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Iowa  
Neighborhood Resource Center

**Neighborhood Association  
Start-UP KIT**

A group of residents who meet regularly to accomplish goals in their neighborhood. May include home owners and renters, apartment residents, business owners, school and church officials, and members of nonprofit organizations.

May be organized as a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization or an informal group established to act as a unified voice representing the concerns of all its residents.

## What is a Neighborhood Association?

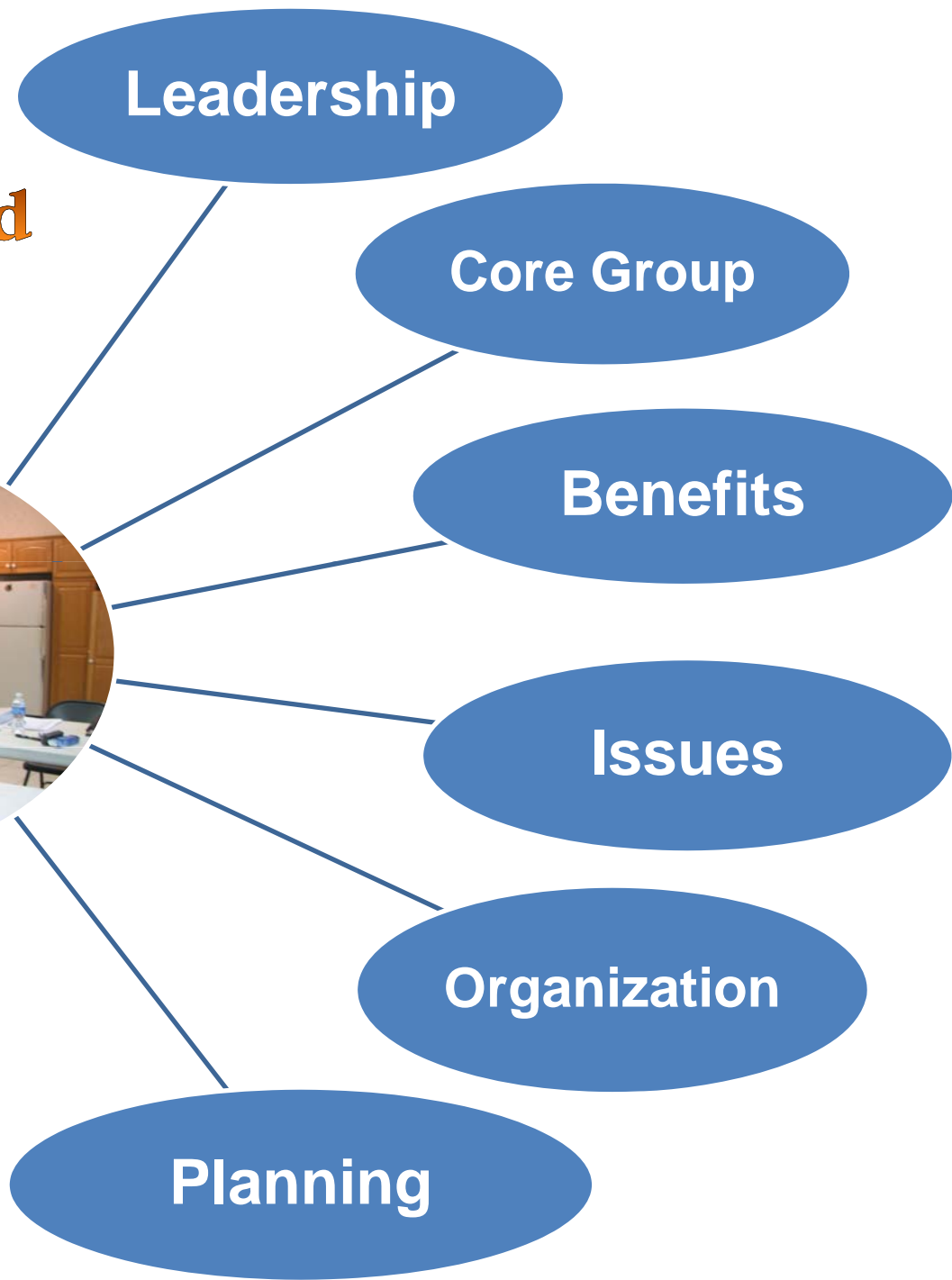
Depending on the goals of the group, meetings may be held only a couple times a year, once a quarter or every month for social events, to keep residents informed of pertinent issues and events, to respond to issues and concerns regarding the neighborhood and to seek out ways to improve the overall quality of life.

