Andy Schor, Mayor

Neighborhood Organization Resource Handbook

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Qualities of a Good Leader

Regardless of your style or skills, there are some ingredients that can contribute significantly to effective leadership:

1. **Be inclusive**: It's important to include all of your neighbors, including:
   a) Residents from all economic, religious, ethnic background
   b) Other "neighbors" like faith communities, schools, and businesses who play important roles in the neighborhood and have valuable leadership skills, resources, and networks of contacts to offer.

2. **Cultivate networks of relationships**: Relationships do not exist in a vacuum. One person is connected through relationship to many others. Cultivating a relationship with that person, therefore, is like connecting with the entire "network" of relationships they have already developed. Cultivating networks of relationships, then, can be about building relationships with others who have specific expertise that might also benefit your neighborhood.

3. **Delegate**: Share responsibility (either through forming committees or asking individuals to take responsibility) for the major neighborhood functions, including:
   a) Meetings (logistics, agendas, minutes)
   b) Finances, communication (phone calls, newsletter, flyers, etc.)
   c) Point of contact (both within the neighborhood and with the City, County, the LPD, and other important bodies)
   d) Social gatherings
   e) Neighborhood projects
   f) Other activities.

4. **Assist others to develop their leadership skills**: Help people discover skills in service to the neighborhood's needs—cultivate the next generation of leadership. One good way of assisting others to develop their leadership skills is to release control over how others approach the tasks they've volunteered for. That is, avoid micromanaging!

5. **Communicate**: particularly with those who don't attend meetings and events. Be sure to share information both about neighborhood activities and other events/activities of interest. Useful skills include dialogue (as opposed to debate), listening (as opposed to lecturing), and transparency (as opposed to hoarding information and/or being secretive).

Be a Community Leader (Ctnd.)

6. Provide a vision: That will keep people engaged. Remind people of the big picture and long- term goals. Always have a vision-driven purpose for having a meeting.

7. Know your and your neighborhood's assets and limits: Build on your strengths and don't exceed your limitations.

8. Be a learner: Acknowledge both your successes and your mistakes and use them all as ways to improve your leadership skills.

9. Appreciate and celebrate: Thank people for the work they do and celebrate your neighborhood achievements.

10. Motivate yourself and others: When times are tough or slow you have to be able to motivate yourself and others to push through.

11. Relate to others: Leaders have to present themselves in a way people can relate to and be considerate of others. This means not engaging in gossip and respecting other people's privacy.

12. Collaborate: Work with other neighborhood groups and community leaders on tasks and issues in order to get the most information and create strong neighborhood connections.

Create a Neighborhood Group

If you are new to your neighborhood, or your neighborhood lacks a neighborhood organization, or if you simply want to address an issue that no one else in your neighborhood seems to be acting on, then you want to identify others who are also interested in addressing it.

Types of Neighborhood Groups

There is no one right organizational structure for a neighborhood group. The key is to figure out what is best for your neighborhood. You may decide that a loosely structured group is ideal for your area. Maybe you want a strong neighborhood association. Or maybe you only want to focus on crime and public safety. Organization structure should be decided early on by the leaders of your group.

Org Type	Advantages	Disadvantages
No Formal Structure	•Limited energy put into organizational maintenance	•Can't open bank accounts •Can't participate in City's CDBG Trash Pickup program •Must partner with another organization to apply for Mayor's Neighborhood Advisory Board grants •Less 'clout' with officials
Neighborhood Watch	•Required phone trees are fantastic resource •Can Participate in City's CDBG Trash Pick-up •Strong focus on public safety	•Some organizational upkeep required: •Coordinator, Block Captains, phone tree, and annual meetings •Focus is limited to Public Safety
Neighborhood Association	•Can apply for Mayor's NAB grants •Can participate in City's CDBG Trash Pick-up •Can obtain EIN# from Feds for establishing a bank account	•Maintenance of organization can be rather involved

Create a Neighborhood Group (ctnd.)

First Steps

Organize Neighbors: Start talking to neighbors you are acquainted with, and see if they are interested in starting a new organization. If so, have them help reach out to other neighbors.

Discuss the Issues: Talk informally to your neighbors about what are the important issues that your new organization should address.

Determine Leadership: Determine who out of the people you talked to would be good people for the dedicated core leadership of the organization.

Planning for the First Meeting

Now that you have a leadership team, invite your leadership partners to your home to help with plans and arrangements for a meeting with everyone in the neighborhood. At the leaders meeting be prepared to:

• Discuss conditions in your block and neighborhood that are of concern.

• Talk about the great things in your neighborhood and how to utilize and promote them.

• Decide if it is necessary to form an organization, and if so, how it should be structured.

• Determine the geographical boundaries of the proposed organization.

• Set a time and place for a meeting that invites all the residents within the proposed geographical boundaries to be held in a home, school, church or hall.

•Agree on a plan for inviting everyone to the meeting, and for how it shall be conducted, what shall be on the agenda, etc.

Additional Information

For more information on neighborhood organization creation, leadership and financial management, and event planning, see the Neighborhood Resource Handbook, at http://mi-lansing.civicplus.com/842/Neighborhoods. You can also contact the Director of the Department of Neighborhoods and Citizen Engagement, *Andi Crawford*, at *517-614-9695*, or andi.crawford@lansingmi.gov.

Types of Watch Groups

A **Neighborhood Watch** is an organized effort by concerned citizens to improve the quality of life in their neighborhood. In cooperation with the Police Department, neighbors work to safeguard each other's homes and reduce the risk of crime in their community.

The **Lansing School Watch** sends volunteers into the neighborhoods surrounding Lansing schools to act as "eyes and ears" for the LPD. Their role is to add another layer or buffer of security to the school property and to act as an observation and reporting program to assist the Lansing School District and LPD.

A **Business Watch** is a free program that creates a partnership between the business community and the Lansing Police Department to reduce and prevent crime through shared communication and training. Business Watch shows owners and employees crime prevention techniques and strategies they can use to help cut down on business-related crime. Training is conducted in-house for your convenience. Training may also be conducted at City facilities if requested.

