



## OFFICE OF VICE MAYOR CHAPPIE JONES

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#### **STARTING A NEIGHBORHOOD ORGANIZATION**

A well-organized neighborhood can wield powerful influence when addressing the needs and problems of local residents. The deeper a community's problems are the more neighbors need to be organized in order to bring about change. When you start a block or neighborhood association, you and your neighbors decide what needs to be done as a group. A group representing the community in all neighborhood issues will have the stability, credibility and political clout necessary to be an effective force in creating a better neighborhood.

If you think your building, block, or neighborhood needs to be organized, look over the six steps explained below. The steps are drawn from the experiences of thousands of New York City volunteers whose organizations provide leadership opportunities for young people, plant gardens in vacant lots, fight drugs and crime on the streets and in their building, combat unemployment and racism, and improve the overall quality of life in their neighborhood.

#### **DEFINE THE ISSUES**

Some neighborhood groups are organized as multi-purpose organizations. They bring residents together around a variety of concerns. Others begin as a response to a crisis --a sudden increase in drug sales, an outbreak of racial tensions or a redevelopment scheme drawn up without consulting the community. In either case, you'll want to prepare yourself to represent all the people in your neighborhood.

Talk to other residents to find out what they think the important issues are and what should be done. At the same time, collect information about the issues. If your goal is to plant a community garden, for instance, you'll want to know if there is available space in the community, how to get access to it, who in the neighborhood wants to participate, and what resources exist to help you.

Know the history of the issue or issues that you're dealing with. Your local Community Board, the public library, and the community newspaper are likely to have answers.

#### **RESEARCH THE COMMUNITY**

What's the size of the area you want to organize --one building, a block, or the entire neighborhood? Is there a particular grouping --tenants, homeowners, single parents --who are most concerned and most likely to join the organization?

Find out what resources your community has and talk to the neighborhood business and government leaders.

Take a walk and look at your neighborhood with a critical eye. Where do people socialize? Which local merchants might be supportive? Are there any buildings with rooms suitable for



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meetings? What are the sore spots --vacant lots, abandoned buildings, drug-dealing points, places where youth have run-ins with the police, dangerous street crossings?

#### **BUILD A CORE GROUP**

Recruit a handful of people --three or four are enough --to help you launch the organization. A group has more credibility than an individual and one individual cannot do all the work. Also, if your organization is tackling a drug problem in the neighborhood, working in a group is much safer than working alone.

Find candidates for your core group by talking to your neighbors. Look for people who are committed to the neighborhood.

Talk to leaders of churches, community centers, or similar organizations and ask them whether they know people who may be interested.

#### **HOLD CORE GROUP MEETINGS**

The core group acts as the temporary steering committee until the general membership meeting is held.

When the core group meets, it should come up with ideas for projects to kick off the organizing drive. Start with fairly simple activities like a block cleanup, a letter-writing campaign or a potluck fundraising dinner. This will give the people who come to the first general meeting a beginning list of projects to get involved in; they may come up with other ideas. The first project should give the organization higher visibility in the neighborhood.

Decide which churches, community newspapers, government offices and other neighborhood institutions should know about your organization. You'll want to start contacting them after the first general meeting.

Divide up responsibility for contacting neighborhood institutions, reaching out to local residents (see step 6 below) and arranging for future core group meetings. Individuals from the core group may want to research specific issues in depth and head up a committee on that issue later on.

#### **PLANNING A GENERAL MEETING**

Decide on a time, date and place that are convenient for people in the neighborhood --a weekday evening or a weekend day generally work best. Church buildings, community centers and public libraries are usually easy for neighborhood residents to get to and will often provide a room



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without charge.

When you prepare an agenda for your first general meeting, keep in mind that you're laying the foundation for the organization. Your goal is to come out of the meeting with an agreement on the issues and goals that the organization takes on. A good agenda should include the following:

#### A. Introductions

1. Who's on the steering committee and why they called the meeting.
2. The names of the residents and other people, who are in attendance.

#### B. Discussion of the Problems / Issues

All the people at the meeting should have a chance to voice their opinions and make suggestions.

#### C. Setting Priorities

1. If there are a number of issues that arouse strong interest, you will need to decide which are the most important.
2. Develop projects to address the one or two top-priority issues.
3. Assign volunteers to the tasks that need to be done. If the work is complicated or there are a lot of people involved, ask someone to head a committee on each issue.

#### D. Structure

1. Agree on a name for the organization,
2. You should ask the group to approve the current core group members as the steering committee or choose new leaders for a temporary period of time.
3. The structure should be kept simple during the early going. By-laws can be drawn up and elections held when the organization has more experience and members know each other better.
4. Choose a date for the next meeting.

### **REACH OUT TO THE COMMUNITY**

Getting the word out is crucial to create a well-balanced, fully representative organization.

Be sure to include the time, date, place and purpose of the first general meeting on your printed flyers. Post the flyers in apartment building lobbies, on grocery store bulletin boards, and in churches, schools and other public locations.

Take the flyers door-to-door. Canvass the block or neighborhood you're organizing. Rehearse a few lines ahead of time to introduce yourself and the organization, and be sure to ask the people about their concerns and suggestions. Take down names and phone numbers of interested individuals so they can be re-contacted if they don't make it to the first meeting. Leave everyone you visit with a flyer or something to remind them you were there.



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Be ready for a big meeting with lots of discussion and more ideas than you had expected --but also be ready for a very small meeting. Sparse attendance is common for organizations that are just starting out. If this happens to your group, stay positive and enlist the energies of the people who do show up to keep your community outreach going. Work with what you have. Develop your neighborhood organizing skills, and move ahead. Good next steps that could give your group a higher profile include: taking a survey of neighborhood opinion, holding a community forum, or meeting with the government agencies that are supposed to be dealing with your issues. Good luck.

### **BENEFITS OF A NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION**

All too often, individuals' express concerns about not wanting to have a neighborhood association because they do not want to be told what color to paint their home, etc. In most cases, the individual has confused a homeowner's association for a neighborhood association. The following information will provide the difference between the two associations and delineate the benefits of a neighborhood association.

#### 1. Neighborhood Association:

- This association is resident – neighborhood driven.
- The residents decide on the name of their association and the geographical area (street boundaries).
- Reasons for a neighborhood association are:
  - No one person has to do all of the work.
  - Uniting the neighborhood.
  - Building relationships, Spirit of warmth and neighborliness, strong friendships.
- Creating a stronger voice
  - Stronger voice at City Hall, etc.
  - Set goals that can be reached more readily.
  - Information can be provided to a greater number of residents – neighbors through newsletters, telephone trees, emails. Etc.
  - Harnessing energy and resources within the neighborhood to resolve issues.
- Improve your neighborhood
  - Organizing events and activities that work towards developing a better quality of life within the neighborhood.
  - Beautification projects, traffic calming, clean up days, etc.
  - Unified efforts in the implementation of projects help build stronger



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neighborhoods.

- Safety
  - Knowing and looking out for neighbors – Neighborhood Watch
  - Knowing the Police Department personnel (beat officers and command staff) for better communications and services.
- Community directed policing.
- Having an association makes it easier to develop partnerships and receive donations from businesses for neighborhood events.
- Most associations do not charge a membership fee.
- Residents have a united voice with a Board and by-laws.
  
- Neighborhood Associations are eligible to receive City grant monies through CAP – Community Action and Pride grant program (as well as other resource grants) in order to implement their plan of action – goals.

#### 2. Home Owners Association:

- This type of association pertains to townhouses – condominium neighborhood complexes and the association is formed through the developer.
- This usually does not pertain to single-family dwellings.
- Automatically, a CC&R (California Certificate and Resident) management program is then activated once all of the homes have been sold.
- The CC&Rs then act as the by-laws that spell out everything about maintenance of the buildings, landscaping, painting, swimming pool, etc.
- A Board of Directors is also established and the property owners are then responsible for participating and following through with their responsibilities as pertains to the CC&Rs and for the benefit of the entire housing complex- neighborhood.
- Monthly maintenance fees are also part of the association in order to have a budget for the maintenance of the buildings, etc.

I'm sure that there are many more benefits; these are just some samples. What other benefits come to mind or have you found in your neighborhood?



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#### INTRODUCTION TO ORGANIZING A COMMUNITY

##### **Do-It-Yourself Organizing**

This section is a do-it-yourself guide to grassroots organizing. It focuses on bringing together people who share a common place such as an apartment building, city block, or neighborhood. The focus on people acting together does not diminish the importance of citizens acting alone. Nor does the focus on organizing around a place diminish the importance of organizing around an issue.

Learn-it-yourself organizing before you can do-it-yourself you will have to learn-it-yourself. Most provinces in Canada do not offer full training programs in community organizing. In Canada, our faith in government has placed decisions about our communities in the hands of politicians and professionals.

When you can't do it all yourself a paid, experienced organizer can help when the task is to pull citizens together quickly, or involve people who normally stay at home. Paid organizers often begin by gathering information on the neighborhood, then proceed by introducing themselves to residents, bringing people together in discussion groups, building self-help skills, and finally, training new leaders to take over the organizing task. The presence of a professional organizer may lead some volunteers to wonder why they are working for free while someone else is being paid. A few groups have addressed this problem by turning funds for an organizer into honoraria for volunteers. For tips on hiring a paid organizer see *Taking Action* by Elizabeth Amer, reviewed in "The Citizen's Library".

The Active Ingredients of Organizing Community organizing is often presented as a step-by-step process. The ingredients of a process often make sense, but the step-by-step sequence usually fails to fit actual circumstances. What we've done is look at community organizing from the point of view of its ingredients. Which of these you turn to at any given time will depend on your circumstances. Except for the first, ingredients are added and re-added regularly as part of community organizing. All, as well, are interwoven. For example, planning requires research, which depends on getting and keeping people, which is affected by decision making, which requires evaluating, and so on.

Beginning, where do you begin if you want to become more involved in your neighborhood? Here are some options. Begin with research although professionals often start with research, you don't have to start here. On the other hand, you might be wise to begin with research if you intend to tackle an issue you do not fully understand.

Begin with a community building activity the "Community Building Activities" section of the Handbook lists seventeen informal opportunities for neighbors to meet one another. The bulk of



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community building in Vancouver comes from these activities. The most common are organizing around an Issue, and

#### **Block Watch (Neighborhood Watch)**

Begin by joining an existing group—most neighborhoods have many different kinds of active organizations. Linking up with one of these can be an easy way to get involved. Begin by checking out the groups listed in the "Inventory of Community Organizations".

Begin by starting a new group

If working with an existing group looks difficult, you might have to start a new group. New neighborhood organizations usually form around a core of three to five committed people. Putting together a core of first-rate people is worth the effort. Once you have done so consider these questions:

- What are we trying to do?
- What size of area are we going to organize? (The smaller the area, the easier.)
- Who will support our efforts?
- What is a good idea for our first action? (It should be simple, focus on a local concern, and increase the group's visibility.) How are we going to reach out to others?
- Should we organize a general meeting and invite the community?

Make a special effort to remain friendly with other local groups that have similar goals. Friendliness can replace the common tendency toward competition with the potential of cooperation. Inter-group cooperation is the engine of real progress at the grassroots.

#### **Researching**

Cities behave in tricky ways. What may seem an obvious problem, or an obvious solution often seems less so after a little research. Acting before researching can waste time and energy. It can also reinforce the stereotype of active citizens as highly vocal, but largely uninformed. The stereotype is the most often-cited excuse for dismissing calls for greater citizen participation in local decision-making.

Here is a typical story of what can happen for lack of a little research. People living in a quiet neighborhood receive notice of a proposal to use a nearby residence as a psychiatric halfway house. Fears of "crazy people" running amok prompt them to form an ad hoc citizens group, which moves swiftly into action to combat the proposal. Having skipped research, they don't discover that most special needs residential facilities (or snrfs) do not create problems, or reduce property values. They don't discover that most snrfs are not even known to local residents. Without these facts, the group goes to battle.



