



BEST Neighborhoods Designation

PROGRAM GUIDELINES



Program Description

The BEST Neighborhoods Designation Program was developed to recognize neighborhoods that have gone above and beyond to create communities that are Beautiful, Engaged, Safe, and Thriving – BEST! Through this program, the City is able to acknowledge residents working collaboratively to create the strong neighborhoods that make Plano a desirable place to live, work, and play.



BEST Neighborhoods are recognized at three levels: Silver, Gold, and Platinum. All awardees receive mention of designation status on plano.gov, a file image of designation status to be used for neighborhood websites, newsletters, etc., and bragging rights! Platinum level awardees will additionally receive two neighborhood entrance signs, a custom online Story Map, and social media promotion.

Application Guidelines

Eligibility

Neighborhoods who are interested in applying for the program must be registered through the Neighborhood Services Department. To register your neighborhood or to check if your neighborhood is registered, please view our [Neighborhood Resources Map](#). You may also call a BEST Neighborhoods team member at 972-208-8150.

Application Details

The application consists of twenty qualification questions, four narrative questions, and a presentation. A complete application will include responses to all questions and supplemental documentation when requested. All submitted responses and supplemental materials should include events, initiatives, and strategies that occurred prior to September 1, 2019. Any events, initiatives, or strategies that are held or completed after September 1, 2019 will not be counted towards your score during this application cycle. Applications and supplemental materials must be submitted electronically to BEST@plano.gov by the deadline. Hand-written applications will no longer be accepted, however, if you are unable to submit electronically, please contact the BEST Neighborhoods division for alternative options. Applications must be submitted by a representative of the neighborhood.

Supplements

Supplemental documentation supports written descriptions. Supplemental materials may include photos, newsletters, emails, screenshots, and/or other materials that best support information provided in this application. Presentations will be an additional form of supporting evidence by which neighborhoods can further elaborate on written descriptions and supplemental materials. Questions answered in the affirmative without the written description and/or supplemental documentation will not count towards your total score. Please be sure that all supplemental documents are labeled clearly with the corresponding question number and submitted with the completed application.

Scoring

All applications are scored by a committee made up of BEST Neighborhood Division team members, City of Plano staff, and community partners.

The application consists of twenty questions separated into the following categories: Beautiful, Engaged, Safe, and Thriving. Each of these questions is worth up to 5 points, for a possible score of 100. Additionally, there are four narrative questions worth up to 2 points per question for a possible total of 8 bonus points. Applicants will also be asked to present in front of the review committee. The presentations does not entail points, however, they are pertinent to the review committee when reviewing applications. Awarded neighborhoods are recognized at three levels:

- Silver Level: 65-74 points
- Gold Level: 75-84 points
- Platinum Level: 85+ points

Presentations

In addition to submitting an application, neighborhoods will also be asked to complete a presentation in front of a review committee which will consist of: BEST Neighborhoods division, other City of Plano staff members, and outside municipalities.

Presentations will take place two weeks after the stated submission deadline date. A BEST Neighborhoods division team member will coordinate with the main neighborhood representative to schedule a mutually convenient time to complete the presentation. Presentations should be a maximum 20 minutes in length with an additional 10 minutes for questions and answers. The presentation should reflect the application including the following sections: Neighborhood Description, Beautiful, Engaged, Safe, Thriving, and Narratives.

BEST Neighborhoods Designation Workshop

The BEST Neighborhoods division will host a bi-annual workshop that will overview the BEST Neighborhoods Designation program and how to apply for the program. The workshop will include guest speakers from past awarded neighborhoods, best practices to incorporate into applications, tips, and more. Neighborhoods who are planning to apply for the program are encouraged to attend this workshop to gain pertinent information about the application process as well as learn some new initiatives that other neighborhoods are currently incorporating into their neighborhoods. The workshop will be hosted on an annual basis to overview program changes and best practices.

Open House Hours

Open house hours to further discuss and review your BEST Neighborhoods Designation application will be held during the last week of August during specified office hours for a 30 minute time period. Open hours will be made available on plano.gov and scheduled times can be set-up by emailing BEST@plano.gov or call 972-208-8150.

Designation Graphics

All awardees will receive a graphics package with the respective file image that matches their awarded level and year. File images provided to awardees are for promotional purposes on neighborhood websites, social media outlets, newsletters, lawn signs, etc. Awardees will receive their file image in pdf, jpg, and png format. File images should not be altered by awardees for any reason.



Designation Promotion

All awardees will be listed on Plano.gov and in a City of Plano press release once all agreements have been submitted to the Neighborhood Services Department. New Platinum awardees will receive special recognition at a December City Council meeting as well as additional social media promotion throughout the year and a custom online Story Map (*see below*). All awardees are encouraged to utilize this award status and the designation graphics to promote their neighborhood.

