

STRATEGIES

FOR DEVELOPING NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATIONS



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STRATEGIES

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What is a Neighborhood Association and What Does It Do?

A neighborhood association is a group of residents who meet regularly to accomplish neighborhood goals. The association may include homeowners, renters, apartment residents, business owners, nonprofit organizations, church members and school officials. Depending on the organizational goals, meetings may be held twice a year, once a quarter or every month.

Neighborhood associations facilitate communication between residents and local government to support change, organize improvement efforts and help organize volunteers for community projects.

It is important to identify some of your goals before you ask others to form a neighborhood association. Goals should be specific, measurable, realistic and achievable.

Goals for improving your neighborhood may include hosting or helping with:

- Workshops about hot topics such as property maintenance, hurricanes
- Property Maintenance
- Regular Neighborhood/Park Clean Ups through the City of Clearwater Adopt-a-Park/Street/Trail Programs
- Social events, block parties, movie nights or local bands
- Holiday-themed events such as parades, trick-or-treating
- Creating a neighborhood business discount program
- Putting bows on mailboxes or doors for holidays, patriotic flags in yards, community holiday tree
- Annual town hall with local officials
- Neighborhood Holiday Light Contest and Awards
- Yard of the Quarter/Year Competition
- Neighborhood Food/Can Drive
- Storm Drain Murals
- Little Free Libraries

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Why Should Your Neighborhood Have an Association?

Neighborhood Associations Build Relationships

A neighborhood association is one of the best ways to build relationships between neighbors. Residents of a neighborhood may go years without knowing neighbors two doors away. A spirit of warmth and friendliness can be generated through the formation of an association. Also, neighbors become familiar with each other's needs and interests and become more supportive in problem solving.

Create an Organized, Unified Voice

Through a neighborhood association your neighborhood has a unified voice in city government. The services that the city of Clearwater can provide to your neighborhood can be accessed efficiently through an association. Information on city services can also be provided to a greater number of neighbors, resulting in a benefit to the neighborhood as a whole.

Neighborhood Improvement

If your neighborhood needs improvements, local residents are the best resources to help initiate change. Neighborhood associations are a great resource for residents to start projects to develop neighborhood beautification and improvement programs.



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How to Form a Neighborhood Association

Start with a Core Group

Start your neighborhood association by finding a core group of people who agree to meet regularly. Ask some neighbors you already know. Then knock on the doors of some you don't know and explain why you want to form a neighborhood association. When you find five to 10 people who are interested, schedule a meeting at a resident's home, a nearby school, neighborhood church or other central location. It's a good idea to set up the initial meeting quickly before people lose interest.

Each member of the neighborhood association should:

- Try to attend every meeting.
- Use agreed-upon procedures at meetings.
- Treat other members with respect.
- Accept group decisions after a vote has been taken.
- Act for the benefit of the group.
- Be polite and make constructive comments.
- Discuss issues and concerns, not personalities.

Set the Neighborhood Boundaries

It's important to determine the boundaries of your neighborhood association. Boundaries might be roads, natural features such as canals, residences within a certain distance of a school or church or houses built in a certain style. You might want to look at a city map and take a tour of the neighborhood to help you set the boundaries. Call the Neighborhood & Community Engagement Division to see if your boundaries include any existing neighborhood associations. Your neighborhood may want to merge groups or work as partners on common problems.

Once you have established the boundaries, develop a list of residents and property owners. This will help you get other neighbors involved in your association and its activities. You may need to go door-to-door to create this list. You can find this information by calling the city's Planning and Development Department at 562-4567.

Legal & Administrative Setup

Setting your neighborhood association up with the right administrative and legal tools helps ensure long-term success, transparency and access to additional resources such as grants and donations.

Register Your Group

While it is not legally required to register your neighborhood association to operate, becoming a formal entity can be helpful for fundraising, opening a bank account and partnering with the city.

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Steps to Formalize:

1. Choose a Name

Pick a name that reflects your neighborhood identity.

2. Register with Sunbiz

Visit sunbiz.org to register as a nonprofit corporation in Florida. This provides basic legal recognition.

3. Apply for a Tax ID (EIN)

Request an Employer Identification Number (EIN) from the IRS at irs.gov/ein (even if you don't plan to have employees.)

4. Open a Bank Account

Neighborhood associations typically need a group bank account to deposit donations or dues, pay for flyers, meeting supplies or event expenses, track and report finances. You will need the EIN number from the IRS, signed meeting minutes showing board members and officers and a copy of your Sunbiz registration form. Designate two signers on the account and keep a record of all transactions for transparency.