The goals are often accomplished through resident participation and grass-roots leadership representing the consensus of the Neighborhood Association and communicated with one unified voice to city government and community organizations on behalf of the association

# Neighborhood Association Start-up



## BASIC Start-Up Components



# LEADERSHIP

A neighborhood leader guides with organizational skills

Builds Consensus/Unifies the group

Coordinates activities to achieve goals

Motivates the members to take action

Delegates duties and authority to others

Helps the association cultivate future leaders

Initiates development of the CORE GROUP

# How to Organize a Neighborhood Association

## The LEADER forms a CORE GROUP

This group of approximately six to 10 neighbors should be committed residents with similar points of view regarding your neighborhood issues and be interested in starting a neighborhood association.

The final number of residents in your core group will depend on how many individuals are committed to assist with the organization process and should be able to work well together and share a common vision regarding important issues affecting the neighborhood.

From this core group, committees will form to work on various issues.

Set up a meeting the first meeting at a comfortable place, such as someone's home soon after the core group is formed.

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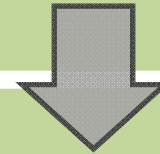
**GET  
STARTED**

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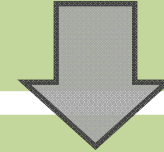
After the core group is formed, set up a meeting with the Core Group - the first meeting should be at a comfortable place, such as someone's home soon. From this core group, committees will form to work on various issues.

# First Meeting of the CORE GROUP

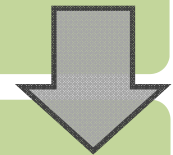
The first meeting sets the tone for future meetings.



Prepare an agenda suggesting issues the neighborhood could address, stay on task and keep the meeting moving. It is important that the initial goals of the group are easily achievable.



An hour is usually long enough for most meetings – unless you make it a social event too. Start on time and end on time.



Set-up next meeting and invite neighbors – making this meeting a social event with a meal is a good way to bring in more members.

## **PREPARING THE AGENDA**

**Once the members of the core group have been identified and a meeting time and place have been established, develop a well-planned agenda for the first meeting. Nobody likes to attend meetings that are unproductive and a waste of time. During this initial meeting the core group will need to:**

- Determine the boundaries of the neighborhood using natural boundaries.
- Develop a complete list of neighborhood residents.
- Discuss each person's ideas concerning the problems and needs of the neighborhood.
- Discuss goals, projects and concerns.
- Discuss strategies to achieve common goals.
- Identify current and potential leaders.
- Determine special skills, talents and willingness to participate.
- Determine a convenient time and location for members to attend meetings.
- Determine how frequently members would like to meet.
- The core group has to meet several times before it will be ready to hold a meeting with the entire neighborhood. Once the entire neighborhood is involved the core group should continue meeting as an advisory board for the newly formed neighborhood association.

# BENEFITS

## to Becoming a Neighborhood Association

Determine the boundaries of the neighborhood.  
Develop a complete list of neighborhood residents.  
Along with the issues – discuss the benefits of starting a Neighborhood Association.

Having a recognized neighborhood will give you a unified voice and an advocate.  
Neighborhood associations greatly improve the two-way communication between the city and its residents.

Your neighborhood will have a clear, organized way to speak to city government with a guarantee you will be heard.  
You will have a tool for relating directly to both your elected city council and city service areas.

This increased communication can be a resource for upcoming meetings or other community opportunities that may benefit you and your neighborhood  
Moreover, you will be put in touch with your neighbors, people who share your fondness for and frustrations of your area.

# ISSUES

## (Examples of Concerns – Ideas – Projects)

- Neighborhood Watch (Safety/Crime Intervention)
- Property Improvements
- Neighborhood streetscape improvements
- Walkability Assessment
- Social – getting to know your neighbors
- Historic Preservation
- Neighborhood Commercial Revitalization
- Curb Appeal/Clean-up/Recycling
- Neighborhood Entrance Signs
- Block Parties & Recruitment Social Events
- Zoning & Codes
- Newsletters
- New Yard of the month awards

# **ORGANIZATION**

## ***(General Components)***



- Governing Rules
- Not-For-Profit Organization
- Communication
- Funding
- Leadership Development
- Membership
- Resources

# Not-For-Profit Organization



**Establishing the association as a not-for-profit corporation is optional and not necessary. In order to know your options it is best if you can discuss this with an attorney.**

The primary benefits of establishing such status are financial. All or most of the money made by a tax-exempt, non-for-profit corporations is free from federal, state and local taxation, so the association can devote a larger share of its funds to the purpose for which it was formed.