Find or Start a Watch Group

If you don't know who your watch coordinator is, or you would like to start a new group, contact Lansing Police Department's Community Services Unit Officer, *Kasha Osborn*, at *517-483-6812*, or at lpdcsu@lansingmi.gov.

Also go to http://www.lansingmi.gov/465/Neighborhood-Watch for information and guides on watch groups, such as:

- Neighborhood Watch Inquiry Form
- Neighborhood Watch Brochure
- Neighborhood Watch Start-up Packet
- Home Security Handout
- School Watch Flyer
- What is Business Watch
- Business Watch Brochure
- Business Watch Registration Form

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

Hold Your First Neighborhood Meeting (ctnd.)

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).

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Hold Your First Neighborhood Meeting (ctnd.)

Examples of prospective speakers for a general neighborhood/civic organization meeting:

- City of Lansing Police Captain
- City of Lansing Council member assigned to specific ward or at-large member
- City of Lansing department directors and/or designated staff, such as:
    - Director of Neighborhoods & Citizen Engagement
    - Director of Public Service
    - Director of Parks and Recreation
    - City Clerk or Deputy City Clerk
    - Assigned Code Enforcement Officer to neighborhood
    - Forestry Supervisor
    - Do1Thing Coordinator
    - Hazard Mitigation Coordinator (part of Emergency Management)
    - Director of Office of Financial Empowerment
        - Lansing SAVE Program Coordinator (Children's Savings Accounts)
        - Financial Empowerment Center Counselor(s)
    - Zoning Administrator
- Community Police Officer assigned to area (if applicable)
- Ingham County officials/staff, such as:
    - Register of Deeds
    - Drain Commissioner
    - County Clerk
- Ingham County Commissioners – applicable district of City
- Michigan House of Representatives – 68th House District (encompasses City of Lansing)
- Michigan 8th Congressional District U.S. Representative
- AARP in Lansing
- American Red Cross Mid-Michigan Director/Coordinator
- Capital Area District Library – Local History Librarian and Archivist
- Capital Area Housing Partnership Director/representatives
- Capital Area United Way
- Chief Operating Officer of McLaren Greater Lansing or Sparrow Health System
- Commercial Associations (Downtown,Old Town,REO Town,Saginaw-Oakland,South Lansing)
- Community Associations (Southside Comm. Coalition, S. Lansing Comm. Dev. Association, etc.)
- Fenner Nature Center Director/Program Coordinators
- Friends of Lansing Cemeteries
- Greater Lansing Food Bank Operations Team
- Habitat for Humanity
- Ingham County Land Bank
    - Garden Project Team
- Lansing Board of Water & Light Community Relations Representative/ Energy Audit Team
- Lansing School District administrators/local school principal/teacher
- Lansing Promise Administrator
- Local area business owners
- Neighborhood Community Center directors/representatives
    - Allen Neighborhood Center
    - NorthWest Initiative
    - Cristo Rey Community Center
- Refugee Development Center
- Service Organizations (Jaycees, Junior Achievement, Kiwanis, Rotary, Zonta, etc.)

Roles in an Informal/Small Organization

A new organization can be a small and relatively informal group of three or four people thinks that it has to elect officers and establish by-laws in order to do anything. It may not be necessary, or even practical, for such small groups to aspire to so much organizational structure. Rather than beginning with an excess of emphasis on organizational structure, you may wish to think about "fitting" the level of organization with the personality of your group.

Regardless of how you decide to organize your group, here are some functions that may need to be addressed. The "titles" associated with each function are optional, of course, and may be taken on (or changed) by individuals who volunteer to handle those specific functions. Further, a single person may handle more than one function.

Contact Person: Someone who is willing to give their phone number and address to neighbors, agencies, and City Departments, and serve as a source of information.

Record Keeper: Someone who will maintain a box or file with: a notebook for keeping track of who attends meetings, a copy of the agendas and minutes from meetings, a telephone directory of neighbors and other important numbers, other organizational information (by-laws, etc.), notes from previously planned events, and any mementos such as photos, flyers, news clippings, or written histories of the area. Google Docs is also a great resource for putting these documents online in a digital format in order to keep the documents for many years without cluttering space or having to be physically transferred from record keeper to record keeper.

Meeting Coordinator: Someone who will set up the place to meet, create an agenda (by calling or emailing anyone who might have relevant agenda items, such as the record keeper, contact person, or calendar czar), and facilitate the actual meeting. The meeting coordinator is also responsible for collaborating with the flyer captain and/or the phone tree guru to make sure that the neighborhood is informed about the meeting. If refreshments are to be part of the meeting, then the meeting coordinator would also take care of this or work with someone else (the "refreshment king" to do it).

Calendar Administrator: Someone who will keep track of important dates, look ahead to plan when things need to happen, and who will remind others of approaching deadlines. It makes sense for the contact person also to play this role, as the contact person often receives the mail and can more easily keep track of upcoming events.

Flyer Captain: Someone who is willing and able to type up a flyer on their computer that is attractive and informative and get it duplicated and to the Delivery Captain in a timely fashion.

Roles in an Informal/Small Organization (ctnd.)

Delivery Captain: Someone who either can deliver the flyers or who can coordinate others in the delivery of the flyers to the neighborhood (usually a couple of days prior to the meeting or event date.)

Phone Tree Leader: Someone who calls everyone to remind them of meetings or events, or who works with other phone tree “officials” to make those calls.

Finance Officer: In the beginning, this is someone to take up a collection to cover costs, who handles the “money things” and who makes financial reports to the members. Later, if it becomes necessary, the finance officer would be responsible for setting up a checking account, making deposits, etc.

Social Media Chair: This person would be in charge of maintaining your Facebook , Twitter, NextDoor, or other social media pages. They should update these pages at least a couple times a week and distribute any flyers you may have onto them.

As your group adds activities to its agenda, create new captains or committees or any other title that seems to fit.