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Gather existing information on your neighborhood information on your part of town already exists. The municipal planning department has community profiles, traffic studies, zoning and other maps, aerial photos, and possibly an official community plan. Local health authorities or service agencies may have a needs assessment or more focused studies of your area. Back copies of community newsletters and local newspapers will contain the recent history of many local issues. Your branch of the public library will have copies of many local reports, studies and newsletters.

#### **Find Out What People Want**

In the absence of a single over-riding concern, your group will have to identify neighborhood issues. In any cases you will try to answer the following questions:

- What do residents like about the neighborhood, and what do they want to change?
- What are the opportunities for making the neighborhood more interesting, identifiable, understandable, helpful, and friendly?
- What is the highest priority problem? Who is affected?
- Where is it located? What has been done? What can be done? Who can help?

Give this research some time. A question such as, "What do you like about the neighborhood, and what do you want to change?" can take a group a couple of evenings to itemize, condense and prioritize.

Consider a survey of residents. Any survey requiring face-to-face interaction not only provides information but also helps build community. For details on conducting a listening survey see "The Downtown Eastside Listening Project" in the chapter, "Local Projects".

Go to those in the know, interview those who know what is going on in the community, and those who know how to deal with an issue. Often they are people with first-hand experience. A small focus-group discussion with six teens can reveal more about teens in the community than a survey of 500 adults. Other sources of information are community activists, such as the contact persons named in "Community Building Activities" and "The Inventory of Community Organizations".

Discover your human resources: To really understand your neighborhood, you need to research its capacity to act. Start by answering these questions:





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- Who can help? What resources does our community have: public institutions, business groups, religious organizations, citizen associations, clubs, ethnic groups, sports and recreational groups,
- cultural associations, service groups, major property owners, businesses, individuals? For a practical guide to tapping local capacity see John Kretzmann's and John McKnight's book, "Building Communities from the Inside Out", reviewed in "The Citizen's Library".

#### **How, Why and Where Do People Get Together?**

How do people find out what is going on? Who most influences local decisions, local funding, and local investment? Who has a big stake in the neighborhood?

Research solutions from other places problem in your neighborhood probably exists in other neighborhoods in Vancouver and other cities. Find out how citizens in other places are solving the problem. Connect with residents groups in other parts of the city using "The Inventory of Community Organizations". Check out the books and periodicals in "The Citizen's Library". Ask citizens in other cities for help; if you have a computer and Internet access, post requests on the freenets of other cities.

#### **Planning**

Planning is necessary if you want to avoid wasted activity, and make your collective efforts count. It should move from the general to the specific, from the big picture to the small, from the long term to the short, from "what" to "how". Planning entails: Setting a goal.

Devising objectives (or strategies) to achieve the goal. Devising actions to achieve the objectives.

Look beyond the obvious to find good objectives. In trying to deal with a problem like growing juvenile crime, your group might decide on the obvious objective of getting more police. If you looked beyond symptoms, at causes, you might decide to try to open local schools during evenings. Research can help you look beyond the obvious.

#### **How Do Your Objectives Score?**

Generate ideas for objectives that will lead to your goal, and then decide which to pursue. Test alternative objectives by asking:

Does it have strong group support?

Is it specific enough? ("Reduce crime" is too general. "Eliminate street prostitution on Angus Drive" is specific.)



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Is it easily attainable?

Will it have an immediate visible impact?

How will we know when we've reached our objective? How do we measure progress?

To be effective, your group should pursue no more than one or two objectives at any given time. New groups should begin with small projects having a high probability of success over the short term.

#### **Plan the Action**

Generate ideas that will lead to your objective, then decide which to carry forward. Once your group agrees on an action, create an action plan. It should include a time frame; an ordered list of tasks to complete; persons responsible for each task; a list of resources required including materials; facilities and funds. Keep action plans flexible so you can respond to the unexpected. One good way to identify a group's priorities is to ask people to write their views with thick markers on large post-it notes. Each person sticks their notes to a board or large sheet of paper where everyone can see them. A facilitator then helps the group arrange the notes into clusters with similar characteristics.

#### **Acting**

Once you've completed the necessary groundwork, you need to act. Surprisingly, many groups never get around to acting. John Gardiner says, "Many talk about action but are essentially organized for study, discussion or education. Still others keep members busy with organizational housekeeping, committee chores, internal politics and passing of resolutions." While many interest groups get together just for discussion, community groups tend to work best when acting accompanies talking. Otherwise, they tend to shrink to a few diehards for whom meeting attendance has become a way of life.

#### **GETTING NOTICED**

If you want to expand the number of people who know what you are doing, you need to get noticed. This usually means working with the media. Besides informing a larger public, the media can empower residents, nudge politicians, and add momentum to a grassroots initiative. According to David Enwicht in *Reclaiming Our Cities and Towns*, empowerment comes from simple exposure. "Group members say, 'Did you see we were in the news again. Isn't it great? We are really starting to get places now'". When you understand the media, you can also raise public issues that are being ignored, and reframe issues from a citizen's perspective. Be careful, however, if you are not used to dealing with the media. Many journalists look for stories rooted in conflict, error and injustice. They may impose a confrontational agenda that can actually make it more difficult for you to resolve your issue.



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Assemble a list of sympathetic journalists if you have a positive news story, you may find no one is interested. One way around this is to cultivate a list of journalists who care about community building. Note their deadlines, so you can call after a deadline. Find the media professionals in your community. Seek help from the people in your community who work for newspapers, radio and television stations. They can provide advice on what is newsworthy, how to get attention, and who to call. Most will not want to appear in the foreground, but in the background they will be invaluable.

Define your objective, then your messages. Don't rush off to the media without a clear idea of what you want to accomplish. Use this to create a set of clear messages you wish to project. If you intend to air a problem, one of your messages should suggest a reasonable solution. Make actions newsworthy to get media attention you need to tell a good story with a human focus that is happening now. The more creative, colorful, and humorous, the better coverage will be. Getting noticed is largely a matter of dramatizing issues.

#### **Link Actions to Other News Events**

Your actions will stand a better chance of getting covered if they tie into other events in the news: government announcements, holidays, local conferences, world events, and hot issues. The media like a good feeding frenzy.

#### **Issue News Releases**

Send out a news release if you have fresh information you wish to publicize. Issue the release on your group's letterhead. At the top put "For immediate release" and the date. Next, create a strong newspaper style headline that will interest an editor who has to shuffle through hundreds of news releases every day. The first sentence of the copy should contain the most important fact in your story. The rest of the release should cover the essentials of who, what, where, when and why. At the bottom put "For more information" and contact name and phone number.

Keep the whole thing short, one to two pages double-spaced. For big events send out a news release seven days prior, and then telephone a reminder one to two days before the event. Faxing a release without any personal contact is usually a waste of time.

#### **Aim at TV**

Some of the most effective citizens groups get TV coverage by staging events that provide action and good pictures. Greenpeace, for instance, gets attention by sending little rubber boats buzzing around huge aircraft carriers. Some groups also shoot their own broadcast quality video or create video news releases to help control what is broadcast. Try to schedule actions on dull news days, allowing enough time to process material for the 6 o'clock news. Choose a spokesperson that



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comes across well on TV. On television a great deal is communicated non-verbally through tone of voice, facial expression, and body gestures.

#### **Practice Your Blurb**

For regular TV and radio news you will have 15-30 seconds to make a statement. Practice what you want to say before the event. Your statement or a minor variation can be used in response to any question asked. No one will know the difference.

#### **Reframe stories on live radio**

If you can get on a live radio show you can actually shape the news, because you won't be edited as you would on TV or in the newspaper. Just make sure you know what you want to say.

#### **Write a Letter to the Editor**

Writing a letter to the editor of a community newspaper is an easy way to get publicity. Small papers will publish any reasonable letter that does not require a lot of fact checking. Common Cause, the largest citizens group in the US, did a study, which showed that a letter to the editor was one of the most effective ways of influencing politicians.

#### **Don't Rely on the Media to Educate**

The mass media prefer to entertain. If you want to get out detailed information, you will probably have to do it yourself through newsletters, bulletins and other methods listed in the Handbook.

#### **Consider Other Kinds of Announcements**

Community bulletin boards run by radio and some cable stations can announce your event. So can ethnic newspapers, TV and radio stations. Public service announcements on radio and TV offer another opportunity. For radio, send in public service announcements of 30 seconds or about 75 words. Include a start and stop date, plus information on your organization.

#### **Consider Alternative Media**

Consider printed t-shirts; buttons; window signs; posters; bumper stickers; notices in apartment building laundries, church orders of service, and the newsletters of other groups. For more methods see "Getting People" and "Information Sharing".

#### **Try the Direct Approach**



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Consider phoning or writing those who have the power to put things right. If you have a city-related problem that you cannot solve, even with the help of city staff, call or email a city councilperson.

#### **Evaluating**

Your group will need to evaluate both projects and processes if you wish to improve your effectiveness and stay on track. Unfortunately, many grassroots groups rarely evaluate either.

#### **Don't Evaluate When Trying to Create**

Avoid evaluating and criticizing when trying to generate ideas. If you are facilitating a meeting, prohibit criticism when the group is brainstorming.

#### **Make Honest Evaluation Part of Your Group's Culture**

Make a habit of asking what worked and what could be better for both actions, and projects.

Consider a round to evaluate group process at the end of meetings.

If you don't ask for honest feedback, you won't get it. Unhappy people will simply drop out. To get the most honest feedback, make responses anonymous, and obtain responses from people outside your immediate group.

#### **Check on Benefits to Members**

At the end of actions ask participants about benefits. Did you learn anything? Did you have too little or too much to do? Did you have any fun? Did you feel part of the group?

#### **Compare Results with Objectives**

Is there a gap between what is happening and what you want to happen? If there is a persistent gap, you might consider getting help from a professional organizer. Another way of dealing with a persistent gap is to revise your objectives.

#### **GETTING PEOPLE**

One of the main on-going activities of any grassroots organization is getting more people involved. This is not easy; most people don't like the idea of being "roped into" doing community work in their spare time. The heavy emphasis on the individual by modern commercial culture has driven participation rates below 5% for most community activities. If that sounds low, remember a few people committed to a single course of action can achieve amazing results.



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#### **Ask Members to Invite Others**

Eighty per cent of volunteers doing community work said they began because they were asked by a friend, a family member, or a neighbor.

Go to where people are instead of trying to get people to come to you, try going to them. Go to the meetings of other groups, and to places and events where people gather. This is particularly important for involving ethnic groups, youth groups, seniors, and others who may not come to you.

Never miss a chance to collect names, addresses, phone number have sign-in sheets at your meetings and events. At events organized by others, ask people to add their name, address, and phone number to petitions and requests-for-information. In return, hand out a sheet explaining the nature of your group.

Try to include those who are under-represented Minority language groups, low-income residents, the disabled, the elderly and youth all tend to be under-represented in neighborhood groups. In some cases, not participating is a matter of choice - most transient youth choose not to take part. In other cases, English language competence poses a formidable barrier to participation. In still other cases, people get overlooked. This can happen to the disabled and the elderly, even though they have proven invaluable as active citizens.

#### **Here Are Some Ways to Include the Under-represented:**

- Go to people in the group you are trying to reach and ask how they would like to be approached.
- Address their issues.
- Think about whom you know who knows someone in the group you are trying to reach.
- Use your connections.
  
- Identify a group as people you want to work with, not as a target group you want to bring "on side".

#### **Here Are Some Ways to Include the Under-represented - continued**

- Treat people as people first.
- Organize projects that focus on kids. Parents of different ethnic backgrounds and income levels will meet one another while accompanying their children.

#### **Do Surveys**



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Surveys are a good way to stay in touch, increase participation, and bring in new members. They show your group is willing to respond to a broad base of others, not just those who tend to participate in community activities.

#### **Door-knock**

Door knocking is the oldest and best outreach method. For a how-to description see "Information Sharing."

#### **Create Detailed Membership Lists**

Create membership lists with places for entering name, address, day and evening phone and fax numbers, priorities for local improvement, occupation, personal interests, special skills, times available, what the person would be willing to do, and what the person would not be willing to do. Consider using a computer to update lists and sort people by address, priority, and interests. With such a computer database you can easily bring together people who belong together. Membership lists can also form the basis of a telephone tree, a system for getting messages out to large numbers of people. For suggestions on setting up a telephone tree see "Information Sharing".

