



RNO Survey Result Analysis

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Purpose

The purpose of this paper is to analyze the Registered Neighborhood Organization Survey that was initiated by the Council District 6 Office in the winter of 2020. This research will be utilized to help inform future conversations surrounding the City and County of Denver's Registered Neighborhood Organization (RNO) structure.

Executive Summary

In the winter of 2020 Council District 6 distributed a survey to RNOs comprised of 21 questions. 158 respondents answered the survey, representing 123 RNOs in Denver. This survey asked questions about group structure, meeting frequency, membership criteria, roles of an RNO, and city assistance for RNOs. Key findings in the analysis of the survey shows that RNOs primarily communicate with their members via electronic means: e-newsletters or social media. RNOs view themselves as conveyors of information to their communities, as well as, advocates for the community's interests. Respondents also expressed being overwhelmed with the work of running an RNO and the job of sharing information from the City to their members and soliciting feedback on key issues feeling that they had little support from the City. The survey revealed that RNOs would like additional assistance from the City in performing their duties such as financial assistance, legal assistance, education on how the city works and effective community organizing strategies.

Methodology

The survey was created by a city mediator and distributed to RNOs via a targeted sampling method. The survey was comprised of twenty-one questions, with questions spanning multiple topics such as: identifying information to fundraising practices, membership requirements, and outreach methods. City council aides distributed the survey through their networks, and then out to RNOs within each respective council district.

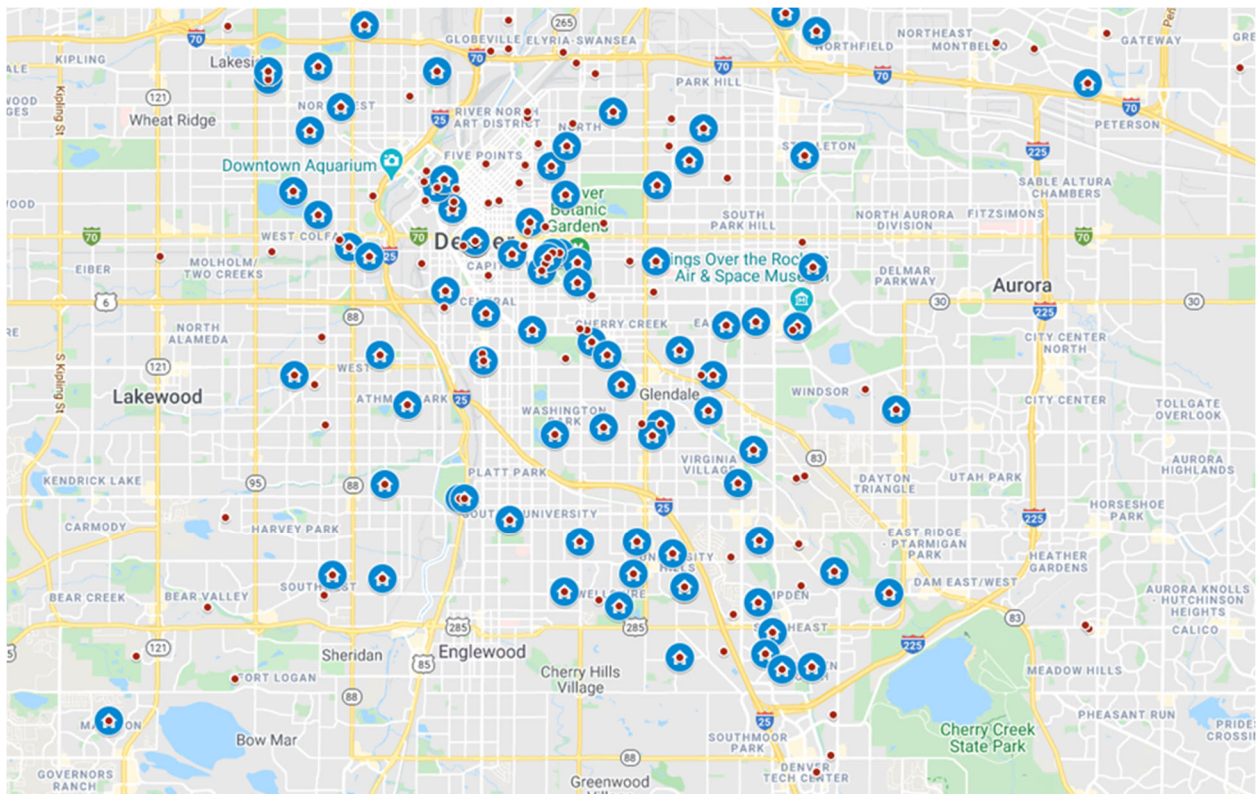
City Council Central Staff received the survey results via SurveyMonkey and reviewed all survey results through the SurveyMonkey survey analytics portal. Eighteen questions permitted open-ended responses. After reviewing text responses to these questions, staff utilized a grounded-theory approach to identify key themes that developed from the written responses to the survey. Staff then coded each response based on the patterns and themes that derived from written text. The analysis below, also pulls quotations from various answers that exemplify the undercurrent themes from each question. To protect the privacy of respondents, staff modified quotations to ensure anonymity.

Results and Analysis

Question 1: Identifying Information

This question asked respondents to provide their name, RNO, email, their role within the organization, and approximate number of households in the organization. 158 respondents answered the survey; however, only 123 RNOs were represented among the respondents. According to CPD there are 219 RNOs in the City and County of Denver.¹ While, this list is inclusive of council districts, HOAs, and BIDs it shows that the survey results are not entirely representative of the totality of RNOs and their members in Denver. Additionally, 17 respondents claimed membership to organizations that are not registered with Community Planning and Development (CPD).

Map 1 demonstrates the geographic representation of respondents to that of all RNOs in the City and County of Denver. To demonstrate this visually, staff created a map with the addresses provided by respondents to the survey and compared it to the address affiliated with the RNO with CPD. Red dots indicate the mailing address affiliated with the RNO on CPD's website, houses represent addresses affiliated with respondents to the survey. Neighborhoods in southeast Denver and central Denver make up the bulk of the respondents.



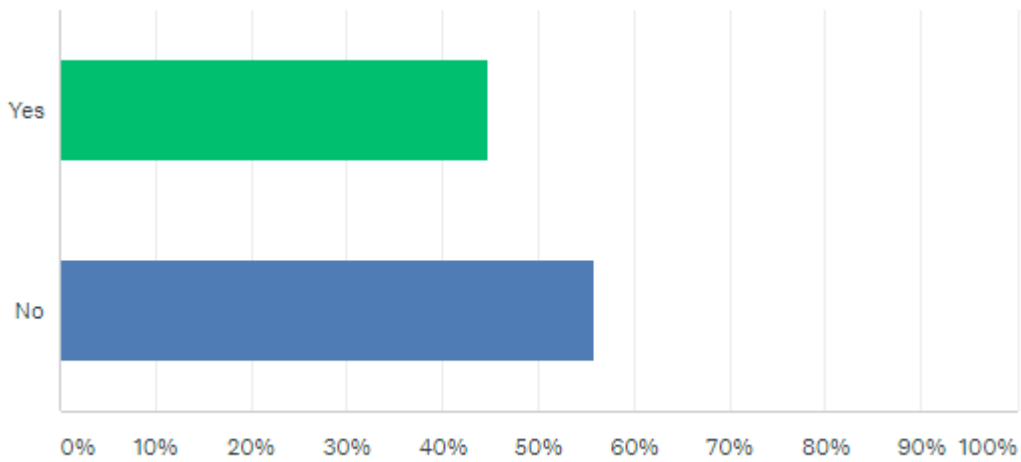
Some respondents self-identified as a BID, Business Association, or HOA. This is important to note because several questions on the survey asked about tax status and registration with the Secretary of State.