When using this method, remember to choose one month during the calendar year when you will assess and re-assign the various functions/jobs. This avoids elections but also allows someone to do their part and then move on to something else, if they wish. If nobody wants to do a job, then perhaps you can eliminate that activity? If it is vital, re-think how often you meet (some groups meet every month, every other month, quarterly, or during the holidays and 4th of July or once a year), or perhaps divide the job in two.

This method of organizing encourages more people to get involved because their jobs are well defined and finite which makes people more comfortable in volunteering. There is also a sense that everyone is doing his or her part, which encourages more involvement. This method also lends itself well to passing around the leadership so you don't get as much burnout or personality conflict as in the more formal “titles, elections, and terms of office” method

Roles in a Formal/Large Organization

If you have determined your organization is large enough to have formal officer roles, you should hold elections for clearly defined positions. Below is a list of typical officer roles in an organization.

Roles

President

The President shall preside at membership and board meetings. He or she shall exercise general supervision over the organizational affairs of the corporation and shall perform other such duties as usually pertain to the office of the President. The President shall sign checks as needed.

Vice President

The Vice President assists the President in his or her duties. At the request of the President, or in the event of his or her temporary or permanent absence, the Vice President shall be authorized to perform all acts and duties pertaining to the office of the President.

Secretary

The Secretary or his/her assistants shall attend all membership and board meetings and shall preserve in the records of the organization accurate minutes of the proceedings at said meetings. The Secretary or his/her assistant shall also maintain a register or roll of the members, all other corporate records except those maintained by the Treasurer, and call the roll when required.

Treasurer

The Treasurer shall have general supervision of the banking, all monies, and the safekeeping of all property, which shall be given to or vested in the organization/ association. He or she oversees the keeping of accurate accounts of the assets and liabilities as well as receipts and expenditures of the organization/association and shall deliver the same to the Board at their request. The treasurer will sign checks as needed.

The Importance of Personal Contact

An essential part of neighborhood organizing is contacting other people in the neighborhood.. Perhaps the most effective channel for contacting and connecting with people in your neighborhood is ***personal contact***.

Personal Visits

Making personal connections through visiting homes is one strategy for learning more about your neighbors. The purpose of such "personal visits" is to establish a social connection with your neighbors through which you may build a foundation for future work (and play) together. Especially if you are unfamiliar with the people in your neighborhood, it is a good idea to go on personal visits with a partner.

What is a personal visit for?

- 20-30 minutes of quality one-on-one time
- To make a connection and learn about a person
- To ask for specific commitments
- To evaluate previous actions/activities
- To set up house meetings or other future activities
- To prepare for upcoming activities

With whom should you do personal visits?

- Do personal visits with a leader or potential leader
- Allies or potential allies
- Opponents or potential opponents.

Tips for good personal visits include:

- Make an appointment
- If you can't get the person by phone, drop by
- Don't take notes—keep it informal
- Be on time
- Relax, enjoy the person's company and let them enjoy yours
- Don't bring more than two people with you
- Get a specific commitment
- Ask questions, listen, and focus – try to get past what they do and learn why they
- do it

Build and Sustain Partnerships

Organizations can accomplish great things when working with other organizations. This could be as small as asking for advice on a problem or as big as applying for a grant together. Lansing is full of community-focused individuals and organizations so don't pass on the opportunity to work with a group that can help to make your organization the strongest it can be.

Potential Community Partners

1. Neighborhood Organizations: Talk with your fellow neighborhood leaders about events, issues, or techniques for running your organization. Oftentimes two different organizations deal with the same experiences, and can be a great resource for each other. This can include another neighborhood organization, or a community watch. See if there are any projects that you can work on together. Go to http://lansingmi.gov/842/Neighborhoods for information on specific neighborhood organizations.

2. Neighborhood Roundtables: These are monthly meetings to connect with the Neighborhood Resource Team and other community leaders who are succeeding at creating change in their neighborhoods. Contact the Director of the Department of Neighborhoods and Citizen Engagement, Andi Crawford (Andi.Crawford@lansingmi.gov) for more information.

3. Community Organizations: Community organizations (such as Allen Neighborhood Center) can provide a network of contacts and resources for organizations, such as financial resources, legal assistance, and volunteer recruitment. Go to http://lansingmi.gov/1414/Community-Organizations for information on specific community organizations

4. Commercial Associations: Commercial associations are focused on promoting economic development and business relations in a neighborhood. By working with your commercial association, you can bridge the gap between businesses and homes in your community.

5. Businesses: See if businesses want to advertise for your organization ot perhaps a business in your neighborhood would be willing to provide discounts or coupons for neighborhood residents.

6. School/Church: Schools and churches often act as pillars of their neighborhood, so connecting your neighborhood organization with them is key. Schools and churches can be used for meeting locations, volunteer recruitment, connections to social services, or financial resources, such as acting as a fiduciary for a grant.

Build and Sustain Partnerships (ctnd.)

Examples of Successful Partnerships

- In Lansing, a commercial association and two neighborhood associations teamed up to administer a massive parks and trails project on the West Side. Their partnership allowed them to successfully apply for large grants, and have enough resources and manpower to successfully manage the problem.
- At least one realtor in town has a personal policy that he will donate to a neighborhood association, upon request, 10% of his retained commission from any home listed and sold through him in that neighborhood.
- A local print shop may print a newsletter for free or for a reduced fee in exchange for a banner ad acknowledging the store. Or a local business might underwrite all or a portion of the cost of the newsletter for free ad space.
- A manager at a sporting goods store included one neighborhood on her list of people who can shop (with sizable discounts) on “Friends and Family Night” at the store. Many people from the neighborhood bought sporting goods for themselves and for Christmas gifts. The manager’s sales that night not only beat the other stores, but also set a record for the event. In return, the manager donates gift certificates for raffle prizes at the neighborhood’s annual holiday dinner.
- One church hosted a back-to-school rally and donated school supplies to children in an Eastside neighborhood. They also hosted a community picnic where raffle prizes were equally divided among members of the congregation and the neighborhood.
- One resident had a problem with neighbors throwing trash and large items over her radio station’s back fence and onto her property. She met with her neighbors and cut a deal that they could use the station’s dumpster once a month to get rid of large items. This arrangement keeps her maintenance costs down and gives residents a place to put large trash items.
- At one school, signs were bought and installed with neighborhood grant money. These are used to promote neighborhood and school activities. There is also more of a trend toward integration with neighborhood schools, whereby neighborhood news is printed in the school newsletter, and updates from schools are included in neighborhood news. Also representatives attend each other’s meetings to share information.