#### **Generate newsletters and leaflets**

Newsletters keep group members in touch. Because most neighborhood groups deliver to all residents whether members or not, a newsletter helps attract new people. For tips on newsletters see "Information sharing in Community Building Activities", and "How to do Leaflets, Newsletters & Newspapers" by Nancy Brigham.

#### **KEEPING PEOPLE**

People join community groups to meet people, to have fun, to learn new skills, to pursue an interest, and to link their lives to some higher purpose. They leave if they don't find what they are looking for. Citizens groups need to ask themselves more often: What benefits do we provide? At what cost to members? How can we increase the benefits and decrease the costs? Here are some ideas on where to begin.

#### **Stay in Touch with One Another**

Regular contact is vital. Face to face is best. If you have to meet, getting together in someone's house is better than meeting in a hall.

#### **Welcome Newcomers**



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Introduce them to members of your group. Consider appointing greeters for large meetings and events. Call new contacts to invite them to events, or to pass on information. Help people find a place in the organization. The most appealing approach is to say, "Tell us the things you like to do and do well and we will find a way to use those talents." The next most appealing is to say: "Here are the jobs we have, but how you get them done is up to you." Invite newcomers to assume leadership roles. If the same people run everything, newcomers feel excluded.

#### **Pay Attention to Group Process**

Most volunteer groups do not give adequate attention to how they work together. Decision-making methods are not determined explicitly nor are roles, or healthy behaviors. Some groups make process a topic of discussion by appointing a process watcher.

#### **Discuss the Group Contract**

Set aside occasions when members describe what they expect of the group and what the group can expect of them in terms of time and responsibilities. This information should become part of your membership lists.

#### **Act More - Meet Less**

The great majority of people detest meetings; too many are the Black Death of community groups. By comparison, activities like tree planting draw large numbers of people of all ages.

#### **Keep Time Demands Modest**

Most people lead busy lives. Don't ask them to come to meetings if they don't need to be there. Keep expanding the number of active members to ensure everyone does a little, and no one does too much. Work out realistic time commitments for projects.

#### **Do It in Twos – Team Approach**

Following a practice from Holland, we suggest working in pairs. It improves the quality of communication, makes work less lonely, and ensures tasks get done. Ethnically mixed pairs (such as English and Chinese) can maintain links to different cultures. Gender mixed pairs can take advantage of differences in ways of relating to men and women.

#### **Provide Social Time and Activities**

Endless work drives people away. Schedule social time at the beginning and end of meetings. Turn routine tasks into social events; for example, stuff envelopes while sharing pizza. Some groups form a social committee to plan parties, dinners, and trips.





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#### **Provide Skills Training**

Provide skill-building workshops and on-the-job training. Simply pairing experienced and inexperienced people will improve the skills of new members. Training in leadership, group facilitating and conflict resolution are important enough to warrant special weekend workshops.

#### **Leading**

Good leaders are the key to community organizing. They do not tell other people what to do, but help others to take charge. They do not grab the limelight, but nudge others into the limelight. They are not interested in being The Leader, but are interested in creating more leaders. They recognize that only by creating more leaders can an organizing effort expand.

#### **Model the Effective Leader**

Set realistic expectations--nothing buoys a group more than tangible success. The smart leader will steer the group toward things it can easily accomplish.

#### **Divide-up & delegate work**

Divide-up tasks into bite-sized chunks, then discuss who will do each chunk. Make sure everyone has the ability to carry out their task, and then let them carry it out in their own way. Have someone check on progress. People do not feel good about doing a job, if nobody cares whether it gets done.

#### **Show Appreciation for Work Well Done**

Recognize people's efforts in conversations, at meetings, in newsletters. Give thank you notes and other tokens of appreciation. Give certificates and awards for special efforts. Respect all contributions no matter how small.

#### **Welcome Criticism**

Accepting criticism may be difficult for some leaders, but members need to feel they can be critical without being attacked.

#### **Help People to Believe in Themselves**

A leader builds people's confidence that they can accomplish what they have never accomplished before. The unflagging optimism of a good leader energizes everyone.



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#### **Inspire Trust**

People will not follow those they do not trust. Always maintain the highest standards of honesty. Good leaders air doubts about their own potential conflicts of interest, and about their own personal limitations.

#### **Herald a Higher Purpose**

People often volunteer to serve some higher purpose. A leader should be able to articulate this purpose, to hold it up as a glowing beacon whenever the occasion demands. A good leader will celebrate every grassroots victory as an example of what can happen when people work together for a common good.

#### **Convince Others They Can Lead**

Make the practice of leading transparent. Invite others to lead. Don't try to run the whole show, or do most of the work. Others will become less involved, AND you will burn out.

#### **Meeting**

Meetings are necessary for planning, and decision making. How well they work influences whether people remain in a group. All meetings should be as lively and as much fun as possible.

#### **The basics of meeting**

Fix a convenient time, date and place to meet. You can find free meeting places in libraries, community centers, some churches, neighborhood houses, and schools. Some groups meet in a favorite restaurant or cafe. To keep a group together, decide on a regular monthly meeting time, or think of another way of staying in touch. Agree on an agenda beforehand. A good agenda states meeting place; starting time, time for each item, ending time; objectives of the meeting; and items to be discussed. Start the meeting by choosing a facilitator, a recorder, and a timekeeper. Begin with a round of introductions if necessary. Next, review the agreements of the previous meeting. Ask for amendments or additions to the agenda, and then begin working through the agenda. If you have trouble reaching agreement, refer to "Decision Making" below. Record actions required, who will carry them out, and how much will be accomplished before the next meeting. Finally, set a time, place and an agenda for the next meeting.

#### **Display Everyone's Contribution**

Consider using a flip chart, overhead projector or a blackboard.

#### **Follow a Set of Discussion Guidelines**



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Regular meetings work better if everyone agrees on a set of discussion guidelines.

Some groups post their guidelines on a large sign:

- Listen to others
- Do not interrupt
- Ask clarifying questions
- Welcome new ideas
- Do not allow personal attacks
- Treat every contribution as valuable
- Develop a friendly culture

Encourage humor. Provide food and drink, or meet in a restaurant. Allow for social time.

#### **Decision Making**

Your group should discuss, agree on, and then post guidelines for reaching decisions.

#### **Straw Polling**

Straw polling entails asking for a show of hands to see how the group feels about a particular issue. It is a quick check that can save a great deal of time. To make straw polling continuous, agree on a set of hand signals everyone will use throughout the meeting. These silent signals enable people to gauge how others are reacting moment by moment. They can also provide invaluable feedback for a speaker whom is trying to work with a large group.



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#### **Voting**

Voting is a decision making method that seems best suited to large groups. To avoid alienating large minorities, you might decide a motion will only succeed with a two-thirds majority. Alternatively, you might decide to combine voting with consensus. Small groups usually follow informal consensus procedures. Large groups, on the other hand, often try to follow Robert's Rules of Order without anyone really understanding how to Amend a Motion, or the number of people needed to Move the Question. If rules are used, they should be simple and understood by everyone. Some community groups limit the privilege of voting to people who have come to three or more consecutive meetings to prevent stacked meetings, and to encourage familiarity with the issues being decided. Voting usually means deciding between X or Y. But not always. Some issues will admit a proportional solution, part X and part Y. in such a cases the ratio of X to Y in the solution usually reflects the ratio of people voting for each alternative.

#### **Consensus**

A consensus process aims at bringing the group to mutual agreement by addressing all concerns. It does not require unanimity. Consensus can take longer than other processes, but fosters creativity, cooperation and commitment to final decisions.

At the end, the facilitator states the outcome clearly. For consensus to work properly everyone must understand the meaning of "legitimate concerns". They are possible consequences of the proposal that might adversely affect the organization or the common good, or that are in conflict with the purpose or values of the group. Consensus will not work properly if concerns come from ego or vested interests, or derive from unstated tensions around authority, rights, personality conflicts, competition or lack of trust. Trust is a prerequisite for consensus. If your group adopts consensus as a decision-making method you do not have to use consensus of the whole group to decide everything. You can (and should) empower individuals, committees, or task forces to make certain decisions.

#### **Live with Disagreements**

Get agreement on the big picture, and then turn to action. Don't exhaust yourself trying to achieve consensus on details. On a contentious issue, embracing a variety of positions will make you more difficult to attack.

#### **Facilitating**

The facilitator's role is to help a group make progress. Good facilitating keeps a meeting on track and moving forward. The more people who learn to facilitate the better. If you accept the role of facilitator you must be neutral. You should also try to:

Watch group vibes



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If people seem bored or inattentive, you may have to speed up the pace of the meeting.

If people seem tense because of unvoiced disagreements, you may have to bring concerns out in the open.

Ask open-ended questions.

For instance, "We seem to be having trouble resolving the matter. What do you think we should do?"

#### **Inject Humor**

They're a few better ways of overcoming cranky, niggling or petty behavior. Learn to deal with difficult behavior.

#### **Flare-ups**

When two members get into a heated discussion summarize the points made by each, then turn the discussion back to the group.

#### **Grand Standing**

Interrupt the one-man show with a statement that gives him credit for his contribution, but ask him to reserve his other points for later. Alternatively, interrupt with, "You have brought up a great many points. Would anyone like to take up one of these points?"

#### **Broken Recording**

When someone keeps repeating the same point, assure him or his or her point has been heard. If necessary ask the group if they want to allow the person to finish making their point.

#### **Interrupting**

Step in immediately with, "Hold on, let X finish what they have to say." If necessary, ask the person who tends to interrupt to act as the recorder for the meeting.

#### **Continual Criticizing**

Legitimize negative feelings on difficult issues. You might say, "Yes, it will be tough to reduce traffic congestion on Marguerite, but there are successful models we can look at." If necessary, ask the critical person to take on an achievable task.

#### **Suggest Options When Time Runs Out**



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Identify areas of partial consensus, suggest tabling the question, or create a small subcommittee to deal with the matter at a time of their choosing.

#### **Consider a Round at the End of the Meeting**

Going quickly around the whole group gives people a chance to bring up matters not on the agenda. You can also use a round to evaluate the meeting.

#### **Fundraising**

You do not need to fundraise to begin organizing your neighborhood. However, you will need money to organize large numbers of people, or launch a large action program. If you decide to fundraise, be careful.

You can lose money, and divert time and resources away from your objectives. If you must raise money, here are some suggestions.

#### **Individual contributions**

Asking for contributions from local people turns fundraising into community building.

People become more attached to groups, projects, and places they feel they own.

Money can come from memberships, voluntary subscriptions to newsletters, collections at meetings, door-to-door canvassing, planned giving, memorial giving and direct mail. Lots of books cover these approaches. Some groups make donations tax deductible by registering as a charity with the federal government.

#### **In-kind donations**

Seek in-kind or non-monetary contributions. This includes donations of printing, equipment, furniture, space, services, food, and time. Local businesses respond well to requests for in-kind donations.

#### **Auctions**

Consider a dream auction. Elizabeth Amer writes in *Taking Action*, "Neighbors can donate overnight babysitting for two children, a local landmark embroidered on your jacket, cheesecake for eight, four hours of house repairs. At a big community party, your auctioneer sells every treasure to the highest bidder."



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#### **Grants from governments & foundations**

With so many potential sources of assistance, half the battle is figuring out who supports what. After identifying a possibility, find out about application procedures. Getting a grant usually requires writing up a good proposal. Look for matching grants. In many cases governments will contribute a dollar for every dollar raised by citizens.

#### **Casinos**

A provincially registered non-profit society can make several thousand dollars a night by running a casino. Typically, a group will provide people to help staff the casino over several nights. There is a long waiting list of applications for this fundraiser.

#### **Charging fees**

Consider the possibility of charging fees for services, or products.

#### **Time tithing**

Ivan Sheier, an expert on volunteerism, dislikes the time and energy spent on grant writing and big fundraising events. Instead, he recommends time tithing as a way of producing a steady flow of cash. It is a system that relies on supporters contributing high quality services. A group might advertise such services as conducting a workshop, painting signs, or providing professional assistance. When a supporter performs a service, they do not keep the money they are paid; but have the amount, minus expenses, sent directly to their group.