Neighborhood Clusters

Each neighborhood within the City of Plano is assigned a Neighborhood Planner to help assist with initiatives, concerns, and general inquiries. Planners can further assist neighborhoods who are interested in BEST Neighborhoods Division programs. To find out who your assigned Neighborhood Planner is, please visit our Neighborhood Resources Map [here](#).

Designation Lifespan

Once a neighborhood receives the award, it remains a BEST Neighborhoods Awardee for five years. However, neighborhood representatives must always use the year and level of the award when identifying their community as one of Plano's BEST Neighborhoods.

Correct:

Springwells Village at Collin Creek,
2019 BEST Neighborhoods Gold Awardee

Not correct:

Springwells Village at Collin Creek,
BEST Neighborhoods Awardee

Reapplying for the BEST Designation

All awarded levels are valid for five years. During that five-year designation period, new awards will be granted only when a neighborhood has reapplied *and* successfully moved up an award level. For example, Silver and Gold awardees looking to move up an award level may reapply every two years. Platinum awardees may reapply for the award once every five years. Awardees reapplying after their five-year designation period will be evaluated based on their application submission at that time, meaning that previous awardees may maintain, decrease, or increase their level. New awards will always include the updated award year. Neighborhoods are also encouraged to attend the bi-annual BEST Neighborhoods Designation workshop which will include guest speakers from past Platinum

BEST Neighborhoods Designation Awardee Guidelines, FY 2018-2019 neighborhoods, and tips on how to incorporate best practices into your application.

Mentorship (*All Awardees*)

All awarded Neighborhoods are encouraged to participate in mentorship opportunities that share best practices to other Plano neighborhoods. This may include presenting at select BEST Neighborhoods division events, guiding other neighborhoods through particular issues or initiatives, and sharing knowledge in relation to neighborhood-based programming. In addition, all awardees are encouraged to participate in the mentorship program through the Plano Neighborhood Directory. As a supplement to the Neighborhood Resources Map, the directory provides additional means of communicating to neighborhoods across Plano and effectively connects neighborhoods to participating subject-based mentors.

Annual Reporting (*Platinum Awardees*)

For neighborhoods to maintain their five year Platinum status, an annual report consisting of yearly accomplishments and upcoming initiatives should be submitted in October. A report template will be provided by your assigned Neighborhood Planner.

Story Maps (*Platinum Awardees*)

Story Maps combine maps with narrative text, images, and multimedia content to tell a story. Platinum awardees will work with the Planning Technician to create a custom StoryMap for their neighborhood. The Story Maps for Platinum Awardees can feature neighborhood history, community leaders, local assets, beautification projects, and/or other important aspects of the neighborhood. [Previous Story Maps can be found here.](#)



Neighborhood Signs (*Platinum Awardees*)

Platinum awardees will receive two neighborhood entrance signs recognizing the level and year of award. The following guidelines were established to outline the details of the sign design, procedures for sign locations, and additional policies.

Sign Details

Each sign will consist of two separate signs. The larger sign measures 24" x 36". The design of the street sign has been established by the City of Plano and will be consistent for each neighborhood, with the exception of the neighborhood name.

The unique name of each neighborhood will be applied to each sign in white reflective 3" font. The neighborhood names will be typed in all capitals with 'Agency FB' font type in bold.

The secondary smaller sign will measure 9" x 24" and will include the text: "PLATINUM LEVEL" on the top line, and below that, "SINCE XXXX" the year the level was achieved. See the example design at the right.

Platinum level neighborhoods may reapply for designation every five years. A neighborhood obtaining Platinum level for the second time, and every other time thereafter, will receive replacement secondary signs with the new year added. The larger sign will not be replaced.



Sign Location

Determining locations for the two signs will be a collaborative process between the neighborhood, the BEST Neighborhoods Division, and the City's Public Works department. Public Works will have final approval of locations based on sign regulations and policies.

The BEST Neighborhoods Planning Technician will conduct a site survey of the Platinum neighborhood and determine eligible locations. The neighborhood will choose two locations from the list of eligible neighborhood entrances. Public Works will make the final approval and take responsibility for installing the signs.

Sign Installation

The BEST Neighborhoods Planners and Planning Technician will partner with each awardee to determine an ideal installation date. A community unveiling ceremony is encouraged and will be accommodated as best as possible at the desire of each community. Public Works will finalize installation date(s) based on their current schedule and staffing.

Sign Policies

The BEST Neighborhoods Division will incur the cost for the signs at two locations in each Platinum neighborhood. No more than two signs will be provided or installed. The City will evaluate replacing missing/damaged signs on a case by case basis.

Let Us Know!

We are interested in hearing from you! Has your neighborhood accomplished something new, fun, and creative thanks to the BEST Neighborhoods Designation program? Do you have program feedback or recommendations you would like to share with us? Please call the BEST Neighborhoods Division at 972.208.8150, or send an email to best@plano.gov.