

NEIGHBORHOOD

ORGANIZING

GUIDE



NEIGHBORHOOD ORGANIZING GUIDE

CITY OF Lima

The City of Lima is strongly committed to partnering with neighbors to improve and maintain the quality of life in the neighborhoods that make up our community. Each neighborhood is as unique as the residents, businesses, places of worships, and service providers that inhabit them. It's the residents who are best able to create the kind of neighborhood they desire by working together. Coming together with your neighbors only when controversial issues arise limits your effectiveness and the ability of residents to determine the future picture of the neighborhood. Organizing a neighborhood association is an excellent way to improve your neighborhood and develop a spirit of community and pride.

Organized neighbors send a message that everyone is working together to build their community.

Keep in mind, there is no one model for starting a neighborhood association. The basic ingredients — issues, people, leadership, planning process, and structure — are necessary components. How they are put together may vary from group to group. This guide serves as a tool to assist you in this challenging, but worthwhile process.

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NEIGHBORHOOD ORGANIZING GUIDE

Chapter 1

Organizing a Neighborhood Association

Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.

Margaret Mead

Why start a neighborhood association?

When starting a neighborhood association, the people in the neighborhood get a chance to decide what needs to be done and work together to make it happen. They plan projects and activities beneficial to their area and provide a forum for discussion of local issues. A group that represents the community will have the stability, the credibility and the clout to be an effective core for a better neighborhood.

A neighborhood association is a geographically-based organization of people who live in a neighborhood and organize around common concerns of the members. It provides a means and structure to organize a neighborhood and manage neighborhood projects and programs. More importantly, it provides a forum to get people interested in the neighborhood, where issues can be discussed and information distributed. It provides a structure to organize volunteers and it is an official entity to access the City and influence decisions. It can also serve to generate funds for neighborhood improvement projects through fund raisers, dues, assessments, or donations.

Types of Associations

There are two types of associations – mandatory and voluntary. In Lima, mandatory associations are usually formed as a requirement for a planned development or may be established by the builder as an attraction to the development. The dues for the association are set by the developer at the time that papers are filed with the Planning Department.

Voluntary Associations are usually the result of individuals that organize to ensure continued neighborhood vitality. Dues are determined by a consensus from the group.

While dues are not mandatory in a voluntary association, some nominal contribution should be required for voting members as a show of commitment to the success of the association.

The association may include homeowners, renters, apartment dwellers, and representatives from neighborhood businesses, churches, and schools interested in partnering to improve conditions in the neighborhood.

Neighborhood Association

This type of association generally includes the residents and businesses within a specifically defined area. Neighborhood associations generally include residents who join together for the betterment of their subdivision or neighborhood. Membership includes homeowners, renters, and businesses within the defined neighborhood boundaries. A voluntary homeowners association means that owners do not have to be a member of the association. These associations do not have any authority to force lot owners to do anything. The issues of a neighborhood association are broad based, addressing residential and business concerns impacting the specific community. Dues are commonly used to pay for meeting notices, neighborhood parties, and directories, for example.

Homeowners' Association

This type of association is formed when the subdivision is planned and people who buy houses there are informed before purchasing the house. When the subdivision is platted, deed restrictions are also filed that have specific rules as to what they can and cannot do with their property. A mandatory homeowners association means that owners automatically belong to the association and must pay dues. Dues are used for the maintenance of common areas and screening walls as well as landscaping medians, for example. These associations have the authority to enforce rules and regulations and may be able to place liens against an owner's property if the owner is not paying dues.

Tenants' Association

This type of association has members who are renters in multi-unit complexes. Members address issues relevant to the neighbors that reside in the complex.

Benefits of an Association

When asking neighbors to organize, they must first be shown some of the reasons and benefits for forming a neighborhood association. Neighborhood associations:

- Supply a channel to meet neighborhood goals.
- Unify the voice of the community (A collective voice is a stronger voice.).
- Provide an effective communication link with the City.
- Serve as a tool in preventing neighborhood decline.
- Provide a sense of security as neighbors get to know one another.
- Increases awareness of decisions that impact the neighborhood.
- Help bring people together through socializing and working toward neighborhood improvement goals.

Talk to other neighbors to determine if there is an interest in starting a neighborhood association. Talk about your concerns. Find people on your block, places of worship, at the schools, at shopping centers, or in stores. For many people this is a difficult first step. Do not be afraid or embarrassed. You will find that there are many people who share your concern of building and maintaining a safe and healthy neighborhood. Most people would love an opportunity to talk about the issues they see in their neighborhood. On the rare occasions that you find someone not interested in the organizing effort, simply thank them for their time and knock on the next door.

Chapter 2

Organizing Your Core Group

Energy and persistence conquer all things. Benjamin Franklin

You cannot organize or reactivate a neighborhood association alone. You will need help. An association may begin informally with just a few people and gradually evolve into an organized group with common interests.

Hold an organizing meeting

To get started, you need a small group (core) of committed neighbors to form the association. The number of people needed will depend on the size of the area you want to organize. The core group may start with neighbors who have not been part of an organized group before or from crime watch members who have an interest in expanding their neighborhood goals. Neighbors who have an interest and are excited about the process make up your core group.

When you have a commitment from five to ten people, set up a meeting at a comfortable place, such as someone's home, and discuss your goals and plan of action. Do this quickly, before your contacts lose interest. Explain to the potential committee members what you have in mind and what you want them to do. With this group, decide on issues that are most pressing, most extensive and the most easily solved. Discuss the need for a structured association to deal with concerns and long term goals. Also, talk about how to get other people involved. Set a date to meet and plan your next steps for organizing the association.

This is the beginning and core of your neighborhood association. Keep lines of communication open among the core group and effectively communicate the plans, goals, and activities to the neighborhood via newsletter, flyers, e-mail, or a phone tree. Delegate responsibilities to as many core group members as possible to ensure buy in and excitement about the new organization.

Core Group Meetings

Define the purpose of the meeting.

Develop an agenda in cooperation with key participants.

Choose a location suitable to your group's size. Small rooms with too many people get stuffy and create tension. A larger room is more comfortable and encourages individual expression. If possible, arrange the room so that members face each other, for example, a circle or semi-circle. For large groups, try U-shaped rows.

Choose an appropriate meeting time. Set a time limit and stick to it, if possible.

Distribute the agenda and circulate background material, lengthy documents or articles prior to the meeting.

Remember, members have other commitments. They will be more likely to attend meetings if you make them productive, predictable and as short as possible.

Use visual aids for interest (posters, diagrams, etc.). Post a large agenda up front to which members can refer. Be sure everyone knows where and when the next meeting will be held.

During the Meeting

Greet members and make them feel welcome, even late members when appropriate. If possible, serve light refreshments; they are good icebreakers and make your members feel special and comfortable. Start on time and end on time. Review the agenda and set priorities for the meeting. Stick to the agenda, and encourage group discussion to get all points of view and ideas. You will have better quality decisions as well as highly motivated members; they will feel that attending meetings is worth their while.

Encourage feedback. Ideas, activities and commitment to the organization improve when members see their impact on the decision making process.

Keep conversation focused on the topic. Feel free to ask for only constructive and non-repetitive comments. Tactfully end discussions when they are getting nowhere or becoming destructive or unproductive.

Keep minutes of the meeting for future reference in case a question or problem arises.

As a leader, be a role model by listening, showing interest, appreciation, and confidence in members. Admit mistakes.

Summarize agreements reached and end the meeting on a unifying or positive note. For example, have member's volunteer thoughts of things they feel have been positive during the organizing effort.

After the Meeting

Write up and distribute minutes within 3 or 4 days. Quick action reinforces importance of meeting and reduces errors or memory.

Discuss any problems during the meeting with other officers; come up with ways improvements can be made.

Follow-up on delegation decisions and see that all members understand and carry-out their responsibilities.

Give recognition and appreciation to excellent and timely progress.

Put unfinished business on the agenda for the next meeting.

Conduct a periodic evaluation of the meetings. Note any areas that can be analyzed and improved for more productive meetings.

Use the above meeting tips for planning and conducting your neighborhood meetings as well. How your association conducts its meeting will attract potential members if done right. There are many ways to make meetings productive and efficient. Evaluate what works for your group and make adjustments when it is necessary. Remember, effective meetings will keep them coming back!

Chapter 3

Planning the Neighborhood Meeting

Make no little plans; they have no magic to stir men's blood...Make big plans, aim high in hope and work.

Daniel H. Burnham

Use the outline below to plan your first meeting. Be careful to cover all areas listed. Do not be afraid to assign tasks. Make each task clear to the person(s) responsible. At the conclusion of your meeting, review who has been assigned each job. Make sure that everyone understands what needs to be done. When you finally hold that first meeting, it is important that it be well organized and run smoothly. A well-run meeting is the beginning of a successful neighborhood association.

