CITY OF BLOOMINGTON
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 needed information. HAND provides technical assistance to help set up and maintain a Neighborhood Association.

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.
- Work proactively to enhance the quality of life.
- Create a unified voice for the neighborhood.
- Mobilize commitment for neighborhood issues and initiatives.
- 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.
- Take part in the decision making that directs the neighborhood actions.
- Plan social activities that help to build community and a sense of place within your neighborhood.

Organizing your Neighborhood

Visit the HAND Neighborhood Associations website for links to helpful information. Contact HAND Neighborhood Services staff for assistance in helping you to organize a Neighborhood Association. HAND will 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, talk about how to get other neighbors involved.
- What will the neighborhood boundaries be? Are their natural boundaries, i.e., streets, waterways or schools? HAND can furnish you with a map of your area that denotes the boundaries of the neighborhoods around you. Maps of all register neighborhood associations can be found here: (1) city map of all registered NAs, (2) individual neighborhood maps.
- Get 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. HAND can make copies of your flyers for you.

Your First Neighborhood Meeting

Designate a meeting facilitator and a note taker. Create an agenda for the meeting. Invite HAND Neighborhood Services staff.

Some helpful agenda items include:

1. Welcome and Introductions.
2. A discussion about why a neighborhood association is desirable.
    a. Include a brainstorming session on community building activities.
    b. HAND staff presentation about City resources available to neighborhoods.
3. A discussion about issues important to your area.
    a. Include a brainstorming session on neighborhood strengths and concerns.
4. Designation of Block Captains
    a. 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 responsible for the door-to-door activities for the association.
5. Adjournment
    a. Determine a good day and time for regular meetings.
    b. Identify topics for the next meeting's agenda.
    c. End the meeting on time.

Build in time to mingle and socialize after the meeting. This can be very important, as it not only allows neighbors to get to know each, but also gives them a one-on-one opportunity to discuss issues further, while issues are 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.

**DON'T FORGET a sign-in sheet to collect names, addresses, emails, phone numbers so you have a means of contacting one another.

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, talked about issues of concern, and built enthusiasm toward contributing to the future of the neighborhood. What can you do next?

Meeting 2: Begin the process of formal organization:

1. Choose leaders.
    a. Steering committee?
    b. Officers?
2. Choose a name.
3. Select boundaries.
4. Consider committees
5. Determine how you will communicate
    a. Collect email addresses?
    b. Create a listserv or Google Group?
    c. Use an existing app such as Nextdoor or Facebook?
    d. Create a neighborhood association website?

Meeting 3: Continue formal organization (Understanding the constitution & bylaws)

1. Develop a constitution and bylaws
    a. A constitution serves to clarify your purpose, delineate your basic structure, and provide the cornerstone for building an effective group. It will also allow members and potential members to have a better understanding of what the organization is all about and how it functions
    b. Bylaws set forth in detail the procedures your group must follow to conduct business in an orderly manner. These can be changed as the needs for the organization change.
2. Use this template, which combines the elements of a constitution and bylaws into one simplified document. ***This template also outlines the minimum***

standards required in order for your organization to be officially recognized by the City.

Summary of things to keep in mind for all meetings

- Give neighbors plenty of advance notice of meetings.
- Keep minutes.
- Have an agenda and stick to it.
- Keep meetings to one 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.

Register with the City

Once the neighborhood has voted to approve the constitution and bylaws, you may register your neighborhood association with HAND. The advantages of registering include:

- City staff will have an easy way to contact the neighborhood when there is an issue of concern for your area, or when there are City programs of interest to neighborhoods.
- Your neighborhood will appear on the City Neighborhood map.
- Your neighborhood will be invited to apply for HAND neighborhood grants and to attend the annual Blooming Neighborhoods Celebration.

To register, download and complete this Neighborhood Registration Form and email it, along with a copy of your bylaws, to the Angela Van Rooy, at angela.vanrooy@bloomington.in.gov.

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.
- **Social Media** – you may wish to create a Facebook group, or use an app such as Nextdoor to communicate with your neighbors.

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 bloomington.in.gov/neighborhoods** - HAND offers a wide array of services and programs for neighborhood organizations.
2. **Sign up for The HAND Update: Bloomington's Neighborhood Newsletter** – The HAND Update is emailed once a month and contains information on local programs, services and news of interest to neighborhoods.
3. **Enroll in the Residents Academy** – The Residents Academy offers neighborhood leaders the opportunity for an interactive learning experience about City services, programs and responsibilities. Gaining better knowledge of the inner workings of City government can be advantageous when your neighborhood is working on a grant-funded improvement project.
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

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 residents working toward community improvement.

If you're ready to organize, contact Angela Van Rooy, Neighborhood Services Program Manager at HAND, to help you on your way! angela.vanrooy@bloomington.in.gov or 349-3505.