Resolve Conflict

Neighborhood and community conflict is part of life. We can choose to deal with that conflict constructively, ignore it, or even opt for making matters worse. Some problems are best left to proper authorities, such as instances where laws are broken or clear code violations exist. Others problems, like conflicts over a shared driveway or nuisances that are not breaking any laws, may be handled better by approaching that conflict yourself.

What can we do about issues of shared space, lack of cooperation, or lack of consideration? Well, one way to attempt this is to try putting oneself in the other person's shoes, to see through their eyes. Also, it is helpful to think about what you may want or need from this relationship, long term.

Let's look at the example of a shared driveway and think through a basic approach to addressing it without the addition of third parties.

Examples

You and your neighbor are constantly blocking each other in, sometimes even making it difficult to get places on time. Here is one way you might approach a conversation about it: "I would really like to be a responsible neighbor. And I know we have to share this driveway. I realize it's probably as difficult for you when I block you in as it is for me when you do it. So, I'm wondering if we can figure out some system so that we can both use our shared space without inconveniencing each other? Do you have any ideas?"

If the situation begins to get more difficult, you might try saying something like: "I would prefer to work this out between us. We both have to share this space. Can we talk about this?"
If you are not successful working the problem out together, you may want to consider mediation. Here are some further examples of basic non-confrontational approaches to problem solving:

"I'm having a hard time understanding why you did this (any behavior that is bothersome). Can you explain why this is important to you so that I have a better understanding?" This shows someone that you are really trying to see the world through their eyes.

"I need for you to listen to me right now. I feel strongly about this issue and I just need you to hear me out."

Mediation

When negotiating with another party doesn't work out, you might try using a mediator, i.e. a NEUTRAL third party. The mediation process allows each party to tell their side and have a neutral TRAINED third person help reframe explosive issues and help the parties arrive at a mutually agreed upon solution to their problem. This usually results in the mediator writing up an agreement that can even become a legal document, if necessary. Most of the time, if neighborhood issues end up in court, it is a win/lose situation. If people have to continue to live together, problems can best be worked out through a process like mediation, where parties come up with their own solutions, with the assistance of a mediator.

Most communities in Michigan have community mediation centers, offering free or low cost mediation through trained volunteer mediators. Mediation Centers across the state can be reached by calling 1.800.873.7658. Many of these local mediation programs have people trained to handle policy issues that may crop up for certain municipalities, such as development controversies.

The local mediation center in Lansing is the:

Resolution Services Center of Central Michigan
516 S. Creyts Road, Suite A
Lansing, MI 48917
Phone: 517-485-2274
Fax: 517-485-1183
E-mail: gtrice@rsccm.org
Website: www.rsccm.org
Contact: Gretta McHaney-Trice

In addition, Lansing has a private mediation organization:

Mediation Management Services
423 W Grand River
Lansing, Mi 48906
Phone number: (517) 316-7766
Fax number: (517) 316-7909
Email: smiley_aw@yahoo.com

You might also be able to obtain free mediation through the Lansing Department of Human Relations and Community Services, 483-4477.

Hold an Election for your Organization

- It is a good idea to hold elections on an annual basis, usually at the same time each year
  - Term limits are a great way to assist in building the leadership capacity, by making sure new people are able to hold office
- Make sure your bylaws are read and followed during the election process
  - Ensure you understand what the bylaws define as a voting unit- does one family equal one vote? Does one person equal one vote? Does one house equal one vote?
  - If your organization has a nominating committee, this committee must think in terms of representation
  - Who will best represent the organization? Who knows the neighborhood well? Who knows the neighbors? Who is active in the community? These are all questions you should ask when thinking about representation
- Write-in nominations from members should be requested
- Who Votes?
  - Depending on your by-laws, voters may be anyone who shows up to vote, members of the community only, or only those members who pay dues
- If your organization stipulates voters must be dues-paying members, here are some tips:
  - Have records present at the meeting of those who have paid dues
  - If paying dues at the time of voting is acceptable, have a receipt book or other receipting device on hand
- Prepare ballots in advance
  - To protect the voting process, prepare ballots with colored paper or ink so that the real ballot is not easy to duplicate.
  - Include on the ballot previously nominated candidates, as well as black space for write-in candidates
- Ask two responsible persons who are organization members, but not candidates, to gather and count the ballots
  - While the ballots are being counted, offer a speaker and/or refreshments and social time

Announce the winners!

Opening a Bank Account for Neighborhood Funds

1. Plan for the Account

- Who will be the signers on the account?
- What type of account? Will it be for checking or savings?
- Who will be responsible for maintaining financial records?
- How will these records be audited?

2. Obtain a tax identification number

A tax identification number is a federal tax number that is assigned by the Internal Revenue Service to entities; it is called an Employer Identification Number. This number enables a bank to report earnings of an association's account to the IRS for tax filing purposes. Prior to opening an account a bank is required to obtain this number from an association, even if the account does not pay interest.

To apply for an Employer Identification Number (EIN), a form SS-4 must be completed. This form is often available at your bank or can be obtained on the IRS website at http://1.usa.gov/18bJ7JL or by calling 1-800- 829-4933. Once completed, you can call the IRS at 1-800-829-4933, and IRS representative will use the information from the Form SS-4 to assign you an EIN or you can simply apply online. Also, a copy of form SS-4 is included with this account opening information, as well as a $75.00 fee.

3. Gather the necessary documentation

If you have filed as a Michigan nonprofit corporation, you must bring a copy of the Articles of Incorporation stamped "Filed" by the corporation. Bring a copy of your bylaws or minutes of your first meeting if you are note a corporation.

