

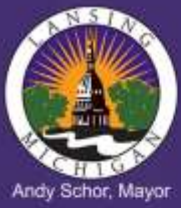


Hold Your First Neighborhood Meeting

Your first neighborhood meeting provides an opportunity for residents to learn, discuss issues, solve problems, and get to know one another. But if the meeting is not run efficiently, it will not be effective. More importantly, badly run meetings can discourage participation at future meetings and group activities.

An effective meeting results in residents feeling they have made a contribution and that the organization is worthy of their time and has good direction. Below are eight basic steps that you can take to help ensure meeting is effective.

1. **Set goals** - Think about why you are having the meeting. Determine what you want to accomplish. Does the organization need to make decisions? Do committee assignments need to be made to accomplish a larger goal?
2. **Set up a meeting time and location** - If your organization will meet frequently, establish a standard meeting place, date and time. The location should be central and well-known with adequate parking. The size of the space should accommodate the anticipated attendance. Neighborhood centers, churches, schools and community centers are excellent. Weeknight meetings after 6:30 p.m. often have the best attendance.
3. **Prepare the agenda** - The agenda should be designed to help you meet your goals. Each topic should have a time limit and the name of the person addressing the topic. You should make sure to print copies for all attendees. **Limit the meeting to one and a half hours.** Here is a sample agenda:
 - Welcome and Introductions
 - Guest Speakers
 - Discuss neighborhood concerns
 - Make sure to ask people what issues are important to them
 - Determine your organizations goals possibly using a visioning session
 - Consider tackling short term achievable goals, like flower planting, that have immediate return on investment
 - Remember the City takes a long time to get things done, so include more structural things (like getting speed bumps in as longer term goals
 - Discuss what sort of organization you would like to form
 - Assign members to fill key roles
 - Suggest Agenda Items for Next Meeting



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4. **Know who will attend** –It is extremely important that your proposed leadership team be at the meeting to run it effectively. You also want to ensure that as many neighbors are in attendance as possible. Make sure that everyone who attends signs in and a neighborhood list with contact info and addresses.
5. **Advertise the meeting** - If the entire neighborhood is invited, prepare a flier that is simple, yet eye catching. The flier should include the meeting date, time, location and purpose or goal. Fliers can be mailed, hand delivered, and posted on social media. Create a Facebook event, announce the meeting on NextDoor, and use other forms of social media. Have your leadership team make reminder phone calls or texts to their neighbors. If only the leadership team is meeting, mail a reminder notice or make phone calls.
6. **Set up the meeting space** - Arrange tables and chairs in a manner that is conducive to discussion. Set up displays or set out handouts and copies of the agenda before the meeting starts. Offer refreshments.
7. **Facilitate the meeting** - Have someone welcoming people as they come in. Start the meeting on time. Everyone should sign-in and someone should be taking notes or minutes. Follow the agenda, stick to the times allowed for each topic, and remain on- track. Encourage participation and summarize comments you hear. Treat everyone with respect and remain open minded. Make sure that once a discussion about an issue is finished that the group is aware of final decisions, assignments and deadlines. Conclude the meeting on a positive note and thank everyone for attending. Consider inviting an experience facilitator to keep your meeting running smoothly and positively.
8. **Follow-up** - Confirm assignments or deadlines with a phone call or memo. Acknowledge help and significant contributions by others. Identify ways to improve the meeting and attendance. Make sure everyone knows how information will be passed out (newsletter, flyers, e-mail, etc).