



## **City of Bloomington, Indiana Housing and Neighborhood Development**

### **NEIGHBORHOOD ORGANIZATION GUIDE**

#### **Why Have a Neighborhood Association?**

There are many avenues to become involved in your neighborhood and community.

The most direct link to neighborhood involvement is the Neighborhood Association. Neighborhood Associations work to proactively enhance the quality of life by unifying the voice of the neighborhood while mobilizing commitment for neighborhood issues and initiatives. The Neighborhood Association provides a place to meet your neighbors, organize social events and bring your voice to the table about decisions affecting your property and neighborhood.

[Housing and Neighborhood Development Department \(HAND\)](#) has staff available to help you make your Neighborhood Association work for you, and as City representatives, the employees of HAND can inform you about the many resources available to Bloomington neighborhoods. HAND can help neighborhoods navigate through City departments and services and provide them with the needed information. HAND has a wide array of written materials and provides technical assistance to help set up and maintain a Neighborhood Association. Start off with the Bloomington Guide for Neighborhood Associations. So, a simple call to 812-349-3505 or e-mail [provinev@bloomington.in.gov](mailto:provinev@bloomington.in.gov) can open up a world of possibilities.

#### **The Benefits of a Neighborhood Association**

A Neighborhood Association can be a fun way to meet people, participate in interesting discussions and feel more “in-control” of your destiny.

Through a neighborhood association, residents can:

- Protect investments.
  
- To work proactively to enhance the quality of life.

- To create a unified voice for the neighborhood.
- To mobilize commitment for neighborhood issues and initiatives.
- Empower neighborhoods, as a collective have a voice in issues that have an impact on the neighborhood.
- Provide the neighborhood with an effective communication link with government officials and other influential groups.
- Help members work for the preservation and improvement of the neighborhood.
- Members take part in the decision making that directs the neighborhood actions.
- Plan social activities for the neighborhood that build neighborhood unity.

### **On to Organizing the Neighborhood**

First of all, remember there is a Neighborhood Services staff person in HAND that specializes in helping you to organize a Neighborhood Association. HAND will furnish you with a Tool Box of materials and information and work with you every step of the way in organizing your neighborhood.

Things to consider:

- Do you have a core group of committed neighbors to form the association? Once you get started you talk about how to get other neighbors involved.
- What will be the neighborhood boundaries? Are their natural boundaries, i.e., streets, waterways or schools? HAND can furnish you a map of your area that denotes the boundaries of the neighborhoods around you. There is map with a complete listing of all the registered Neighborhood Associations online on the City website in the Neighborhood Maps section.
- Plan on getting the word out that neighbors are interested in forming a neighborhood association, plan a place, date and time for the meeting. Recruit neighbors to help distribute flyers to all the residents in the area. The City can make copies of your flyers for you.

### **Your First Neighborhood Meeting**

You will need a meeting facilitator and an agenda for the meeting. Some helpful things to place on the agenda for the first meeting can include.

1. A “Welcome and Introduction” period – this can be a time for HAND staff, any existing neighborhood leaders, you and/or the attendees to introduce yourselves to the group.
2. A discussion about neighborhood associations and issues important to your area – this is a good time for HAND and you or other leaders to talk

about the necessity of organizing and the possibilities out there for the association. HAND would be more than happy to speak on this topic at your first meeting.

Also, this meeting is a great time for residents to list concerns that they would like to address in the neighborhood, and mention any “fun” projects or fund raisers. Those ideas, and any other new ones, can be listed on a board or sheet large enough for the whole group to see. There are some questions that can be posed to the group, to help facilitate this brainstorming session.

They are:

- What are the strengths that you see in the neighborhood?
  - What are the concerns you have about the neighborhood?
  - What are the causes of the problems?
  - What projects would we like do, for business, for fun, in our neighborhood?
3. Announcements – for the new association this can be a good time to have HAND staff members talk about current opportunities open to neighborhoods.
  4. Pick block captains – the group should split the neighborhood up into small areas on a map and try to get at least one person (preferably living in that area) to volunteer to be a block captain. These people are responsible for the door-to-door activities for the association.
  5. Adjournment – end the meeting on time, talk with those who attended and see what is a good time for regular meetings, from there make a plan for the next meeting and what topic(s) should be on the agenda.
  6. Social time – if the group is somewhat large, allow some time for mingling. This can be very important, as it allows neighbors not only to get to know each other and get to know other quests, but also gives them a one-on-one atmosphere to discuss issues further. It is often advantageous to have this after the meeting rather than before, as by that time residents will have issues fresh on their minds.