4. Open the account

It is ideal if all signers on the account can be present when the account is opened. Personal identification such as a driver's license (which shows the expiration date) will be required of each signer. At this time signature cards will also be signed. Your corporate board or the members of an unincorporated association must adopt a resolution authorizing the bank account. The bank will provide you with this resolution.

Recordkeeping and Bookkeeping

Recordkeeping and bookkeeping can be daunting, but if you start right and follow through it allows your organization to achieve its goals. These two simple rules will make recording easier.

1. Keep it simple.
2. Keep all records in one place
3. Make it digital

Once you have a place to keep your records you need to develop a method for arranging them. A few common ones are:

1. Check number order
2. Alphabetically in file folders
3. In envelopes per month
4. Chronologically by deposit or payment date
5. Keep hard copies of ballots, but upload all the information and agendas online

Records should be self-explanatory:

A good way to approach record keeping is to think of it in a way that anyone should be able to walk in and take over without ANY questions. That implies that your system should be easily understandable and all records accessible with all pertinent information, i.e. deposit information filed chronologically, paid bills filed numerically by check number. It is actually a good idea to have a backup perform functions periodically such as when the regular person is on vacation.

Most organizations have at least four major categories: Receipts, Disbursements, Correspondence and Miscellaneous. This section will discuss what you need to include in each of these categories.

Receipts:

All monies received either cash or check need to be recorded immediately. This can be through a cash receipt book, where the payer receives a receipt and you have a carbon intact in the book. Use a book that is already pre-numbered, and keep the use consecutive. Ideally, the person opening the mail, writing the receipt and stamping the check “deposit only” should not be the same person making the deposits or doing the bookkeeping. At a special event where currency is received, two people should collect and count the cash. Deposits should be made timely and intact in an account authorized annually by the Board of Directors. Do not pay expenses from cash receipts. List the payers on the deposit slip. Carbon deposit slips should be used. A good way to record the items for deposit is in the same order as the receipts were written. This avoids a missed or overlooked item. If there is a check remittance advice or other document attached to the check, this should either be kept with the deposit slip or attached to the corresponding receipt. After the deposit is made, the bank receipt should be stapled to a carbon copy of the deposit slip.

Disbursements:

A cash disbursement is the payment for a good or service. A checking account should be used for this purpose. A financial institution that returns the cancelled check is best. Carbon copies are another option. Avoid cash payouts whenever possible.

Recordkeeping and Bookkeeping

Disbursements (continued):

For a few minor payments, a petty cash system can be utilized. It should be an imprest system – meaning that any given time the total amount of cash and receipts add up to the amount setup as petty cash. Ex. If the petty cash is up to $50, the cash and receipts for payments ALWAYS need to equal $50. The petty cash fund should be the responsibility of one person.

No matter which system is used, all documents need to have the same information on it. That information needs to include:

- Date of purchase
- Amount of service/product
- Name of vendor
- What the product/service is for

All documentation needs to be ORIGINAL. I the case of reimbursing someone who put a cost on their charge card, you need to keep the original receipt and they get a photocopy for their records. For an individual requesting mileage or payment for service, they should handwrite an invoice noting the above information and SIGN it BEFORE payment. Do NOT pay from statements. When a payment is made – The invoice should be noted as PAID listing the date and check number.

Optimally, at least two people should be involved at all times. One should authorize the expenditures and the other should actually write the check. All checks should require two signatures of individuals authorized by the Board of Directors. Invoices should be available for the signers review. NEVER sign a blank check. If the amount cannot be determined in advance (because the check is needed at an event) at least fill in the payee and date. Mutilate voided checks.

Bank reconciliations should be prepared by someone not making deposits or writing checks. If this is not possible, the bank reconciliations should be reviewed and signed by a second individual, preferable the Board President.

Correspondence:

All pertinent information, letters received should be kept in the organization's record for a length of time. I have included a guide for the keeping of some documentation. This information can be kept in a file marked "correspondence" or put in a monthly file/envelope or scan the correspondence and keep them online and on your computer.

Miscellaneous:

Try to set a specified time aside regularly to do organization's stuff. At ALL costs do not co-mingle your organization's and your personal monies or expenses. In the case of purchasing items along with your personal shopping, have the organization's item rung up on a separate receipt where possible. Otherwise circle the appropriate items on your receipt, total them and use for your backup and get reimbursed through the regular disbursement process. Do not "net" revenue and expenses at an event. If you MUST, keep detailed records of what was paid from the revenue ad record this in your accounting records. This gives you a better picture of the true revenue and expenses of the event and insures that controls are in place. Because appearances are so important, every step should be taken to insure the safeguarding of the organization's assets. Ex. If the organization has a copy machine and you use it for the organization business but use your electricity – can you use it for personal business? Again appearances are important. I would suggest that some sort of agreement be in writing allowing for example, so many copies at no charge for personal use to offset your electrical expense. Again two or more people need to be involved, not a trust issue as much as an appearance and CYA. Common sense and courtesy should be foremost here.

Social Media

Facebook: Create a Facebook group or page is an excellent way to get word out about your organization. Lots of people have a Facebook, and by having people in your neighborhood “like” or “join” the page, others will see it and join in. This can also be a great way to communicate with your members about meeting times, events, policies, and deadlines.

Twitter: Twitter is useful for rapid-fire interaction with members of your community, and is especially helpful for posting about a live event on social media.

NextDoor: NextDoor is a unique form of social media because it is the only social media created explicitly for neighborhoods. You can post about suspicious activity, advertise your yard sale, or get information on neighborhood meetings.

Flyers

Flyers are still one of the most effective ways to get word out about your neighborhood organization. Flyers are helpful because they can be placed strategically, where people are more likely to see them, and they can reach potential members even if they don’t have internet or social media accounts. Therefore, it is important to make sure your flyer is just right.

