement and community engagement program and celebration, and a neighborhood leadership academy.

There are two categories for the Best Neighborhood Program award:

- 1. Physical Revitalization/Beautification** - Programs that focus on physical aspects of improving your neighborhood such as parks, lighting, litter control, traffic management, housing improvements, green spaces, and business district enhancements.
- 2. Physical Revitalization/Beautification** - Programs that focus on physical aspects of improving your neighborhood such as parks, lighting, litter control, traffic management, housing improvements, green spaces, and business district enhancements.
- 3. Social Revitalization/Neighborliness** - Programs focusing on the social or cultural aspects of a neighborhood like safety, youth and/or senior programs, activities that make neighbors feel connected and foster neighbors working together on programs like an ice cream social, holiday celebration or festival.

BNP – *Judging Criteria*

All Best Neighborhood award finalists will be notified by March 20, 2026 and invited to the NUSA Virtual judging session in April to present their entry. Awards will be announced during the 2026 Neighborhoods, USA Conference, held virtually May 28-29th, 2026.

BNP – *Application Submission*

Any governmental entity, business or corporation that has developed and completed a program in 2025 is eligible to enter. Entries previously considered for this award are ineligible.

Costs associated with taking part in the conference and making a presentation are the sole responsibility of each finalist organization.



To help us better understand your program, please answer the following questions, using up to three (3) double-sided 8 1/2" x 11" white pages.

1. Please tell us about the nominated project or activity.

- Describe your program/activity. Identify when it started, who initiated it, and what you hoped to accomplish.
- What prompted your organization to develop this program/activity? Please describe circumstances and/or situations that made this a priority for your neighborhood residents.
- Why do you think this program was successful? Describe why it was beneficial, how it changed the neighborhood, and any unexpected surprises resulting from the program/activity.
- How has your program made a difference in the community? What benchmarks were used to measure success?
- If this program/activity could be replicated by others, is there documentation that another group could obtain to design a similar type program?

2. Please attach the following:

- A copy of the **Required Cover Sheet and Application** (*see pages 9 and 10 of this packet*).
- A budget showing income and expenses related to the program/activity including, but not limited to donations, grants, in-kind support, and volunteer hours committed.
- Up to six (6) additional items that you feel will help the judges have a better understanding of your program/activity.

3. Applications MUST be mailed using the following guidelines:

- Submissions must be on **8 1/2 x 11** white paper.
- **Include the award entry fee of \$100, payable to NUSA.** Entry fees may also be paid electronically via PayPal at: <http://www.nusa.org/awards/>.

Mail your original application plus two (2) copies to the address found on the **Required Cover Sheet**.



Costs associated with taking part in the conference and making a presentation are the sole responsibility of each finalist organization.



NEIGHBORHOOD NEWSLETTER COMPETITION (NNC)

Community newsletters are an effective communication tool to share news about your city, community, and neighborhood. A well-designed newsletter can spark an interest in neighborhood involvement, increase neighborhood association membership, and spur volunteerism.

The Neighborhood Newsletter Competition rewards excellence in community newsletters and given in two (2) categories/subcategories:

- **Print Format Newsletters**
- **Electronic Format Newsletters**

First, second and third place awards will be given in each category/subcategory.



NNC – *Judging Criteria*

A panel of judges will evaluate each Neighborhood Newsletter Competition application received on the following five (5) criteria:

1. Branding (0-10 pts)
2. Aesthetics & Design (0-20 pts)
3. Technical Layout (0-20 pts)
4. Content-Informational (0-25 pts)
5. Content-Outreach & Involvement (0-25 points)

A panel of judges will evaluate all Neighborhood Newsletter award entries. We will notify award finalists by March 20th. Finalists are encouraged to attend the virtual conference and will be honored during the Awards Program.

NNC – *Application Submission*

Only electronic and print newsletters published during 2025 are eligible for submission. In order to help better understand your application, please answer the following questions using up to three (3) double-sided 8 1/2" x 11" pages.

- How many issues of your newsletter were published in 2025?
- How many households does your newsletter get delivered to?
- How is your newsletter distributed to these households?
- How are the expenses for your newsletter covered?

Costs associated with taking part in the conference and making a presentation are the sole responsibility of each finalist organization.



All applications MUST postmarked by February 27, 2026

1. Applications MUST be submitted using the following guidelines:

- **Print Category Entry**
 - Mail three (3) publications of two (2) issues of the 2025 newsletters to the address on the **Required Cover Sheet**. (*Please DO NOT include more than two (2) issues.*)
- **Electronic Category Entry**
 - Entries in the electronic category must include either a URL (*website address*) with their entry.

2. Applications MUST include:

- A copy of the **Required Cover Sheet and Application** (*see pages 9 and 10 of this packet*).
- **An award entry fee of \$50 for Electronic Format submissions or \$65 for Print Format** submissions for the Neighborhood Newsletter Competition Award, payable to NUSA. Entry fees may also be paid electronically via PayPal at: <http://www.nusa.org/awards/>.

WHO'S WHO IN AMERICA'S NEIGHBORHOODS AWARDS

The Who's Who in America's Neighborhoods award recognizes those individuals whose work mirrors the mission of Neighborhoods, USA: to build and strengthen neighborhood associations; to encourage neighborhood involvement in the decision-making process in local governments; and to promote productive communications and collaborations between neighborhood associations, local governments and the public/private sector.