#### **Grassroots Structure**

Citizens groups should have as little structure as possible. The right amount is just enough to address their goals. In an attempt to become legitimate, many small groups decide they need more structure. Unfortunately, this can lead to spending more time on the needs of the organization than on the reason for getting together.

#### **Networks, Cooperatives, Collectives**

Grassroots organizations seem to work better with a flat structure as free as possible of boards, directors, and chairs. Flatness, or the absence of an organizational hierarchy, does not mean the elimination of individual roles or responsibilities. It does mean the end of people with over-riding authority over other people's work. Citizen's groups must avoid the common mistake of involving small numbers of people heavily. They should strive to involve large numbers of people lightly. Flat organizations, which emphasize horizontal connections, seem to be the best bet for involving large numbers of people lightly.



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#### **Traditional Structure**

Traditional organizational structure seems to dry out the grassroots. Nevertheless, it continues to be recommended by many citizens' umbrella groups in North America. The most successful traditional organizations have:

#### **An Elected Leadership**

Some groups elect a set of officers - a president, one or two vice presidents, a secretary and a treasurer. In order to include people doing important work, some expand the leadership group into a steering committee that includes the chairperson of each committee. Leaders should be elected on a regular basis at well-publicized membership meetings. One or two people should not try to run the organization. When that happens others become less involved.

- Regular meetings
- A newsletter
- A means of delegating tasks and responsibilities
- Training for new members
- Social time together
- A planning process

#### **Provincial Non-profit Societies**

Traditional organizations frequently wind up as provincially registered non-profit societies. The advantages of non-profit status are few, beyond less circuitous access to certain sources of funds. On the other hand, non-profit status means having to follow the rules and organizational structure required by the Societies Act. If you wish to become a non-profit regardless, get a copy of Flora MacLeod's *Forming and Managing a Non-profit Organization in Canada*, published by Self-Council Press.

#### **Committees & Task Forces**

Committees and task forces are the main way jobs are shared. They make it possible to get a lot done without anyone getting worn out. Standing committees look after a continuing group function; task forces carry out a specific task, they disband. Both provide members with a way of getting involved in projects that interest them. A large, action-oriented group might have the following standing committees: coordinating, publicity, membership, outreach, newsletter, fundraising, and research. Many people prefer the short-term projects of task forces, to the work of committees. Ideally, members of committees and task forces are made up of people selected by the whole group rather than by people who are self-selected. If the whole group is confident in a task force or committee it should empower the subgroup to make most decisions on its own. To keep everyone working together, committees and task forces should regularly report back to





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the whole group. For more on the effective distribution of work see Ivan Sheier's book *When Everyone's a Volunteer*, reviewed in the "Citizen's Library", and available from the Vancouver Public Library.

#### **Coalitions**

If you intend to tackle a large issue you will need allies. Approach other organizations by asking to speak on a matter of community importance at their next executive or general meeting. After you have presented, distribute material outlining your objectives, program and budget. A good way of getting agreement is to ask someone from the group you are approaching to help prepare your presentation. A coalition requires that all participants have a clear set of expectations and get together regularly to develop a friendly working relationship. A coalition works best when established for a specific project, and then allowed to lapse when the project ends.

#### **Block Watch/Block Parents**

One of the most formal communities building activities in the city is the Block Watch program sponsored by the Vancouver City Police Department. This highly successful crime prevention program encourages people to keep an eye on the street and their neighbor's property, and to report any suspicious activity to 911. A block is usually organized across the rear lane since most forced entries into buildings occur from the rear. Each Block Watch has a captain and often a co-captain, who undergo a police security check and then receive an identification badge. Block captains usually set up an initial organizing meeting to introduce neighbors to one another. Someone volunteers to draw up a map of the block with names and phone numbers, and to supply copies to the police and other members of the Watch. Police Officers will attend the meeting if requested, to talk about local policing issues and ways of securing your home against theft. They will also provide guides to home security. Police usually advise neighbors to jointly buy an etching pen (\$15.00) so that members can mark their valuables with their driver's license number. Members are then given Block Watch stickers for entry points to their homes.

At present there are 243 Block Watch blocks in the city, including some in co-ops and apartment buildings. In many cases, where Block Watch blocks have formed, other activities have followed, from block cleanups and pet minding to plant swapping. When neighbors get together they find they have more in common than an interest in security.

The Block Parent program is another initiative sponsored by the Police Department. As with Block Watch captains, police run security checks on potential candidates. Block Parents provide a safe haven for children and, occasionally, seniors. When Block Parents are available to answer the door, they post a sign in their window. In an emergency, children who find themselves in trouble can turn to a Block Parent house for assistance.



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Potential Block Parents are often concerned that signing-up will mean constant interruption for non-emergencies, such as drinks of water and trips to the bathroom. According to a Block Parent coordinator in Cedar Cottage, this does not happen. For the most part, children understand they should turn to these houses only in emergencies.

#### **Community Crime Prevention**

Taking part in community crime prevention is a great way to meet your neighbors, and help make your community a safer place to live. Organized citizen participation in crime prevention usually begins with the opening of a Community Crime Prevention Office where people can meet with one another and the police to address local concerns. Staffed almost entirely by volunteers, the activities of an office include promoting crime prevention programs, collecting local crime statistics, referring people with every kind of problem to every kind of agency, sharing community information, conducting workshops, coordinating community clean-up days, and organizing other local projects.

Crime prevention offices are a part of Vancouver's new strategy of community-based policing. The premise behind the strategy is that police need to do more than respond to incidents. They can be more effective if they spend more time on public awareness, partnerships with citizens, and local problem solving. In

#### **Community Crime Prevention - continued**

Vancouver, community crime prevention offices operate in Collingwood at 5157 Joyce Street, in Mount Pleasant at 672 East Broadway, in Grandview at 1661 Napier Street, in Gastown at 12 Water Street, and in Riley Park at 3998 Main Street. Regular crime prevention offices are located in Strathcona at 601 Keefer, in the West End at 200 Burrard, in the Downtown Eastside at 312 Main Street, and in Chinatown at 18 East Pender. Other neighborhoods are in the process of opening their own offices.

#### **Block Parties**

Block parties give neighbors a chance to meet one another in a relaxed setting. To hold a successful block party, you need to do some advance planning. A couple of months ahead you should start thinking about dates, activities, and supplies. And you should start enlisting the help of neighbors. Find out how they can help, and what they can supply. Try to involve as many people as possible, and make sure everyone stays in touch with one another. Block parties can be held in backyards, neighborhood parks or on the street. If you close the street, you must take out liability insurance (\$75.00), and obtain the approval of affected neighbors. You may also be required to obtain traffic barricades (\$250.00) from the city's Special Events Coordinator. If you hold your party at a local park, you should inform the Park Board by calling the number listed below.



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You can make your block party just about any shape or size. A block in Grandview-Woodlands held a very successful block party several years ago, and invited the whole neighborhood. They had live music, helium balloons, face painting and lots of food. Some people came in response to local ads, others in response to the sounds, smells and color of the event itself. Block parties can come at the end of a block cleanup, a block garage sale, or a day of tree planting. They can also have a theme such as a harvest festival or Canada Day celebration. Whatever the nature of your first party, the next will be much easier to organize. On some blocks it becomes an important annual event.

The Park Board is currently looking at simplifying the process of organizing block parties. They hope to provide information kits, and barriers at no cost through community centers.

#### **Block Cleanups**

Fed up with the mattresses rotting in the alley? Tired of litter on your street? Why not organize a block cleanup? A cleanup can get rid of the mess and prevent it from reoccurring by making residents more conscious of the appearance of their block. Just as important, a cleanup can provide an opportunity for everyone on a block to get to know one another. In many small towns, one-day neighborhood cleanups involving adults, kids, and a variety of civic officials have become a recognized way of building community and instilling pride in place. Cleanups can range from a simple litter pick-up, to an operation requiring more planning.

One recent block cleanup in east Mount Pleasant began with a few residents calling two quick meetings to decide on a date and plan of attack. After distributing fliers to the neighbors, they contacted the city. Because group members were willing to do the work themselves, the city provided a truck and two men for loading. On cleanup day, residents not only collected the debris that filled their alley, but went door-to-door collecting large items such as old mattresses, water heaters and other junk. They also helped load the city truck.

Cleaning up your block can extend to graffiti removal, weeding, fence-painting, and hedge-trimming. It can also extend to helping those on your block who lack the strength or resources to maintain their own property.

#### **Organizing Around Hot Issues**

People often organize around a single issue. They get together because they are annoyed or angry about street prostitution, extra taxes, or an ugly building scheme. Often the issue is a proposed change or addition to the neighborhood that is seen as undesirable. Those in favor of changes or additions often describe this kind of activism as NIMBYism (Not-In-My-Back-Yard syndrome), a selfish attempt by residents to keep their part of



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town just as it is, in defiance of some larger public good. They rarely mention how the first towns arose out of the natural tendency for people to band together to oppose disruptive outside forces.

A potential threat may be just what is needed to mobilize citizens. Neighbors in Hastings/Sunrise found strength and common purpose in the discussion surrounding the proposed redevelopment of Hastings Park. Oakridge had no neighborhood organization until community planners began talking about redevelopment – when suddenly the need for a neighborhood "voice" became clear. Kitsilano residents found the need to organize over proposed zoning changes that threatened older houses and low-cost rental accommodation. Glen Park Neighbors got together to deal with an unsatisfactory development proposal for an abandoned supermarket site.

Sometimes an issue can serve to invigorate an existing organization. On one east-side block, neighbors decided to petition the city for paving and lighting in their lane. Their group grew as they contacted neighbors across the back lane to support their request. This in turn strengthened a Block Watch already in place.

But organizing around a hot issue can be a waste of time if it leads to a hardening of positions. Too often, citizens have worn themselves out in fights that might have been resolved to everyone's satisfaction through collaborative problem solving that focused on interests rather than positions. Until recently, most of the books written about community organizing have taken a battlefield approach, because it used to be the only way to influence public decision-making. With the dawning of a new age of co-operation between government and citizens, let's hope that the roundtable will replace the battlefield.

### **Block by Block Organizing**

In the spring of 1993 a number of Mount Pleasant residents decided to create a community organization that included everyone. They wanted a democratic organization with authority vested in a large number of people rather than a small group of self-appointed individuals with a high tolerance for evening meetings. After some discussion they sketched out a model micro-democracy based on block-by-block representation.

This is a block level micro-democracy works. Resident organizers find block reps for every block in the area. A block can either be a block of houses, an apartment block, co-op, or condominium complex. Block reps get to know everyone on their block, and then introduce them to one another. When neighbors first meet, they are often surprised and delighted to discover how many interesting people live on their own block. Once residents know one another, they can elect a block rep. Block reps then elect neighborhood reps, who get together to form a coordinating committee for the area.



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This simple organization can easily link many people over a large area; it can also help to form a much better link between citizens and government. In addition to linking people, block reps can promote mutual aid. At the block level, mutual aid can range from dealing with a noisy neighbor, to finding someone to look after your cat while you are on vacation. The side effect of these small exchanges is a sense of community, a commodity in short supply in the modern city.

Here are some tips when organizing block-by-block. ~ First, make the task manageable by focusing on small neighborhoods. What the City now calls neighborhoods - Kerrisdale, Riley Park, Marpole, and so forth - are actually large areas that each contain many small neighborhoods, encourage each block to act independently.

Only when a problem is too large or difficult for a single block should people from other blocks become involved. ~ Thirdly, organize in twos, so each block has two block reps, and each neighborhood has two neighborhood reps. This provides friendly support, improves information exchange, and reduces workloads. ~ Finally, consider integrating with Block Watch. While the former works across a street, and the latter across the lane, they can support one another.

