

# WATCH MUSK EGON

## 2024 NEIGHBORHOOD EMPOWERMENT PROGRAM

*A NEIGHBORHOOD ACTION PLAN ADOPTED BY  
THE MUSKEGON CITY COMMISSION:*

## **PURPOSE**

Strong and active neighborhoods are a key component of a successful and vibrant Muskegon. Our neighborhoods help drive quality of life, as they can help provide activities that engage residents, improve living conditions, provide social opportunities, and positively affect crime. Accordingly, this program is designed to empower neighborhood groups to become more active as a means to access city funds to invest in the quality of life activities that they believe will improve their neighborhood.

## **PROGRAMMING**

Active neighborhoods associations will be eligible to receive funds from the City of Muskegon in three ways: Neighborhood Grants, Enhanced Neighborhood Grants, and Earned Neighborhood Grants.

### Neighborhood Grants

All active neighborhood associations are eligible to receive a \$1,500 Neighborhood Grant annually. An active neighborhood association is defined as a neighborhood association that accomplishes **all** of the following in a given year:

1. Holds at least two general membership meetings per year.
2. Holds at least two additional board meetings per year.
3. Has a board member in attendance of at least 4 Neighborhoods of Muskegon (NAM) meetings each calendar year.
4. Prepares and delivers (paper/electronic) at least two neighborhood association newsletters per year.
5. Actively participates in the City's designated National Night Out event.
6. Holds at least two community dumpster day events within the boundaries of the neighborhood.

*These Neighborhood Grant Dollars are available April 1 of each year, **upon receipt of a completed application and previous year's mid and year end reports.** They must be spent on community-related purchases or activities. **These funds may not be rolled over from year-to-year.***

### Enhanced Neighborhood Grants

All active neighborhood associations are also eligible to receive up to \$3,000 in Enhanced Neighborhood Grants annually. To be eligible for the Enhanced Neighborhood Grant, the neighborhood must volunteer to undertake a number of the following events/activities, *including but not limited to*, in a given year:

1. Create a neighborhood Facebook Page and actively maintain the page with neighborhood events, activities, and news.
2. Submit two articles on topics of importance to the neighborhood to the City Staff Liaison for use in the city's annual newsletter.
3. Hold one family-related event during the months of June or July.

4. Hold one family-related event during the months of September or October.
5. Hold one family-related event during the months of March, April or May.
6. Expend a combination of 300 dollars/hours in maintenance/repairs/ beautification of a community park. Example: \$250/50 volunteer hours, \$200/100 volunteer hours, \$100/200 volunteer hours.
7. Undertake a community beautification project (not-park-related).
8. Sponsor a youth activity that reaches/involves at least 50 Muskegon youths collectively. Examples include mentoring, coaching, sponsoring, or organizing little league teams, soccer teams, football teams, water-safety related events, Winter Sports Day, Hockey Field Trip, etc. Does not have to be sports related.
9. Volunteer to paint 15 or more fire hydrants in your neighborhood (city DPW to provide paint, brushes, etc.).
10. Undertake at least 40 volunteer hours at the Muskegon Farmers Market.
11. Implement a neighborhood beautification program that acknowledges efforts by property owners to beautify their property, with at least one owner highlighted in each neighborhood association newsletter.
12. Implement a neighborhood beautification program that acknowledges efforts by renters to beautify the neighborhood, with at least one renter highlighted in each neighborhood association newsletter.
13. Implement a neighborhood beautification program that acknowledges efforts by business owners/operators to beautify the neighborhood, with at least one business owner/operator highlighted in each neighborhood association newsletter.  
*\*\*11-13 can be used to acknowledge snow removal efforts and maintenance of neighbors, as well as neighborhood clean-up efforts.*
14. Demonstrate that one neighborhood members is actively serving on at least one City Board or Commission.

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| Successfully undertaking up to three events/activities:   | \$750   |
| Successfully undertaking four or more events/activities:  | \$1,250 |
| Successfully undertaking seven or more events/activities: | \$2,000 |
| Successfully undertaking ten of more events/activities:   | \$3,000 |

*These Enhanced Neighborhood Grant Dollars are available April 1 of each year, **upon receipt of a completed AND APPROVED application and previous year's mid and year end reports.** They must be spent on community-related purchases or activities. These funds may not be rolled over from year-to-year.*

## Earned Neighborhood Grants

All active neighborhood associations are eligible to earn neighborhood grants by volunteering to undertake certain beautification activities in the City of Muskegon, as follows:

1. **Adopt-A-Lot Program.** The city has many publicly-owned orphan parcels of land spread throughout our neighborhoods. These pieces of property are generally maintained by the city on a three-week mowing schedule. In an effort to beautify our neighborhoods and raise the maintenance standards, an Adopt-A-Lot Program was established in 2015. The program is being extended to active neighborhoods as follows:
  - a. There is no limit to the amount of lots that a neighborhood is eligible to adopt, nor is there a requirement that the adopted lots be located within the adopting neighborhood's geographic boundaries. In the event that adoption requests exceed available lots, adoptions will be equalized throughout the requesting neighborhoods.
  - b. Care of the lots must begin by May 1 of each calendar year (this date may vary with application release date, with staff approval).
  - c. Lots must be mowed throughout the mowing season (May-September) and be in compliance with local ordinances that call for a 6 inch maximum grass height.
  - d. Trash must be removed from the lots weekly.
  - e. Fallen Leaves must be removed from the lots by November 30 of each year.
  - f. A standard lot is between 30 and 60 feet in width. Lots with a width in excess of 60 feet will be compensated as multiple lots, with staff approval.
  - g. A statement of commitment must be signed for each neighborhood adopting lots.
  - h. Each lot in the program must have a sign indicating that it is part of the program. Contact the Staff Liaison to obtain signs.
  - i. The City will contribute \$250 to the neighborhood for each lot adopted and successfully maintained, with payments disbursed as follows:
    - i. The first payment (\$125 for each adopted lot) will be made during the city's first billing cycle in the month of May.
    - ii. The second payment (\$75 for each adopted lot) will be made during the city's first billing cycle in the month of August.
    - iii. The second payment (\$50 for each adopted lot) will be made during the city's first billing cycle in the month of November.
    - iv. Payments will not be made in the event code enforcement activities are undertaken by the City's Code Enforcement Department.

- v. Repayment may be required in the event that lots are not kept up to the city's code enforcement standard.
  - vi. Repayment may be required in the event any payment has been made and accepted by the neighborhood association for any lot(s) that has become ineligible for the program.
2. Fundraising Match. The City will provide \$500 in matching dollars to any active neighborhood association that successfully raises more than \$1,500 of non-city funds for youth-related neighborhood activities. These matching dollars are only available to neighborhoods that have met the requirements to receive at least \$2,000 in Enhanced Neighborhood Grants.
  3. Other beautification-related activities may be incentivized by the city on a case-by-case basis, depending on funding availability.

*These Earned Neighborhood Grant Dollars must be spent on community-related purchases or activities. They may be rolled over from year-to-year as the neighborhood association saves funds for planned neighborhood needs/activities. Unless otherwise indicated above, these grants funds will be released upon successful completion of the approved activity.*