A good flyer should be:

- **Eye-catching** (have a nice picture, bright colors, or a large text to brighten it up)
- **Informative** (give contact information of your organization, next meeting time, and an outline of what your group does)
- **Readable** (make sure your font isn’t too small, and there are no typos)
- **Organized** (use bullet points as a way to get your points across)

Flyer Resources

There are several online resources to help you create an eye-catching, informative, readable, and organized flyer.

- Canva.com- This is a FREE website that allows you to create flyers, posters, or brochures. It is helpful for creating attractive flyers, and all of their templates can be customized to fit your needs.
- Microsoft Word- Microsoft Word comes with hundreds of templates for flyers, and is useful because most public or personal computers come with Microsoft.

Newsletters

Newsletters are another resource that can be helpful to advertise your group, inform your neighborhood of a meeting or, get the word out about a new policy, and give general announcements about what is happening in your community. Westside Neighborhood Association's Westsider Newsletter (https://www.wnalansing.com/newsletter/) is an excellent example of a good newsletter.

Below are some guidelines and resources for creating a good newsletter:

- Newsletters are typically printed on a monthly or quarterly basis
- Ask your City Council member for a message ot put in the letter
- If your organization is unable to afford printing or postage, sending the newsletter via email may be the better option
- Ask local business if they'd like to advertise in your newsletter, this can be a good way to generate revenue for printing and postage
- Advertise services that are being offered to the community- such as mobile food bank, tutoring, or health clinics
- Newslettertemplates.com and Microsoft Word are both excellent resources for creating newsletters

Yard Signs

Signs that can be staked in to the ground and easily removed are another excellent way to advertise an upcoming meeting or event. Ask a few members of your organization (who are far apart) to place these signs in their yards.

For help in advertising your organization, feel free to contact the Director of the Department of Neighborhoods and Citizen Engagement, Andi Crawford at Andi.Crawford@lansingmi.gov or 517-614-9695

Raise Funds for Your Organization

Neighborhood organizations often need at least some money to keep them afloat. This money goes towards parties, snacks for your group, fees that need to be paid for reserving spaces for events, and the like. There are many different ways to raise money for your group, and depending on your organization, you may find one is more useful than another.

Fundraising Events

Holding an event to raise money is a common way for organizations to raise money, and can be a good way for your organization to become more visible. Here are some ideas for fundraising events:

- Themed Party (Holiday, Costume, etc.)
- Dinner Event
- Car Wash
- Bake Sale
- Auction

Membership Fees or Dues

You may choose to have membership fees or dues for your organization. Be sure the price is not so steep as to scare away potential neighbors, or exclude people who cannot afford it. Assign someone (treasurer, etc.) to keep close records of payment, and consider setting up a bank account to hold the dues.

Advertising

Create a partnership between you and your neighborhood businesses. Offering ad space in a newsletter, putting a business logo onto a banner, or handing out coupons to neighbors are all ways of advertising for businesses, in exchange for a donation to your organization.

Grants

Organizations should apply for grants if they are looking for a large money award for an involved community project. For more information, see the Grants One-Pager, or contact the Director of the Department of Neighborhoods and Citizen Engagement, Andi Crawford, at (517) 614-9695.

Additional Resources

http://www.thefundraisingauthority.com/fundraising-basics/
http://nhi.org/online/issues/145/fundraising.html
https://doublethedonation.com/fundraising-ideas/

Receive Grants for Your Organization

Applying for grants can be an overwhelming, but rewarding, process. To make the process less difficult, there are many resources available to help you. See below for a list of available grants, as well as some helpful tips for filling out a grant.

Grants

Mayor's Neighborhood Advisory Board Grant

The NAB grants are tools to help groups obtain funding for many types of projects, events, functions that will enhance their area, and bring people together in a positive setting. There are multiple awards available.

1. Stipends: Small award typically used for neighborhood events ($100)
2. Small-Project Grant (up to $650)
3. Large-Project Grant (up to $3000)
4. Love Your Block Grant: Gives community groups in Lansing an opportunity to enhance and revitalize their neighborhoods through a larger project ($1000-$5000)

Application Release Date: Fall
Application Due Date: January
Contact: Andi Crawford, Director of Department of Neighborhoods and Citizen Engagement (Andi.Crawford@lansingmi.gov, (517)-483-4141)
http://lansingmi.gov/1284/Mayors-Neighborhood-Advisory-Board-NAB

Additional Grant Resources
http://www.ourcommunity.org/grantmaking/applyingforagrant
http://libguides.lib.msu.edu/grants
https://michigan.grantwatch.com/grant-search.php?serach=advanced

Grant Writing Basics

Successful Grant Proposals are:

- Well researched, planned, and presented
- Concisely packaged
- Delivered on-time
- Unique; that is, they do not duplicate other projects
- Aligns well with the interests, intentions, and needs of the grantor

Receive Grants for Your Organization (Cntd.)

Top 10 Pet Peeves of Grant Reviewers

1. Typos
2. Paragraphs that masquerade as sentences
3. Sweeping generalizations
4. Too many details
5. A boring narrative
6. Lots of flash, little substance
7. Over or underestimating how much a project will cost
8. The request is unclear
9. Not following the specific instructions required for the grant proposal (with proper research, you should know the deadlines, funding priorities, proposal format, required content, desired attachments, and page length restrictions of the targeted funder)
10. Project is not relevant to the grant.

Basic Components of Grant Proposals:

- Cover Sheet/Letter of Application
- Executive Summary
- Definition of Need
- Program Description/Approach
- Program Goals/Objectives
- Evaluation
- Sustainability/Organizational Capacity
- Budget

For information on finding or apply for grants, contact Andi Crawford, Director of Neighborhoods and Citizen Engagement (Andi.Crawford@lansingmi.gov, (517) 614-9695).

Volunteer and Member Recruitment

Different people have different reasons for volunteering. Some people will want to get involved in meetings and decision making while others are happier just to come in, do their task, and then go. Regardless of the level of commitment, it is important that volunteers feel they will get something in return for their time and effort. Some of the returns might be satisfaction, learning new skills, helping others, gaining information, meeting people, being included, solving a problem, having fun, and personal fulfillment.