- Plan a strategy for getting people to come to the first meeting.
- Plan how to present the issues as the core group sees them.
- Explain why you see the need to organize a neighborhood association.
- Explain what you hope the association will accomplish.

Determine what to discuss at your large group general meeting

At your planning meeting discuss with the group your ideas for starting a neighborhood association. Allow time for all the neighbors at this meeting to share their thoughts. Also at this planning meeting discuss how you will present your ideas to the larger group at your first general meeting. How can you entice your neighbors to attend the general meeting and provide input and share ideas? You might include the following question for your group to discuss:

- Why do you want or need to organize a neighborhood association?
- What are the positive things to maintain and common problems to resolve in our neighborhood that a neighborhood association may help solve?
- How can we affect the health or livability of our neighborhood?
- What other things do you want the neighborhood association to accomplish?

Finding a Place to hold the meeting

Try to estimate the number of people you expect at your first general meeting and then look for a meeting space to fit that number. It is important to keep the meeting place as neutral as possible for all of the attendees expected. Possible sites include:

- Schools, both public and private
- Places of worship
- Private homes

- Community centers
- City Hall
- Non-profit organization centers
- Restaurant meeting rooms

When arranging for a meeting space, ask if there is a cost associated with the use of the facility. Schools and colleges often charge a fee and/or require a permit. You can arrange for usage of the facility through the school's administrator or principal. Be sure that your meeting space can accommodate people with disabilities. If your neighborhood is racially and ethnically diverse, consider translators for those potential attendees.

Draft a plan for what is to occur at your meeting

To be successful, it is important that the first general meeting run as smoothly as possible. To ensure its success, discuss the following:

- What roles should the core group take during the larger first meeting?
- Encourage active participation from all newcomers. Do not present just your ideas as the final decision for the group at large. They are only your opinions. Seek input on the ideas as they are presented to the group. This will help the group to feel like they "own" the idea or strategy as well.
- Allow people at the meeting to feel that their ideas and input are welcome. A sense of belonging is crucial in getting the attendees to return and become even more active in the group.

The meeting agenda

The most important aspect of running a meeting is having a solid, well-planned agenda. An agenda is a listing of the topics and the order in which they are to be discussed by the group. Decide at the planning meeting who will draft and reproduce the agenda. Your agenda should include the following items (See Sample Agenda in Appendix B):

- Introductions of all people present. It may also benefit the group for each individual to identify their address and association with your neighborhood. (Individual introductions may take place at the first group meeting. However, at future meetings individual introductions should be reserved for only the new people attending thereafter.)
- Clearly state the purpose of the meeting. It is important that you explain why you are interested in forming a neighborhood association to the attendees. (Compile a goals list to be part of the agenda for each meeting.)

- Address areas of concern or importance to the members of the core group. This will provide a staging area for discussion by all of the citizens in attendance. Be careful not to appear as “lecturing” to the attendees. This will turn them off from the entire process.
- Set aside ample time for socializing. Generally, this would be held at the beginning of the meeting. However, it can be held at either the beginning or the end. You might prepare several “ice-breaker” exercises to help the attendees mix more freely. Refreshments are a good idea for your first meeting.

Publicize your meeting

The best-planned meeting can be successful only if you have people in attendance. The way to get people to attend your meeting is to publicize. You do not have to be a local personality or a great writer to do successful public relations. Just remember to include all pertinent information in your publicity. Remember to answer the questions of what, when, where and why. If possible, include a phone number for people who have questions about the meeting or are interested in future meetings but cannot make the first meeting.

Staging your meeting

The first meeting will be one of the most important meetings for your new group. This may be the first general meeting of neighbors. The original planning meetings were only stepping-stones. Now is the time for your dreams and hard work to become reality. Create a checklist to ensure that you have the meeting “tools”:

- Sign in sheet to collect the names and addresses of those in attendance
- Copies of the agenda
- Handouts
- Area map
- Contact information for core group

Determine logical neighborhood boundaries

Contact the Office of Neighborhood Support to view a map of your area or subdivision. You have the option of starting with a small area and enlarging your boundaries as interest in the association increases

When developing boundaries, it is important to define an area where there are common interests and goals and where residents feel they have some identity with each other. This usually means at least some of the following are present:

- The area is bounded by strong barriers such as major roads, rivers, railroad tracks, open space/parks, or a major change in land use such as a change from residential to industrial. This is often the boundaries of the original subdivision.
- There are similar housing styles.
- People use common schools and shopping areas.
- There are common goals, issues and interests.

These items are important, but the most important element is a perception of “neighborhood.” Again, this could be the boundaries of your original subdivision. If there are areas where residents perceive themselves as having different goals and interests, even if all other elements are present, they should think about forming their own association. If they are included, it can mean constantly working out differences to accommodate two sets of goals.

Chapter 4

*Few things help an individual more than to place responsibility upon him, and to let him know that you trust him. **Booker T. Washington***

Choosing Your Officers

The key to a successful association is the selection of the officers and board members. The officers may be members of the core group who initiated efforts for beginning the association, or other members of the neighborhood. Officers are typically board members as well, but your board should include at large members as well. In choosing each of your officers, you may want to consider the following characteristics:

- Does this person have the respect of the neighbors?
- Does this person have a sense of the community?
- Does this person inspire confidence?
- Does this person have the ability to relate both to the group and on an individual basis?
- Does this person have an understanding of the group process, and the leader's role in this process?
- Does this person seem to have a feel for the democratic process? (No one wants a dictator!)
- Does this person have the ability to listen?
- Does this person have the ability to articulate the group's desires and positions?
- Is this person logical, reasonable, self motivated, and have the ability to motivate others?

An important and often overlooked aspect of organizing is considering the attributes you DO NOT want in your association officers:

- An officer should not be a "know-it-all" dictator.
- An officer should not be serving on the board in a position of power out of personal dysfunctional behavior.
- An officer should not be a rude or obnoxious person, who regularly demonstrates this behavior in the meetings.

Board of Directors

It is important for your neighborhood association to remain as inclusive as possible. Therefore, any person who is a resident or property owner within the neighborhood association boundaries, or who meets the criteria as set forth in your association's by-laws, is a prospective member and will be able to participate in your association.

Elections should be held annually for your neighborhood association to select a Board of Directors. The board will handle the business of the neighborhood association throughout the upcoming year. Your association's bylaws should specify the positions and the general framework of your electoral process. The "job" descriptions outline the responsibilities of the board and other individual officer positions. In addition to the roles listed below, board members may be selected at large to represent the general membership. The number of board members may vary. Other roles and descriptions may be added based on the needs of your neighborhood.

President

- Oversees the schedule of meetings and activities.
- Coordinates the activities of officers, leaders, and committees.
- Appoints committees as needed. The chairperson is an ex-officio member of all committees except the nominating committee.
- Represents the association in a public capacity
- Arranges for a regular meeting time and place each month.
- Reviews tasks and makes assignments.
- Develops a meeting agenda.
- Contacts each person who has a part during the meeting and encourages him/her to be prepared.
- Arrives at least 30 minutes before the meeting to set up the room.
- Exhibits good leadership qualities and is a role model to the members of the association.

Vice President

- Assists the chairperson.
- Presides at meetings and performs other duties in the absence of the chairperson.
- Arrives at least 30 minutes before the meeting to set up the room.
- Responsible for introducing new members and guests at meetings

Secretary

- Keeps complete and accurate minutes of all meetings.
- Reads letters of information or any other correspondence to the group.

Secretary (continued)

- Writes letters for the association.
- Maintains current and comprehensive membership records.
- Contacts members who have missed several meetings and extends an invitation for them to attend the next meeting.

Treasurer

- Keeps accurate records of all receipts and expenditures of association funds.
- Plans a budget and presents to the association for approval.
- Pays bills as approved by the association in a timely and accurate manner.
- Gives a financial report at each meeting or as requested by the chairperson.
- Prepares financial report for the year and presents it to the association.
- Provides written and financial reports for the Secretary to include with the minutes.

Crime Prevention/Public Safety Chair

This job usually involves working with the Crime Prevention section of the Lima Police Department. It is also the responsibility of this position to act as a liaison between the block captains of the active Crime Watch groups in the neighborhood.

Publicity Chair and/or Newsletter Editor

This position has the overall responsibility for overseeing production and distribution of the association's newsletter. If the association maintains a monthly newsletter, this position can become quite overwhelming. Sometimes it will benefit the group to appoint a vice chair for this position.

Chapter 5

Effective Meetings

Time is what we want most, but use worst. **William Penn**

There is nothing more frustrating than sitting through a meeting that's pointless and seems endless. Unproductive meetings waste everyone's time and make people angry.

The way that meetings are run will affect how members become as well as stay involved in the association. If meetings rarely start on time or are dominated by a few people, members will become frustrated and stop coming to meetings. When meetings are run well and the agenda is followed, members will feel more willing to participate in other activities of the association. Some guidelines to keep your meetings on track are as follows:

Set an Agenda

Let the people attending the meeting know what they need to bring to the meeting and what you want to accomplish.