5. Create Bylaws or Operating Guidelines

Bylaws are the rules your association agrees to follow. They do not have to be complicated. Examples of things that are included in bylaws are:

- Officer roles and terms
- How meetings are scheduled
- How decisions are made (e.g., voting procedures)
- Membership eligibility
- Conflict resolution process

Bylaws can be customized to meet your neighborhood's needs. Ask the city's Neighborhoods Division for a samples of other neighborhood's bylaws as a reference.

6. Create a Group Neighborhood Email

Establish a group email for all board members to access. Start a cloud-based folder to keep documents like meeting minutes, financial records, bylaws and contact lists.

Staying organized makes transitions easier when new leaders step in and demonstrates professionalism when working with the city or outside partners.

7. Register with the City of Clearwater as a Neighborhood Association at MyClearwater.com/NeighborhoodRegistration



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Membership Dues

It's up to the association to decide what financial resources it will need to manage the association. It will cost money to operate your association. Your association expenses will be based on the mission, goals and projects of the association.

Examples of new association expenses are:

- Incorporating the association with the State of Florida
- Setting up and managing an association website
- Meeting flyers, agendas and other materials
- Yard signs for meetings and events
- Office supplies, such as name tags, business cards, notepaper, binders, and folders
- Event supplies, such as food, paper products and decorations
- Meeting space rental
- Maintenance of neighborhood signage/entryways/landscaping

Some associations choose to rely on the donations instead of charging annual dues. The pitfall to relying on contributions is that the association may struggle to have enough operating funds and the cost of funding the association activities falling upon a few.

Create a Budget

1. Create budget
2. Divide the total expense budget by the number of estimated members
3. Determine frequency of dues – annual, monthly, quarterly and how they will be collected
4. Establish automated reminders throughout the year
5. Run a membership campaign once a year to encourage neighbors to register as members and educate them on the benefits of the association.



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Establish Committees

Neighborhood associations work best when the work is divided among members who sit on committees. The core group should define the goals and objectives of the committees and decide the rules members will follow. A standing committee is a permanent ongoing working committee that may be outlined in the association's bylaws. The goals of the association will help determine what kind and how many committees to create.

Some examples of designated committees include:

- Beautification Committee
- Publicity Committee
- Youth Involvement Committee
- Government Liaisons
- Crime Reduction Committee
- Welcoming Committee
- Neighborhood Events Committee
- Business Liaisons

Serving as a committee chair or a member is a great way to ease into an association leadership role. Committees help share the workload for the association and enable members to get involved in issues and projects that they are passionate about. It is not the role of the association officers and board members to do all the work of the association; the committees are the workhorse of the association.



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How to Hold and Organize Neighborhood Meetings

Communication Fosters Neighborhood Involvement

Communication is very important to the success of your association. Sharing information is a great way to build a sense of community in your neighborhood, get to know your neighbors and enlist support for your events and programs.

Ideas for promoting neighborhood meetings:

- Publish a neighborhood association newsletter four to 12 times a year.
- Team up with a nearby association to share the cost and work.
- Distribute fliers door-to-door.
- Distribute a neighborhood survey (and the results) by email, mail, phone or door-to-door.
- Ask permission to place notices, posters or fliers in laundromats, libraries, supermarkets and local businesses, etc.
- Set up a telephone tree and develop an email contact list.
- Develop a neighborhood website or social media page on Facebook, Instagram or Nextdoor.
- Create yard signs (Note: yard signs must be placed on private property and can only be placed leading up to the meeting)



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Plan the Meeting

People will more likely attend meetings if they are organized, brief, useful and in a convenient location.

Set the time, date and location by consulting with the core group of members. Try to keep meetings to one hour in length.

Select a place that is centrally located and familiar to your neighbors such as a home, school, church or public building, and then remind them of the time and date by phone, email or flier. Before the meeting begins, arrange the tables and chairs and place any handouts near the entrance of the room. Allow time for neighbors to introduce themselves. Be sure to test any equipment such as projectors or computers before the meeting starts.

To prepare an agenda:

- Check the minutes of the last meetings. Note any unfinished business.
- Include the committee chairman or chairwoman, special meeting guests and members who are to make reports.
- Check on all new business, which has come up since the last meeting.

Establish Meeting Agendas

All meetings should have an agenda. The agenda lists what will happen at the meeting, including committee reports and any business that needs to be discussed. The president and secretary are responsible for preparing the agenda.

An agenda is important because it:

- Serves as a guide.
- Ensures important issues are not overlooked.
- Gives neighbors a chance to prepare for discussions.

Robert's Rules of Order

Neighborhood associations often use Robert's Rules of Order to help run meetings in a fair, organized and respectful way. These rules give everyone a chance to speak, keep discussions on track and ensure that decisions are made properly.