WHO'S WHO – *Judging Criteria*

Each Who's Who in America's Neighborhoods (WWAN) nominee will be evaluated by the Neighborhoods, USA Board of Directors using the following criteria: the neighborhood involvement of nominee, information on how the nominee has proven to be a leader in the community and specific reasons why the nominee has earned the Who's Who in America's Neighborhoods recognition.

Costs associated with taking part in the conference and making a presentation are the sole responsibility of each finalist organization.



There are two (2) categories for the WWAN award:

- **Governmental nominee** - Includes elected officials, local or state government staff, and paid neighborhood advocates and/or community leaders.
- **Grassroots/Neighbor nominee** - Includes non-paid neighborhood advocates and/or community leaders.

It is encouraged, but not required, that Who's Who in America's Neighborhoods nominees attend the 2026 Neighborhoods, USA Virtual Conference, May 28-29, 2026 to receive their award, if selected. Costs associated with attending the conference are the sole responsibility of each award recipient.

WHO'S WHO – Application Submission

Please note the following eligibility requirements:

- Only current Neighborhoods, USA (NUSA) members may nominate an individual for the Who's Who award and only one nomination per member per year.
- We define a current NUSA member as having attended the 2023, 2024, 2025 NUSA Conferences El Paso, TX, Lubbock, TX, Jacksonville, FL and/or being current in their annual membership dues.
- Current (seated) NUSA Board Members are ineligible for nomination.
- Previous NUSA Board Members may be nominated for advocacy and showed leadership within their local community.

To evaluate the Who's Who nominee's submission, please provide the following information using up to two (2) double sided 8 ½" x 11" pages:

- The name and contact information of your nominee. If the nominee is unaware of this nomination, please share your name and contact information.
- Describe the neighborhood involvement of your nominee.
- Explain how the nominee has proven to be a leader in your community.
- Explain why you feel the nominee has earned this recognition.

Nominations for the Who's Who in America's Neighborhoods recognition should include a copy of the **Required Cover Sheet and Application** and mailed to the address shown on the **Required Cover Sheet** (see pages 9 and 10 of this packet).

There is no entry fee to submit a nomination for the Who's Who in America's Neighborhoods recognition

Costs associated with taking part in the conference and making a presentation are the sole responsibility of each finalist organization.



Required Cover Sheet

Please check the award category which best describes your project and the category that best describes your organization. Before you make your selections, be sure to review the project category descriptions listed in the information packet. *NUSA reserves the right to place an application in the project category that it best fits.*

NEIGHBORHOOD OF THE YEAR AWARD (*mark one for each category*):

A. Project/Activity Category:

- Physical Revitalization/Beautification-Single Neighborhood
 Social Revitalization/Neighborliness-Single Neighborhood
 Multi Neighborhood Partnerships

Applications cannot be processed without receipt of the correct entry fee:

- \$65 - Neighborhood of the Year
- \$100 - Best Program of the Year
- \$50 - Electronic Newsletter
- \$65 - Printed Newsletter

B. Organization Category:

- Neighborhood Association
 Homeowner Association
 Business Association
 Other (Please specify): _____

BEST NEIGHBORHOOD PROGRAM AWARD (*choose one*):

- Physical Revitalization/Beautification
 Social Revitalization/Neighborliness

There is not an entry fee for the Who's Who in America award.

NEIGHBORHOOD NEWSLETTER COMPETITION (*mark one for each category*):

A. Newsletter Format Category:

- Electronic Format
 Print Format

B. Organization Category:

- Neighborhood Organization
 Government Entity
 Non-Profit Organization or Agency

WHO'S WHO IN AMERICA'S NEIGHBORHOODS (*choose one*):

- Governmental nominee
 Grassroots/Neighbor nominee

All applications MUST postmarked by February 27, 2026 and mailed to:

NUSA Awards Committee, 9450 SW Gemini Dr. PMB 50873, Beaverton, OR 97008-7105



2026 AWARDS COMPETITION

Required Application

Application Information:

Name of Project/Activity/Individual: _____

Name of Association: _____

Contact Person (for additional information/questions): _____

Contact's Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Contact's Email:

Contact's Phone:

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Local Newspaper/Media Information:

Neighborhoods, USA sends out press releases and social media posts about award recipients. Should your project/activity/individual become an award recipient, please provide us with the following contact information:

Name of Newspaper/Other Media: _____

Contact Person: _____ Contact's Phone: _____

Contact's Email: _____

Other (social media link, website, etc.): _____

Neighborhood of the Year (NOTY) award recipients may be eligible for a cash award. Should your project/activity be named as a NOTY award recipient and eligible for a cash award, please state whom the check should be made payable to: _____

Neighborhood of the Year or Best Neighborhood Program Awards Award applicants:

Please share a (maximum 50 word) description about the program or project being nominated. *NOTE: This information will be shared with the judges and used to describe your program/project during the awards ceremony, should an award be earned.*

If you have questions about the application process, please contact Lindsey Pinkston at email the Awards Program committee at awardsentry@nusa.org

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