

STRATEGIES FOR **DEVELOPING NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATIONS**

PRESENTED BY THE CITY OF CLEARWATER



Dear neighborhood leaders:

Clearwater neighborhoods are the heart and soul of our great city. We depend on our residents to keep the City Management and Commission apprised of the everyday needs in each of Clearwater's diverse neighborhoods.

Our mission as a City is to provide a safe, healthy, and vibrant community to the residents of Clearwater, along with a stimulating and nurturing environment for Clearwater's business community and tourists.



Bill Horne

City Manager Bill Horne



Index

What is a Neighborhood Association?	1
Why Have an Association?	2
How to Get Started	3
Core Group	
Neighborhood Boundaries	
Meeting Agenda	
Organizing a Meeting	5
How to Hold a Meeting	
Establishing Agendas	
Sample Agenda	
Leadership Development	7
Recruiting Leadership	
Developing Leaders	
Association Job Descriptions	8
Duties & Responsibilities	
President	
Vice President	
Secretary	
Treasurer	
Building Relationships	9
Consensus Building	
When Members Disagree	
Tips for Handling Disagreements	
Expanding and Maintaining Membership	10
Keeping Members Interested	
Helpful Hints	
Contact Information	10



What is a Neighborhood Association?

What is a neighborhood association and what does it do?

A neighborhood association is a group of residents who meet regularly to accomplish neighborhood goals. The association may include homeowners, renters, apartment residents, business owners, school and church officials, and members of non-profit organizations. Depending on the organizational goals, meetings may be held twice a year, once a quarter or every month.

Neighborhood associations facilitate communication between residents and local government to support change, help organize volunteers for community projects, and organize improvement efforts.

It is important to identify some of your goals before you ask others to form a neighborhood association. Goals should be specific, measurable, realistic, and most importantly achievable.

Goals for improving your neighborhood may include:

Organizing workshops to educate residents about property maintenance

Volunteering to assist neighbors with property maintenance

Holding regular neighborhood clean-ups

Forming a Neighborhood Watch to reduce crime



Why Have an Association?

Why should your neighborhood have an association?

Neighborhood associations build relationships.

A neighborhood association is one of the best ways to build relationships between neighbors. Members of a neighborhood may go years without knowing neighbors two doors away. A spirit of warmth and friendliness can be generated through the formation of an association. Also, neighbors become familiar with each other's needs, interests and become more supportive in problem solving.

Create an organized, unified voice.

Through an association your neighborhood has a unified voice in City government. The services that the City of Clearwater can provide to your neighborhood can be accessed efficiently through an association. Information on City services can also be provided to a greater number of neighbors, resulting in a benefit to the neighborhood as a whole.

Neighborhood Improvement

If your neighborhood needs improvements, local residents are the best resources to help initiate change. Neighborhood associations are a great resource for City staff and residents to develop long range beautification and improvement projects.



How to Get Started

How to form a neighborhood association?

1. Start with a core group

Start your neighborhood association by finding a core group of people who agree to meet regularly. Ask some neighbors you already know. Then knock on the doors of some you don't know and explain why you want to form a neighborhood association. When you find five to ten people who are interested, schedule a meeting at someone's house, or at a school, church or other central location. It's a good idea to set up the meeting quickly before people lose interest.

Each member of the neighborhood association should:

Try to attend every meeting

Use agreed-upon procedures at meetings

Treat other members with respect

Accept group decisions after a vote has been taken

Act for the benefit of the group

Be polite and make constructive comments

Discuss issues and concerns, not personalities

2. Set the neighborhood boundaries

It's important to determine the boundaries of your neighborhood association. Boundaries might be roads, natural features such as canals, residences within a certain distance of a school, church, or houses built in a certain type of style. You might want to look at a city map and take a tour of the neighborhood to help you set the boundaries. Call the Public Communications Division to see if your boundaries include any existing neighborhood associations. Your neighborhood may want to merge groups or work as partners on common problems.

Once you have established the boundaries, develop a list of residents and property owners. This will help you get other neighbors involved in your association and its activities. You may need to go door to door to create this list. You may also get information by calling Public Communications at 562-4554.

3. Establish committees

Neighborhood associations work best when the work is divided among members who sit on committees. The core group should define the goals and objectives of the committees and decide the rules members will follow. The goals of the association will help determine what kind and how many committees to create.

Some examples of designated committees include:

Beautification Committee

Publicity Committee

Youth Involvement Committee

Government Liaisons

Crime Reduction Committee

Welcoming Committee

Neighborhood Events Committee

Business Liaisons



Get your neighbors involved

Communication is very important to the success of your association. Sharing information is a great way to build a sense of community in your neighborhood, get to know your neighbors, and enlist support for your events and programs.

Promoting neighborhood meetings:

Publish a neighborhood association newsletter 4-12 times a year.

