

ROLE OF NEIGHBORHOOD SERVICES

The City of Jackson Neighborhood Services office works with and encourages citizens to become active participants in determining the destiny of their neighborhoods. The Neighborhood Relations office works with citizens to organize new and emerging as well as established neighborhood, community and civic organizations.

The Office of Neighborhood Services is available to address inquiries by phone, e-mail or in person regarding questions, problems or requests about neighborhood, community and civic organizations. The office staff regularly facilitate, attend and speak at community meetings in an effort to directly interact with citizens and provide helpful information while collecting inquiries on city services for follow up. The staff is also available to aid neighborhoods with seeking out resources to strengthen their communities.

Neighborhood Services staff meets on a regular basis with other City of Jackson departments, non-profit organizations, faith-based organizations and businesses in conjunction with neighborhood association groups to participate in events that help bridge the gap in our neighborhoods. Information is spread throughout the neighborhoods via a quarterly newsletter, the city's website, e-mail blasts, flyers, handouts and website development.

The office partners internal and external entities on special community projects that will positively impact citizens and Jackson neighborhoods. The Neighborhood Services office continues to work with numerous committees, task forces and boards throughout the city.

TIPS FOR A SUCCESSFUL FIRST NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION MEETING

- Publicize the meeting
- Contact Elected Officials
- Draw up an agenda of issues and ideas that need to be discussed
- Try to keep the meetings at a minimum of 60-90 minutes
- Record minutes for all meetings
- Start and end the meeting on time
- Outline future actions and task assignments
- Set the next meeting date, time, and place

NEIGHBORHOOD SERVICES

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(Note: Information in this brochure has been taken from Neighborhood Services sources in various cities.)



Neighborhood Services

Guide on How to Start A Neighborhood Association

Jerry Gist, Mayor

ROLE OF NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATIONS

Neighborhoods -- defined as a group of homes surrounded by a geographic boundary -- are critical to the social, economic, and political foundation of a city. Historically, neighborhood associations are at the center of the local civic and community building process.

Each neighborhood takes its identity from the people who live, work or have an interest in the area. Citizens are stakeholders in the well-being of their respective community and are crucial to making neighborhoods more enjoyable, livable and satisfying.

Neighborhood associations, although voluntary, are vital. They help channel information to help deter criminal activity, clean-up blighted areas, and empower citizens by speaking as one voice about their concerns to city government. Neighborhood associations may be organized at any time with the support of residents and stakeholders of the association's geographic area. Its members may include residents, local businesses, faith-based organizations, schools and others located within and who have a vested interest in the area.

As a group, citizens ultimately bear ownership of the role of ensuring the vitality, health and safety of their neighborhoods. Citizens who take an active role in enhancing and sustaining livability of their area ensure that their quality of life meets expectations.

Citizens' involvement can be as minute as removing trash from the sidewalks to serving in an elected public capacity. Both examples are important — ***the key is to participate in the process.***

ASSESSING YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD

Finding out what is going on in neighborhoods is the first step to take to begin organizing a neighborhood association. Some basic and fundamental steps citizens can take to become involved in their neighborhoods are:

- Get to know neighbors, particularly those that have lived in the area for a number of years.
- Identify boundaries that surround neighborhoods. Once boundaries have been determined; a complete list of residents and property owners should be obtained. In order to get a complete list, organizers may need to go door-to- door.
- Find out if there are any other neighborhood associations functioning in the community. If so, meet with those leaders and ask for their input and assistance.
- Conduct a neighborhood inventory. This process helps to gather facts about the neighborhood including the population, type of housing, land use and other elements unique to the neighborhood.
- Conduct surveys or questionnaires and submit the results to the residents. This will help identify neighbors' concerns such as crime, physical improvements, transportation corridors, preservation of unique features, rezoning, social functions or other special issues such as neighborhood renovation.

BEGIN THE ORGANIZING PROCESS

Develop a core group of 6-10 individuals who are willing to help start the association and plan to host a "Meet & Greet."

- Host the meeting in a "neutral" location -- one of the local churches, schools, or a place where neighbors feel comfortable.
- Set a time & date convenient for most adults.

- Contact the Office of Neighborhood Services so our staff can assist you with organizing your first meeting or be available to come and speak to the group.
 - During this organizing meeting, plan a strategy for getting people to attend the first meeting (i.e. flyers, canvassing, newsletter, potluck dinner, etc.)
- The Neighborhood Services office will provide a complimentary flyer or postcard template for you to send to all of your neighbors advising them about meetings.
- Discuss each person's ideas about problems and issues in the neighborhood. A good idea is to initially select an issue the neighborhood feels strongly about and will rally around.
 - Discuss the need to organize a neighborhood group.
 - Talk about what your group hopes to accomplish.
 - Identify other potential leaders in the neighborhood. The importance of a pool of qualified leadership is often overlooked. Strong leadership gives organizations guidance, stability from year to year, motivation to take action, and unity of purpose. The task of recruiting and developing leaders has to be an ongoing activity through the lifetime of a neighborhood association.
 - Invite other association leaders/members from other neighborhoods and ask for their input; find out from them what worked or did not work in their neighborhood.
 - Research to determine what resources/assets that may be available within the neighborhood's boundaries. This would be a good time to identify talents, expertise, skills, and any special areas of interest a member might possess.

Note: Some group members might not be able to attend meetings, but possess a special skill that can be useful to the group without their attending meetings. Be sure to be flexible and afford members a variety of ways to participate.