#### **Kitchen Table Discussion Groups**

A Kitchen Table Discussion group is a small collection of people who get together in someone's home to talk, listen and share ideas on subjects of mutual interest. The host often begins by reminding everyone that there are no right or wrong ideas, and that everyone's contribution is valuable. The host also encourages people to listen, to ask clarifying questions, and to avoid arguing or interrupting. Kitchen table discussion groups are similar to the salons of the past, once the prime vehicle for social change.

Many of the two hundred "City Circles" that contributed to City Plan were kitchen table discussion groups. The city supplied facilitators for many of these groups to help move the process forward, and ensure equal opportunities for input. City planners also used kitchen table discussion groups in the Downtown Eastside to provide a forum for residents of residential hotels to articulate their concerns about development in their neighborhood. The West Point Grey Residents Association used the same approach to develop their own community plan. The B Council for the Family uses the kitchen table discussion process when they want to consult communities about strengthening families and creating healthier communities.

Volunteers, family service providers, parents, grandparents, community elders, teens and professionals gather together to share their concerns and knowledge in this informal setting. The approach, says Carol Matusicky of the B Council For the Family, "helped facilitate a sense of shared ownership and a sense that change is possible, as well as a sense that problems, if not completely solvable, can become manageable."

If you are interested in a broad-based discussion of health in your community, the Ministry of Health will provide you with a kitchen table discussion kit, plus a facilitator or interpreter. Get in



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touch with your local Health Council Planning Group, or the Vancouver-Richmond Health Board Office to find out how people in your community are tackling the large issue of health.

#### **Visioning Exercises**

Guided visioning exercises have become popular in many fields as a way of defining and achieving a desirable future. Recent studies have shown that we are more likely to reach an objective if we can see it, and can imagine the steps to reach it.

Visioning has become a familiar technique in sports. High jumpers, for instance, regularly take the time to imagine themselves going through the steps of jumping higher than they have ever jumped before. Citizens can use visioning to create images that can help to guide change in the city.

In a typical visioning exercise, a facilitator asks participants to close their eyes and imagine they are walking through their neighborhood, as it should be fifteen years into the future. What do they see? What do the buildings look like? Where do people gather? How do they make decisions? What are they eating? Where are they working? How are they traveling? What is happening on the street? Where is the center of the neighborhood? How does green space and water fit into the picture? What do you see when you walk around after dark? People record their visions in written or pictorial form; in diagrams, sketches, models, photographic montages, and in written briefs. Sometimes a professional illustrator helps turn mental images into drawings of the city that people can extend and modify.

#### **Knock and Drop**

How do you tell everyone in your neighborhood about an event they should attend? The Kitsilano Residents Association does a "Knock and Drop." Block reps knock on doors to invite neighbors to attend; if no one is home they drop off a leaflet. Other groups put up posters. Some photocopy machines can turn a leaflet into an 11 x 17 poster suitable for advertising in laundries, community centers and libraries. If you want people to attend your event, the best approach is asking everyone to invite friends, family and neighbors.

#### **NEWSLETTERS**

A newsletter is one of the most common ways of staying in touch. Community newsletters range in frequency from two to twelve times a year. Most are 8 1/2 x 11 printed both sides or a folded 11 x 17 sheet printed both sides. Printing is either by high-speed photocopying or "instant" offset printing. You may be able to defray printing costs by enlisting the support of local merchants, local government, or community organizations. The big job in putting out a newsletter is finding people who are willing and able to write articles that others are interested in reading. Take the time to search out people with the necessary skills to write and edit your newsletter. Other people should be available to deal with printing, funding and distribution.



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To make your newsletter appear worth reading you should also try to find someone with a computer, desktop publishing software and access to a laser printer. Engaging newsletters look like little newspapers with narrow columns, photographs and bold headlines. Try to deliver your newsletter by hand. If you have block reps, they can easily deliver to their own block.

#### **Local Newspapers**

Local newspapers can also help with information sharing. Because newspapers thrive on conflict, you may find a neighborhood solution gets much less attention than a problem. Fortunately, the small papers may be changing their idea of what should go into a newspaper. One of the best known said that it would publish, without charge, articles with a neighborhood focus that were well written and worth reading.

#### **Telephone Trees**

A telephone tree is a fast, person-to-person information sharing technique. It requires a coordinator, and a list of who-calls-whom. An outgoing message starts with the coordinator who calls a predetermined list of ten activators. The ten activators in turn each call another predetermined list of ten people, who in turn each call another ten. It is important to make sure those at the base of the tree are reliable. The coordinator should check by occasionally calling people at the outer tips.

#### **Computer Networks**

Another way of staying in touch with citizens locally and in other cities is through an Internet connection. You can use the Internet to put questions to interested people, simultaneously all over world. Their replies will help you understand what works in other cities. Many schools and businesses have an Internet connection. Those who do not have free access can use a dial-up service provider. Many Internet service providers advertise in the Computer Paper, free in many corner stores and branch libraries.

#### **Fax Networks**

A fax network operates by everyone faxing messages into a central node. They are then sorted and faxed out automatically to a list of subscribers. Until the fax machine (or its equivalent) becomes more common, subscribers will have to use traditional methods to relay information to those who do not have the necessary hardware.

#### **Auto Dialer Networks**



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A new idea for involving large numbers of people lightly is an auto dialer that sends short messages to answering machines. Subscribers receive messages on topics they designate, when they are not at home. The system uses a computer and database directory to digitize voice messages then send them out automatically. Operating on one line, during weekdays, it can deliver a 1-minute message to 5000 people per week. Evenings and weekends, people can dial back to get further information automatically through a touch-tone system. Besides being an effective local broadcasting system that guarantees message delivery, an auto dialer network can also be used for neighborhood polling and elections.





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**Association Information, Profile and Long-term Goals**



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#### SAMPLE BYLAWS

##### Neighborhood Association

###### Article I: Name

The name of this Association shall be (Name) Neighborhood Association. It will hereby be referred to as EBNA, and is located in District 1 of the City of San Jose, Santa Clara County in the State of California

###### Article II: Purpose and Goals

Section 1: (Purpose) The purpose of this Association is to serve as a vehicle for communication within the Easterbrook community, between EBNA and the City of San Jose and other Neighborhood Associations within the area.

Section 2: (Mission) To establish a communication network within the neighborhood and to establish a set of priorities for the neighborhood and then to move forward with those defined priorities.

Section 3: (Goals) The goals for this association will be defined at the first several EBNA meetings

###### Article III: Definitions

Section 1. Standing Definitions. The terms defined as follows shall be considered standing definitions:

- a. Majority. A majority shall be defined as a number greater than one-half (1/2), or fifty percent (50%), of the total.
- b. Organization Quorum. A quorum of the organization is required in order to hold meetings as set forth in Article VII, Section 1, and shall be either a majority of the General Members in Good Standing or seventy-five percent (75%) of the Active Members.
- c. Board Quorum. A quorum of the Board is required in order to hold meetings set forth in Article VII, Section 2, shall be a simple majority of the Board members.
- d. Written Petitions. All written petitions shall bear the signatures of either ten (10) members, or twenty percent (20%) of the voting membership, whichever is greater.
- e. Member in Good Standing. A member is in good standing if their dues are current, their other monetary obligations to the organization are fulfilled, and they have attended at least one (1) previous meeting.
- f. Mailing. A mailing may be by physical or electronic means.



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- g. Active Member. An active member shall be a member who has attended at least one of the three (3) previous regular organization meetings as set forth in Article IV, Section 1 of these bylaws.
- h. Annual Meeting. The annual meeting is the meeting at which the officers shall be elected for the ensuing year, and at which other significant business is conducted in accordance with these bylaws, and is described in Article VII, Section 3 of these bylaws.

Section 2. Provisional Definitions. All terms not previously defined as standing Definitions shall be defined according to the current edition of MERRIAM-WEBSTER'S COLLEGIATE DICTIONARY

#### Article IV: Membership

Section 1. Membership Types. There will be two distinct types of members, Associate Members and General Members.

Section 2. Associate Members will be any person age 18 or over who would like to join and resides or owns property within the neighborhood boundaries.

Section 3. General Members will be any person or family representative age 18 or over who resides within the boundaries of the neighborhood association.

Section 5. Boundaries. Neighborhood boundaries will be loosely defined as North of Venice Way, South of Borina Drive, East of Brentwood Drive and Del Cambre Drive and West of Saratoga Ave.

Section 6. Voting. For each occupied residential address within the association boundaries only one vote may be cast. Only General Members who are Members in Good Standing shall have the right to vote.

Section 7. Voting Method Voting may be done through a show of hands or verbal forum for regular agenda items. When voting for officers or other action items, members may use secret ballot. Voting on certain items may also be conducted by mail in any manner that the board shall determine.

Section 8. Annual dues. EBNA shall request from Association Members an annual contribution of \$10. EBNA shall request from General Members an annual contribution of \$15. Should the amount of dues be fixed in the bylaws, or suggested by the Board and approved by the membership at the annual meeting?

Section 9. Termination. Memberships may be terminated voluntarily:

- a. by resignation. Any member may resign from the organization upon written notice to the Secretary.
- b. by lapsing. A membership will be considered as lapsed and automatically terminated if such member's dues remain unpaid thirty (30) days after the deadline for payment of dues. However, the Executive Board may grant an additional thirty (30) days grace period to such delinquent members in exceptional cases. In no case may a person be entitled to vote at any



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organization meeting whose dues are unpaid as of the start of that meeting, or who are sixty (60) days in arrears of other monetary obligations to the organization.

Section 10. Refund of Dues. Membership dues will not be refunded either wholly or in part for any reason save extreme circumstances as determined by the membership.

#### Article V: Organization

Section 1. The EBNA will run in a democratic fashion. No one person will have governing power to act upon or approve any decision without majority vote from the EBNA core members and board.

Section 2. This organization's hierarchy is comprised of its general membership, voting membership, designated block captains, a core group of members in active participation in the direction and actions of the association, and a Board of Officers.

#### Article VI: Officers

Section 1. Executive Board. The officers of the organization shall constitute the Executive Board. The Board of Officers shall:

- a. Be responsible for conduct and management of the Association;
- b. Supervise preparation and maintenance of the procedures and guidelines for the Association and its activities
- c. Appoint ad hoc committees as needed
- d. Budget and approve all expenditures.
- e. Be subject to the orders of the organization, and none of its acts shall conflict with action taken by the organization, and the organization may countermand any decision of the board by a majority vote.

Section 2. Officers. The organization officers, consisting of the following, shall serve in their respective capacities both with regard to the organization and its meetings and the Board and its meetings.

- a. President. The president shall coordinate all Association activities, preside at meetings of the Association and the Board, and shall have the general powers of supervision and management of the Association.
- b. Vice President. The vice president shall assume the duties of the president in the officer's absence and shall be responsible of maintaining up-to-date records of members.
- c. Treasurer. The Treasurer shall be custodian of the Association funds and shall supervise the handling of funds of any enterprises of the Association. The Treasurer shall assure the keeping of proper financial records and report regularly to the membership; pay budgeted requests as directed by the board and collect all money due or belonging to the organization and maintain all funds in a bank satisfactory to the Board in the name of the organization.



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- d. Secretary. The secretary shall be responsible for keeping the minutes and preparing the agendas for the Association meetings. The Secretary shall keep a roll of the members of the organization with applicable information, including attendance at meetings of the general body.
- e. Communications Officer. Shall be responsible for editing the newsletter, maintaining association website, and has the responsibility of correspondence at the direction of the Chairperson.

Section 3. Officer Requirements. Officers must be General Members in Good Standing.

Section 4. Term of Office. The term of office shall be for one (1) year. Officers will be elected at the first annual meeting to serve for that year. No officer may hold the same position for more than three (3) consecutive terms in the same office. No member may hold more than one office on the Board at the same time. Officers shall train their successors and turn over all records in a current condition.

Section 5. Vacancies. If an officer is impeached, resigns, or becomes ineligible to hold an office, the office shall immediately become vacant. If the office of President is vacant the Vice President shall immediately assume the office of President until the expiration of the President's term of office. For any other vacancy, the Board shall appoint an eligible Member as a replacement until the expiration of the term of office. The replacement should be voted in by the Board as soon as the Association knows of a vacancy on the Board.