Ask members beforehand what they want to have discussed during the meeting. This will make them feel more involved and committed.

Before you finalize the agenda, ask yourself some questions: What is the current situation? What result is needed? What decisions should come out of the meeting? If you can agree upon goals before the meeting, sidetracking and peripheral discussion will be kept to a minimum, the group will stay focused, and you will be better able to control the flow of discussion.

Managing the Meeting

Start the meeting on time! Don't penalize those who arrived on time by making them wait for latecomers. Go ahead and start the meeting with less important agenda items. By doing this, you will reinforce the behavior of those who arrive on time without excluding those who are late.

Make sure someone takes the minutes or records the meeting.

It's important to create a climate in which all opinions are valid and valued. Many people are too quiet or shy to speak up even though they sometimes have a very good point to make or issue to bring up. Gently encourage those people to be involved or share their opinions or ideas.

A good way to get everyone involved is to poll all members present. This forces the silent members to provide their input.

On the flip side, there are those members who dominate the meeting, they overpower by being aggressive or violating other people's rights, they are most likely insecure or need attention. The best way to handle this is to demonstrate control and assertiveness. Do not ignore them or give them negative feedback which will only lead to further problems.

Instead, confront the problem. To calm this person make direct eye contact with them and turn your body toward them so that they know that you are listening. If they know that you are paying attention to them they won't have to resort to negative approaches to get your attention.

Dealing with Different Personalities at Meetings

Problem: Broken Record

Solution: Use group memory or the minutes of the meeting to remind Broken Record that the point is noted. When a point is being discussed too long: summarize or suggest tabling the question for a later time

Problem: Teacher's Pet

Solution: Be encouraging, but break eye contact.

Problem: Know-It-All

Solution: Remind the group that all members have expertise; that's the reason for the meeting

Problem: Attacker

Solution: Thank the attacker and ask the rest of the group what their opinion on the situation is

Problem: One Man Show

Solution: Interrupt the One Man Show with a statement giving credit for his contribution, but politely ask him to hold his other points until later. Ask if anyone would like to take up one of these points.

Problem: The Drifter

Solution: The Drifter goes from subject to subject. Interrupt, give them credit for their idea but explain that it is important to follow the agenda. The topic may be discussed after the meeting or placed on the next agenda.

Closure

Try and make sure that when everyone leaves the meeting they feel as if something has been accomplished. They should end with a plan of action. Be sure that everything was specific enough that everyone knows what is going on and what was decided. At the end of the meeting give a brief overview and answer people's questions.

Tips for Participating Assertively in Meetings

Timing

Before you decide when to contribute your opinion, consider all the issues that are raised. Decide on your top-priority issues and focus your comments on them. There's no point being assertive just for the sake of being assertive. Focus on the result you want, but be sensitive to other people's needs and priorities.

Tone

The way you present your opinion or contribution is also important. Be clear and assertive. Don't preface your remarks with "This is only my opinion." This will detract from the power of your remarks, and you will lose credibility.

Tact

Tact is very important especially when you are taking a position that is contrary to what the group wants to do. An effective tactic is to acknowledge the value or truth of what another person has said and then continue with your own view. This allows you to get your point across without making the other person lose face.

Parliamentary Procedures for Meetings

Robert's Rules of Order is the standard and most recommended resource for running discussion and decision making among members of a group. These rules outline and define the rules of parliamentary procedure. Copies of the rules are available at most bookstores and libraries. Having standard rules help meetings to run a lot quicker and smoother. Your group is free to modify the rules or to find another suitable process, but most organizations adopt Robert's Rules of Order.

Overview of Robert's Rules:

1. Make a Motion. To introduce a new piece of business or propose a decision or action, a motion must be made by a group member ("I move that..."). A second motion must then also be made (raise your hand and say, "I second it."). After limited discussion the group then votes on the motion. A majority vote is required for the motion to pass.

2. To Postpone an Item Indefinitely. This tactic is used to kill a motion. When passed, the motion cannot be reintroduced at that meeting. It may be brought up again at a later date. This is made as a motion ("I move to postpone indefinitely..."). A second is required. A majority vote is required to postpone the motion under consideration.

3. To Amend a Motion. This is the process used to change a motion under consideration. Perhaps you like the idea proposed but not exactly as offered. Raise your hand and make the following motion: "I move to amend the motion on the floor." This also requires a second. After the motion to amend is seconded, a majority vote is needed to decide whether the amendment is accepted. Then a vote is taken on the amended motion. In some organizations, a "friendly amendment" is made. If the person who made the original motion agrees with the suggested changes, the amended motion may be voted on without a separate vote to approve the amendment.

4. To Commit a Motion. This action is used to place a motion in committee. It requires a second. A majority vote must rule to carry it. At the next meeting the committee is required to prepare a report on the motion committed. If an appropriate committee exists, the motion goes to that committee. If not, a new committee is established.

5. To Call for the Question. To end a debate immediately, the question is called (say, "I call for the question") and the action needs a second. A vote is held immediately (no further questioning is allowed). A two-thirds vote is required for passage. If it is passed, the motion on the floor is voted on immediately.

6. To Table a Discussion. To table a discussion is to lay aside the business at hand in such a manner that it will be considered later in the meeting or at another time (“I make a motion to table this discussion until the next meeting. In the meantime, we will get more information so we can better discuss the issue.”) A second is needed and a majority vote is required to table the item under discussion.

7. To Adjourn a Meeting. A motion is made to end the meeting. A second motion is required. A majority vote is then required for the meeting to be adjourned.

In small committee meetings, only four motions are needed:

- To Introduce
- To Change a Motion
- To Adopt
- To Adjourn

Board and committee chairpersons might want to get some training in meeting facilitation and in using parliamentary procedure.

The following summary on motions will help you determine when to use the actions described in Robert’s Rules of Order.

- A main motion must be moved, seconded, and stated by the chair before it can be discussed.
 - ✓ If you want to move, second or speak to a motion, stand and address the chair.
 - ✓ If you approve of the motion as it is, vote for it.
 - ✓ If you disapprove of the motion, vote against it.
 - ✓ If you approve of the idea of the motion but want to change it, amend it or submit a substitute for it.
 - ✓ If you want advice or information to help you make your decision, move to refer the motion to an appropriate quorum or committee with instructions to report back.
 - ✓ If you feel they can handle it better than the assembly, move to refer the motion to a quorum or committee with the power to act.
 - ✓ If you feel that the pending question should be delayed so more urgent business can be considered, move to lay the motion on the table.
 - ✓ If you want time to think the motion over, move that consideration be deferred to a certain time.
 - ✓ If you think that further discussion is unnecessary, move the previous question.

- ✓ If you think that the assembly should give further consideration to a motion referred to a quorum or committee, move the motion be recalled.
- ✓ If you think that the assembly should give further consideration to a matter already voted upon, move that it be reconsidered.
- ✓ If you do not agree with a decision rendered by the chair, appeal the decision to the assembly.
- ✓ If you think that a matter introduced is not relevant to the matter at hand, a point of order may be raised.
- ✓ If you think that too much time is being consumed by speakers, you can move to limit the time of such speeches.
- ✓ If a motion has several parts, and you wish to vote differently on these parts, move to divide or split the motion.

Chapter 6

Opening a Bank Account

Put not your trust in money, but put your money in trust. Oliver Wendell Holmes, Sr.

If your neighborhood association accumulates money, you may want to open a bank account. To open an account, you must first obtain a Tax Identification Number. A tax identification number is a federal tax number that is filed with the IRS.

To receive a tax identification number follow these steps:

❖ APPLY BY PHONE

Taxpayers can obtain an EIN immediately by calling the Business & Specialty Tax Line (800-829-4933). The hours of operation are 7:00 a.m. - 10:00 p.m. local time, Monday through Friday. An assessor takes the information, assigns the EIN, and provides the number to an authorized individual over the telephone.

❖ APPLY BY MAIL

The processing timeframe for an EIN application received by mail is four weeks. Ensure that the Form SS-4 contains all of the required information. If it is determined that the entity needs a new EIN, one will be assigned using the appropriate procedures for the entity type and mailed to the taxpayer.

❖ APPLY ONLINE

The EIN application (<http://www.irs.gov>) is another avenue for customers to apply for and obtain an employer identification number. Once all the necessary fields are completed on the online form, preliminary validation is performed and the taxpayer will be alerted to information IRS needs that may not have been included. An EIN will be issued after the successful submission of the completed Form SS-4 online.

Please note that not all business entity types may use this method.

Other guidelines for opening a bank account may include:

- Identification, such as a driver's license, credit card or passport, is required to open any type of account.
- Along with your tax ID number, you will need other papers proving the legitimacy of your organization.