You don't need to know every rule to get started. Learn more at RobertsRules.com

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Neighborhood Meeting Sample Agenda

Neighborhood Name: _____

Meeting Location: _____

Meeting Date: _____

- I. **Call the meeting to order**
- II. **Neighborhood introductions**
- III. **Review meeting purpose and agenda**
- IV. **Minutes of last meeting**
- V. **Officer reports**
- VI. **Committee reports**
- VII. **Review events, programs and citywide activities**
- VIII. **Unfinished business**
- IX. **New business**
- X. **Set agenda for next meeting**
- XI. **Adjourn meeting**

Thank you for your attendance. Please join us at the next meeting on _____

Meeting Location: _____

Meeting Time: _____

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Leadership Development

Recruiting Neighborhood Association Leadership

Part of the job of a neighborhood organizer is to identify and develop neighborhood leaders. People in leadership positions are responsible for coordinating the activities of a group, including activities designed to help the groups achieve goals and feel good about working together.

A leadership position within a neighborhood association is a serious commitment. A leader impacts the association and the neighborhood. A neighborhood leader needs to have the vision and the ability to build consensus, to delegate duties and authority to others

and to encourage neighbor involvement and maximize talent. A leader helps the association cultivate future leaders. A good leader recognizes the value in changing leadership.

The task of recruiting and developing leaders should be an ongoing activity for all members of the neighborhood association. Sometimes leaders are reluctant to share authority or delegate responsibility. Part of being a good leader is helping others grow into leadership roles.

Developing Neighborhood Association Leaders

- Search for many potential leaders, not just one or two.
- Encourage people to switch tasks and discover their strengths.
- Remind members to be open to change and bring in new members and leaders.
- Encourage people to communicate in a positive and productive manner.
- Delegate responsibility. Match members' personal needs with the needs of the group.
- Break big jobs into small parts and assign to different people.
- Focus on goals and achievements, not personalities.

Inclusion in Your Neighborhood Association

Neighborhood associations work best when they reflect the full diversity of the communities they serve. Every resident should feel welcome, informed and empowered to participate.

Take time to identify and understand who lives in your neighborhood using online Census data, then consider outreach methods that meet people where they are.

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Start by asking:

- Who's missing from the table?
- Are renters represented?
- Do we have multilingual residents who need translated materials?
- Are we reaching young adults, families with children and seniors?
- Is this the best time and place for a meeting?

Ideas:

- Offer coloring or children's activities during the meeting
- Provide virtual attendance options
- Rotate between socials and formal meeting months
- Hold occasional outdoor or informal gatherings to increase comfort and visibility
- Designate a "greeter" to welcome new attendees
- Host a newcomer event
- Ask quieter neighbors for input through surveys or one-on-one conversations
- Rotate leadership roles



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What are the Duties and Responsibilities of Association Officers?

President

- Chief executive officer of the association.
- Assumes general charge of the day-to-day administration of the association.
- Presides at all meetings.
- Reserves the authority to authorize specific actions in promoting the board's policies.

Vice President

- Performs the duties of the president in the absence of the president.
- Serves on the association's executive committee.
- Coordinates with the committee chairman or chairwoman and reports the status to the board.
- Assumes duties as defined by the president.

Secretary

- Maintains the association's records.
- Takes minutes of meetings and keeps a permanent, accurate record.
- Prepares written minutes for the board of directors and reads the minutes at meetings.
- Receives and handles all correspondence addressed to the association.

Treasurer

- Keeps accounts of all expenses, upon authorization of the board.
- Collects membership dues.
- Presents a written report each month to the board of directors and/or association.



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Building Relationships and Strengthening Your Association

Consensus Building

Consensus building is a process in which groups of people who disagree are encouraged to share information and negotiate to reach the goals of the association. Under consensus building, an entire neighborhood association considers the issues on the basis of reason and discussion. Each member expresses a view and a decision is made that all can commit to, instead of a few or a majority. The consensus building process encourages everyone to participate.

Tips for Handling Disagreements

- Seek to fully understand opposing viewpoints.
- Resist an immediate response. Don't strike out immediately to oppose or take sides.
- When conflict becomes intense and emotions strong, sometimes a break is helpful to allow emotions to cool.

When Members Disagree

Neighborhood associations, like any group of people, can encounter problems with personality conflicts, leadership issues and burnout. When problems occur, encourage open and respectful discussion among association members. One way to avoid conflict is to invest time in consensus building before key votes are taken.

- Define and agree on the problem.
- Focus on the most significant issues of the conflict.
- Focus on issues, not people.
- Find common ground on which you can agree.