Section 6. Elections. Elections for the officers shall happen at the Annual Meeting.

Section 7. Nominations. Nominations for officers shall begin at the Core Meeting immediately preceding the Annual Meeting.

Section 8. Recall of Officers. Any officer may be recalled for misconduct or dereliction of duty. A written petition, stating the reason(s) for recall, shall be filed with the Board. Written notice of such a petition shall be mailed to the membership. At the next core meeting at least six (6) days after the mailing, a hearing on the matter will be held and a two-thirds (2/3) vote will be required to sustain the recall.

#### Article VII: Meetings

Section 1. Association Core Meetings: The board and the membership shall meet at least once a month on the third Tuesday of each month. The President may call special meetings at any time and shall call a Special meeting upon telephone request of three (3) members. In either case, a three (3) day notice shall be given.

Section 2. Board Meetings: The President may call special meetings of the Board at any time and shall call a Special meeting upon telephone request of three (3) members. In either case, a three (3) day notice shall be given

Section 3. Open Meetings: Any person may attend any Meeting held by the Membership or any subsidiary body, unless the Meeting in question has been designated as a Closed Meeting.

Section 4. Closed Meetings:



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- a. The Membership may at any time designate an association meeting or a part of an association meeting to be a Closed Meeting by a majority vote. Only Voting Members in Good Standing may attend a closed association meeting without a special invitation from the membership.
- b. The Board may at any time designate a Board Meeting or part of a Board Meeting to be a Closed Meeting by a majority vote of the Board. Only the members of the Executive Board may attend a closed Board Meeting without a special invitation from the Board.
- c. Only the outcomes and final decisions entered in the minutes of a Closed Meeting are to be discussed outside of that Closed Meeting.

Section 5. Parliamentary Authority: The rules contained in Robert's Rules of Order, Newly Revised shall govern all meetings in all cases to which they are applicable and in which they are not inconsistent with these Bylaws and any special rules of order the Membership may adopt.

Section 6. Parliamentary Rights: All Members have the right to participate in debate. The right to make motions is reserved for Regular Members in Good Standing.

#### Article VIII: Amendments to these Bylaws

Section 1. Proposal of Amendments: Amendments to these bylaws may be proposed by the Executive Board or by written petition addressed to the Recording Secretary. Amendments proposed by such petition shall be promptly considered by the Board and must be submitted to the members with the recommendations of the Board by the Secretary. The proposed amendments will then be placed on the agenda of the second subsequent Regular Meeting, at which time the proposed amendments shall be acted upon.

Section 2. Adoption of Amendments: An affirmative vote of two thirds (2/3) of the total number of General Members in Good Standing shall be required to adopt any proposed amendments to the Bylaws.

#### Article IX - Dissolution of Assets

The property of this association is irrevocably dedicated to community education, prevention, intervention, preservation, maintenance, and enhancement. No part of the Association income shall ever inure to the benefit of any officer or member. Upon dissolution or winding up of the Association, its assets remaining after payment of its debts and liabilities, shall be distributed to a nonprofit fund, a foundation, community group, or a corporation organized exclusively for the purposes and goals established by the Association.



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#### DECISION PLANNING MATRIX PROCESS

The decision planning matrix is a simple process to help a group develop a short-term and long-term plan.

The process is one where when connected with the Community Asset Mapping Process, can develop an entire plan, including individual responsibilities and a time line.

The process will flow as follows:

1. Ask the group to list those areas of concern, problems, and issues in the neighborhood.
2. List the issues as they are identified
3. Group the issues (i.e., parking problem, speeding through the neighborhood, abandoned vehicles = city services)
4. Review the Decision Planning Matrix
5. Take each item (or groupings) and place them in the box. Ask the group to decide which areas the group has a high level of control, a high potential for success etc.
6. Review the items in the “High Group Control – High Potential for Success”, that should be your short term plan
7. Review the items in the “Low Group Control – High Potential for Success”, that is your long term plan
8. Use the individual information developed during community asset mapping process to identify who has skills that can be used for each item the group will work on.
9. Use the Time- Line Form to create the tasks for each area the group will work on
10. Use the Action Plan Form to develop individual responsibilities. (you can develop one form using the two forms provided in this training.

This process will facilitate the group in identifying actions, and developing a plan.



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#### DECISION PLANNING MATRIX

High Group Control High Potential for Success	Low Group Control High Potential for Success
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#### THE ACTION PLAN

When you have decided on working on an issue you need to develop a plan on how you will proceed.

1. Define the outcome
2. Identify the first step necessary to start (meeting, who should be there and why)
3. Brainstorm the issue, creating a list of what needs to be accomplished first.
4. Put the list in chronological order (what needs to be completed first).
5. Discuss and agree who will be responsible for what.
6. Develop benchmarks (what should be accomplished by when and how do we check if the item has been completed).
7. Develop follow-up (meetings, email, telephone calls) to check the progress.
8. Complete the task(s) and the project





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9. Compare to the initial desired result.

10. Discuss the project, what worked, what didn't, what would you change.

**GROUP NAME:**



**ACTION PLAN (YEAR)**

Use this form to develop your action plan. After individuals have identified themselves and their commitment, create follow up meetings that will include an update of each action item from the plan.

Desired Action/ Activity	Responsible Person (s)	Timeline/ Completion Date	Cost	Desired Outcome
<b>Sample: Outreach &amp; recruitment</b>	<i>John G.</i>	<i>Jan, May, June</i>	<i>\$100</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>Increase in community participants</i>



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#### TIPS ON ORGANIZING AND MAINTAINING A GROUP

**Identify the Leaders:** Find the right two or three people early on who have leadership qualities and help them develop them. Always remember that the members should run the group, not you as staff person. If you do this, they can gradually assume the leadership so that when you back away, the group stays strong and representative.

**Find funding:** The ability to cover members' childcare costs and travel expenses is crucial. It also helps to have money to pay for coffee and cookies at meetings.

**Advertise:** Get the word out. Not paid ads, but use the media that's available – Cable TV shows, bulletin boards and newspaper 'Coming Events' sections. Send a press release to the local media about the group's start-up; they will often do an article about it. Do a simple flyer for your meetings and special events and have local agencies and food banks post it and distribute it for you. Get your events mentioned in local agency newsletters.

**Plan Meetings Well:** Keep the members' needs in mind when planning the initial meeting(s). Weekend or evening meetings are usually better.

**Have a clear purpose for the meeting,** try to start on time, and stick to the agenda. It's frustrating to sit in a meeting without a clear purpose. Waiting too long to start the meeting until others show up wastes the time of those who came on time.

**Use Community Asset mapping for the early meetings:** The first few meetings you should use the community asset mapping process to develop the skills set of the group. This process will provide the group with skills of the individuals and provide a positive way for the group to look at its self prior to looking at the negative aspects of the neighborhood or reason for organizing

**Make good use of volunteers:** Make sure there is a role for all the people who want to volunteer. It helps to make a list of every task that has to be done. A good process to use is the matrix evaluation process. This will connect the community asset mapping skills to the needs of the neighborhood.

**Get a Dynamic Speaker:** This is especially important for a kick-off meeting for a new group or a campaign. Once the group gets going it's useful to bring in members of government agencies, local politicians, leaders of neighboring associations, leaders of other community based groups.

**Relate to People's Own Experience:** Use the matrix process to identify the issues of the neighborhood. This will provide them with a reason to come back. Let them know that the group can make things better if they're willing to work at it. Find out what their needs and concerns are. It's easy to do, just ask them to tell you what's wrong with the neighborhood, or local politics.



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**Pick a Small Problem and Solve It:** Using the matrix process identifies those areas that are of high group control and high probability of success. Having a success story to tell is an excellent recruitment tool for new members. It's also a good media story.

**Start the Real Work:** Now it's time to begin the planning process of analysis and strategy required if your group is going to succeed. If you match the community asset matching skills with the matrix issues you can develop a work plan that will rely on people skills as well as their likes and dislikes.

At the same time you begin this work on local issues, you must involve the members in the "big picture" and that means education. Looking at the local issues is the right starting point, but it isn't enough. The members need to know how their concerns fit into the larger issues, and understand the need to work at that level too.

**Get Networked!** This helps a lot with the "big picture" issues, as well as providing comfort and confidence for the members when they can see that other groups out there working for the same goals. Find out what other agencies are working in and around your neighborhood and set up times to meet with them. Invite them to your meetings.

**Build Local Coalitions:** There will be issues your group identifies that will require collective action to solve. Coalitions can be very fluid, coming together when there is an issue to work on, or they can meet on an ongoing basis even when there is no immediate crisis

**Keep building the group:** Don't forget to keep recruiting new members. Keep in mind why people join organizations and coalitions:

- They are personally affected themselves by the issue;
- A friend or another person they respect asked them;
- They feel compassion for those affected;
- They dislike the opposition;
- They are looking for an outlet for their own abilities.

Keep an up-to-date list of the people who participate with telephone, fax numbers and e-mail addresses. Often local agencies, churches or unions that participate can contribute communication capacities – they may be able to handle faxing and e-mailing people. Don't forget that a lot of people have had to give up their telephones. Make a plan for contacting them, perhaps through friends.

**Remember to Celebrate!** It is important that groups create celebrations. This brings unity in the community. The easiest way to develop a small celebration is around food or children.

## **TOOLS FOR COMMUNITY ORGANIZING AND ACTION RESEARCH**

What is Action Research?



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Action research is a method for simultaneously gathering knowledge and understanding (research) and seeking. This makes it somewhat different from traditional research where the impact and use of knowledge is a secondary consideration. Action and research can enhance each other. Action that is informed by knowledge is more effective. Research that is connected to change is bound to be more grounded, relevant and meaningful.

Action research is usually, if not always participatory - the people who are directly affected are actively involved in the research, not just as passive subjects. Letting people choose the level of participation is better than trying to impose some predetermined model.

There are different levels of involvement:

- Non-involvement or as passive subjects;
- Consultation, through representatives;
- Direct consultation;
- Participants set goals, identify and interpret information and develop and implement plans;
- Participants as co-researchers;
- No outside involvement - participants undertake full responsibility for the work.

It usually includes a process of critical reflection and evaluation.

Lastly, action research is usually qualitative, although not exclusively.

#### Steps in Undertaking Action Research

The easiest way to start is to hold a planning meeting with your group to look at the options and decide which you want to take on. Make sure to begin plan for the action component that you want the research to feed into right at the beginning of the process.

##### Identify resources

You'll need resources to carry out even the simplest project. Think through each step and what will be required down to the smallest details - photocopying, telephone calls, transportation money, and access to a computer.

##### Look for partners

Quite often many of these kinds of resources can be provided by partner organizations in the community. Organizations that can't provide money can often provide 'in-kind' resources like photocopying. Make a list of likely partners such as sympathetic community agencies such food banks and social service organizations. Labor Councils and local unions are often willing to help with local projects as well.

Don't forget about local colleges and universities as well. There may be faculty with research experience who would participate in your project. Many colleges and universities will have social work or social service programs with students whose course requirements include a field placement. A placement supporting an action research project with a community-based organization would fulfill their requirements perfectly. This will be particularly helpful if you intend to undertake a more



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complicated project like a questionnaire where you want to collect data from a large and representative group of people.

#### Conduct the research

This is not nearly as intimidating as it sounds. Each of the model research tools in this kit has general instructions for how to use it to conduct a simple research project. Again, with more complicated tools like surveys, it is probably helpful to have someone on the project team who is familiar with this kind of work, but with common sense and some care non-experts can do high quality, meaningful research.

#### Report what you find

Make sure your results get out to the community. This kit contains a section on using the media and community action.

#### Link your work to community action

Action research is intended to bring about change. Without the link to action it is just more knowledge.

## DISCUSSION GROUP, GENERAL INFORMATION

### Developing a discussion group

Choosing a discussion group depends on the time and resources that are available. You need to use a method that is sound and efficient. You can start by choosing people you know who are involved, such as other workers, community groups, anti-poverty groups etc. You can ask your initial contacts to name other people who may be interested. Some things you may want to think of as you are choosing your focus group:

- Experience: do your informants have the experiences needed in order to investigate the program.
- Availability: will people speak to you? Can you locate people or have the means to find someone who can? Will language be an issue? Is translation a possibility? Can you provide for the participants needs; for example, child care.
- Range and variety: different people have different experiences. Do the people you are going to select have the experiences you want to know about?