- You must bring a copy of your bylaws or minutes of your first meeting if you are not a corporation or do not have non-profit status. You must also state the names and titles of people who can conduct business for the organization.
- If you are a non-profit corporation, you must bring the corporate resolution form, sealed by the state, proving non-profit status.
- Not all non-profit organizations will receive a waiver of service charges. The bank waives service charges to organizations that provide a necessary public service. The decision to waive the charge is at the discretion of the individual bank. If you are not a non-profit business, there is no waiver of service charge.
- Signature cards must be signed by the current secretary of the neighborhood association along with anyone else who will be signing on the bank account.

Chapter 7

Incorporation and Non-profit Status

Decide what you want, decide what you are willing to exchange for it. Establish your priorities and go to work. H.L. Hunt

If your neighborhood association plans to apply for non-profit status, you must first file Articles of Incorporation with the Secretary of State. Here are the steps to consider when incorporating:

- Call the Secretary of State Corporations Division at **(614)466-3910** to check on the availability of your corporate name. The state does not allow duplication of corporate names, and your proposed name may already be in use.
- Write your Articles of Incorporation. The City of Lima's Neighborhood Support Office has sample articles for you to follow. If possible, have an attorney check your Articles of Incorporation before submitting them to the State.
- The forms must be notarized. All the officers of the corporation must sign two copies of the Articles of Incorporation in front of a Notary Public.
- Send two copies of the Articles of Incorporation, along with a \$25 filing fee to:
Ohio Secretary of State Contact Information:
Ohio Secretary of State
30 East Broad Street, 14th Floor
Columbus, OH 43266-0418
- Wait for a reply. Processing usually takes seven working days. This may vary. Once approved, the state will keep one copy and return a second copy for your files.
- For more information about the incorporation process, visit the Secretary of State's Web **site at <http://www.sos.state.oh.us/>**

Applying for Non-profit Status

Articles of Incorporation do not make an organization a non-profit organization. Non-profit status is given by the Internal Revenue Service. Applying for and maintaining non-profit status requires a great deal of paperwork and record keeping.

The benefits of non-profit status are:

- To enable your neighborhood association to accept tax-deductible donations.
- To avoid paying sales tax on your purchases.

- To avoid paying income tax on interest earned in the association's bank account and on qualified non-profit income.

A neighborhood association is eligible for non-profit status if:

- It is incorporated by the state as a non-profit corporation.
- It is organized solely for charitable purposes.

To apply for non-profit status, you must file IRS Form 1023 seeking tax-exempt status and charitable organization status. IRS Publication 557 explains how to complete Form 1023.

The IRS requires the submittal of a filing fee along with Form 1023. To determine the appropriate filing fee for your organization, complete Form 8718 User Fee for Exempt Organization Determination Letter Request.

Many organizations find that professional assistance in filing these forms is necessary.

Chapter 8

Recruiting & Maintaining Members

To most of you, your neighbor is a stranger...you can't be a stranger to any guy who is on your team. John Willoughby

Recruiting new members to the group can be a challenge, but it is only half the battle. The other half is keeping them involved in your organization. For every member who is active in the association, there are probably two who would be involved if they were properly motivated or enticed. Keeping the interest and involvement of neighbors in their association is a continual challenge faced by every neighborhood group.

The following are ideas to keep in mind as you recruit new members.

- Help new members find a place in the association. Not every-one is a self-starter. Many will offer to help but have no idea where to begin. Develop a list of volunteer activities that includes a job description and approximate time commitment for each task. This will be a great start for your new members.
- Always welcome new people and attempt to make them feel at ease with the group. Officers and board members should watch for new faces at each meeting and welcome them enthusiastically. Each new or potential member should be introduced to someone who lives near them or shares a similar interest. Designate an official "greeter" at every meeting.
- Avoid the appearance of cliques. New members who see the same people running every project will feel excluded and may not return. Appoint people who are not part of the core group to positions of leadership. Sensitivity to this issue is central to creating a sense of belonging among group members.
- Encourage new ideas and input in all levels of the organization. This is often most difficult for people who long have been involved in the association or neighborhood and are more knowledgeable on the area than newcomers. People coming into a situation for the first time, however, are able to see things in a new light and can offer new solutions to old problems. They just might have the answer that you have been seeking. New perspectives can assist the whole group in problem solving.

- Every meeting should exemplify the strongest commitment to organization. Busy people will not attend meetings or involve themselves in organizations they consider a waste of time. Organization will also endow the association with a sense of accomplishment from the outset. Create a written agenda before each meeting and stick to it.
- Maintain current membership records. Keep a file that lists members' names, addresses, phone numbers, family member names, occupations, special talents, concerns, areas of interest, etc.
- Enjoy yourself and have fun. The work of the neighborhood association should not be boring drudgery. Sponsor parties and celebrations to get to know your neighbors better. Have events that appeal to all, including children. This will foster a strong sense of community spirit among your neighbors.

Tips for Maintaining Interest

1. Be realistic in your expectation of the members. Neighbors have to work and have other priorities that may limit their participation.
2. **Stay focused on a few well-defined goals or projects. Too many projects may frustrate or dilute your volunteer resources.**
3. Be sure to set attainable and realistic goals, which include a time line and identify individual and/or committee responsibilities.
4. Celebrate your successes, even if it means doing it one step at a time.
5. Be sure to publicly recognize members for their efforts and accomplishments. Recognize efforts in your newsletter.
6. Try to incorporate "fun" into your meetings or projects. Humor helps too!
7. 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.
8. Find out what is important to your member(s) and try to get them involved in committees or projects involving their interest.
9. Delegate important tasks and assignments.
10. Ask neighbors what their concerns are and respond quickly to those issues when and if possible.
11. Anytime a hot issue comes up, call as many neighbors as possible to ask their opinions.
12. Create a buddy system or "neighbor mentor" to make newcomers feel more welcome and important to the association.

13. Have the president or another board member personally visit all new members to encourage their involvement.
14. Publicize your association meetings well in advance; including what will be on the agenda.
15. Start and finish meetings on time. Respect the time and commitment of members attending the meeting.
16. Keep meetings on track and to the point. Summarize the results of decisions and actions at the end of the meeting so that members leave with a sense of accomplishment.
17. Be creative with your meetings, maybe ask neighbors to share what they do for a living. So often neighbors have no idea what each does for a living. Promote using the businesses and services of neighbors with no perks attached or expected discounts for services, etc.
18. Publish a newsletter to keep the neighborhood informed and focused. Include a classified section for neighbors to promote their businesses or sell items.
19. **Meetings are not the only way to bring neighbors together. Organize a social function by delegating the event to a special committee.**
20. Sponsor clean-up days, if possible taking one street at a time so that the clean-up seems manageable and can be accomplished in the morning.
21. Respond to concerns and questions as quickly as possible.
22. Involve the youth in the neighborhood in activities and events. Many times, kids are able to get their parents involved easier than the association.
23. Provide useful and meaningful information at your meeting. Contact your Office of Neighborhood Support for information on City services useful to your neighborhood.
24. Always thank members for their participation and leadership, including showing appreciation to committee chairs and members.
25. Listen to what members are saying. Often, all a member may want is for someone to listen.
26. The president and/or board should delegate authority and be supportive. Let the committees do their jobs. Respect their decisions.
27. Create a telephone chain or communication system that makes it possible for the association to keep its members informed.
28. Volunteers always appreciate incentives and rewards. Some examples are recognizing and thanking a specific person or persons at a general meeting; acknowledging someone's efforts in your newsletter; or neighbors' cooking dinner or cake/cookies for someone. Incentives and rewards do not have to cost a lot. Use your imagination and creativity.

Chapter 9

Setting Goals

The indispensable first step to getting what you want in life is this: decide what you want.

Ben Stein

A unifying vision or purpose for your neighborhood provides direction for setting goals that will make the vision a reality. Determine the needs of your neighborhood through meetings and personal discussions with neighbors during a neighborhood walk. After you construct a list of possible needs, discuss them in reasonable depth to identify the issues. When you have identified the issues, discuss each one and agree on the priority of each issue. Sort the issues into short-term or long-term projects and begin to evaluate how your association would like to approach each issue.

In developing your neighborhood projects, focus on a specific issue that will demonstrate action and results and that will be visible in the neighborhood. Get the whole community behind the project by promoting the issue as much as possible. This will provide lots of participation for you to establish a large membership base. If you are successful in achieving your goals or effecting change on a single issue, it demonstrates that your association is an effective group. This establishes the credibility and worthiness of your association, characteristics which are important to long-term survival. Unfortunately, one problem with concentrating on a single issue is that when that problem is solved, everyone leaves.

Therefore, it is important to introduce other issues at the same time and get people to work on them in addition to the main issue. As each issue is resolved, focus on new, short- and long-term projects. Most importantly, do not forget to celebrate!