Team-up with a nearby association to share the cost and work.

Distribute fliers door to door. Distribute a neighborhood survey (and the results) by email, mail, phone or door to door.

Ask permission to place notices, posters or fliers in Laundromats, libraries, supermarkets, local businesses, etc. Send letters.

Set up a telephone tree and develop an email contact list.



Organizing a Neighborhood Meeting

How to hold meetings

Plan the meeting

People will more likely attend meetings if they are organized, brief, useful, and in a convenient location. Set the time, date and location by consulting with the core group of members. Try to keep meetings to one hour in length.

Select a place that is centrally located and familiar to your neighbors such as home, school, church or public building, and then remind them of the time and date by phone, letter or flier. Before the meeting begins, arrange the tables and chairs and place any handouts near the entrance of the room. Allow time for neighbors to introduce themselves. Be sure to test any equipment such as projectors or computers before the meeting starts.

Establish meeting agendas

All meetings should have an agenda. The agenda lists what will happen at the meeting, including committee reports and any business that needs to be discussed. The president and secretary are responsible for preparing the agenda.

An agenda is important because it:

- Serves as a guide, which the president/chairman uses to time the action
- Ensures important issues are not overlooked
- Gives neighbors a chance to prepare for discussions

To prepare an agenda:

Check the minutes of the last meetings. Note any unfinished business

Include committee chairmen, special meeting guest, and members who are to make reports

Check on all new business, which has come up since the last meeting



NEIGHBORHOOD MEETING SAMPLE AGENDA

NEIGHBORHOOD NAME: _____

MEETING LOCATION: _____

MEETING DATE: _____

- I. Call meeting to order**
- II. Neighborhood introductions**
- III. Review meeting purpose and agenda**
- IV. Minutes of last meeting**
- V. Officer reports**
- VI. Committee Reports**
- VII. Review events, programs, and or citywide activities**
- VIII. Unfinished Business**
- IX. New Business**
- X. Set Agenda for Next Meeting**
- XI. Adjourn Meeting**

Thank you for your attendance. Please join us at the next meeting on _____.

Meeting Location: _____

Meeting Time: _____



Leadership Development

Recruiting association leadership

Part of the job of a neighborhood organizer is to identify and develop neighborhood leaders. People in leadership positions are responsible for coordinating the activities of a group, including activities designed to help the groups achieve goals and feel good about working together.

A leadership position within a neighborhood association is a serious commitment. A leader impacts the association, and the neighborhood. A neighborhood leader needs to have the vision and the ability to build consensus, to delegate duties and authority to others, and to encourage neighbor involvement and maximize talent. A leader helps the association cultivate future leaders. A good leader recognizes the value in changing leadership.

The task of recruiting and developing leaders should be an ongoing activity for all members of the neighborhood association. Sometimes leaders are reluctant to share authority or delegate responsibility. Part of being a good leader is helping others grow into leadership roles.

How to develop effective leaders

Search for many potential leaders, not just one or two

Encourage people to switch tasks and discover their strengths

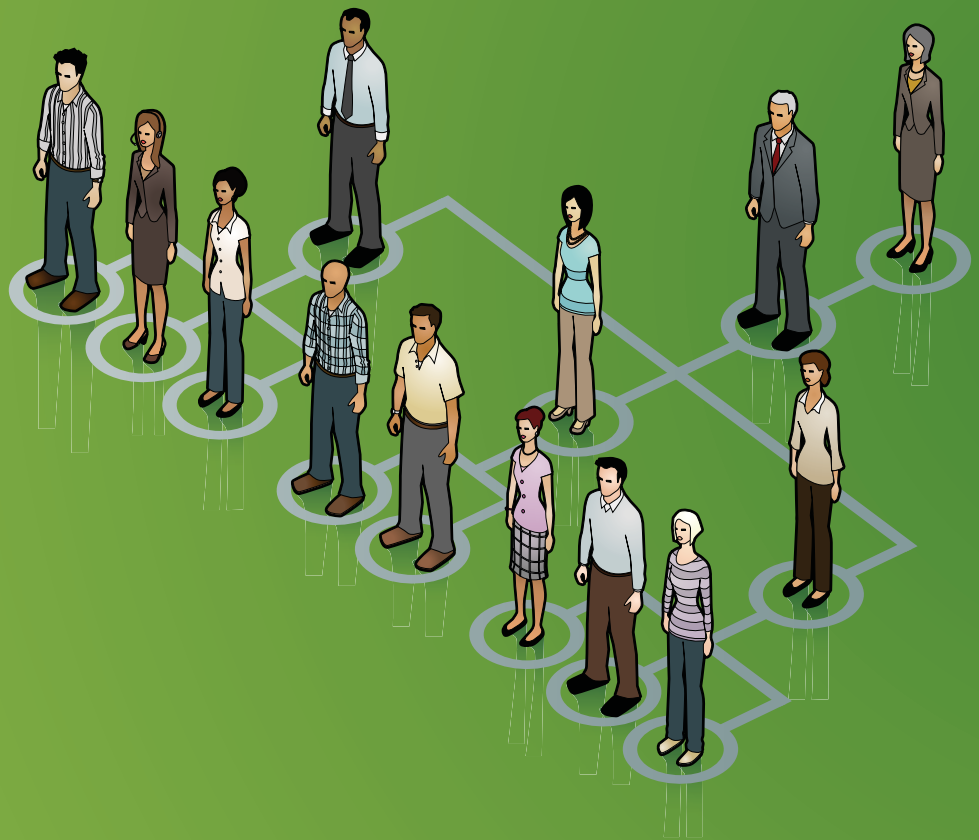
Remind members to be open to change and bring in new members and leaders