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Expanding and Maintaining Membership

Helpful Hints

Keeping the interest and involvement of neighbors in an association is an ongoing challenge in every neighborhood. Here are some pointers and ideas that hopefully will stimulate other ideas:

- Be realistic in your expectation of the members. Many neighbors have other priorities that may limit participation.
- Stay focused on a few well-defined goals or projects. Identify individual and/or committee responsibilities.
- Celebrate each success, even if it means doing it one step at a time.
- Ask specific neighbors for help or their involvement. Sometimes all it takes is asking a neighbor to do something. They may be willing if asked, but may not volunteer or speak up when an “all call” for help is issued.
- Find out what is important to your members and try to get them involved in committees or projects involving their interest.
- Make sure to welcome new neighbors. Many communities have a welcoming committee that visits or calls each new resident.
- Organize a social function by delegating the event to a special committee. Sponsor cleanup days. Take one street at a time so that the work is manageable and can be accomplished in a reasonable time.
- Create a telephone chain, social media site, email list or other communication system that makes it possible for the association to keep the membership informed.
- Recognize volunteers. Thank a specific person or persons at a general meeting, acknowledge someone’s efforts in your neighborhood association newsletter or website or prepare a meal or dessert for the volunteer neighbor.

Additional Resource

The Clearwater Neighborhoods Coalition is an organization made up of Clearwater neighborhood, civic and homeowner associations serving to achieve its goals through public programs including community forums, public education events and initiatives and opportunities for citizens to work together to promote quality of life, safety, sustainability. Learn more about the Clearwater Neighborhoods Coalition by visiting ClearwaterNeighborhoods.org.

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Clearwater Citizens Academy

Clearwater Citizens Academy is a hands-on program designed for residents eager to make a positive impact on their community. This interactive experience offers a behind-the-scenes look at the operations of Clearwater city government, including engaging with elected officials, department directors, and other city staff.

Throughout the 10-session program, participants have the chance to tour facilities, try hands-on activities, ask questions and share their concerns about their neighborhood. With opportunities to visit the police K9 unit, fire stations, solid waste and recycling facilities, and more, participants gain a comprehensive understanding of what it takes to run Clearwater.

When We Meet

The program runs from September to November, with 10 Tuesday evening sessions from 6-8:30 PM. Participants must attend at least 8 of the 10 sessions to graduate. The program is free of charge.

Applications are accepted the late spring. Please note that there are a large number of applicants for Citizens Academy. You are more likely to be accepted if you fill out the application completely.



What We Do

Each night, participants visit a different location that relates to a different aspect of government. The schedule may vary based on the topic, but in general, the group tours the facility, eats dinner during the presentation, does interactive educational activities and participate in an open question-and-answer period at the end.

Program History

Clearwater Citizens Academy began Sept. 14, 2002, with a picnic held at Moccasin Lake Nature Park. Recognizing that residents are the city's most important assets, officials designed the program to help residents become more actively involved in local government.



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Adopt-a-Park, Street or Trail

Through the Adopt program, the Clearwater Parks & Recreation Department partners with volunteer groups to help keep our city parks safe, clean, and beautiful. Any community organization, group, family, or individual that wants to make a difference in their community can participate in the Adopt-a-Park program. We welcome businesses, churches, schools, neighborhood associations, civic groups, clubs and other organizations.

Benefits of the Program

- An Adopt recognition sign with your group's name on your adopted space
- Highlighted on the Adopt website page
- Recognition on the City's social media pages following your clean up
- Keeping Clearwater spaces bright, beautiful, and safe in a highly visible and positive way
- Volunteer appreciation recognition events

Requirements

- Two-year adoption period
- Two cleanups each year (most groups host quarterly or monthly clean-ups)
- Follow all programs procedures and safety guidelines
- Place trash bags under the Adopt sign (Trail and Street Adopt programs only)
- Fill out the after clean-up volunteer report with number of volunteers, hours worked, bags of litter and/or recyclables collected

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Paint a Storm Drain

In addition to their artistic value, painted storm drains serve an educational purpose by addressing the misconception that it's acceptable to dispose of trash and more down storm drains.

The city of Clearwater welcomes its residents to apply to paint their own storm drain mural.

To encourage residents, volunteers, and students to get involved, the city of Clearwater will provide all supplies free to participating groups.

Learn more at MyClearwater.com/StormDrainPaint



City Contact

The city values neighborhood groups as trusted partners in community development and outreach. Reach out if you need assistance with:

- Starting a new neighborhood group
- Connecting with city departments or speakers for your meetings
- Identifying available grants and programs
- Providing templates for agendas, bylaws and flyers

*neighborhoods@myclearwater.com
(727) 562-4559*

Clearwater Connect

Report potholes, graffiti, and other non-emergency issues on our online portal at MyClearwater.com/ClearwaterConnect.