¹ [Registered Neighborhood Organizations, CPD](#)

Respondents were not entirely sure of how many households were in their boundaries. Some listed the number of registered voters, number of newsletter subscribers, number of active members, or homeowners to quantify their membership. Some differentiated between dues paying members and non-dues paying members when estimating their membership numbers. The average number of households in each RNO was 1,635. The most commonly reported number of households in an RNO was 150, while the range was from 8 households to 19,000 households.

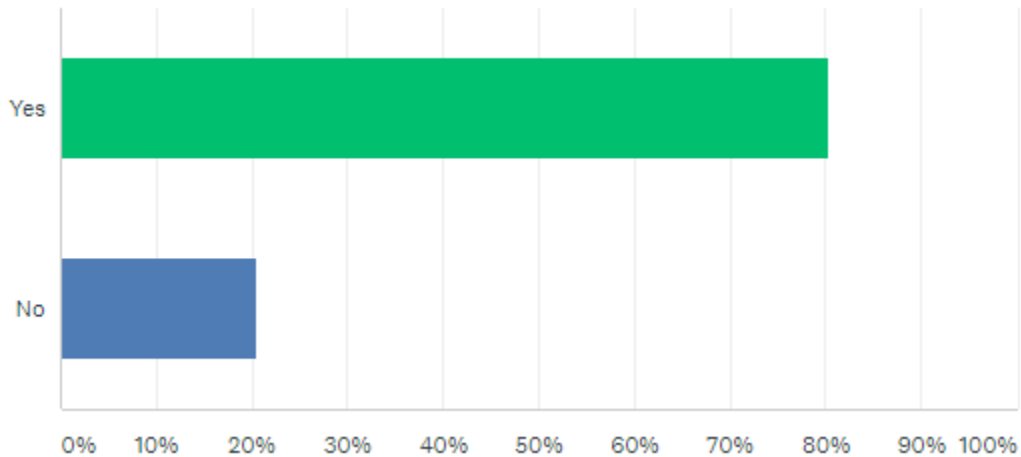
Question 2: Are you a registered 501c3?

154 respondents answered this question, and 4 respondents skipped this question. 44.81% claimed they were a registered 501c3, and 55.84% claimed they were not a registered 501c3.



Question 3: Are you registered with the Secretary of State?

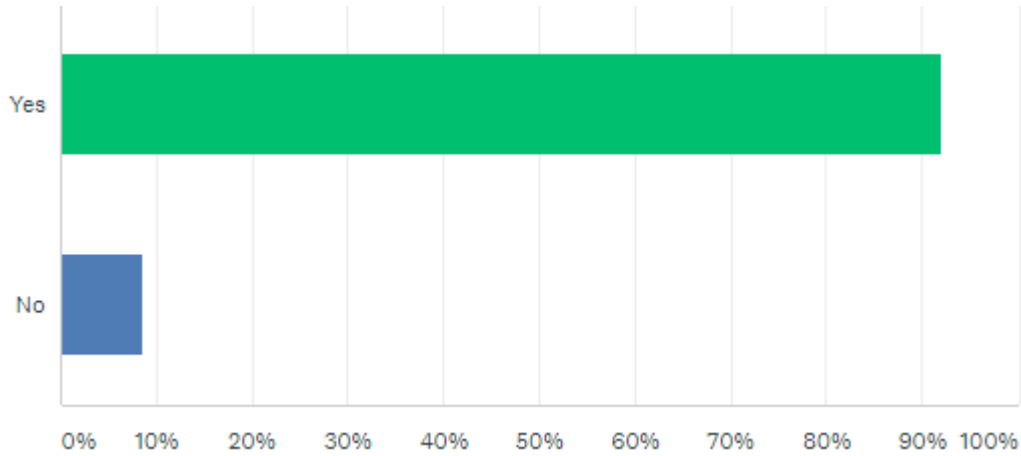
147 respondents answered this question, and 11 skipped this question. 80.27% of respondents claimed to be registered with the Secretary of State, and 20.41% claimed they were not registered with the Secretary of State.



Question 4: Does your organization have bylaws?

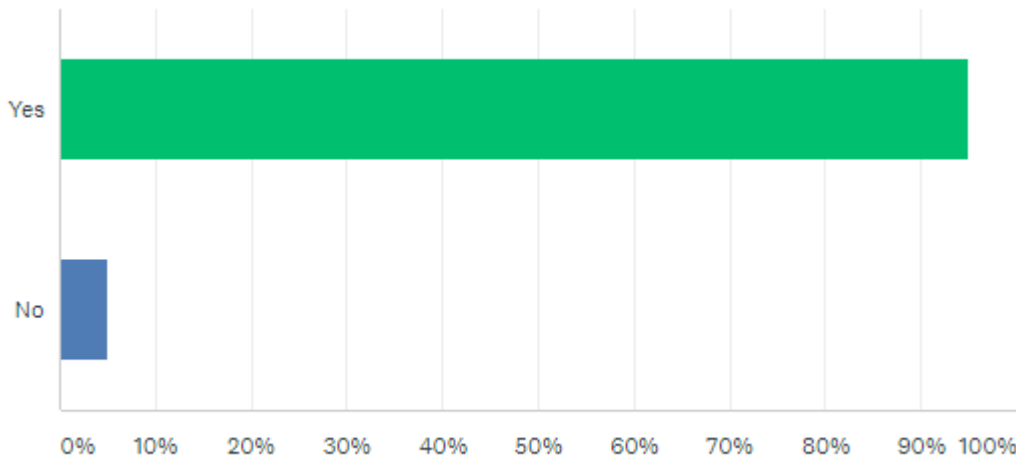
152 respondents responded to this question, and 6 skipped this question. 92.11% said they do have bylaws, and 8.55% claimed they do not have bylaws.

115 respondents provided additional comments to the follow-up question, “If so, when were they updated? (approximately, if you’re not sure).” The earliest bylaw was created in 1972. Most bylaws were created or updated in the mid-2010s with 2019 being the most common year. Comments also described how regularly some organizations updated their bylaws, with most saying every five years.



Question 5: Does your organization communicate via email?

157 respondents answered this question, and 1 respondent skipped it. 94.9% of respondents do communicate through email, and 5.10% do not.

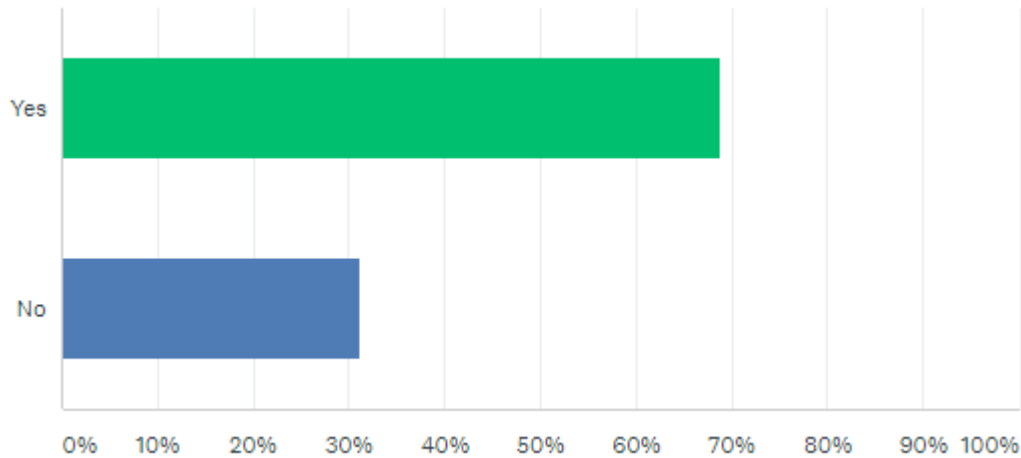


126 respondents provided comments on the follow-up question, “If yes, approximate number of households on the email list?” The average subscription list had 502 subscribers. The range of subscribers was from 9 to 5,200.