The following is a list of possible short- and long-term projects:

- ❖ Neighborhood Clean-up
- ❖ Community Garden, tree planting, flower planting
- ❖ Back-to-school party and school supply drive
- ❖ Neighborhood scrapbook or video
- ❖ Crime watch program

- ❖ Scholarship exchange (Example: Ex-boxer in the neighborhood sets up an afternoon boxing program for neighborhood kids. The kids mow and care for his yard).
- ❖ Block party or festival
- ❖ Neighborhood entrance signs
- ❖ Security lighting
- ❖ Tool lending libraries
- ❖ Tutoring program for youth
- ❖ Neighborhood cook-out, picnic, or potluck
- ❖ National night out celebration
- ❖ Holiday celebration
- ❖ Neighborhood t-shirts
- ❖ Yard of the month award
- ❖ Neighborhood newsletter, web site, directory, or telephone/email tree
- ❖ Paint /fix up projects
- ❖ Speakers on topics of interest to the neighborhood
- ❖ Philanthropic projects, such as "adopting" a family who needs help with Christmas dinner

Evaluate the association's progress to recognize successes, detect problems and suggest improvements. In planning projects, keep momentum with a list of projects and activities that will maintain participation and interest. The best approach is to plan around a calendar. Do not suffocate your members with more projects than time will allow. Choose a pace and stay consistent. Slow progress is often better than no progress at all, but keep in mind that one large gap in activity could cost you the participation of a large majority of your membership because of lack of interest. Be careful how you plan and coordinate all projects. Keep people involved in all levels and give people specific jobs (with specific time frames) to do. Everyone is willing to contribute a little bit of time. Do not give too much responsibility to one person when it can be easily delegated to several.

Finally, celebrate your accomplishments!

Chapter 10

Building Social Capital

There is one thing better than good government, and that is government in which all people have a part. **Walter Hines Page**

Social Capital refers to those stocks of social trust, norms and networks that people can draw upon to solve common problems. Networks of civic engagement, such as neighborhood associations, and sports clubs are an essential form of social capital. This is the “glue” that holds a neighborhood together. It works in the in-between spaces bringing people and resources together. Social Capital is the web of relationships giving a neighborhood a sense of community and belonging. Every neighborhood has Social Capital. Most neighborhoods have more Social Capital than they think they do.

Think of Social Capital as resources or assets to be called upon to strengthen and stabilize the neighborhood. These assets and resources are the foundation, bricks, and mortar to building up the neighborhood and those who live, work, play, learn and shop in it. Social Capital is both inside and outside the neighborhood. It bridges across neighborhoods and links up and down to connect the neighborhood with the larger community, the nation, and the world. Social Capital is people, resources, churches, businesses, organizations, non-profits, schools, and events and happenings. Social Capital is you.

On the following page are some examples of actions, both large and small, that we can take every day to build Social Capital. Read the list and add some of your own!

1. Go for a walk, invite a neighbor.
2. Invite friends to take a hike, go snowshoeing, or cross-country skiing.
3. Be real, be humble acknowledge others.
4. Attend gallery openings.
5. Write personal notes when inspired to neighbors and friends.
6. Form a fitness/health group with your friends or co-workers.
7. Organize a town-wide yard sale.
8. Visit a local nursing home, day care center, or group home.
9. Start a children’s story hour at your local library.
10. Go to the next church supper or community potluck in your town

11. Slow down enough to chat with your neighbors as you all sort your trash at the Recycling Center
12. Volunteer to deliver Meals-on-Wheels in your neighborhood.
13. Become a story-reader or baby-rocker at your local childcare center or neighborhood pre-school.
14. Read your local newspaper, faithfully.
15. Join a book club discussion.
16. Raise funds for a new town clock or new town library.
17. Go to your town dump.
18. Take a pottery class with your children or parents(s).
19. Read to your children.
20. Go to or organize community bandstand event.
21. Build a neighborhood playground.
22. Assist with or create your town's newsletter.
23. Join other people walking in the mall in early morning – and don't forget to stay for coffee.
24. Organize a neighborhood litter pickup.
25. Invite your friends and colleagues to help with a home renovation/building project.
26. Sing in a choir.
27. Make a point to help those in need –open the door for someone who has his or her arms full.
28. Help the kids on your street construct a lemonade stand.
29. Bike, walk or motorcycle to support a cause...and have fun meeting new people.
30. Bake some cookies and bring to your new neighbors with a list of important community phone numbers.
31. Go to a Contra Dance.
32. Become a Big Brother or a Big Sister.
33. Stand on the corner of Main Street holding a sign for the candidate of your choice.
34. Attend your town meeting.
35. Register to Vote and Vote.
36. Support your local merchants.
37. Volunteer your time anywhere.
38. Take Dance lessons with friends.
39. Be a mentor for someone of a different ethnic or religious group than you.
40. Volunteer in your child's classroom or chaperone a field trip.
41. Don't gossip.
42. Organize or participate in a sports league.
43. Join a gardening club.
44. Attend home parties when invited.

45. Become a blood donor, organ donor or bone marrow donor.
46. Attend our children's athletic contests, plays, and recitals.
47. Get to know your children's teachers.
48. Join the local Elks, Kiwanis, Knights of Columbus.
49. Start a monthly afternoon tea group.
50. Speak at or host a monthly brown bag lunch series at your local library.
51. Volunteer at your local recycling center.
52. Get to know the clerks and salespeople at your local stores.
53. Attend PTA meeting.
54. Audition for Community Theater or volunteer to usher.
55. Organize a community garden.
56. Join a carpool.
57. Surprise a new neighbor with one of your favorite dinners – and include the recipe.
58. Give to your local food bank.
59. Attend the play put on by your local High School.
60. Attend Veteran's Day and Memorial Day parades and say, "Thank You".
61. Form a neighborhood/town wide outdoor activity group.
62. Help coach Little League or other youth sports – even if you don't have a child playing.
63. Attend a local budget committee meeting.
64. Participate in political campaigns.
65. Help run the snack bar at the Little League Field.
66. Form a "tools cooperative" with your neighbors – to share ladders, rototillers, etc.
67. Join a baby-sitting cooperative.
68. Offer to rake a neighbor's yard or shovel their walk if he or she needs help.
69. Plan a "Walking Tour" of historic areas in your town.
70. Eat breakfast out on Saturday morning at a local gathering spot.
71. Stop and make sure the person on the side of the highway is OK.
72. Host a "Block Party" or a holiday open house.
73. Run for public office.
74. Start a "fix it" group – friends who are willing to help you clean, paint, garden, etc., and you help them in turn.
75. Offer to serve on a town committee.
76. Join the volunteer fire department.
77. Go to church...or temple...or outside with your children – talk about why it's important to be there.
78. Ask the person at the next table if he or she would like to share your table for lunch.
79. Organize a social gathering to welcome a new neighbor.

- 80.** Persuade your local restaurant to have a designated “meet people” table.
- 81.** Host a potluck supper before your Town Meeting.
- 82.** Give a weatherproof chess or checkers board to your town park.
- 83.** Say “thanks” to public servants –Police, Firefighters, City Council, Town Clerk, etc.
- 84.** Fight to keep essential local services in the downtown area – your post office, police station, school, etc.
- 85.** Sit on a nonprofit board of directors.
- 86.** Gather a group to clean up a local park or cemetery.
- 87.** Join a bowling team...or form one.
- 88.** Have dinner with your family.
- 89.** Turn off the TV and talk with your family.
- 90.** Play cards with your friends or neighbors.
- 91.** Have a neighborhood barbecue. When somebody says “government stinks,” suggest he or she help fix it.
- 92.** Volunteer at the library.
- 93.** Talk to your friends and family about social capital. Tell them why it matters.

Chapter 11

Providing Public Testimony

The mighty oak was once a little nut that stood its ground. **Anonymous**

Giving public testimony before the City Council, boards, or commissions can be frightening if you have never done it before. There are several things you can do to make your thoughts and presentation clear and successful. You may not always have the time to follow the outline listed below. However, whenever you can, it is beneficial to spend as much time as possible preparing your testimony. Carefully prepared testimony may influence action. Also, testimony becomes part of the public record and may be referred to later on.

How to Prepare Public Testimony

- ❖ Know your time frame. Find out when, where, and before whom (City Council, Planning Commission, Parks and Recreation Advisory Board, etc.) the issue will appear. This will let you know how much time you have to prepare--there is a big difference between having one day and one month to prepare.
- ❖ Know your issue. Support opinions with as many facts as possible. Do your homework: information is power. Read newspapers, magazines, etc., to find out about the issue. Talk to local government officials, when possible, and other citizens. Be knowledgeable of the opposition's arguments and be prepared to counter those arguments. Also, draw on your own knowledge and experience.
- ❖ Start writing down main points. Construct a rough outline from scattered thoughts, research, plus any additional brainstorming. Begin thinking about any extra visual aids that might be important (posters, charts, fact sheets, flyers, cartoons, brochures, etc.).
- ❖ Know how much time is allowed for the testimony. At City Council meetings, the time limit for testimony is usually indicated on the agenda or announced by the Mayor. However, effective testimony should generally be held to under five minutes. If your ideas are well-organized, five minutes should be ample time to make your point effectively.

