

## How to Start

Neighborhood Associations bring neighbors together in order to improve the livability of Madison's neighborhoods. There are over 120 neighborhood associations throughout Madison that help citizens make their voices heard in City Hall.

### **What is a Neighborhood Association?**

A Neighborhood Association is a group of residents, business representatives, and other interested citizens that devote their time and energy to improve and enhance a well-defined, geographic area that they and others live. The neighborhood association meeting, like the earlier town meetings, is a place to meet neighbors, exchange ideas, prioritize projects, propose solutions, and implement plans for the neighborhood.

Most neighborhood associations are concerned with issues that affect the quality of life in the community. This can include issues such as zoning regulations or traffic improvements as well as events that strengthen neighborhoods. Sponsoring neighborhood festivals, block parties, crime prevention activities and upgrading neighborhood parks are important projects for neighborhood associations.

### **Why Start a Neighborhood Association?**

Neighborhoods usually organize to:

- Build a sense of community among neighbors;
- Address a particular issue of the neighborhood;
- Provide the neighborhood with an effective communication link with government officials and other influential groups;
- Empower residents to work together in improving their neighborhood:

Organizing a neighborhood brings people together to form a collective, united voice. A well-organized group of people can be a powerful and influential force.

### **Simple Organizing Tips**

Organizing a neighborhood association is a big job. While it may seem difficult at first, developing your association will be enormously exciting as people come together to address common problems and learn to work together as a group.

Keep in mind some important guidelines as you begin to organize:

- Building an organization is a process. It cannot be done overnight. Be patient. Identify your priorities and build them step-by-step.
- Set realistic goals. Start small and build upward. As your organizational capacity grows, start setting your goals higher.
- How you treat people is crucial to your success. By treating people with respect and integrity, people will be more likely to get involved in the organization.

People join neighborhood groups for a variety of reasons. One of them is to get to know their neighbors and to feel a sense of community. So as you build your organization, be sure to have fun.

### **How to Start a Neighborhood Association?**

Four simple steps is all it takes.

- Contact your Alderperson to inform him/her of your intention to create a neighborhood association. Your Alderperson will be helpful in providing you with useful information on any other neighborhood associations that are functioning within the area. Call the Common Council Office at 266-4071 to leave a message for your Alderperson.
- Contact Jule Stroick, Neighborhood Planner, Department of Planning and Development to discuss establishing a neighborhood association. She will discuss the steps in forming a neighborhood associations, setting boundaries, and refer you to other technical information that may be useful in your neighborhood-based initiatives.
- Place a Class II *Public Notice* in the Wisconsin State Journal or Capital Times indicating the time and place for the first organizational meeting. We also encourage the meeting organizers to post notices at frequently visited places in the neighborhood such as a local grocery store, the public schools, or go door to door inviting your neighbors to this meeting.
  - An example of the public notice would be: Residents of the Vilas Neighborhood are invited to attend an organizational meeting at Monroe Street Public Library on March 4, 1995, at 7:30 p.m. for the purpose of establishing a neighborhood association, adopting neighborhood boundaries and to elect officers. The proposed boundaries of the neighborhood includes the area circumscribed by Monroe Street, Regent Street. S. Randall Avenue, and Vilas Park and Lake Wingra. Contact Beth Madison at 222-2222.
- Forward a copy of the public notice, a map of your neighborhood boundaries, and the name, address, and phone number of a neighborhood contact person to:

Department of Planning and Development, Planning Unit  
Jule Stroick, Neighborhood Planner  
215 Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard  
P.O. Box 2985  
Madison, WI 53701-2985

Tel: 608-267-8744  
Fax: 608-267-8739

Email: [neighborhoods@ci.madison.wi.us](mailto:neighborhoods@ci.madison.wi.us)

### **Why Register your Neighborhood Association?**

Neighborhood associations are organizations which offer an opportunity for citizens to participate in decision-making for their neighborhoods. The Department of Planning and Development, Planning Unit maintains a computerized file of the recognized neighborhood associations that is distributed monthly to various governmental bodies. Many City departments and agencies solicit neighborhood association opinions on upcoming approvals of development projects, programs and services, and other changes proposed in particular neighborhoods.

### **FAQ's**

*How do we determine our neighborhood boundaries?*

Keep it simple. Draw your neighborhood boundaries reflecting the natural (e.g. lake) or manmade boundaries (e.g. major transportation corridor). Many times these particular boundaries form a coherent neighborhood area. A rule of thumb is to keep it simple and start with a relatively small (but not too small) area to build the sense of community amongst neighbors.

*Are there requirements on the formal structure of neighborhood associations?*

No. We do encourage neighborhood associations to develop an organizational structure that works for them. Some options for neighborhood associations to consider include:

- Mission statement: An organization's vision is its driving force. The mission statement explains why a group exists and what it hopes to accomplish. A group can revise and clarify its mission statement whenever it is deemed appropriate.
- Bylaws: Bylaws are simply the rules governing an organization's internal operations, including: purpose of organization, membership information, terms of officers, committees, voting procedures and dues.

*What are some key organizational questions?*

- Is the neighborhood association attracting, maintaining, and recruiting new members?
- Is the neighborhood association representative of the area? Are you involving individuals across barriers of race, religion, age and socio-economic status?
- Are the neighborhood association meetings publicized? Status reports? Successes?
- Are you identifying and forming partnerships with organizations that support the residents of your community, such as: the schools, centers of worship, the merchants, business associations, the employers, landlords, local government, hospitals, realty companies, libraries, community centers, etc.?
- Are you celebrating your victories? Spread the word and tell other associations how you did it and how it can help them!

### **Who to Contact**

Jule Stroick, Neighborhood Planner  
Department of Planning and Development  
215 Martin Luther King, Jr. Blvd.  
P.O. Box 2985  
Madison, WI 53701-2985

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