Respondents provided additional commentary stating that they were not sure how many subscribers were on their email list.

Question 6: Does your organization communicate via Facebook?

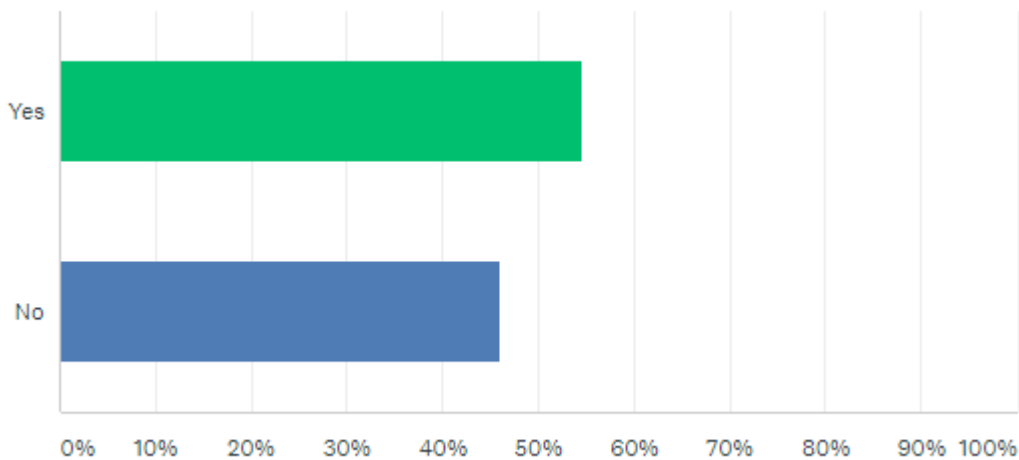
154 respondents answered this question, and 4 skipped it. 68.83% said that they do communicate via Facebook, and 31.17% said that they do not.



84 respondents provided additional comments to the follow up question, “If yes, approximate number of followers?” Facebook group membership ranged in size from 20 - 4,500. Some respondents were unsure of how many people were in their neighborhood Facebook group. Several respondents remarked on low engagements on their Facebook group. Some comments intentionally differentiated membership numbers from the official RNO Facebook page and the “unofficial” neighborhood Facebook page.

Question 7: Does your organization communicate via NextDoor?

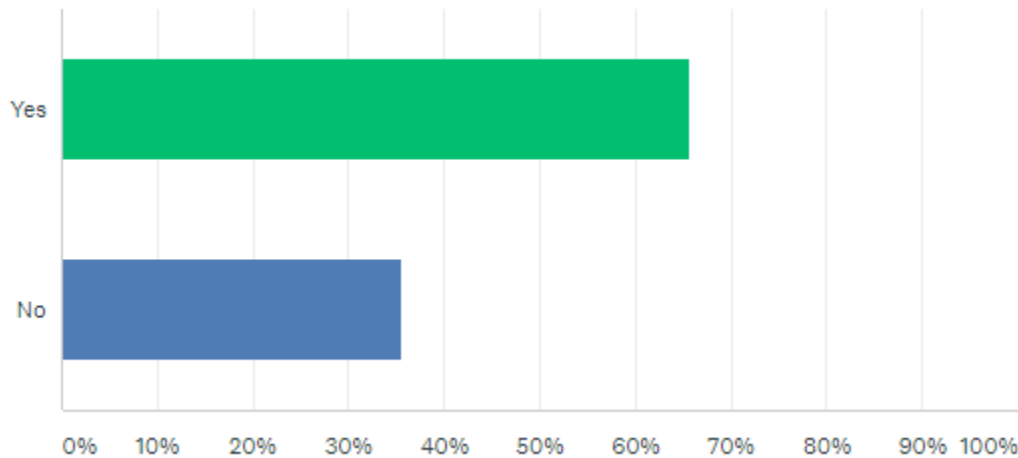
152 respondents answered this question, and 6 skipped the question. 54.61% reported using NextDoor to communicate with members, while 46.05% shared that they do not.



85 respondents provided additional comments to the follow-up question, “Please explain.” Most respondents claimed that they use NextDoor with more infrequency than Facebook because of the structure of NextDoor. Only individuals can have accounts on NextDoor, not organizations, so communicating as an organization to the community has been difficult. Several respondents claimed that NextDoor can make dialogue devolve stating that, “it can get ugly quickly,” and “their model creates barriers for accurate, fair information to be disseminated to neighbors.”

Question 8: Are all residents within your boundaries considered voting members?

152 respondents answered this question, and 6 skipped the question. 65.79% answered yes to the question, and 35.53% shared that not all residents are considered voting members.



70 respondents provided additional comment on the question to clarify their answer. Some respondents described their voting procedures, elaborating that only one member of a household can vote, or only board members can vote, or only homeowners can vote.

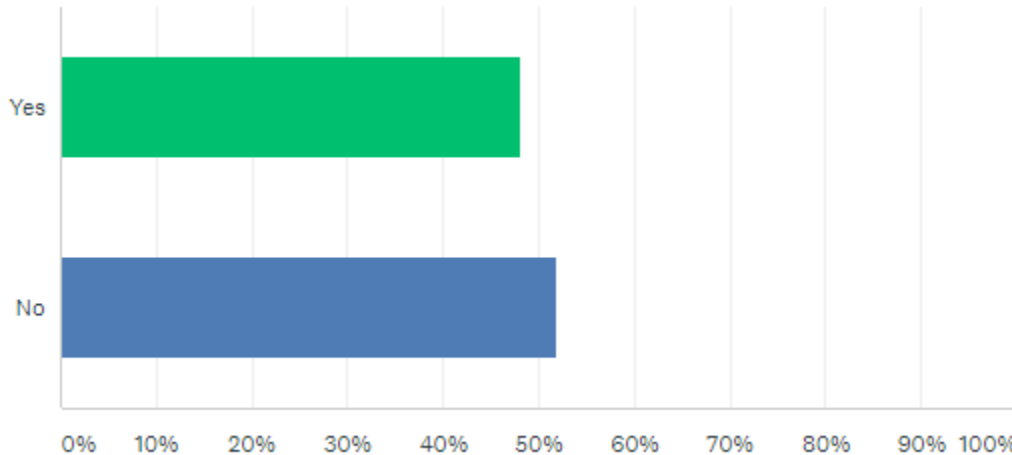
Other respondents clarified that only dues-paying members can vote: 21 respondents claimed only members who pay dues are eligible to vote. Two respondents explicitly stated that making dues a prerequisite to vote was against the Denver Revised Municipal Code (DRMC).

Some respondents expressed a need to reduce barriers to citizen engagement:

- “Yes, if they are 18 or older; I believe the RNO ordinance requires all residents be eligible for voting membership”
- “I am working to protect this. There are some active board members who would like to alter this to only homeowners (not apartment dwellers or rentals), but it goes against what the city lists as a requirement for an RNO based on my reading. We have less than 10 that are voting board members.”
- “Everybody in the neighborhood is technically a member, whether they know it or not! Also we refuse to charge dues or enact any other barrier for entry.

Question 9: Do other RNO’s overlap your boundaries?

152 respondents answered this question, and 6 skipped the question. 48.03% of respondents said that their RNO’s boundaries overlap with another’s. 51.9% shared that their boundaries do not overlap with another RNO’s boundary.



75 respondents provided additional comment on the follow-up question, “If you answered ‘yes,’ which RNO’s overlap your boundaries?” In this the number of commentors is actually greater than the number of respondents who claimed that their RNO does overlap with another organization. The most number of overlapping RNO boundaries reported is 10 RNOs, and the average number of self-reported RNO overlapping boundaries is 2.