- ❖ Write a draft statement. Address the governmental body (example: "Mr./Ms. Mayor, Members of the Council"). State your name and address for the record. Say if you are testifying for yourself or a group, and give a brief description of why you or your group is testifying on the issue. Explain how support for your testimony was solicited from your group (by petitions, vote at meeting, surveys, letters, etc.). Bring with you documentation of that support (copies of petitions, surveys, minutes of meetings, etc.) whenever possible. Be specific about how many people were involved in making the decision. State whether this is a majority or minority opinion. Keep the statement as short as possible (two pages is about right). State the problem, the reasons why you or your group support or oppose, and then summarize. Get others to read and make comments on the draft. If you need the approval of a group, use the rough draft so people will feel comfortable making corrections or suggestions on the copy. Let the statement sit for a day or so, if you have the time, and then go back and read it again and revise if necessary.
- ❖ Write up final copy. Type and double space the final copy, if possible (easier to read, looks neater, etc.). Be careful to check spelling.
- ❖ Start anticipating questions from the Council, board, etc. Practice giving testimony before friends and get hints on improving the presentation.
- ❖ **Be Familiar with the Group's Process** Attend one or more meetings of the group before you testify to get an idea of the room layout and the procedures used.
- ❖ **Know Your Audience** Try to stress what you have in common and that you respect the differences of the people you are talking to. The more you can find out about their biases and sympathies, the more chance you have to relate to them.
- ❖ **Presenting Yourself** is aware of how you present yourself when you make a statement to the decision-making body. Think about what image you want to project. Most of what we communicate is nonverbal. Be aware of your body language.
- ❖ **Check Your Feelings** Try to keep your feelings in check while you are testifying. It is all right to have strong feelings on the subject, but you do not want them to overshadow the content and reason of your message.
- ❖ **Maintain Eye Contact** Use notes rather than written manuscript so you can develop good eye contact.
- ❖ **Define What You Want** Make it perfectly clear what action you want the group to take.
- ❖ **Sum up Important Points** Summarize your written message to emphasize the important points.
- ❖ **Copies of Testimony** Provide copies of your written testimony for each member of the body, appropriate staff, and the media.

If you are testifying for a group:

Make sure different people cover different topics so the testimony is not repetitious.

Action Check List

- ❖ Learn the decision-making process.
- ❖ Meet your elected officials as early as possible.
- ❖ Let your elected officials know about you.
- ❖ Concentrate and coordinate your efforts.
- ❖ Inform yourself--research the issue.
- ❖ Inform the members and the public of the issues.
- ❖ Attend meetings.
- ❖ Assist your elected officials.
- ❖ Know and support your allies.
- ❖ Always provide completely accurate information to elected officials; never deliberately provide misleading or false information.
- ❖ Focus on the preliminary stages of policy making.
- ❖ Never threaten elected officials.
- ❖ Form coalitions.
- ❖ Identify "swing votes."
- ❖ Be discreet.
- ❖ Be realistic. You may not win every fight, and at times, compromises will have to be made.
- ❖ Thank elected officials for their help.
- ❖ Involve as many members as possible in different roles.
- ❖ Inform your members about which officials helped and supported your cause.
- ❖ Evaluate your efforts.
- ❖ Monitor the implementation of decisions.

Tradition

"We always do it this way." Examine the traditional framework in your community. Does your project fit comfortably? Does it make minor changes? Or is it radically different? A project that differs a great deal from the way "we always do it" will require more explanation to the community before it will be accepted.

Power Clusters

Organizations and individuals who are all interested in the same thing form power clusters. For example, the Johnny Appleseed Park District, keep Allen County Beautiful, and the Lima Parks Board might all focus on beautification. When these groups join efforts, they form a power cluster, sometimes called a coalition. Since a large part of a neighborhood association's time may be spent advocating for change at the local level, it is important to know how to work with local government. The next few sections give ideas for how groups like neighborhood associations can effectively work with local government to influence decision making. These sections deal with general principles, such as how to choose the best channel to go through, how to give public testimony, and how to be politically effective as a group.

Set Your Goals

What is most important for your neighborhood association to accomplish in order to maintain livability? If you have a neighborhood plan, some goals have likely been set. If not, set aside some time for your Board to set its direction. Prepare needs statements for the City budget process and prioritize issues for Board involvement.

Know Your Issues

Do your homework. Find out who is affected, to what degree, and the consequences of no action. On a long-range issue, document your process, dates of events, who was involved, and correspondence. Determine which issues will need to be addressed by a local government agency and which will need to be addressed by the neighborhood itself. Only neighbors working together and along with government can solve short- and long-term neighborhood problems.

Become Acquainted with Procedure

Visit a few meetings of your public officials (e.g., City Council, boards, commissions, etc.). Understand how they operate, discover the guidelines they have to follow, and realize the pressures they are under. Have someone explain to you the procedure if it isn't otherwise clear.

Work Personally

Allow your officials to get to know you. The best form of contact is on the personal level: (1) personal appearance, (2) phone call, (3) letter, (4) e-mail to contact city officials.

Keep Your Public Officials Informed

Do not surprise your officials with unexpected actions. Bring written copies of your concern when meeting with them, and follow up your concern and action with letters. (Keep copies of everything you do!) Make reference to things you have sent. Keep up an

ongoing relationship. Show your appreciation as well as dissatisfaction. Send carbon copies to other individuals or agencies involved (citizens, City staff, others).

Work on all Levels

Try the chain of command first by going to the person most directly responsible for your concern. Then work on all levels by going to your appointed and elected officials. If you don't know whom to talk to, do not hesitate to go to the top. Be sure to keep your City Council informed. If necessary, address the Council as a whole to be sure you are heard.

Make it Clear if You Represent a Group

Identify the name of your group and its purpose. Use appointed contact persons to establish continuity and identity. Document attendance at general meetings and votes taken. Ensure that you have the group's approval/authorization before acting.

Get Solid Answers

Don't be satisfied with vague answers. Talk to informed people and solicit answers you can rely on. Ask for and remind your officials of specific information--dates, places, times, etc.

Be Open to Suggestions

Take the suggestions of your officials seriously and follow up on them. Progress occurs when everyone pushes in the same direction.

Follow Up

Follow up on a discussion with a memo summarizing the discussion and its outcome. Check back to see if whatever has been agreed to is being done or to see if decisions are being made. After the decision has been made, check back with the appropriate staff or government official to be certain it is carried out.

Keep the Neighborhood Informed

Use your neighborhood association's meetings and annual newsletter to keep the neighborhood informed. Talk with neighbors and businesses about what is happening. Contact the neighbors and friends about what is happening. Contact the newspapers to let them know your concerns. You may wish to issue a press release. Make your written information interesting. The establishment of a good communications and publicity network is absolutely essential to any group. Whether it is a simple flyer, newspaper announcement advertising a meeting, a short telephone call, or an email, groups must take advantage of all media (including word of mouth) to make people aware of activities.

One of the most effective ways to establish a manageable and affordable network is using the following forms of communication:

Flyers - Any activity, project, or goal of the group can be announced in a flyer. When designing a flyer, be sure the wording is bold enough to be read from a distance of 10 feet. Use colorful paper. If possible, arrange for the use of a church or school copying machine. Better still, have them quick copied as a donation by a local print shop. Contact the Office of Neighborhood Support if you need help designing and/or copying flyers. Post flyers in markets, Laundromats, schools, beauty shops, and other places frequented by the people you want to reach.

Newspaper announcements - The Lima News may have announcement sections and may allow neighborhood associations to advertise their local meetings at no charge.

Neighborhood walks - This is one of the most effective ways to begin a relationship with your neighbors and get them interested in your association. Organize a group of at least four to six people to cover a specific region of your neighborhood. Assign pairs to go door-to-door and introduce the association and its goals. Ask them about their concerns and respond with how your association can help them effect a change in their situation. Ask them to attend the next meeting to voice their concerns. Also, ask them to bring some of their neighbors. Be sure to leave a flyer with the information about the next meeting. If no one is home, leave a flyer in a visible, but secure location (do not place flyers in mailboxes as it is against federal law).

Chapter 12

Good Neighbor Checklist

We were born to unite with our fellow men... **Cicero**

Having a good neighbor starts with being a good neighbor. The primary responsibility of making life better on the street where you live begins with you – the resident. Take an active role in bringing your neighborhood together.

Show interest in your neighbors – meet them and learn their names. You'll find that your neighbors have diverse backgrounds, careers, and experiences. Plan an annual event centered on a yard sale, a barbecue, or a holiday. National Night Out (the first Tuesday in August) is a great opportunity to promote safety and Neighborhood Watch efforts. Invite everyone in the neighborhood to community events, regardless of personal feelings or previous disputes. If you are planning to have a block party, contact the Building and Zoning Department, at (419) 221-5343 for a permit to block off the street.

