NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION TOOL KIT

A GUIDE TO CREATING A SUCCESSFUL NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION

CITY OF PROVIDENCE

Mayor's Office of Neighborhood Services

Angel Taveras, Mayor

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WHAT IS A NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION AND WHAT DOES IT DO?

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

Neighborhood associations help identify challenges and concerns, support change and improvement efforts, help resolve conflicts, provide volunteers for community initiatives, represent the neighborhood as a whole to elected officials and find resources to make the neighborhood a better place to live.

Before forming a neighborhood association it is important to define or understand the goals of the proposed neighborhood association. Some goals may include:

- Helping neighbors get to know each other by hosting social events
- Making physical improvements such as painting a mural, installing a playground or organizing a neighborhood clean-up
- Assembling a Block Watch to reduce crime
- Organizing to share opinions with public officials

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 and ask those neighbors to speak to other neighbors. Once you have 5 or so people interested, schedule a meeting at a central location, a school, church or community center in the area. Set up the meeting very quickly before people lose interest.

The core group should agree on ground rules for meetings:

- Try to attend every meeting.
- Act for the benefit of the group
- Be polite and make constructive comments
- Treat other members with respect
- Discuss issues and concerns, not personalities
- Accept group decisions after a vote has been taken

2. SET THE NEIGHBORHOOD BOUNDARIES

It's important to determine the boundaries of your neighborhood association. Boundaries might be roads, residences within a certain distance of a neighborhood landmark or a community facility. You can take a look at a neighborhood map or take a community stroll to identify boundaries for the neighborhood association. Call the Office of Neighborhood Services to see if you boundaries include any existing neighborhood associations, you may want to partner with the existing group on common problems.

Once you have set the boundaries, establish a list of households in the area. This list will help you get more neighbors involved in the association and its activities. You may need to go door to door to obtain this list; information on property owners is available at the Tax Assessor's Office in City Hall or www.providenceri.com under online services, tax assessor property data.

3. IDENTIFY PROBLEMS AND DEVELOP A NEIGHBORHOOD PLAN

A neighborhood plan will help your neighborhood association make decision and take action. First, conduct a neighborhood inventory. An inventory is a collection of facts about the neighborhood including information on residents, types of homes, area businesses, churches and schools. You can obtain this information from the City of Providence Planning Department or at www.provplan.org.

After gathering your inventory of the neighborhood, identify a few problems, concerns or desires. (Problems can be identified by hosting a meeting where neighbors can share concerns) Problems and concerns typically addressed by neighborhood associations may include crime, physical improvements, traffic, street lights, preserving unique features of the neighborhood, zoning concerns or meet and greet for neighbors.

The plan should include:

- The reason the association was formed
- The principals that will guide the association and its work
- When and how often the members will meet
- How meetings will be conducted
- The goals and outcomes of the neighborhood association
- An action plan for accomplishing the goals set by the neighborhood association

4. ESTABLISH COMMITTEES

Some neighborhood associations work well when divided into committees. The core group should be responsible for determining what those committees are, how many are needed and the goals of the committees.

EXAMPLES OF COMMITTEES	POSSIBLE DUTIES
By-laws Committee	· Determine how the association will conduct meetings and votes · Making decisions to resolve disagreements among members about procedures
Crime Reduction Committee	· Works with the Providence Police to educate residents on crime prevention · Helps organize block watch programs about procedures
The Green Committee	· Organizes neighborhood clean-ups · Works with the department of environmental control to address environmental violations · Organizes tree plantings and beautification projects

Example of committee action plan:

PROBLEM	RISING BURGLARY RATE
Committee	Crime Prevention
Goal	Reduce the number of burglaries and overall crime in the neighborhood
Resources and strategies	Resources: Providence Police Sub-Station and Community Commander, Mayor's Cicilline's Office of Neighborhood Services, respective City Departments Strategies: 1) Form a Block Watch group for every block. Have them up and operating as soon as possible. 2) Have at least two residents from each block meet with the Community Commander for proper training on block watch safety. 3) Call the Office of Neighborhood Services to inquire on any other resources for this problem. 4) Identify quality of life issues facing the community which may have a direct impact on why crime has increased.

HOW TO HOLD MEETINGS

PLAN THE MEETING

People will be more likely to 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. Plan the meeting to last no longer than an hour.

Pick a location that is centrally located and familiar to your neighbors, and then remind them of the time and date, by email, phone call, flier or letter. Before the meeting begins arrange the tables and chairs, have all handouts, resource materials available at the entrance of the room. Don't forget a sign in sheet, you will be able to keep all information up to date and keep new members involved.

SET THE AGENDA

All meetings should have an agenda. The agenda lists the order of business at the meeting, including committee reports. Example of a typical agenda:

1. Call to order
The President as designated by the neighborhood association will call the meeting to order. This person would also act as the meeting facilitator and offer opening remarks.

2. Reading/ reminder of previous discussions
If minutes were kept from previous meeting, those minutes should be read aloud to the association. This could serve as a refresher of the topics at hand.

3. Reports from Committee members
A designated person from each committee should be prepared to report on the progress of the committee's goals and objectives. The individual should allow discussion or feedback from the entire group. Make sure each reporting committee member keeps debate time to a minimum of 5-10minutes.

4. Unfinished or new business
The President asks for new ideas or topics and opens the floor for discussion. Limiting discussion to 5-10 minutes

5. Announcements
In most occasions this is an opportunity for non-profits, city departments or other agencies involved in the neighborhood association to speak. Next meeting date, time and location should be announced.

6. Adjournment
The President adjourns the meeting.