Several respondents shared feedback on the overlapping of boundaries between RNOs:

- Three respondents made claims against boundary-sharing or overlapping RNOs legitimacy citing the DRMC ordinance.
- Some of these respondents felt that BIDs, Developer organizations, or Arts Districts should not be able to register as an RNO because they are not residential organizations.
- HOAs were also cited as not RNOs on technicality because they represent only property owners and not renters.

Question 10: What role does your RNO serve?

155 respondents answered this question, and 3 skipped the question. This question permitted respondents to select multiple answers.

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Receives information from the City regarding zoning, licensing and other such matters and passes this along to your residents.	94.84% 147
Takes official positions on zoning, licensing and other such matters where a neighborhood position is desired.	79.35% 123
Holds special meetings to inform your community about hot topics or issues impacting the area.	82.58% 128
Sponsors community building events like picnics, concerts, farmers markets, etc.	75.48% 117
Sponsors neighborhood improvement events like clean-ups, etc.	62.58% 97
Total Respondents: 155	

Respondents overwhelmingly agreed with the predefined responses, and most strongly identified their role as a conveyer of information to their communities. 85 respondents provided additional comments for this question. Analysis revealed 13 themes in the comments. Some respondents expanded on their information dissemination methods in general or how they engage with the community on key issues such as land use and zoning.

- “We do a paper newsletter that is delivered to 1800 households.”
- “Publish quarterly newsletter that is distributed to EVERY household in the neighborhood, regardless of membership”
- “We distributed flyers to nearby neighbors for a recent rezoning because it was an embedded commercial building.”

Respondents also shared how COVID has impacted RNO participation, structure, leadership and events:

- “Our RNO was just taking off and gaining recognition for informative meetings and events, when Covid lockdown hit. We were in the process of launching social groups and a sustainability committee. Our focus right now is in reaching out to our low-income residents in CCH and VOA housing, providing help through the pandemic and working with surrounding neighbors to address problems and include these residents into the greater community.”
- “We have been regrouping, the former President abandoned the RNO...and I took it over then COVID hit.”
- “We push out public health messaging - importantly now in the time of covid, but also pre-covid regarding wellness, racism, exercise, pollution, etc.”

Respondents also specified their work in youth programming and engagement:

- “Working with residents and Denver Public Schools to ensure capacity during the neighborhood build-out and anticipated steady-state”
- “We have a strong focus on children, youth, and family.”

In addition to the above listed duties and roles, multiple respondents shared their organization’s efforts in maintenance and beautification of their neighborhoods. Because several respondents to the survey

overall self-identified as HOAs or BIDs these responses could be identified to these organizations with maintenance as a key component to their organization's mission:

- "Maintains the shared parts of the neighborhood, such as the (private) street and landscaping."
- "We have Covenants thus we have an Architectural Review Committee, we pay for the upkeep of 6 entry islands"
- "We are a Business Improvement District, we serve in the streetscape and corridor business community support and maintenance improvements of the corridor."

Many organizations made comments emphasizing the importance of their role in advocating for the community on important issues:

- "Organizing residents who are not engaged in the RNO culture because of perceived favoritism towards wealthier neighborhoods."
- "Our Homeless Solutions Committee work closely with DPD Outreach, advocates for the Safe Outdoor Spaces, and works closely with nearby neighborhoods and charitable organizations"
- "We advocate for improving the streetscape design to stop traffic violence from killing people in the Lincoln/Broadway Corridor, and generally making the area safe, livable and welcoming for people of all ages and income levels."

Several organizations explicitly called out traffic and mobility issues as important to their mission:

- "Work with Denver DOTI to resolve traffic problems"
- "Works with the city to advocate for better mobility and transit options"

Another key theme was building a sense of community:

- "[We are] focused on helping to build a strong sense of community across a diverse population of ages and [ethnic] groups."
- "Act to assist resolution of neighborhood issues."
- "Works with local businesses to try to build better connections with the community and ensure the neighborhood helps patronize them"

Several organizations shared that they felt it was important to have DPD attend meetings regularly to provide members with information on crime and safety.

- "Working with Denver Police Department to encourage Neighborhood Watch participation, distribute crime information"
- "interacts with DPD neighborhood liaison."
- "communications on law and order"
- "[Advocate to] DPD to raise awareness of community concerns, issues, and also to get answers to questions"

DPD, CPD, and DOTI were the only agencies that were regularly mentioned in response to this question, Excise and License was not mentioned despite it being an agency that frequently provides RNOs with notifications per the DRMC.

Many respondents emphasized that they felt it was their duty to educate the community on important issues:

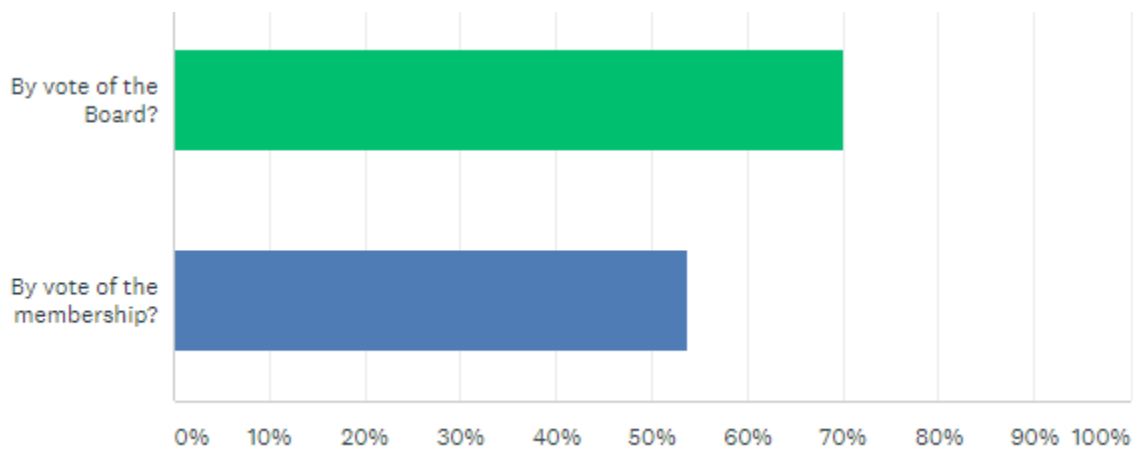
- “We have the Design and Preservation committee that educates and offers free design review for all improvements within our three historic districts, to help steer the applicants and their architects to meet the requirements of the historic district design guidelines”
- “Informs residents of all issues that impact our community”
- “We communicate out to our members (who follow us on social media) information the city wants communicated, such as: leaf drop off info, x-mas tree recycling, etc. We also communicate, through social media, neighborhood related events, such as: farmers markets, community town halls, studies that the results of will impact our residents, etc.”

Two respondents self-identified as new RNOs, who formed at the beginning of the pandemic.

BIDs, HOAs, and Art Districts described their organization duties – maintenance district requirements, art district responsibilities, etc. Some also discussed Good Neighbor Agreements between themselves and residential developments as well.

Question 11: If your RNO takes official positions, how is that position determined?

134 respondents answered this question, and 24 skipped. Respondents were permitted to select both answers so the percentages are not accurate. For example: 94 respondents answered that a vote of the board determines if their organization takes official positions, and 72 respondents answered that a vote of the membership determines if their organization takes official positions. This totals 166 responses, which is 32 higher than the number of respondents who answered the question overall.



68 respondents provided comments on this question to clarify their responses. RNOs have different methodologies on how they take a stance on an important issue or topic in the community. Showing that there is not a consistent way to solicit feedback from the community when taking an “official” position on an issue. Some organizations have sub-committees that focus on zoning and land use and authorize these subcommittees to represent the RNO when taking an official position on something. Other organizations solicit feedback from neighbors that are within a 1-block radius of a proposed rezoning or license application by flyering door-to-door. Sometimes an RNO’s position on controversial topics will be made by membership, simpler items will just be voted on by board. Many respondents shared that they solicit community input through surveys on: Twitter, Facebook, NextDoor, and in-person membership meetings prior to the Board taking an official position on something.