Additionally, donors are more likely to contribute financially to tax-exempt, not-for-profit corporations than to non-exempt organizations because donors can write off the donations on their tax returns.

The Iowa Secretary of State's office provides excellent information and can be found on the Secretary of State's website at:

<http://www.sos.state.ia.us/business/Nonprofits/MinCodeReq.html>

# Governing Rules



## NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION BYLAWS

Bylaws are the "rules governing the internal affairs of an organization." They are the constitution of the organization that establishes the legal requirements for the group. Bylaws govern the way the neighborhood association functions and the roles and responsibilities of the association officers. Bylaws are an essential element to organizing a neighborhood association. Bylaws are also an integral part of the process for obtaining optional tax exempt status by the federal government.

While most people see writing bylaws as a tedious, difficult procedure, they can be of great benefit to a new organization by helping members clearly define and understand the purpose and procedures of their neighborhood association. Bylaws should also be reviewed periodically. This will help orient new members to the purpose and processes of the organization and ensure that the bylaws continue to meet the association's needs and other legal requirements. Remember, bylaws are the governing set of rules for a particular neighborhood association. Therefore, it is important to think about the needs of the group by tailoring the bylaws to meet those needs. Bylaws should be as specific as possible, yet allow for flexibility within the organization.

- Bylaws typically include:
- The number, qualifications, manner of election, powers, duties, and compensation of directors
- The qualifications for membership
- Different classifications for members
- The manner of admission, withdrawal, suspension and expulsion of members
- Property, voting, and other rights and privileges of members
- Appointment and authority of committees
- Appointment or election, duties, compensation and tenure of officers
- Time, place, and manner of calling, conducting, and giving notice of member, board, and committee meetings or of conducting mail ballots
- Making of reports and financial statements to members
- The numbers required to establish a quorum for meetings of members, committees, and the board

# Communication



Determine a method of follow-up to remind the neighborhood volunteers of upcoming meetings.

Plan your programs, events and meeting and spread the word. This will help others in the neighborhood join in the effort and take part in making a difference. Here are a few ways to get the word out:

- Neighborhood association newsletter
- Weekly area newspapers
- Schools, churches and club newsletters
- Door-to-door handouts
- Neighborhood Survey: Email • Mail • Phone • Door-to-door • person-to-person by phone to friends and neighbors
- Bulletins, notices, pamphlets, posters, fliers placed with permission in: Laundromats • Libraries • Supermarkets • Local restaurants • Stores • Waiting rooms in dentist/doctor's offices • Booths at local events
- Speakers at: Business groups • Service clubs • Youth groups • Schools/churches
- Cooperative efforts with adjoining neighborhoods • Lawn signs • Letters
- Telephone tree

# Funding



## **Monetary Resources: Contributions, Fees, and Fund-raising Strategies and Ideas**

Finding resources to implement the goals and priorities set by the neighborhood association can be a challenge. Two assets for finding resources are enthusiasm and support for your effort to build a stronger, improved neighborhood.

Consider what types of goods, services and funds your neighborhood association will need to accomplish its goals. Fund raising may be for any of the following:

- Association start up costs
- Supplies for a neighborhood beautification project
- Newsletter printing
- Postage
- Prizes at meetings
- Refreshments for meetings
- In-Kind Contributions

Instead of money, some stores or companies may be willing to donate something that they sell. For business owners, in-kind donations usually are easier to donate than cash. Churches may also provide meeting space and perhaps access to computers and copiers. To make a request from a business, consider sending a letter that includes your association and logo and a description of how the donation will be used. Send a follow-up thank you letter or card following the project/event.

## **Neighborhood Association Fees**

Neighborhood associations may choose to adopt a small membership fee, a voluntary membership fee or a “pass the hat” contribution at neighborhood meetings.