We can encourage participation in our neighborhood activities and organizations by:

- Welcoming people to the organization;
- Being open and clear about our purpose and goals;
- Giving people an opportunity to work on a specific project;
- Listening;
- Appreciating whatever level of commitment someone can make;
- Continuously recruiting;
- Matching people's interests to the volunteer work they do;
- Finding out what others are interested in;
- Always recognizing people for the work they do;
- Making one-on-one connections;
- Giving people a variety of volunteer options to choose from;
- Find out and tap into whatever motivates them;
- Appeal to people's higher purpose, their heart strings;
- Identify the strengths, talents, and skills of neighbors so that they can be invited to help in ways that are meaningful to them; and
- Sponsor volunteer commitment campaigns through which people are asked to pledge a small number of hours over a year's time to a specific volunteer activity.

Groups may initially attract members and volunteers through well-publicized meetings on issues that concern many or projects that involve lots of people. If your group is in the public eye, it will certainly boost membership. After the publicity dies away and the problem is solved, active members may disappear.

Therefore, continually finding new members is crucial to keeping neighborhood organizations alive. While many people appreciate what the group is doing for the neighborhood, they may not attend meetings or even come in direct contact with your neighborhood organization.

To maximize membership potential, your neighborhood organization could:

- Undertake a membership drive that directly reaches every household. This might include going door-to-door to every household, armed with printed material and sign-up sheets;
- Encourage every board member to bring a neighbor to the meeting;
- Host meetings as potluck dinners;
- Ensure that meetings are run well and purposefully, so that people feel their time is well spent.

Do's and Don'ts of Volunteer Management

Don't: Assume that volunteers understand the impact of their work, why they are doing it, or what they are supposed to be working on.
Do: Make sure you **communicate clearly** with your volunteers- take the first 5-10 minutes of your volunteer event to assign tasks, and let volunteers know the significance of their actions for the community

Don't: Assume that all volunteers know one another.
Do: Take the time during that first 5-10 minutes for everyone to introduce each other, and perhaps incorporate an ice-breaker

Don't: Allow apathetic or lazy volunteers to affect the rest of the group.
Do: Be encouraging to those who are working hard, and address those who are not.

Don't: Make a volunteer feel bad if they were not able to follow through in the past.
Do: Let volunteers know they are welcome whenever they are able to contribute time. Remember, communication is key!

Don't: Overwork or overload your volunteers, particularly those that always show up and put in a lot of effort.
Do: Have a conversation with "frequent flyer" volunteers about how they are doing, if they are feeling overworked, and how you can make volunteering a better experience. This may involve scheduling those people less, or taking on less volunteer commitments in the future.

Don't: Have your volunteers doing the same thing for too long; this can lead to burn out.
Do: Change it up! Find a new activity, community, or organization to volunteer with. There is no shortage of need for volunteers, and a change of pace can be healthy for an organization, as well as for volunteers.

Don't: Let your volunteers go unrewarded.
Do: Reward volunteers through incentives or through positive reinforcement. Recognition can go a long way in encouraging volunteers.

Do's and Don'ts of Volunteer Management (cntd.)

Don't: Allow the organization to become "leader dependent". Members may be unable or unwilling to participate because for too long one or two at the top have done all the work and made all the decisions, leaving others to stand by and act as rubber stamps.

Do: Make sure there is delegation. Gives others tasks that would usually be reserved for those at the top, or cycle-out leadership positions.

Don't: Leave people out of the communication loop.

Do: Set up a group-chat, e-mail chain, Facebook group, or some other form of communication to stay in touch and bond with volunteers.

Don't: Let the work your volunteers are doing go unnoticed or untracked.

Do: Keep track of metrics for each volunteer activity, and present volunteers with these metrics. For example, on a trash pick-up day, keep track of the number of trash bags collected. This will give volunteers a sense of accomplishment

Don't: Let your group become ineffective or inefficient.

Do: Make sure you are organized! This ensures that your organization runs smoothly, and that you are not wasting anyone's time. Organization involves being on-time, having the proper tools for a volunteering event, and keeping track of metrics.

Don't: Make all the decisions on what kind of activities your group will take part in.

Do: Make sure you are receiving regular input from members on what kinds of activities they would like to work on, and make your best effort to include these activities in your group's volunteer schedule.

Prepare for a Change in Leadership

One of the biggest challenges that neighborhood organizations have is what to do when the president or other integral member leaves. Organizations that are not prepared for a leadership shift run the risk of falling apart. It is important to get prepared beforehand, by preparing your organization for whatever happens in the future.

1. Note potential leadership within your organization

Get to know your organization members, and keep them involved. If members are given responsibility (managing events, keeping contact lists, etc.) you may notice potential leadership skills in them. They may also be more willing to step into a larger position in the future.

2. Continuously recruit new members

An organization works best when it has a mix of old and new members working together. An organization that recruits new members and gives them a voice has a better chance of finding new leaders than one that closes itself off from new people or opinions.

3. Stay Organized

Make sure that you have clear documentation of finances, events, and contacts, to make sure nothing important slips through the cracks during a leadership change. Being organized will make it easier for a new leader to continue work that was administered by their predecessor.

4. Address underlying conflicts

Oftentimes conflicts can erupt amidst a leadership change, which puts the organization at risk. Make sure you address conflicts among members when they first come up, instead of letting them simmer under the surface. Be sure that all sides of an argument are being heard.

5. Define a role

If you know a member will be leaving the organization in the near future, make sure they leave clear guidelines for the next person to follow. This could be a summary of their role, instructions for accessing a bank account or files, or even a number to reach if they have any questions.

GIS and Mapping Tools

GIS stands for Geographic Information Systems, which are tools that are used to express information onto maps. GIS maps can be used by organizations to more clearly explain neighborhood conditions and problems, or can just be used to show people where they live. The City is available to help organization with their GIS needs.

Uses for Neighborhood Organization

Neighborhood Maps: A simple map showing where the boundaries of the neighborhood you serve is great to have on hand, and can help show residents which neighborhood they live in. They can also show information like where block captains or members of your group reside.