23 respondents shared that their organization does not take an official position on an item. These respondents shared that the RNO is a social event organization, or views itself as an information conveyer to residents. Respondents within this category also shared that taking positions on a topic is extremely rare, and shared that they do not feel like they have a sufficient amount of time to get genuine community feedback on an item due to time constraints and lack of resources.

10 respondents explicitly mentioned taking official positions only on zoning and land use issues, and two respondents mentioned taking official positions on licensing issues.

Question 12: How does your RNO communicate information received from the city?

156 respondents answered this question, and two skipped this question. Respondents were permitted to select multiple answers in their response.

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Share with the Board?	82.05%	128
Share with all dues paying members?	23.72%	37
Share with an email list of those who have requested information?	67.95%	106
Share on social media (Facebook, Nextdoor, etc.)	60.90%	95
Share through print newsletter.	26.28%	41
Community meetings.	58.33%	91
Don't share - lack of time and other resources	7.69%	12
Don't share - lack of interest	3.85%	6
Total Respondents: 156		

73 respondents provided comments on this question. Multiple organizations discussed challenges in sharing all information the City sends out, because the volume is so high and the constant information sharing could potentially impact community participation with the RNO:

- “[We] releases a monthly [newsletter] with current issues of importance. [We do] not share all city information as the magnitude would be detrimental to maintaining alert members. City events, services and notices of general public interested are shared.”

To address this issue some RNOs would only share “relevant” information with their members, not identifying what “relevant” means. Other RNOs would only share zoning information with members.

- “Some information is not communicated widely. Depends on how much time and other resources available to send widely; only more important stuff spread widely.”
- “On occasion we flyer neighbors affected by important issues all the zoning/transportation/planning/licensing notices are also posted on our public zoning page.”
- “Depends on the importance and location of each item”

- “Not every bit of information is shared on any of these platforms. I would like to see the city have an email list for those requesting information. The expectation that all meetings and community gatherings get posted by the RNOs is onerous. There are so many competing events, that I would be spending my whole day online to redistribute all the emails I receive on city events. I am not a social media advocate and in order to be an active Denverite, should not be expected to troll social media to understand what is going on in the city.”

Multiple organizations mentioned the costs associated with printing a newsletter and distributing as a barrier to being able to send out a print newsletter. Respondents also addressed frustration with a lack of organizational and personal capacity to act as the information sharer to their communities.

- “Our print newsletter is published once per quarter and mailed to all households and businesses. In 2020 we canceled one issue due to lack of finances and published one issue online only for the same reason.”
- “Being the organization tasked with communicating with our neighbors about matters the City has notified us of has proven to be extremely difficult in light of the fact that we are a volunteer organization, and that we are funded entirely through donations. As a result, we have very little access to the resources necessary to adequately communicate with our members.”
- “...when we had a newsletter we could put information in there, but since we currently do not have a newsletter due to cost, we do not have the resources to get the information out.”
- “I'd like to share more of the information from the city on social media. But it's hard to keep track of it all.”
- “Do not share much w/ general membership, or non - member community members. Lack of resources, and time.”
- “Messages that do not get communicated are usually due to lack of capacity, relevancy or a limiting format/language...”

Older RNO members communication preference differs than contemporaries:

- “Many residents who are senior citizens prefer not to engage online or via email. Many prefer personal contact thru phone call or door knocking.”
- “Depends on the content and what the [intended] audience is. In some cases, we share on our website as well. We would want to do a printed newsletter and mailers, but have [nowhere] near the resources to do this”

Question 13: Communication and meetings

This question had four prompts with open-ended responses. 155 respondents answered this question, and 3 skipped it. Because respondents were allowed to answer questions in any form of their choosing, staff quantified their responses by coding their written responses.

How often does your Board of Directors meet?

The majority of respondents claimed that their boards met once a month. Two respondents shared that their boards have been meeting twice a month due to COVID.

Meeting Frequency	# of Respondents
12 times a year	85
8 to 11 times a year	3
6 times a year	11
5 times a year	2
4 times a year	18
2 times a year	7
1 time a year	6
Ad hoc	15

How often do you hold general open meetings?

14 respondents claimed that COVID has impacted their meeting regularity. Eight respondents shared that all meetings are open but did not specify how often they hold meetings. Two respondents shared that none of their meetings are open to the general public.

Meeting Frequency	# of Respondents
12 times a year	42
8 - 11 times a year	3
6 times a year	6
5 times a year	5
4 times a year	22
3 times a year	3
2 times a year	11
Once a year	38
Ad hoc	5

Approximately how many people attend your open meetings?

Nine respondents shared that attendance varies depending on the agenda. Three respondents shared that they do not know how many people attend their meetings. Six respondents shared that COVID has

impacted their attendance and the way they do business. Some organizations have gone virtual, while others have forgone having meetings all together. The most attendees reported was 300.

Attendance	# of Respondents
10 or fewer	16
11 through 30	58
30 through 50	29
50 through 70	15
70 through 100	11
100+	11

Approximately what percentage of your neighborhood is actively engaged?

Some respondents stated, “very few” and did not provide an estimated percentage of engaged neighbors. Some respondents expressed confusion over the term “actively engaged” and provided different examples of engagement – virtual engagement vs. volunteering. Some respondents did not provide a numerical quantity of engaged neighbors but shared that neighborhood engagement differs depending on the issue.

Percentage	# of Respondents
0 - 10%	73
11 - 30%	25
30 - 50%	5
50 - 70%	3
70 - 100%	5

Question 14: What have you found to be most effective in communicating with your neighborhood?

153 respondents answered this question, and 5 skipped it. Respondents could select multiple responses to answer this question.

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Postal mailed newsletters	15.03%	23
Hand-delivered newsletters	35.29%	54
Electronic mailed newsletters	50.98%	78
Social Media	58.17%	89
Emails	74.51%	114
Website	44.44%	68
Posted signs	33.33%	51
Total Respondents: 153		

Respondents overwhelmingly communicate with members via email and social media. 43 respondents provided additional comments to the question, which revealed several themes. A number of respondents shared that their limited resources causes difficulty in distributing communications. Several respondents requested additional resources from the city to assist in distributing communications. Comments said that hand-delivered flyers are the most effective, but the cost associated with mailed or hand-delivered materials is exorbitant. Some RNOs target specific areas that are pertinent to a rezoning or license application.

There is not one way that is best to reach everyone, so RNOs shared they are trying to diversity their outreach efforts: hand-delivered newsletters, websites, yard signs, social media, etc.

- “Honestly, we have no idea what is the most effective form of communication. We just do everything we can to get the word out.”
- “Effectiveness is hard to measure. We take a multi-pronged approach to communicating with neighborhood and do not assume one method reaches everyone. In fact the quarterly newsletter is the one that reaches the most households as in all households in the boundaries of the neighborhood.”
- “There is not one good way to reach everyone and this is a struggle. We are currently seeking funding for a platform that allows for integration between a web site, email, and social media, but it is expensive. We have not sent a mailer home in over a decade, but until recently, the Front Porch Newspaper was delivered to homes in the community and we had a standing article - budget cuts however had eliminated this print opportunity as of 2 months ago.”
- “Our main method is digital communication (because it is free), however this only works for the people that have signed up. We have used print newsletters a handful of times- however they are far too cost prohibitive for us. We don't have any public facing businesses (other than fast food chains) in our boundaries, thus no business partnerships or revenue at all. Our lack of resources is a major hinderance to our ability to reach our neighbors and thus perform our duties.”

Question 15: What can the City do to support your RNO in carrying out your mission?

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132 respondents answered this question, and 26 skipped this question. Respondents could select multiple answers to this question.

