

# Community & Interest Groups in Santa Fe County



## Community Organization (CO)

**Status:** Official & Legislative. The highest formal recognition.

**Approval:** By Resolution of the Board of County Commissioners (BCC).

**Basis:** Geographic. Represents a defined residential community or area.

**Key Powers:** Has official standing in hearings, guaranteed notice, right to present evidence, and a formal advisory role in planning and capital projects.

**Analogy:** The “official neighborhood council” for an area.

**Example:** **Tesuque Valley Community Association**

**Note:** COs, ROs, and CAs **do not have the power to approve or deny permits**. While the CO is the primary community liaison. Final decision-making authority rests solely with the Planning Commission and Board of County Commissioners, who consider the CO’s input in their decision.

## Registered Organization (RO)

**Status:** Administrative & Informal. A recognized interest group, but not officially chartered by the BCC.

**Approval:** Administrative registration with the Growth Management Department (by Land Use Administrator). No BCC vote required.

**Basis:** Topical or Geographic (Self-Declared). Can be a special interest group (e.g., environmental, affordable housing, Realtor association), a functional entity (e.g., Acequia Association, HOA), or a group declaring a geographic area of interest.

**Key Powers:** Gets to self-define its geographical or topical “area of interest.” Receives automatic notice of development applications within that self-declared area of interest. Does NOT have standing or the right to participate as a formal party in quasi-judicial hearings (unlike a CO). Can submit comments like any member of the public.

**Analogy:** The “registered stakeholder” or “interested party list.” Ensures groups with a consistent interest are in the loop.

**Example:** **Aqua Fria Water Association**

## Community Association

**Status:** Unofficial & Organic. No formal recognition from the County.

**Approval:** None. It is a private, voluntary group of residents.

**Basis:** Geographic or Social. Formed by neighbors.

**Key Powers:** Can petition to initiate a community planning process. No right to automatic notices. Must rely on general public notices or the 1,000-foot mailed notice radius for specific projects. Advocates informally through public comment and lobbying. Is the common precursor to forming a CO.

**Analogy:** The “grassroots neighborhood group.”

**Example:** **La Cienega Valley Association (now a CO)**

# Santa Fe County Community Planning Program

## What is a Community Plan?

An official small-area plan that guides growth, zoning, infrastructure, and character in your neighborhood. Once adopted, it becomes County policy.

## Who Can Start the Process?

- Community Associations (informal resident groups)
- Community Organizations (COs) (official County-recognized bodies)

## How It Works:

### Request & Organize

- Residents petition County Planning staff
- Staff then requests approval from the BCC to initiate the Community Planning process
- A Planning Committee of local stakeholders is formed

### Vision & Analysis

- Public meetings, workshops and surveys
- Comprehensive review of history, land, water, traffic, housing and other elements outlined in the SGMP

### Draft the Plan

- Future Land Use Map created
- Narrative section and goals/policies drafted for each element (housing, water, etc.) to document existing conditions and future vision
- Implementation matrix created to identify priority projects for future funding

(Note: While the County may fund some priorities, projects typically leverage multiple potential sources: state/federal grants, public-private partnerships, etc.)

### Adopt & Implement

- Public hearings with Planning Commission & Board of County Commissioners
- Plan adopted as part of the County's Sustainable Growth Management Plan
- Guides zoning changes and capital projects

## Why Create a Plan?

- Protect community character
- Plan for responsible growth
- Prioritize infrastructure (roads, water, parks)
- Influence development decisions
- Secure a formal voice in County decisions
- Develop community-specific zoning regulations via a Community District Overlay

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