### What is a discussion group?

It is a gathering of a group of people, preferably 8 to 10, who have similar experiences and are open to discussing topics related to the research. A discussion group is like interviewing a group of individuals at one time.



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#### How to run a discussion group

- First and foremost the consent, information sheet, and confidentiality agreements must be provided and agreed upon.
- Choose a location which is suitable; comfortable accessible, private, and a safe place to talk.
- Get a person to record or to take notes about the discussion
- Use a flip chart to help people see the issues while they are talking
- The facilitator should have a list of questions or topics to help guide the process
- At the end, the information should be written up, you should use a flip chart to take notes
- The facilitator or discussion leader should point out the ground rules around the discussion and introduce themselves and the person who will record the meeting information.
- The group members should be made aware of ethical issues especially the confidentiality among group members

#### Why use a discussion group

- The discussion groups can be used to supplement information obtained by surveys, interviews or questionnaires.
- Discussion groups permit the researchers to access the perspectives of several people at one time
- Participants can compare experiences and encourage each other to discuss concerns
- Focus groups are most effective when the topic is one that individuals feel comfortable and ready to discuss in a group setting

#### Here are a few proposed guidelines:

- Respect one another, talk at your turn so we can record your impressions properly, try and not interrupt other when they are speaking. There may be issues that surprise or anger you in this discussion as we have learnt from experience.
- What we need is for you to tell us about your experiences and suggestions; there is no right or wrong answers.
- Please leave us your name and a contact number, email address and we will send you a report when it is completed.

Food is always helpful: (There are cookies and coffee available, feel free to get up and help yourself at any point. We will take a break about half way through).

Discussion groups are valuable because they can both develop the needs of a neighborhood group and design the program to meet those needs.



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**Meetings**



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**SAMPLE AGENDA**



**GROUP/MEETING NAME**

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Date:

Time:

Place:

**OUTCOMES**

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- 
- 

**AGENDA**

What (Topic)	How (Process)	Who	When (Time)
<i>Sample: Project Status</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>Update Presentation</i>	<b>J.J Consultants</b>	<i>6:00pm-7:00pm</i>
<i>Grant Proposal</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> <i>Check for agreement</i>	<i>Phil P.</i>	<i>7:00pm-8:00pm</i>





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#### ROBERT’S RULES OF ORDER

##### What Is Parliamentary Law (Roberts Rules)?

Parliamentary law (Roberts Rules of Order) is a series of rules that were formulated to facilitate the transaction of business and structure within a group or assembly. The name “Robert’s Rules of Order” is named after the American book of parliamentary rules published in 1876 by Henry Martyn Robert.

##### Principles of Parliamentary Law

The overall principals of parliamentary procedure are based in some basic principals, expectations of members and rights.

##### Basic Principles and Expectations

**Majority-vote decisions:** All decisions will be made by a majority vote of the authorized members of the assembly.

**Equal rights and privileges:** Every member possesses the same rights. This means each member has the rights to propose motions, to debate them, to oppose them and to run for offices.

**Equal Obligations:** Each member is expected to be responsible for various (basic) duties as part of the assembly. Those include

- Attend Meetings
- Be on time
- Stay until the end of the meeting
- Be ready to talk knowledgeably on a topic
- Be attentive
- Be open-minded
- Participate actively in the meetings
- Work with others in a cooperative fashion
- Treat everyone with courtesy and respect
- Speak openly, but also allow others to speak
- Follow the rules of debate
- Make points concisely
- Attack issues, not people
- Abide by the final decision of the majority
- Respect the chair’s opinions and rulings.
- Insist on order during the meetings
- Be familiar with then basic rules of parliamentary law
- Select well-qualified officers
- Participate in committees

**Protection of minority rights:** True democratic organizations, those governed by parliamentary law, protect certain basic minority rights, which can never be infringed upon. These include the following rights:

- The right to be heard
- The right to protest
- The right to seek and convince
- The right to understand fully the question under discussion



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#### How to use Robert's Rules of Order in a Meeting

The method used by members to express themselves is in the form of moving motions. A motion is a proposal that the entire membership take action or a stand on an issue. Individual members can:

1. Call to order.
2. Second motions.
3. Debate motions.
4. Vote on motions.

There are four Basic Types of Motions:

1. **Main Motions:** The purpose of a main motion is to introduce items to the membership for their consideration. They cannot be made when any other motion is on the floor, and yield to privileged, subsidiary, and incidental motions.
2. **Subsidiary Motions:** Their purpose is to change or affect how a main motion is handled, and is voted on before a main motion.
3. **Privileged Motions:** Their purpose is to bring up items that are urgent about special or important matters unrelated to pending business.
4. **Incidental Motions:** Their purpose is to provide a means of questioning procedure concerning other motions and must be considered before the other motion.

How are Motions Presented?

1. **Obtaining the floor**
  - a. Wait until the last speaker has finished.
  - b. Rise and address the Chairman by saying, "Mr. Chairman, or Mr. President."
  - c. Wait until the Chairman recognizes you.
2. **Make Your Motion**
  - a. Speak in a clear and concise manner.
  - b. Always state a motion affirmatively. Say, "I move that we ..." rather than, "I move that we do not ..."
  - c. Avoid personalities and stay on your subject.
3. **Wait for Someone to Second Your Motion**
4. Another member will second your motion or the Chairman will call for a second.
5. If there is no second to your motion it is lost.
6. **The Chairman States Your Motion**
  - a. The Chairman will say, "it has been moved and seconded that we ..." Thus placing your motion before the membership for consideration and action.
  - b. The membership then either debates your motion, or may move directly to a vote.
  - c. Once your motion is presented to the membership by the chairman it becomes "assembly property", and cannot be changed by you without the consent of the members.
7. **Expanding on Your Motion**



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- a. The time for you to speak in favor of your motion is at this point in time, rather than at the time you present it.
  - b. The mover is always allowed to speak first.
  - c. All comments and debate must be directed to the chairman.
  - d. Keep to the time limit for speaking that has been established.
  - e. The mover may speak again only after other speakers are finished, unless called upon by the Chairman.
8. Putting the Question to the Membership
- a. The Chairman asks, "Are you ready to vote on the question?"
  - b. If there is no more discussion, a vote is taken.
  - c. On a motion to move the previous question may be adapted.

#### Voting on a Motion:

The method of vote on any motion depends on the situation and the by-laws of policy of your organization. There are five methods used to vote by most organizations, they are:

1. By Voice -- The Chairman asks those in favor to say, "aye", those opposed to say "no". Any member may move for an exact count.
2. By Roll Call -- Each member answers "yes" or "no" as his name is called. This method is used when a record of each person's vote is required.
3. By General Consent -- When a motion is not likely to be opposed, the Chairman says, "if there is no objection ..." The membership shows agreement by their silence, however if one member says, "I object," the item must be put to a vote.
4. By Division -- This is a slight verification of a voice vote. It does not require a count unless the chairman so desires. Members raise their hands or stand.
5. By Ballot -- Members write their vote on a slip of paper, this method is used when secrecy is desired.

There are two other motions that are commonly used that relate to voting.

1. Motion to Table -- This motion is often used in the attempt to "kill" a motion. The option is always present, however, to "take from the table", for reconsideration by the membership.
2. Motion to Postpone Indefinitely -- This is often used as a means of parliamentary strategy and allows opponents of motion to test their strength without an actual vote being taken. Also, debate is once again open on the main motion.

Parliamentary Procedure is the best way to get things done at your meetings. But, it will only work if you use it properly.

1. Allow motions that are in order.
  2. Have members obtain the floor properly.
  3. Speak clearly and concisely.
  4. Obey the rules of debate.
- Most importantly, *BE COURTEOUS*.



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**Full and free discussion:** The right (and expectation) that the committee or assembly will have a full and free discussion on every issue brought to the table.

**Simple and direct procedure:** This procedure will not become bureaucratic, it will maintain a straightforward process which all will be expected to understand and participate.

**Order of motions:** The introduction and disposition of all motions is governed by a definite, logical order.

**Consideration of one question at a time:** To expedite business and prevent the meeting from disintegrating into chaos, only one question can be considered at a time.

**Voting:** Before members vote, they have the right to know the question before the assembly. It is the responsibility of the presiding officer to keep the motion before the assembly, clear at all times.

**Delegating duties:** As the organization progress', it is expected that many of the duties necessary to run the organization will be delegated to members of the assembly.

**Maintaining impartiality:** The rules of parliamentary law must be administered impartially. Presiding officers serve the organization most effectively when they remain strictly neutral.

#### Rights of Members

Parliamentary law protects the rights of the members to be dealt with fairly and equitably. The following member rights are guaranteed under parliamentary law-the right to:

- Receive notices of meetings
- Attend meetings
- Make motions
- Second Motions (when they need a second)
- Debate motions (when they can be debated)
- Vote on notions (except where there is conflict of interest)
- Nominate people for office
- Be nominated for office
- Elect people to office
- Be elected to office
- Know the meaning of the question people are debating
- Object when the rules are being violated
- Appeal the decision of the chair
- Be protected from personal abuse and attack
- Have access to minutes of meetings
- Receive the treasurer's report
- Get a copy of the organizations bylaws



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#### Motions

##### How to run a meeting

- a. Chair calls meeting to order and state the time
- b. Secretary takes roll (visually, calling out names, etc.)
- c. Approval of minutes (This is the time to fix any changes on minutes then go to motion)
- d. Approval of agenda (Items can be added then go to motion)  
(Approval of minutes and agenda only needs a second)
- e. Report of officers
- f. Report of committees
- g. Old business (where motions that have been tabled from the last meeting)
- h. New business (to make meetings run faster, all voting is done here)
- i. Announcements
- j. Adjournment of meeting (motion must be made and second. No need to vote)

##### Chair duties

- a. Speakers list – take down names of who would like to speak
- b. Motion – Chair cannot MAKE a motion but can PROPOSE a motion by stating “I entertain....” Then a member makes a motion.

##### A motion will take this path:

- M Motion made
- S Second
- D Debate
- A Amend (if necessary)
- M Majorette Vote (pass/reject)
- R Reconsider

##### General Rules

- a. Majority quorum – a total number of active members in order to vote
- b. 2/3 of votes – if voting on a document such as the bylaws, 2/3 must be present to pass (Example: *Total members present is 20. 2/3 is 10 +4 =14 to pass*)
- c. Point of order – if you feel the info given out is incorrect one must state “point of order” then state the correct information
- d. Point of information – called anytime when you feel that there is more info to be added to a subject that is being discuss or announce
- e. Acclamation – anyone can call when it looks like everyone hands are up during voting
- f. Table – If one feels that the discussion is taking to long, one can motion to table till next meeting or any date proposed)



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#### How to Make Motions

Motion	What to Say	Second	Debate	Amend	Vote
Adjourn	"I move that we adjourn." Majority	Yes	No	No	
Adjourn at a future time	"I move that we adjourn at [specific time]." Majority	Yes	Yes	Yes	
Adopt a report	"I move that the report be adopted." Majority	Yes	No	No	
Amend a motion	"I move to amend by adding ..." Majority or "I move to amend by striking out..." or "I move to amend by inserting the word before [or after] the word..."	Yes	Yes	Yes	
Avoid debating this motion in improper motion	"I object to consideration of 2/3"	Yes	No	No	
Complain about the physical conditions	"I rise to question of None privilege." None	Yes	No	No	
End debate	"I move the previous 2/3 question." 2/3	Yes	No	No	



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Give closer study (move to committee)	“I move to refer the Majority matter to committee.”	Yes	Yes	Yes
Introduce Business	“I move that [insert Majority specific motion].”	Yes	Yes	Yes
Postpone business	“I move to postpone Majority discussion until...”	Yes	Yes	Yes
Protest a breach of rules or conduct	“I rise to a point of order.” None	No	No	No
Recess	“I move that we recess for...” Majority	Yes	No	Yes
Reconsider an action	“I move to reconsider Majority the vote on [specific issue]	Yes	If debatable	No
Request information	“Point of information.” None	No	No	No
Suspend an issue	“I move to table the motion.” Majority	Yes	No	No
Suspend the rules	“I move to suspend the rules Majority so that [specific issue]	Yes	No	No
Take up a tabled issue	“I move to take from Majority the table [specific issue]	Yes	No	No



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Verify a vote by asking members to rise	“I call for a division.” None or “Division!”	No	No	No
Vote on the chair’s ruling	“I appeal the chair’s Majority decision.”	Yes	Yes	No





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**Project Planning**



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#### Neighborhood Event Planning: It's More Than A Party

By Kathleen Sutherland and Debra Yantis

Goals of the Event - any event should be a unique expression of your neighborhood association. It should have long term impact on your community, not just one-day of entertainment. The event should be informational, inspiring and community building. All participants, especially volunteers, should be touched, moved and inspired by the whole experience thus producing great visions for the next event.