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Training	39.39%	52
Financial assistance	59.09%	78
Legal aide	34.85%	46
Community organizing	50.00%	66
Other, please explain below	39.39%	52
Total Respondents: 132		

110 respondents provided additional comments to this question. Most comments elaborated on the suggested ways the City could better assist RNOs through the following themes:

- Allow RNOs to opt-in on information. Many respondents felt that they received too much information or the City was asking too much of them and they were overwhelmed by the volume communications.
- Have a city-sponsored website with all RNO information they RNOs can connect/link to with their own websites
- Community liaisons from each agency
- Community organizing assistance to be more inclusive of renters, the Limited English Proficiency (LEP) community.
- Financial assistance for events, newsletters, marketing, websites, and zoom accounts.
- Assistance with meeting logistics such as having a physical space to meet in the community, translation services, childcare services, and food for their meetings.
- Legal assistance for zoning and licensing issues, and insurance for events. Several respondents shared that they felt disempowered when opposing a development in their neighborhood because of their lack of legal expertise and representation.
- More time and notifications on upcoming projects such as rezoning, sidewalk repairs, and large area plans.
- Trainings on a number of topics such as: RNO 101, City Council 101, Zoning 101, Good Neighbor Agreements, Social Justice Equity and Inclusion, Community Organizing.

Several respondents requested assistance from the City in understanding their neighborhood demographics such as income levels, renters, homeowners, race/ethnicity, etc.

Several responses provided additional suggestions on how the City can better assist RNOs suggesting:

- The DRMC be amended to differentiate RNOs from BIDs and GIDs and HOAs
- There be minimum requirements for public notification from departments such as providing RNOs with translated documents/flyers, provide content in 'layman's terms' and not highly technical documents.

- “Recognize that the RNO can play an important part in communicating essential information to the public. Allow the RNO to officially communicate with City Council and the Mayor around neighborhood issues.”
- “Build awareness that neighborhood associations exist all over Denver. That each resident is a part of an organized neighborhood organization. That neighborhood organizations are their representative to the city on zoning, traffic, parks, climate and policing.”
- “For the City to do a better job LISTENING to its citizens. Recently, it really does feel like initiatives are rammed through and community engagement is simply a check-the-box activity. It does not feel like the City is really listening to its citizens.”

Additionally, RNOs provided feedback in wanting direction from the City on how to ensure accountability towards their communities.

- “And I would personally love to see better direction from the city in terms of expectations or requirements for RNOs. It doesn't have to be rigid or very in-depth, but some accountability would be helpful in ensuring each are being good stewards and exist for the right reasons.”
- “Having city requirements for RNOs would make everyone take RNOs more seriously. As it is now, only those most interested and available, usually white, solvent, retired homeowners (such as myself) attempt to speak for the whole neighborhood.”

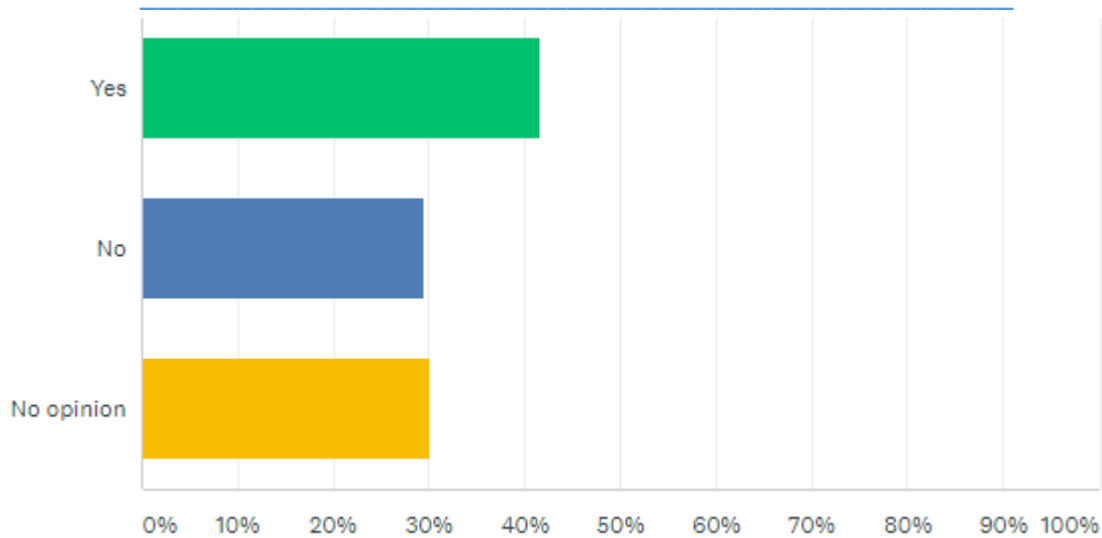
One consistent theme was that RNOs felt overwhelmed with their duties and lacking in support from the City in performing those duties.

- “I think that RNO's are asked to do quite a bit within the city but without any support or resources provided.”
- “This work is incredibly time consuming and lends itself to burnout.”
- “RNOs are run on all volunteer power, our neighbors just don't have the time to put into it. A city paid person to help with organizing would be ideal.”

In addition to requests for financial aid, legal assistance, and trainings. Several respondents proposed having a city staff person whose sole responsibility it was to assist RNOs with trainings, community engagement, publishing and distributing newsletters, etc.

Question 16: Should RNO boundaries overlap?

156 respondents answered this question, and two skipped it. Respondents were able to select more than one answer, so some respondents may have selected multiple answers. 41.67% of respondents said that RNOs should be permitted to have boundaries that overlap, 29.49% said that RNOs should not have boundaries that overlap, and 30.13% of respondents had no opinion on the question. This spread in response demonstrates that there is no overwhelming majority in either opinion. However, respondents that chose to provide additional comments expressed strong opinions to this question.



86 respondents provided comments on this question. For respondents who answered ‘yes’ they shared that there may be conflicts between different groups of neighbors in a neighborhood. These respondents felt that their view or perspective is not represented by one RNO in their area, so they chose to make their own RNO.

- “Sometimes a small cabal of self-interested individuals can work against the interests of an area.”
- “RNOs have different areas of interest and they don't always represent our interests (despite what one particular RNO claims).”
- “Many RNOs are undemocratic and do not allow new voices in the neighborhood to have a say. By, "new," I mean people who have been living in an area for at least 5 years or more, and are clearly committed to it. Having overlapping boundaries allows new RNOs to be formed so that democracy can happen and voices have equal say.”
- “In a perfect world, RNOs should NOT overlap... however our system is so far from perfect that the only way to combat our problems is to allow for overlap. Due to lack of oversight and inconsistency of regulation, some RNOs have evolved into non-representative special interest groups in which entrenched power suppresses any opposition. In these cases, the only way to fight the system is to subvert it with the creation of a competing organization. But in theory, I hate the idea of overlapping RNOs. There should not be organizations created by a single individual in attempt to wield the power of an RNO, and yet it happens.”

Others reasoned that RNOs should be permitted to have overlapping boundaries because there is a difference in historic neighborhood boundaries, and the sense of space/place within a community. These are self-identified boundaries and not necessarily statistical neighborhoods.

- “For example, the Broadway/Lincoln is shared by [two RNOs]; it doesn't belong to just one neighborhood, and we are stronger together when faced with issues.”
- “Shared histories of communities are complex and do not conform to boundaries. RNOs need to understand the context of their neighborhoods within much broader historical contexts, not

simply their experience since moving in. These kinds of concessions are crucial to getting the full story of a neighborhood.”

- “Sometimes the neighborhood borders cut through areas with a sense of place.”

Comments also revealed that one cause in the difference of opinion between overlapping boundaries of RNOs is because of a difference in opinion on the role and purpose of an RNO. Some respondents identified RNOs as a grassroots organization to advocate for community. Other respondents identified RNOs as small governmental organizations, and do not see overlapping boundaries as helpful in their roles, but rather weakening their legitimacy.

