

COUNCIL POLICY MANUAL

Policy 7.3.20 Council Recognition of Dignitaries, Individuals, Organizations and/or Events

POLICY PURPOSE:

This policy is designed to establish consistent criteria and procedures for official Council recognition of individuals, organizations, and/or events and to recognize the contributions and donations to the City from individuals, groups and organizations.

POLICY STATEMENT:

It is the policy of the City to recognize noteworthy contributions, donations and achievements of individuals and organizations through resolutions, proclamations, certificates, letters, and/or plaques in accordance with the criteria contained in this policy, and at the discretion of the Mayor or the City Council where noted. These forms of recognition are not intended for partisan, commercial or narrow individual purposes, as such purposes are inconsistent with the overall policies of the City Council.

1. Formal Resolutions A formal Resolution of recognition or appreciation is the highest Council honor reserved for individuals and organizations that have made extraordinary, lasting, and significant contributions to the community.

All requests for Resolutions should be directed to the Mayor's office for review. Formal resolutions are approved only by action of the City Council at a Council meeting in the following manner: In the form of a motion, the City Council will direct the City Attorney to prepare a formal Resolution. Approved Resolutions will be numbered, logged, signed by the Mayor and the City Clerk, with a copy maintained in the City Clerk's records.

At the discretion of the Mayor and Council, the Resolution may be prepared for signature by all members of the City Council for presentation to the honored individual or organization. The Mayor shall determine whether the presentation should be made at a Council meeting. If presented at a Council meeting, the Mayor and/or their designee shall make the presentation under "Special Orders of the Day."

2. Proclamations (Ceremonial Resolutions) Proclamations are also reserved for accomplishments and/or events of significant importance to the Sunnyvale community. Proclamations (Ceremonial Resolutions) are less formal than official Resolutions of the City Council. They do not require formal vote or action by the Council at a Council meeting, are prepared by the Executive Assistant to Council, not by the City Attorney, and are not numbered and filed by the City Clerk. Proclamations are used for various forms of recognition, including:
 - A. Recognition of individuals and organizations whose contributions and achievements have community-wide significance;

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- B. To call public attention to a significant community event, service or program;
- C. To highlight a special period of observance, celebration, or recognition for community, regional, state, or national occasions.

All requests for Proclamations or Resolutions should be directed to the Mayor's office for review. Proclamations will be issued at the discretion of the Mayor, but may be requested by individual Councilmembers through the Mayor. A copy of each Proclamation is maintained by the Executive Assistant to Council.

The Mayor shall determine whether or not it is appropriate to present the proclamation at a Council meeting or other venue. If presented at a Council meeting, the Mayor and/or their designee shall make the presentation under "Special Orders of the Day." If no venue is designated, a Proclamation may be mailed to the recipient.

- 3. Certificates of Recognition A Certificate of Recognition is similar in appearance to a proclamation, but is less formal. Certificates of Recognition are used to acknowledge individual or group achievement or contributions to the community, or to recognize a noteworthy event or occasion. Certificates of Recognition also are prepared for outgoing members of City Boards and Commissions, and for Sunnyvale residents on the occasion of their 90th ,95th and 100th birthdays. All certificates are signed by the Mayor.

Certificates of Recognition on behalf of the entire Council do not require Council approval and are issued at the discretion of the Mayor. Individual Councilmembers may request through the Mayor that Certificates be prepared and issued. Certificates will be prepared and filed by the Executive Assistant to Council, with the following exception: Certificates of Recognition for outgoing members of City Boards and Commissions are prepared and filed by the City Clerk.

At the discretion of the Mayor, Mayoral letters of commendation, appreciation, congratulation, recognition, support, or greeting may be prepared on behalf of the entire Council as an alternative to Certificates of Recognition. Such letters may be used for inclusion in community event programs such as sports tournaments, service club or business organization events, and conferences held in the community. Letters shall be signed by the Mayor only, and the Mayor shall determine whether it is appropriate to present a Certificate of Recognition at a Council meeting or other venue. (Nothing in this policy shall prohibit individual Councilmembers from preparing individual notes of appreciation or congratulations to others. In this case, however, no staff support shall be provided and no presentation shall be made at a Council meeting). If presented at a Council meeting, the Mayor and/or their designee shall make the presentation under