Encourage people to communicate in a positive and productive manner

Delegate responsibility: match members' personal needs with the needs of the group

Break big jobs into small parts and assign to different people

Focus on goals and achievements, not personalities



Association Officer Job Descriptions

What are the duties and responsibilities of association officers?



President

- Chief executive officer of the association.
- Assumes general charge of the day-to-day administration of the association
- Presides at all meetings
- Reserves the authority to authorize specific actions in promoting the board's policies

Vice President

- Performs the duties of the president in the absence of the president.
- Serves on the association executive committee
- Coordinates committee chairmen and report status to the board
- Assumes duties as defined by the president

Secretary

- Maintains the records of the association
- Takes minutes of meetings and keeps a permanent, accurate record of the association
- Prepares written minutes for the board of directors and reads the minutes at meetings
- Receives and handles all correspondence addressed to the association

Treasurer

- Keeps accounts of all expenses, upon authorization of the board
- Collects membership dues
- Presents a written report each month to the board of directors and/or association



BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS

Strengthening your association

Consensus Building

Consensus building is a process in which groups of people who disagree are encouraged to share information and negotiate to reach the goals of the association. An entire neighborhood association considers the issues on the basis of reason and discussion. Each member expresses a view and a decision is made that all can commit to, instead of a few or a "majority." Normally the president is continually asking the members "what would it take for them to buy into the solutions." This takes a lot longer and requires a level of trust and respect, as well as practice. The consensus building process encourages everyone to participate.

When Members Disagree

Neighborhood associations, like any group of people, can encounter problems with personality conflicts, burnout and leadership issues. When problems occur, encourage open and respectful discussion among association members. One way to avoid conflict for association leaders is to invest time in consensus building before key votes are taken.

Tips for Handling Disagreements

Seek to fully understand opposing viewpoints.

Resist an immediate response. Don't strike out immediately to oppose or take sides

When conflict becomes intense and emotions strong, sometimes a break is helpful to allow emotions to cool

Define and agree on the problem

Focus on the most significant issues of the conflict

Focus on issues, not people

Find "common ground" you can agree on



EXPANDING & MAINTAINING MEMBERSHIP

Keeping members interested

Keeping the interest and involvement of neighbors in an association is an ongoing challenge in every neighborhood. Here are some pointers and ideas that hopefully will stimulate other ideas.

Helpful hints

Be realistic in your expectation of the members. Many neighbors have other priorities that may limit participation.

Stay focused on a few well-defined goals or projects. Identify individual and/or committee responsibilities.

Celebrate each success, even if it means doing it one step at a time.

Ask specific neighbors for help or their involvement. Sometimes all it takes is asking a neighbor to do something. They may be willing if asked, but may not volunteer or speak up when an "all call" for help is issued.

Find out what is important to your member(s) and try to get them involved in committees or projects involving their interest.

Make sure to welcome new neighbors. Many communities have a welcoming committee that visits or calls each new resident.

Organize a social function by delegating the event to a special committee. Sponsor clean-up days, taking one street at a time so that the clean up seems manageable and can be accomplished in the morning.

Create a telephone chain or communication system that makes it possible for the association to keep its members informed.

Recognize volunteers. Some examples are: recognizing and thanking a specific person or persons at a general meeting; acknowledging someone's efforts in your newsletter; neighbors cooking dinner or cake/cookies for someone.

The City of Clearwater and the Clearwater Neighborhoods Coalition appreciate your involvement and efforts. Together we can improve the quality of life for all Clearwater residents.

We hope this booklet will assist you in learning more about how to organize a neighborhood association. For additional information or assistance, please feel free to contact the City of Clearwater Public Communications Division or Clearwater Neighborhoods Coalition.

Clearwater Neighborhoods Coalition

<http://web.tampabay.rr.com/ccha/>

Public Communications Division

www.myclearwater.com

Charles Eric Wilson, Coordinator

charles.wilson@myclearwater.com

727-562-4554