Be considerate. Your schedule and that of your neighbors may differ considerably. The make-up of your household and community may vary from students, to parents with young children who require early bedtime hours, to those who work full time. Be aware of community issues such as noise, parking, resident zoning laws, trash and property upkeep, and alcohol usage.

We all have different expectations of our neighbors. For some of us, a good neighbor is one who takes time for a chat across the fence or who helps with the chores when a neighbor is ill. For others, a good neighbor is one who leaves us alone. Although we may not agree on all the fine points of neighborliness, we do tend to agree on certain basic standards which allow residents to enjoy their homes and property, preserve peace and quiet in our neighborhoods, help maintain property values, and prevent disputes among neighbors.

If you have a concern, try talking with your neighbor. Calmly explain what is bothering you. It is possible that your neighbor is unaware that the music is too loud or that the dog barks every time it is left alone.

Maintaining Property Appearance

A home is an important long-term investment. Property maintenance codes are designed to protect public health and safety. Maintaining the appearance of the structure as well as the yard is essential to property value and the general welfare of the neighborhood. Property Maintenance can provide you with a detailed list of resident responsibilities. Listed below are helpful hints to be sure that you are contributing positively to the health of your neighborhood.

- ❖ Keep yard free of debris and trash. Do not park vehicles on unimproved surfaces.
- ❖ Grass should be cut lower than 8 inches.
- ❖ Property address should be visible from adjoining streets, alleys, and driveways.
- ❖ Oversized vehicles are not allowed to park in residential areas.
- ❖ Trees and shrubs should not encroach alleys, streets or sidewalks. A 14 foot clearance should be maintained for streets and alleys, 9 feet over sidewalks.
- ❖ Contact Building-Zoning at 419-221-5243 for garage sale permits.
- ❖ Contact Property Maintenance at 419-221-5237 for more information.

Environmental Health

Keeping Lima beautiful, clean, and healthy requires that we take responsibility for community appearance through proper management and disposal of trash and litter. The responsibilities listed below contribute greatly to the quality of life in your neighborhood.

- ❖ Move the trash container and recycling bins back out of sight after collection.
- ❖ Trash container(s) and recycling bin(s) may be placed at the designated collection point after 6:00pm the day before your collection day. Leave four (4) feet of space between containers.
- ❖ Don't take trash containers from vacant property. Containers are assigned to each residential location.
- ❖ Participate in the city's recycling program.
- ❖ Place brush and bulky goods on the front curb after 6:00pm the day before your designated collection day.
- ❖ Don't use school or commercial dumpsters located in the neighborhood to dispose of trash. The schools and businesses pay for this service and dumpsters are for their use only.
- ❖ Contact Utilities Customer Service at 419-221-5294 if you have additional questions.

Polluting of the storm drain system is illegal under City Ordinance. Maintaining water quality and proper drainage is very important and beneficial to all residents and businesses in Lima. You can do your part by adhering to the following guidelines:

- ❖ Pick up pet waste even in your own yard. You drop it, you drink it.
- ❖ Wash your car at a car wash
- ❖ Avoid over-fertilizing your lawn. NEVER fertilize if rain is forecast within 24 hours
- ❖ Repair plumbing leaks and drainage problems immediately to minimize standing water and prevent pollution. Mosquitoes can reproduce in small volumes of water in as few as five days.
- ❖ All wastewater (including laundry and dishwater) must be plumbed properly to the sanitary sewer (not a storm drain or any other area that drains to a storm drain).
- ❖ Use water-based (latex) paints and stains whenever possible and NEVER wash out equipment outside. Use disposable equipment whenever possible and wipe reusable items with disposable paper towels. Follow label directions for proper clean up
- ❖ Soil, grass clippings, leaves and other plant debris clogs our storm drains and increases flash flood potential. Decomposition of organic matter steals oxygen from the fish and minnows in our creeks, ponds and lakes that help control mosquito populations. Yard Waste bags are provided free of charge to residents who present their current utility bill to: Customer Service Center, 424 N. Central Ave.
- ❖ Keep Lima Beautiful! Adopt a Spot or a Watershed and remove the trash from our creeks and ponds.

Neighborhood Safety

A safe neighborhood is a priority valued by many sectors of our community. The best method to keep your neighborhood safe is to get to know your neighbors. The city also has several programs available so that residents take an active role in keeping neighborhoods safe. Contact your Neighborhood Police Officer if you are interested in starting a Neighborhood Watch. To obtain the contact information for the officers in your area, you can contact the CRIME unit of the Lima Police Department at 419-227-4444, ext. 5510. The roadways in our neighborhoods are an important part of safety. If traffic signals are malfunctioning or signs are faded or knocked down, please call the Streets Department at 419-221-5165. The speed limit on all residential streets is 25 mph unless otherwise posted. If speeding is a problem, a speed trailer may be requested to monitor vehicular speed and the installation of street humps may also be considered.

Pets

All dogs over the age of three (3) months must have a dog license every year. Contact the Allen County Auditor's Office at 419-228-3700 or the Allen County Dog Warden at 419-223-8528 for more information. Violations of local ordinances, such as barking dogs, animals running loose, cruelly treated animals, neglect, and excessive animal feces can be reported to the Lima Police department at 419-227-4444. Lima does have a "pooper scooper" and a leash law, so if you take your dog for a walk, take the necessary materials to clean up after it, and always keep the dog on a leash. A fenced yard is the best way to keep your dog from soiling or digging in a neighbor's yard. If yard is not fenced, check pet stores and catalogs for tie-outs.

A barking dog can become a neighborhood annoyance. Excessive barking is frequently the result of boredom or anxiety when a dog is left alone for long periods of time. Regular walks and play with your dog and teaching it tricks will help prevent boredom.

If you are a cat owner, keeping your cat indoors avoids problems with neighbors and your cat is less likely to be hit by a car or encounter an unfriendly dog or attacks by other animals.

Questions regarding pet ownership may be directed to Humane Society at 419-991-1775.

Car Repair & Maintenance

Car repair and maintenance is prohibited on public streets. If your driveway or garage permits, pull your car in to work on it, or contact one of Lima's auto repair shops. Be mindful that leaking car fluids find their way to our storm drains and negatively impacts our water supply.

Let your light shine!

For safety in your neighborhood it is very important to keep your community well lit. If you see a street light out please call: 419-221-5165. Keeping your front and back porch light on at night is also an added safety measure. The cost to keep a 60-watt light bulb on for 10 hours cost approximately 7 cents per night.

Apartment Living

Living in an apartment is very different from living in a house, and being a good neighbor in an apartment building entails different considerations. Perhaps this is most obvious in the fact that walls, parking lots, laundry facilities, and more are shared with virtual strangers. While this situation may be intimidating at first, you can take steps to be a good neighbor and make apartment living a pleasant experience.

❖ **Get to know your neighbors.**

They don't have to become your best friends, but there are many reasons why knowing your nearest neighbors is a good idea. So, as you see them in the halls, laundry room, lobby, or by the mailboxes smile and say hello.

❖ **Understand and follow the community rules.**

Many apartment communities have rules for things like where you can park, where your pet can be, when certain facilities are open, quiet hours, trash pickup, and more. These should all be spelled out either in your lease or in a supplemental set of rules and regulations. Know them and follow them. Your neighbors and landlord will thank you.

❖ **If you have children, understand that many of your neighbors don't.**

On the other side of it they may have kids and you don't. Your childless neighbors probably aren't used to tripping over toys, tuning out yelling, and other adjustments that come with living with children, so be considerate. For those of you without children understand that your neighbors' children have a right to be there, and that they are, after all, children.

❖ **If you have pets, understand that not all your neighbors are animal lovers.**

If your community allows pets, be aware of the rules concerning where they can be when they are outside your apartment. Don't let your dog roam free in the complex and promptly clean up any messes your pets make. If your community doesn't allow pets, don't try to get away with it.

❖ **When it comes time to throw that party, remember your neighbors.**

Let them know ahead of time when the party will be happening. Make sure your guests understand the rules of your community -- including where it is okay to park -- and that they remain inside your apartment (or within your own personal area outside) during the party. And remember: even when you're having a party, quiet hours apply.

Visit the City of Lima web site for more information regarding city services and policies, <http://www.cityhall.lima.oh.us>

A

Appendix

Organizing at a Glance

Chapter 1

Why start a neighborhood association?

To address a particular concern, to empower residents and to build community

How does it start?

Think about your reasons for starting an association. It all begins with an idea.

Who do you talk to?

Talk to your neighbors, share your concerns and ideas and then contact the Office of Community Development

Chapter 2

Organize a core group.

Start with a small group that meets and assigns responsibilities.

Chapter 3

Plan the first neighborhood meeting.

Choose a location, plan your agenda, and then outline discussion points.

Get the word out.

Design a flyer, make signs and advertise in free papers.

Chapter 4

Choose officers.

Consider traits of an effective leader, and make the process inclusive.

Chapter 5

Make the meetings count.