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- “Special Orders of the Day.” If no venue is designated, the Certificate may be mailed to the recipient.
4. Letters of Memoriam. A Letter of Memoriam is a short personal note approved by the Mayor, prepared by the City Clerk, and signed by the full City Council in memoriam of an individual who has made a significant contribution to the Sunnyvale community. The Mayor shall determine whether it is appropriate to present a Letter of Memoriam at a Council meeting. It is customary that Council meetings closed in honor of deceased community members be accompanied by letters of memoriam. Following the Council meeting, the letter of memoriam is delivered to family surviving the deceased community member, and a copy is filed with the Clerk’s Office.
 5. Recognition Plaques. Frequently, requests are made to have plaques placed on buildings, sidewalks, benches, trees, or other public places for various reasons (e.g., in memoriam). City policy is to recognize donations of items and contributions to the Community by individuals or groups with a plaque or other appropriate permanent identification based on the following tiered approach:

Donation	Award
\$1 — \$5,000 Donation	A letter from the City Department Director in receipt of the donated gift.
\$5,001 — \$10,000 Donation	A certificate of appreciation from the Mayor recognizing the donation to the City.
\$10,001 — \$20,000 Donation	A plaque (approximately 8x10 inches in size) from the City to the donor recognizing the donation.
Donations of \$20,001 and above, and significant contributions of volunteer time to the Community	The citizen or group offering a donation of more than \$20,000; and the significant contribution of volunteer time by an individual, group or organization will be recognized with a plaque or other suitable recognition in an appropriate location, if desired.

In addition to the above, the City Manager has the discretion to publicly recognize smaller donations (such as park benches) with an appropriately sized and located plaque. This would be for cases where there is a discrete item donated that lends itself to a small plaque or marker. In these cases, the plaque or marker would be no larger than 3x5 inches and would simply include the name, occasion and date. The Library’s program in which bookplates are inserted into books donated in honor or memory of people in the community is an example of this policy. The full cost of any such recognition is to be borne by the donor.

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For those donations (\$20,001 and above), and other significant contributions to the Community qualifying for plaques or recognition staff would present a report to the Council suggesting the size, placement and wording of any commemorative plaque, with input from the relevant board or commission. The donor and/or requesting organization or group would be consulted as part of the staff recommendation. It is possible that something other than a simple plaque, such as a donor wall, could be an appropriate recognition. A “donor wall” would be a way to recognize multiple contributions of more than \$20,000 for a related donation on one plaque or display.

If the item donated and/or the recognition of an individual’s or group’s contributions to the Community does not fall within the jurisdiction of a board or commission, staff would make a recommendation straight to the Council. The City Council has the final authority on all plaques or permanent recognition on public property valued at more than \$20,000.

The cost for designing, producing, installing and maintaining a plaque or other recognition qualifying at the \$20,001 and above level, including the recognition of an individual’s or group’s contributions to the Community would be the responsibility of the beneficiary department. If a plaque or recognition is for something that is no longer in use (for example, a bench that has been destroyed or a building demolished), the department would not be responsible for replacing or maintaining the recognition item in perpetuity. Council will have the discretion to give additional appropriate recognition for extraordinarily large or serial donations.

6. Facility Naming. Naming Facilities or Components of Facilities in Recognition of the Contributions of an Individual, Group or Organization shall be the responsibility of the City Council as provided by Council policy addressing the naming/renaming of Parks and Recreation facilities.

7. Dignitaries, Gifts and Official City Souvenirs

A. Visiting Dignitaries: The City Council recognizes that gifts to visiting dignitaries are an appropriate method of commemorating certain occasions. At the discretion of the Mayor or City Manager, visiting dignitaries will be presented with an official City souvenir and/or gift appropriate to the occasion.

B. Councilmembers Visiting Other Jurisdictions: Mayors and Councilmembers who visit dignitaries in other cities and countries on official City business may, at their discretion, present an official City souvenir to the dignitary visited. Appropriateness of these gifts will be determined by the Office of the City Manager.

C. Visiting delegates or tour groups may be presented with official City souvenirs, at the discretion of the Office of the City Manager. Councilmembers with requests for souvenirs for specific visiting groups should coordinate such requests through the Office of the City Manager.

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D. Requests for Souvenirs: All requests, both internal and external, for official City souvenirs will be handled through the Office of the City Manager, and souvenirs will be provided as appropriate.

[Section 1-4: Adopted: RTC 91-111 (3/19/1991); (Clerical/clarity update, Policy Update Project 10/2005)]

[Section 5: Adopted: RTC 85-362 (7/16/1985); Amended: RTC 00-142 (5/16/2000); (Clerical/clarity update, Policy Update Project (7/2005); (Amended: RTC 06-259 (8/8/2006) – incorporated from Council Policy 7.3.22)]

[Section 6: Adopted: RTC 06-259 (8/8/2006)]

(Amended RTC 25-0912 (11/18/2025)

Lead Department: Office of the City Manager