This first meeting should last, at most, an hour. Hopefully, this first meeting will get neighbors excited about the next meeting, where they can begin to really take action on their ideas.

### **After the First Meeting**

You and your neighbors made it through the first business meeting. You have spent some time getting to know each other, heard about the possibilities, talk issues, and built enthusiasm toward contributing to the future of the neighborhood. What can you do next?

In the early stages of a neighborhood association, after the first meeting, the group should choose leaders, choose a name, select boundaries and start even start committees! This is

in addition to any other activities of particular interest that the neighborhood would like to pursue.

### **Summary of things to keep in mind for all meetings**

- Give the neighbors notice of meetings
- Keep minutes
- Have an agenda and stick to it
- Keep meetings at 1 hour
- Frequently invite guest speakers to come to meetings
- Utilize HAND and other City staff members as resources
- Allow time for those working on a committee to report progress
- Allow time for any new issues or concerns to be heard
- Remember to always talk about positive developments
- Do fun activities and allow some time for mingling

Once your neighborhood is on its way to organizing as Neighborhood Association you will want to have the group vote on the constitution and the by-laws (samples provided below)

- [Sample Constitution and By-Laws of a Neighborhood Association ran with Officers or an Executive Committee.](#)

Who is eligible to be a voting member in your association will need to be discussed. Generally speaking, it is best for the future of the group to be as large and multi-sectored as possible.

Once the neighborhood has approved the By-Laws and Constitution, then you can register your neighborhood with HAND. The advantages are that your neighborhood will be recognized and City officials and staff will be able to contact the neighborhood when there is an issue for you to be aware of. Also it places your neighborhood on the City Neighborhood map.

- [Neighborhood Registration Form](#)

### **Communications/Publicity**

It is important for the association to have some strategies for effectively passing information on to members and residents.

- **Email distribution list** – email is one of the most effective methods of relaying information to your neighborhood.
- **Newsletters** – newsletters are a way to notify residents about association activities builds cohesion and educates the neighborhood.

- **Flyers** – flyers are a great way to notify residents of upcoming events, are easy to make and can be quickly distributed.
- **Newspaper announcements/press releases** – these are easy to write, and quite effective in getting the word out to the community about the projects or events that your neighborhood is sponsoring.

## **OPPORTUNITIES FOR NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATIONS**

There are a number of opportunities currently existing for neighborhood association leaders and members.

1. **Information on HAND neighborhood programs and services can be accessed on our website at [www.bloomington.in.gov/neighborhoods](http://www.bloomington.in.gov/neighborhoods)** - HAND offers a wide array of services and programs for neighborhood organizations. The web site offers pertinent information on neighborhood programs and applications can be down loaded for your convenience.
2. **Sign up of [“THE HAND UPDATE”](#)** – HAND has an email distribution list that informs Bloomington residents of programs, services and news of interest to neighborhoods.
3. **Enroll in the [Citizens’ Academy Class](#)** – HAND developed the Citizens’ Academy class to offer neighborhood leaders the opportunity for an interactive learning experience about City services, programs and responsibilities.
4. **Apply for [Neighborhood Grants](#)** – the HAND Department offers an array of funding opportunities for neighborhoods. Check the web site for updated information
  - [Neighborhood Clean Up Grant Program](#)
  - [Neighborhood Improvement Grant](#)
  - [Small and Simple Grant](#)
5. **Register your Neighborhood with the HAND Department** – by filling out the [Neighborhood Registration Form](#) – your neighborhood association will become official in the eyes of the City of Bloomington. Registering your association will enable City officials to contact the group about upcoming decisions that may affect your area.

## **IN CONCLUSION**

We hope this information will help you not only get excited about forming a neighborhood association, but also give you some tools to make it happen. An organized neighborhood association provides a very real service to residents of the area. Your unified voice will be heard and all of Bloomington benefits from the combined power of citizens working towards community improvement.

HAND offers a hard copy of the “Bloomington Guide for Neighborhood Associations” along with a neighborhood tool kit to neighborhoods who are beginning to organize,

contact Angela Van Rooy at [angela.vanrooy@bloomington.in.gov](mailto:angela.vanrooy@bloomington.in.gov) or 349-3505 to help you on your way!