## **Fund-raising Strategies and Ideas**

For one-time projects, association officers may ask members for a special donation. People are often willing to donate to a project they believe will improve the neighborhood. Some projects require a fund raiser. Fund raising can be a fun way to develop teamwork, get better acquainted, spread the word about the neighborhood association and make your neighborhood more visible to the community.

## **Good fund raising depends on creativity, hard work and fun. Following are a few examples.**

Garage Sale, Bake Sale, Craft Sale. Plan a sale and put the proceeds or a percentage of the proceeds toward the association.

# Financial Management



**Run your neighborhood association like a business—open a bank account.**

- Your neighborhood association needs a management system in place for dealing with funds. Not immediately, but eventually you will accumulate funds for one reason or another.
- What kind of bank account should be opened and how do you go about opening an account for your organization? Obtain Information on bank fees and charges before you proceed. Either a person or a corporation can open a bank account. If your association is incorporated and you also have nonprofit status, you may be eligible to receive free banking privileges at some banks.

# Leadership Development



It is very important to have qualified leadership as you develop your neighborhood association. Strong leadership gives an organization:

- Guidance
- Stability
- From year to year provide continuity
- Motivation to take action
- Unity of purpose

A part of your job as a neighborhood organizer is to identify and develop leaders. **Developing and recruiting leaders is an ongoing activity through the lifetime of your neighborhood association.** New leaders for your organization should have demonstrated that they:

- Are dedicated to and want their neighborhood association to succeed
- Get along with and communicate well with people
- Can motivate people to take action as a unified group
- Are knowledgeable about the neighborhood, its people and their interests
- Know how to share and delegate leadership responsibilities

# Membership



**Organizations typically accomplish their objectives through the dedicated work of committees.**

The association's core group may find it beneficial to form some committees to manage beginning projects prior to the election or appointment of association officers.

## **To maintain active, productive, motivated members on the committees**

- Encourage members to participate in the association and the committee planning process.
- Define and discuss the goals and objectives of the committee.
- Provide reasons for the actions to be considered by the committee and the neighborhood association.
- Give recognition to members and committees who have contributed to the advancement of the neighborhood association.
- Make meeting time and committee work as productive as possible. No one wants to feel they are wasting time.
- The association's goals may define the types of committees formed. Some examples include:
  - Beautification Committee
  - Crime Reduction Committee
  - Welcoming Committee
  - Neighborhood Events Committee
  - Government Liaisons
  - Business Liaisons
  - Youth Involvement Committee

## **Membership Dues**

This is Optional. Associations often charge an annual small fee for membership in order to pay for printing costs, dissemination of information, neighborhood directories, or special projects. Dues usually range from \$5 - \$40/year, with \$15-\$30 being common. Low-income neighborhoods may consider soliciting local business support and membership in their Association.

# RESOURCES

- Create an email and/or telephone chain or communication system that makes it possible for the association to keep its members informed.
- Maintain current membership records of members' names, addresses, phone numbers, family member names, occupations, special interests/talents, etc.
- Sponsor parties and celebrations to get to know neighbors and members better and offer a contact form to expand contact list.
- Maintain a community contact list for neighborhood residents:  
City Police, City Council, Nuisance Reporting, Animal Control, County Offices, Emergency Contacts, Red Cross, Family Violence Center, Dumping: Yard Waste, Garbage, Recycling, Weed Control, Iowa Attorney General, Speaker list, Iowa Neighborhood Resource Center -  
<http://www.iowalifechanging.com/community/neighborhood/default.aspx?id=1>

# PLANNING

## A Guide for the Future

### **A neighborhood plan should contain:**

- Identification of resident issues and concerns
- Boundaries
- General achievable goals (i.e., what the residents would like to see happen – with time-line)
- General policies
- Suggestions for strategies on how to reach goals, time-line and who is responsible
- Use a calendar to chart your plan
- Leaders can become burned out. Plan to have new leaders ready to step in when necessary.



# Iowa Neighborhood Resource Center

More information, resources & models available here.

<http://www.iowalifechanging.com/community/neighborhood/default.aspx?id=1>

## Neighborhood Association Start-UP KIT

**Marie Steenlage**

**Iowa Department of Economic Development Specialist**

**Neighborhood Development Specialist**

**[marie.steenlage@iowalifechanging.com](mailto:marie.steenlage@iowalifechanging.com)**

**515-725-3064**

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