#### Planning the Event - The First Commandment: Start Early

The Five Questions you must answer -

- 1) Why?
- 2) What?
- 3) When?
- 4) Where?
- 5) How?

Why –

- Why are you having this event?
- Is it truly necessary?
- Will it leave your community enriched?
- Will it make a difference a year from now?
- What will be your measurable definition of success?

What –

- What is the theme of your event?
- What is it meant to communicate about your community?
- Do you want to be known for this image over time?
- Choose carefully.

When –

- Check the calendars of other local agencies and groups to see if there is a lot of competition for attendance on that date.
- Is it a holiday?
- The week that school starts?
- Morning or afternoon event?

Where –

- If you want to close your street you must apply for a Permit from the San Jose Police Department. Permits number is 277-4452.



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- If you want your event in a City Park outside of the Downtown Core – call Leininger Center at 277-4191.
- Choose the site carefully - shade, bathrooms, water, electrical outlets, permission from surrounding neighbor's etc.
- Once you begin to go through the Street Closure or Park Use Permit – you will need to make sure that all of the regulations are understood and followed. You can never ask too many questions. Pay attention to all the small details

How -

- Effective organization, sub-committees, volunteers, funding etc.

Insurance!! – Make sure you have coverage for the event!

Some Possible Sub-Committees Necessary for an Event

- Garbage – this is a problem that can take you by surprise if you don't make arrangements ahead of time. Consider how many garbage cans you need around the site.

Be sure to designate a few for recyclable stuff, like cans plastic water bottles and plastic utensils. We need to be responsible about the environment. Before the event figure out how you are going to dispose of the trash. Will you need to call for a special pick-up? Can you divide it as part of the household waste? Just be sure to have a plan. When budgeting for the event, remember to include garbage bags and the fee for an extra pick-up if necessary. Finally the person in charge of garbage needs to see it through until the last bag is hauled away.

- Facilities Management – Who is responsible for the site layout? Who will order the appropriate equipment? Who will ensure that all the required permits and regulations are followed?
- Media & Community Notification – Ask for help from your council member. Who do you want to attend your event? What is the best way to contact them?
- Food – First rule: Don't poison anybody!!! So make sure everything is properly refrigerated or kept on lots of ice and in coolers. Especially in the hot summer. Your Food Volunteer must be very aware of this and skilled enough to handle the responsibility.

It's pretty standard to ask all neighbors to bring a side dish. This usually works out well. Then the Neighborhood Association can provide the meat for the BBQ and buns and beverages. Tailor the food to your type of event. Be sure to have your Food Volunteer label and keep track of peoples serving dishes and utensils. You will inevitably have some pieces left behind and someone needs to play lost & found after it's all over.



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- Entertainment – Where will the audience sit? Where will the sound go? Who will be in charge of greeting the entertainers? Is there an MC? What are the special requirements of the performers? Music: live bands, DJ's, large boom box (most of these can be had for free). Dancers: any local folk group, ballet schools, cheerleaders, whatever -- it's all fun. Theatre: small plays or street theatre. Include the kids. Workshops: demonstration tables of any sort - needlework, craft projects, skate boarders demos, astronomy, garden stuff, HAM radio guys, painters, etc.
- Kids Tables & Games – Not all activities are appropriate for all ages. Adults who have experience with children are most appropriate to design the activity. Adult supervision is always required.
- Contests & Prizes – Do you have/need judges? Contest length of time. Can you keep the attention of the crowd?
- Resource Fair – Any event is a great opportunity for enrollment into the activities of the neighborhood, as well as a useful center for information. Be sure to have one table set up for your Neighborhood Association with sign-up sheets to gather addresses and email lists, information about the Association and the date of the next meeting.

Other programs that are available for resource fairs are the San Jose City Recycling Program, various departments of Parks and Recreation, SNI, local health centers, Food Bank, Emergency Preparedness, Adopt-A-Park, etc.

- Clean up – The toughest job to fill. Make sure you have enough people to help you clean up. Try and make this job as fun as possible
- Documentation & Database – What worked? What needs to change?
- Volunteers – Keep them watered and if possible – fed! Realize

They will not share the same passion for the event as your committee members. Say Thank-you!

- Tables, tents, awnings, etc. - Carefully lay out (draw a site map) of how many tables, chairs, awnings, podiums, stages, sound equipment, etc you will need. Be generous. These items may be borrows from residents and/or rented from party rental stores. Delivery and pick-up of rented items is usually available for a nominal fee. I highly recommend that you pay the fee to have them do it. It is a huge hassle and a backbreaking experience at the end of a hard day - skip it if you can.

### Making It Special

It's important to generate some creative and fun aspects of the event that will make it memorable for all those attending. You may want to stage any number of old fashioned contests such as Best Dessert in the Neighborhood, Dance contests, Funny Dog Costumes



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or Funny Hat Contest that will give folks a chance to show off a little and be silly and laugh together. These are great photo opportunities. Put them on a quick web site afterward for everyone to enjoy, or publish the winners and photos in the next newsletter.

Also at the Party Rental store there are a variety of fun machines such as Sno-Cone and Popcorn machines that everyone likes. The helium balloon tanks are inexpensive. And depending on the site there are fog machines and bubble making machines, which add a certain ambience.

#### Inviting Notables

Most City officials (such as councilpersons or the Mayor) are happy to make a showing at neighborhood events, but they must be given A LOT of notice. Their calendars are very full and you've got to book them early. They are often happy to be judges in contests or to announce awards. They usually cannot stay for long but will put in an appearance. Many of the staff writers at local newspapers are willing to come - especially if they cover neighborhoods or the arts or some relevant issue - in their regular column. Also local disc jockeys may be available or some local television host. Special people at your event make it feel even more special.

#### Funding

If you plan well and far enough ahead, you may be able to receive a grant for your event before it happens. If not, you will have to pay out of pocket and be reimbursed when the grant money arrives. Events can be expensive. Make sure you have a few folks who are able to carry the balance for awhile until the grant money arrives. Figure this all out **LONG BEFORE THE EVENT** -- no last minute financial surprises.

There are several sources for funding through the City such as the Community Action and Pride Grant (CAP) and the SJ BBQ.

Beautification Fund. Be sure and keep all receipts and careful bookkeeping for your records. They re necessary in order to receive grants.

#### Post Script

After it's all over be sure and have a quick de-briefing meeting with everyone involved in creating the event. Write down people's impressions of how it went. Take notes on the things that worked and the things that didn't work. Thank your volunteers profusely both publicly at the event and one-on-one afterwards. No volunteers mean no event. They are your most valuable resource. Congratulate yourselves for a job well done and never,



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never, never place blame or judgment on anyone for any kind of mishap. Take responsibility collectively and not how you'll do better next time. But most of all HAVE FUN - DON'T TAKE ANYTHING TOO SERIOUSLY -- KNOW YOU'RE DOING YOUR BEST FOR YOUR COMMUNITY. Take pride in that.



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**Financing, Fundraising, and Grants**



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#### EIGHT SIMPLE STEPS TO OPENING A BANK ACCOUNT

(This information is intended as a courtesy from the Neighborhood Development Center. There is no guarantee of its accuracy of any information provided herein. Each party should consult their own legal advisors and tax advisories, and this document should not be relied upon as any form of legal advice or tax advice.)

1. Select an official name for your group.
2. Decide which bank is going to be most convenient for your Treasurer to use (one near home, or near their job...)
3. Call this bank and ask to speak to a customer service representative. Ask that person what they require for a grass-roots neighborhood group account (some ask for copies of your by-laws, some do not...). Also ask for the minimum amount necessary to open your account and for any monthly fees (can they be waived?)
4. You will want to have an Employer Identification Number, also referred to as an “EIN” (formerly TIN). This prevents any one member of the group from having to use their Social Security Number to open the account. Using a SSN means that the money that goes through the account would show up on that person’s taxable income at the end of the year, and that person would have to pay tax on the money!
  - Keep in mind that if your group makes \$25,000 or more in one year, the IRS may require you pay taxes on it! City Grant funds cannot be used to pay any IRS penalties or late fees!
5. To obtain an EIN, you need to complete the appropriate form from the IRS. As of the date of this document, the current form is the “SS-4” form. These forms are available online ([www.irs.gov](http://www.irs.gov)) or through the NDC.
6. There are several ways you may complete the form:
  - You may complete the form online at <http://www.irs.gov/businesses> and click on “Employer ID Numbers” under “topics”; or
  - By telephone at 1-800-829-4933 (it’s helpful to complete the form before calling); or
  - Fax the completed form to 215-516-3990 (takes approximately 4 days to receive a fax with your EIN); or
  - You may mail the form to Internal Revenue Services Center, Attn: EIN Operation, Philadelphia, PA 19255. To verify receipt, call 1-800-829-4933.





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7. Take the new EIN number down to the bank, along with whatever other information to the bank requires. We strongly urge that at least 2 responsible members of your group go to the bank to sign for the account. Neighborhood Association accounts should require two signatures to withdraw or pay money out. This protects your group from one person having complete control of the funds and provides some protection against inappropriate withdrawals.
8. If you do not have a grant check to deposit at this time, you will need to use other funds to open the account. Save a receipt from this transaction and the organization should reimburse individual(s) if they used personal funds to open the account when the organizations receives funds from its fundraising efforts or from grant funds.

### **BEST PRACTICES ON ADMINISTERING THE SPENDING OF YOUR GRANT**

Now that you're group has received grant money, now it's time to spend it. Here are some tips to ensure a successful relationship between the grant-funder and your organization:

- Assemble a grant committee and share the work. Assign responsibilities and set timelines. Know who will be doing what and by when.
- Create ground rules and follow them. If you make decisions, get support from the committee, don't work alone.
- Everyone on a committee receiving grant funding should be knowledgeable on what the group has received funding for. Read the proposal and the conditions of funding. If you need clarification, ask the administrator (treasurer), the proposal writer, and/or the funder.
- Be aware of what the funder will ask for. (i.e. sign in sheets, photos, narratives and other requirements).
- As soon as you know a timeline won't be met, communicate with others (committee members, treasurer and the funder)
- If you hit an obstacle, discuss with others in your group and funding source. You may find that an activity is not doable after all.
- Keep accurate records with supportive documents. Ask for and save all receipts!
- Make copies of receipts – some receipts are light sensitive and fade quickly



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Simple accounting tips:

- Keep records of your grant spending. Create a simple budget sheet.

Date	Vendor	Description	Amount	Purchased by
Sample 9/1/05	Safeway	10 gal of ice cream for Ice Cream Social	\$56.78	Joe Smith

- Put all receipts and supporting documents in a manila envelope and label “Grants”
- Break out money into envelopes and label with their intended purchase (i.e. bounce house, ice cream, decorations). Once the money is spent, put receipt into envelope
- Remember to Communicate – Communicate – COMMUNICATE: Communicate with your committee members, communicate with the board, communicate with the funder.

*If you would like more information or would like to attend a training on “Handling the Money” contact the Neighborhood Development Center at (408)723-4114 or via email at [ndc@sanjoseca.gov](mailto:ndc@sanjoseca.gov).*



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**Attachments**