- “RNO boundaries have diverse populations that need to have their own voices. Affluent RNO's tend to dominate conversations about property and not people. Organizing needs to be done with existing organizations in POC communities to get them involved in voicing concerns about neighborhood issues and education about RNOs in general. This is where RNO 101 would help fulfill this goal.”
- “[We] generally see the RNO as a quasi-extension of the local government. Overlapping doesn't make sense at other levels of government, and many on my board believe it doesn't make sense for RNOs for the same reasons. It dilutes resident engagement/involvement, resources (dues and volunteer time), and responsibility of the RNO. Personally, I'm in agreement with much of that... However, if the boundaries may not overlap, then who decides the boundaries and which organization has the exclusive right to the neighborhood? What if I decide that the RNO covering my residence isn't operating properly or just isn't giving voice to the concerns of a minority when it takes a position? It seems to me that everyone should have the right to take advantage of the RNO system to make their voices heard.”
- “Why should they overlap? Imagine if county, state, and country borders overlapped.”

Other arguments on why RNO boundaries should not be permitted to overlap was a concern over competing for a limited pool of resources such as funding, people power, and businesses. Respondents also argued that overlapping RNO boundaries could cause confusion within a community.

- “Overlapping boundaries would cause confusion within each RNO and specifically for those households that are in both territories.”
- “Overlapping boundaries would require financial resources to educate, inform and engage residents. We currently walk our community, talk with residents and distribute flyers (which cost money) to produce. Larger areas would make it harder for us to reach everyone.”
- “I think the overlap is very difficult to navigate, especially for rezonings or things where an RNO position makes a big difference in the outcome of a particular application. Engaging with the neighborhood is a good thing, but what ends up happening is an applicant has to engage with both and answer to two different (and perhaps competing) opinions of how to operate.”

Respondents expressed concerns about business associations competing against a group of organized citizens. They felt that by not permitting overlapping RNOs outside interests can then 'claim' a community without sincere resident input.

- “I think a better distinction to make is whether a BID, an HOA and a true neighborhood RNO should be in same category. All are driven by a different purpose or different financials. We should create different categories with different support.”

- “I have no idea why [one organization] was established as an RNO as it clearly excludes all residents who are not property owners and its board is made up of business/commercial property owners.”
- “No, because then there are small enclaves of people that businesses contact and interact with which undermines the needs of the larger neighborhood. The fact that 2000+ households cannot access our YMCA...”

Some respondents had mixed feelings on this question, or were confused by the question entirely not understanding that there are RNOs with overlapping boundaries throughout the City. These respondents often expressed the idea that overlapping RNOs in a neighborhood would cause confusion for neighbors and any outside organization attempting to work with the neighborhood.

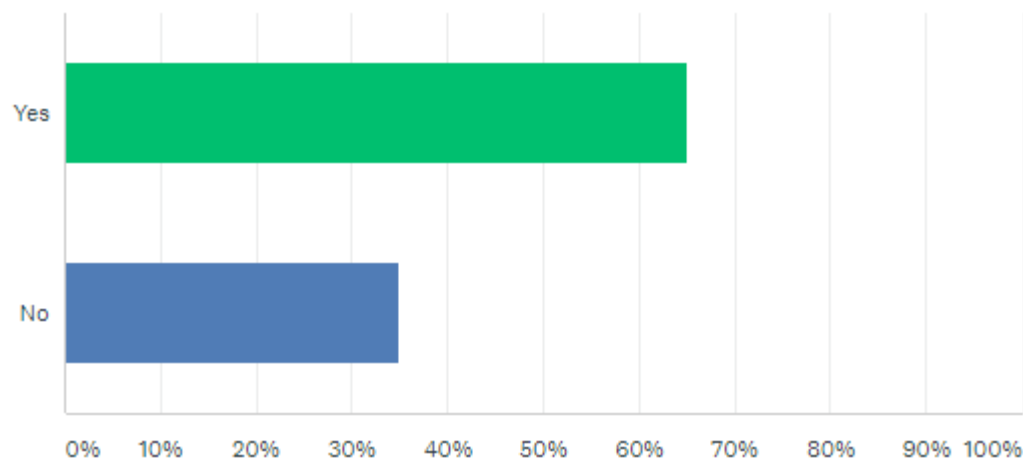
- “I am not really sure why this would be desirable. It is difficult enough to get information out to folks in a specific area.”
- “Too confusing for both the city and the residents”
- “How would you have physically overlapping boundaries?”
- “Mixed feelings on this one... I'm not sure.”

Some respondents raised questions on the intent of an RNO and its voice within city planning initiatives

- “If boundaries overlap, do some residents have double the voice? Or should small factions be required to either separate or operate under the larger RNO?”
- “Different RNOs serve different constituencies and have different missions. All should be allowed to get information from the city. It is up to the city agencies when an RNO takes a position to determine how much weight to give that position.”

Question 17: Does your RNO participate in larger, umbrella organizations like Inter-Neighborhood Cooperation?

157 respondents answered this question, and one respondent skipped it. 64.97% respondents said that they are part of a larger organization, and 35.03% said they are not part of a larger organization.



75 respondents provided additional comments to this question. Many respondents provided names of other umbrella organizations that they belong to: INC, Cherry Creek Steering Committee, MPAC, PRAB, Census, BRT, MCA, ZAP, Transportation, CHUN, FANS, BIDs, DDP, West Denver Collaborative, Southeast Central Area Neighborhood Coalition, Lowry Foundation, LCMA.

Respondents shared that they only focus on certain topics: zoning and planning, parks use, etc. when participating in an umbrella organization. Some respondents shared that they have a limited engagement with these large umbrella groups: that they pay dues, but do not attend meetings.

Some respondents shared that they have a lot of engagement with larger collaboratives. One respondent called it an “amazing organization.” Another respondent shared that their RNO has been a member for 23 years, and that it is “valuable for training, advocacy, and coordination on large citywide issues.”

Many respondents, over a dozen, shared that they and their organizational leadership do not have capacity for involvement due to time constraints, juggling multiple commitments, and funding barriers.

There were also criticisms of these umbrella groups with respondents sharing that they felt it was not representative of all communities:

- "An unbalanced medium for curmudgeons"
- "It takes a certain kind of person that wants to donate a Saturday morning to [these organizations], which has resulted in [these organizations] consisting of only a certain type of person...."
- "We left because we had disagreements with wealthier white communities who have no clue what we deal with on a daily basis in largely POC communities. Too much elitism in [the organization]."
- "Difficult to work on their time"

Question 18: Non-residential entities such as business owners or associations are...

137 respondents answered this question, and 21 skipped it. Respondents were able to select more than one answer to this question, so it may not be the most accurate portrayal of membership qualifiers for non-residential entities. For example, 137 people answered the question but there are 256 responses.

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Welcomed to be members of our RNO?	68.61%	94
Are not invited to be members of our RNO	10.95%	15
Allowed to become members of our RNO Board?	35.77%	49
Have a vote in equal standing as a resident?	38.69%	53
Not able to sit on the board or vote, but given a voice in discussions?	32.85%	45
Total Respondents: 137		

62 respondents provided additional comments to this question. Six respondents self-identified as a business association or a BID. Several respondents specified that a business is permitted to participate in

their RNO if they are a property owner. 13 respondents claimed that the question was not applicable because there are no non-residential entities within its boundaries. Multiple respondents shared that their RNO and local businesses have a positive relationship - businesses are viewed as integral part of the community. Seven respondents shared that this question has never come up, so they do not know their RNO’s policy on the topic

Question 19: How does your RNO engage the range of individuals within your neighborhood? Please provide the best explanation you can, along with a guess of percentage of this population who are active participants in your RNO.