Agendas are important so prepare the room so that you can start on time.

Chapter 6

Opening bank account

Chapter 7

Incorporation and Nonprofit status

Chapter 8 & 10

Building Social Capital should be a priority.

Meet your neighbors, be a good neighbor, and recruit your neighbors.

B

Appendix

Sample By-Laws

HUNTER ESTATES NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION BYLAWS

Article I. – Name

The name of this organization shall be the Hunter Estates Neighborhood Association.

Article II. – Boundaries

The geographic boundaries of the Hunter Estates Neighborhood Association shall be Moore St. (North), Pendleton Dr. (South), Adrian Dr. (West), and Davis (East)

Article III. – Purpose and Aims

The purpose of the Hunter Estates Neighborhood Association shall be to form a voluntary coalition to support projects and programs which promote the common good of our members; to inform, educate, and provide an open forum for the free discussion of all issues which affect our neighborhood and promote cooperative action; to build a better neighborhood by reducing and preventing crime; to develop a cleaner, safer, healthier neighborhood and improve the quality of life for all its residents; to solve problems which exist or arise within our boundaries; and to enable our members to work together to determine the needs of our neighborhood and fully utilize all available resources to respond to those needs.

Article IV. – Membership

Section 1. Individual membership shall be open to any person who is at least 18 years of age who resides, owns property, or operates a business located within the boundaries described above, upon payment of the annual dues. Membership shall be open to a representative from any organization, government agency, non-profit entity, business, church or school which owns property or meets within the boundaries described above. Eligibility is to be without regard to race, creed, color, or national origin.

Section 2. Annual dues will be \$ 25.00 per household or non-residential entity only one vote. These funds will be used for flyers and other materials needed by the Association. Membership dues are non-refundable

Section 3.

Each individual member shall have **or each household or: non-residential entity, upon payment of dues, shall have only one vote.** A representative member shall have only one vote and no organization or entity shall have more than one voting representative. The representative member must have specific authority from the governing board of the entity which he/she represents. Voting by proxy shall not be permitted.

Section 4. Each member of the Association is eligible to serve as an officer, director, or on any committee of the Association, to vote on matters as provided by the bylaws, and to attend any business or social functions of the Association.

Section 5. It shall be the responsibility of the Board of Directors to maintain a current membership list of the Association which shall be open and available for inspection upon request from other members. This list shall be comprised of persons and entities that qualify for membership who have enrolled as members by payment of dues.

Article V - Board of Directors and Officers

Section 1. The Board of Directors shall be composed of not less than five (5) or more than twelve (12) members to be elected at a general meeting of the Association. The directors shall be elected for a two-year term and at least one-half shall rotate off each year to be replaced or re-elected. No director shall serve more than six consecutive years. Those members serving on the Board at the time of these bylaws being approved shall draw lots to determine who shall serve a full two-year term or a one-year term to begin the rotation. The Board should not have two elected officers from the same household.

Section 2. Each year the general membership shall elect the following officers from its membership:

- A. President
- B. Vice-President
- C. Secretary
- D. Treasurer
- E. Parliamentarian
- F. Sgt. at Arms

Section 3. Directors and officers shall serve the term for which they are elected or until replaced. No officer shall serve more than three consecutive terms in the same office.

Section 4. Duties of the officers are as follows:

President: The President shall preside at general membership meetings of the Association and meetings of its Board of Directors. The President shall appoint a parliamentarian and invoke Robert's Rules of Order whenever he/she deems it necessary for any meeting, and shall perform such other duties as may be prescribed by the Board of Directors. The President shall have the authority to represent the Association in its relations with other persons and organizations, except as otherwise provided herein.

Vice-President: The Vice-President shall act as the aide to the President and shall preside at meetings in the absence of the President.

Secretary: The Secretary shall maintain accurate minutes of meetings of the general membership and meetings of the Board of Directors. The Secretary shall be the custodian of all official records of the Association, including the membership list and perform such other duties as the Board of Directors may prescribe.

Treasurer: The Treasurer shall have custody of all funds and shall keep a full and accurate account of all receipts, disbursements, and expenditures of the Association. The Treasurer shall present a financial report at each general membership meeting of the Association and meetings of the Board of Directors. All checks shall require two signatures.

Parliamentarian: The Parliamentarian shall advise the president and other officers, committees, and members on matters of parliamentary procedure.

Sergeant-at-Arms: The Sergeant at Arms is responsible for meeting room preparation, hospitality, and preserving order at the meetings. Shall provide ballots at meetings where a vote is to be taken, count the votes and report the results. They shall oversee the order of meetings and comfort of the assembly.

Section 5. The Association or its Board of Directors shall not enter into any contract in the name of the Association, except as recommended by the Board and approved by the general membership.

Section 6. The business and affairs of the Association shall be managed by its Board of Directors. The Directors shall in all cases act as a Board, and may adopt such rules and regulations for the conduct of meetings and management of the Association as they may deem proper.

Section 7 At any meeting of the Board of Directors, a simple majority shall constitute a quorum for the transaction of business.

Section 8. The Board of Directors shall meet at least four times each year.

Section 9. Any member of the Board of Directors may be removed for cause by a majority vote of the members attending a general membership meeting of the Association.

Section 10 In the event that a vacancy occurs in the Board of Directors, such vacancy shall be filled by a majority vote of the general membership.

Section 11 No member of the Board of Directors of the Association shall receive any form of compensation from any source in connection with the discharge of his/her duty as an officer.

Section 12 A meeting of the Board of Directors may be called at any time by the following:

- A. President
- B. Majority of the Board of Directors

Article VI. – Meetings

Section 1. There shall be a minimum of four (4) meetings per year of the general membership of the Association. The election of the Board of Directors and Officers and the presentation of the annual reports shall be held at the October meeting.

Section 2. A meeting of the general membership may be called at any time by any of the following:

- A. President
- B. Majority of the Board of Directors
- C. A petition signed by no less than the number of members required for a quorum.

Section 3. Notice of any meeting of the general membership or meeting of the Board of Directors shall be given in accordance with procedures established so as to assure reasonable and sufficient notice. Notice shall state the place, date and time of the meeting and the general purpose for which the meeting is held. Notice shall be given a minimum of seven (7) calendar days prior to the meeting. Notice may be given via flyers, email, postcards, or neighborhood newsletter.

Section 4. A majority of the active individual membership at any meeting of the general membership for which proper notice has been given shall constitute a quorum for the transaction of all business of this Association.

Article VII. – Subcommittees

Section 1. The President, with the approval of the Board of Directors, may create and appoint standing or temporary subcommittees with such authority and responsibilities as it deems necessary for the accomplishment of the purposes of the Association. Chairpersons of the standing subcommittees shall be members of the Board of Directors.

Section 2. The standing subcommittees shall include:

- A. Membership
- B. Newsletter
- C. Welcoming
- D. Crime and Safety
- E. Code Compliance
- F. Beautification
- G. Civic Interest

Article VIII. - Parliamentary Authority

Section 1. The conduct of business of the Lima Allen County Neighborhood Association shall be governed by the rules contained in the current edition of Robert’s Rules of Order Newly Revised.

Section 2. The resolution of any internal dispute or any grievance against the Association or its Board of Directors shall be the responsibility of mediation committee comprised of three persons elected from the general membership.

Article IX. – Amendments to Bylaws

These bylaws may be amended at any duly convened general membership meeting of the Association by a two-thirds vote of the members present, provided that notice of the proposed amendment shall have been given at the general membership meeting immediately prior to the one at which the vote will be taken.

Article X. – Miscellaneous

The Association shall not endorse a political candidate or political position. The Association may monitor and act upon zoning and local community issues which affect the neighborhood association area. Any member, including officers, directors and committee chairmen, may, as an individual, support political candidate of their choosing.

Article XI. – Dissolution

This Association may be dissolved by the same procedure as that provided for amending the bylaws. All debts of the Association must be paid and provisions made for the responsible disposition of any assets.

These bylaws adopted this _____ day of _____, 2009.

President _____

Secretary _____

Sample Attendance Roster

Date: _____ Association Name: _____

Name	Address	Phone Number and Email Address
1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		
5.		
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31.		

Secretary/Membership Committee Use Only:

Date Form Received: _____ Amount Received: \$ _____
Form of Payment: Cash or Check Check #: _____

Sample Membership Form

Lima Allen County Neighborhood Association
Membership Form

Annual membership donation is \$25 (per household)

Name(s) of Homeowner/Tenant _____
Street address _____
Home phone _____ E-mail address _____
Work phone _____
Signature(s) _____
Date _____

I would like to help with the following projects:

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Beautification Committee | <input type="checkbox"/> Civic Interest Committee |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Crime and Safety Committee | <input type="checkbox"/> Citizens on Patrol (COP) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Deliver flyers door to door | <input type="checkbox"/> Welcoming Committee |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Membership | <input type="checkbox"/> Newsletter |

Other: _____

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