125 respondents answered this question, and 33 respondents skipped it. Respondents were asked to answer how different demographics were engaged with in their RNO. These were open-ended responses, some of which respondents answered with only a percentage, and not an explanation of how they engaged with the demographic.

Renters

119 respondents answered this question, 6 skipped. The majority of respondents shared that they do not know how many members are renters or did not answer the question of how many of their members they estimate to be renters. Of this type of response, many respondents shared that all are welcome, but the RNO does not make a distinction between renters and homeowners - one respondent cited stigma associated with renting.

Many respondents shared their community engagement methods such as flyering in apartment buildings, working with council offices, posting on social media, NextDoor, and emailing newsletters

A few respondents shared that they do not do explicit outreach to renters, but emphasized that their social media pages are public and open to anyone.

17 respondents said that renters have the same weight and privileges as property owners in their RNOs

Of those that answered the question, the following patterns emerged:

Percentage of RNO Membership - Renters	Respondents
0-10%	33
11-30%	4
31-50%	5
51-70%	2
71-100%	4
Don't Know	32

Young families/ individuals

113 respondents answered this question, 12 skipped. Many respondents simply stated that all are welcome, but they do not do targeted outreach to this demographic, and did not provide an estimated percentage.

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Several respondents shared that they host family-oriented events throughout the year, and use the following outreach methods to increase membership: social media, flyering, newsletters, family-friendly events, partnerships with local schools, libraries, and churches. One respondent mentioned that they make sure their meetings are in spaces where children can play during a meeting.

Percentage of RNO Membership – Young Families	Respondents
0 - 10%	15
11 - 30%	15
31 - 50%	11
51 - 70%	0
71 - 100%	1
Unknown	21

Families / individuals of color

111 respondents answered this question, 14 skipped. A lot of respondents shared that all are welcome but they do not do targeted outreach for families of color. The phrase 'Treated like everyone else' was repeated by multiple respondents.

The following outreach methods were described as a means of increasing membership and/or engagement: emails, newsletters, flyers, visiting churches, and rec centers. Several respondents shared that they need to improve their outreach methods when it comes to engaging with neighbors of color

Fewer respondents produced a guess towards a percentage of BIPOC representation in their RNO.

Percentage of RNO Members – BIPOC Families	Respondents
0 - 10%	24
11 - 30%	5
31 - 50%	3
51 - 70%	3
71 - 100%	3
Unknown	21

Economic diversity?

107 respondents answered this question, 18 skipped. Many respondents shared that all are welcome but they do not do targeted outreach.

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The following outreach methods were described as a means of increasing membership and/or engagement: newsletters, social media, email subscriptions, partnerships with local businesses, schools, churches, partnering with non-profits in the community.

Several respondents commented that demographics have changed now that the RNO has switched to a digital format due to COVID. Other respondents remarked that they noticed that lower-income residents took advantage of neighborhood mask giveaways and food distributions.

Three respondents self-identified as a high-income community. Two respondents specifically referenced gentrification as causing tension between newer and long-time residents.

Percentage of RNO Membership – Economic Diversity	Respondents
0 - 10%	15
11 - 30%	3
31 - 50%	4
51 -70%	3
71 -100%	2
Unknown	18

Senior families/ individuals?

115 respondents answered this question, 10 skipped. The following outreach methods were described as a means of increasing membership and/or engagement: individual networking, newsletters, social media, emails, flyering, partnerships with senior housing centers, and senior-serving non-profits, and libraries.

Respondents guessed the percentage of membership most frequently for this demographic.

Percentage of RNO Membership - Seniors	Respondents
0 - 10%	15
11 - 30%	11
31 - 50%	6
51 -70%	11
71 -100%	5
Unknown	15

Non-English Speakers

104 respondents answered this question, 21 skipped. Many respondents shared that no efforts are made to provide multi-lingual outreach. The phrase, “All are welcome, however no targeted outreach” was used in reference to Limited English Proficiency (LEP) neighbors.

Some respondents shared that they struggle to engage non-English speakers because LEP neighbors are not on the same channels as the English-speaking neighbors on social media. Several respondents shared that they are unsure of where to begin in these efforts.

Other respondents who try to incorporate LEP members into their meetings expressed frustration with the financial difficulty in securing translation services for meetings. They shared that they rely on English-speaking family members to translate for them.

There were fewer mentions of outreach methods - social media and flyers but not as frequently with other demographics, and there were multiple mentions of struggling to engage with this demographic.

Percentage of RNO Members – LEP	Respondents
0 - 10%	33
11 - 30%	2
31 - 50%	3
51 -70%	2
71 -100%	0
Unknown	14

Question 20: How do you raise money?

151 respondents answered this question, and 7 skipped it. This was an open-ended written answer on the survey, and not a multiple choice. Staff coded the responses for major themes which showed the following response patterns:

Fundraising Effort	Number of responses
Do not fundraise	23
Apply for grants	14
Donations or gifts	39
Dues or membership fees ²	82
Fundraising events ³	43
Sell a product ⁴	16
Commercial sponsorship ⁵	20

Most respondents wrote that they fundraise through multiple methods. For those that do not fundraise they mentioned that they have struggled with managing the finances especially if it is related to fulfilling grant obligations. For those who apply for grants they have worked with non-profits in the

² Several respondents mentioned that their dues are voluntary

³ Home tour, garden tour, block party, garage sales

⁴ Newsletter, merchandise, advertisements in newsletter, historic plaques

⁵ One RNO mentioned they secured sponsorship through a GNA with a marijuana dispensary

neighborhood to serve as fiscal sponsors. Several respondents shared that COVID has had an impact on their ability to collect dues and fundraise through the usual methods – events. Most respondents that charge dues, shared their dues are between \$10 - \$25/year. The highest self-reported dues was \$125/year.

Question 21: Anything else you'd like to tell us?

85 respondents answered this question, and 73 skipped it. Four major themes arose from these responses:

- It is difficult to keep people engaged with RNOs and their community in that capacity. COVID has exacerbated this issue.
- The City expects too much of RNOs without providing them with financial and logistical support for their time and services.
- Would like to see reform of RNOs to ensure there is more equitable and genuine representation. Not only a few residents whose points of view are amplified by their status. Would like assistance from the city in making RNOs more accessible for low-income families or communities of color.
- Multiple respondents expressed a desire to be included in the process to reshape RNOs. Also said they would like to see the results of the survey

Conclusion

The survey revealed that responding RNOs were primarily from the whiter, wealthier neighborhoods in Denver. However, this is also where the majority of RNOs are located as is demonstrated on Map 1. All respondents shared that their primary communication efforts to members and the community are through digital mediums such as social media or e-newsletters. COVID and the resulting pandemic has also had a great impact on how these organizations conduct business, fundraise, and engage with their communities. Respondents remarked on COVID's impact on leadership with some long-term presidents or board members stepping down; on their ability to fundraise; on their ability to organize events for their communities; and on their ability to attract and retain members.

The survey also revealed there are many differences in how RNOs identify their purpose and mission as well as their membership qualifiers. Some respondents remarked that they are a grass roots organization, while others identified as a governmental organization. The survey also showed that there were strong feelings among respondents on what organizations should qualify for the status of an RNO, with respondents arguing that only residential organizations should be permitted the status rather than business associations, BIDs, or even HOAs. Questions around participation and engagement showed RNOs self-reporting low engagement and turnout with most respondents reporting 0 – 10% of their neighborhood as “actively engaged.”

The respondents view themselves as conveyors of information to their communities and representatives of their communities' interests. However, the costs and time associated with running an RNO well are causing frustration and burnout for those who responded to the survey. Many felt overwhelmed by the burden of responsibility the city places on them and expressed frustration over a lack of support and supportive services from the city. They requested additional resources such as funding for newsletters

and events; legal expertise for understanding rezoning; education in how the City works and best practices in community organizing.