Parcel Maps: A parcel map is used to show where property lines lie in an area, and can be useful for development projects or property disputes.

Land Use Map: A land use map shows the function of each property, and can show zoning and parks/waterways.

Data Map: Demographic maps can show all kinds of data, including, but not limited to:

- Which houses are red tagged
- Where the flood plain or floodway lies
- Where federally designated CDBG designated areas are
- Assessed housing values
- Crime statistics

Create a Map

For more information on how to have a map created, or how to create and collect data, please contact the City's GIS Administrator, Sam Quon, at sam.quon@lansingmi.gov, or (517)-483-6009.

Available Resources

Here are some links to current maps that the City has available:

- Flood Plains: http://lansingmi.gov/706/Flood-Maps
- Future Land Use: http://lansingmi.gov/documentcenter/view/375
- Existing Land Use: Handbook
- Natural Features: http://lansingmi.gov/documentcenter/view/351
- Community Centers, Parks, and Facilities: http://lansingmi.gov/886/Parks-Facilities
- Lansing Trail Map: http://lansingmi.gov/1296/Lansing-River-Trail
- Lansing Area Schools: http://lansingmi.gov/712/Schools
- Federal CDBG Areas: https://portal.hud.gov/hudportal/HUD?src=/program_offices/comm_planning/communitydevelopment/programs

Event Ideas

One of the best ways to grow and strengthen membership is through events- this gives you an opportunity to meet new members, as well as makes stronger bonds with existing members of your organization.

Event Ideas:

- **Potluck Suppers**: These are festive event that can be modified to suit any occasion. For example, your organization could sponsor a holiday potluck supper preceded by a songfest or caroling in the community. In addition to bringing people together, potluck suppers can be used to attract new members or thank volunteers.

- **Game Nights and Movie Nights**: Hosting game and movie nights are excellent ways to get people in the neighborhood socializing, having fun, eating (assuming you offer refreshments!), and getting to know one another. The better people know one another, the more likely they are to work with each other to accomplish goals for the neighborhood.

- **Logo Contest**: Logos are an important part of a group's identity. Sponsoring a logo contest is one way to involve residents of all ages and gain publicity for your organization. Contest entries can be displayed at a prominent location, such as a local bank, and judged by a panel. Prizes, donated by local businesses, could be awarded to winners and runners-up.

- **Block Party**: A block party is a sure-fire way to bring people out and get them together at a pancake breakfast, barbecue, ice cream social or similar activity. The block party encourages residents to get to know each other and to spread the word about current or planned neighborhood activities. It is useful to have neighborhood newsletters, brochures, and other neighborhood information displayed at the party.

- **Restoration Celebration**: By bringing people together for a social hour, your neighborhood group can reinforce home improvement momentum while simultaneously bringing in new members. These gatherings could be held on a regular basis; perhaps in newly renovated homes so that guests can see for themselves the many benefits of self-initiated home repair, discuss mutual repair problems, and exchange ideas and suggestions on how to fix up older houses. And newly restored home-owners often love to share with others about the work they've done – and you might even get house tours!

Flower Planting Event Checklist

- ☐ Choose a date, time, and place(s) where flowers will be planted.
- ☐ Develop a flyer and/or newsletter article to announce the event to your neighborhood.
- ☐ Choose a volunteer who will call people and secure their commitment to participate, as well as remind them of the event just before it will happen.
- ☐ Choose a volunteer who will secure all of the necessary tools (shovels of various sizes, compost, trowels, hose and/or watering can & water).
- ☐ Choose a volunteer who will make sure the flowers and plants are available (possible sources include: a perennial exchange among neighbors, donations from local plant nurseries and/or business—such as Meijer, gardeners in the neighborhood, or purchased through neighborhood donations).
- ☐ Chose volunteers who will commit to the longer-term watering and weeding that needs to be done after the plantings have been put in. You could even do a weed pulling challenge with the winner receiving a small prize at the end of the season.
- ☐ After the planting, say thank you to your volunteers. This can be done with a follow up party to celebrate your accomplishments, through a neighborhood newsletter article, or the social media page of your neighborhood on Facebook, Twitter, or NextDoor.
- ☐ Evaluate your flower planting and make notes about what went well and what you might do differently in the future.

Little Library Checklist

A Little Library is a “take a book, return a book” free book exchange, located at the front of a park, lot, or home. They come in many shapes and sizes, but the most common version is a small wooden box of books. Anyone may take a book or bring a book to share. Little libraries are an excellent way to increase literacy, bring communities together, or encourage use of the park or lot where it sits.

Steps:

1. Make a plan

- ☐ Choose a location for a little library. Ideally this is at the front of a lot, so it is easily accessible to people. Make sure it is not in a public right-of-way (ie. the area between the sidewalk and the street).
- ☐ Choose a person or group who will be in charge of setting up the library. Also make sure you have a person who will be in charge of the upkeep of the structure and the books inside.
- ☐ Have an idea for what the library is going to look like (see step 3).

2. Make sure library is approved.

- ☐ There are no zoning laws specifically addressing little libraries. Approvals are instead given on a case to case basis. Contact the Lansing Planning Office (517-483-4066) with your plan for approval.

3. Design and Build Your Library

- ☐ Decide if you are going to design your own library, adopt an existing design from a website or kit, or buy a premade library. A premade library can cost from $200-$400. You can also be creative by designing it out of recycled materials, such as an old mailbox or appliance.

  Some Resources:
  - https://littlefreelibrary.org/build/
  - https://littlefreelibrary.myshopify.com/

- ☐ Be sure if you are using the “Little Free Library” name on your library, you have it registered with the Little Free Library organization, as it is trademarked.
- ☐ Construct your library. Make sure it is rain/snow proof.

Little Library Checklist (ctnd.)

4. Add books

- ☐ Decide what types of books you want to have in your library. A diverse selection is often the best option, but you may decide that you want only books for children.
- ☐ Ask neighbors if they have any books they would like to donate. You may also ask your local library or bookstore for donations.
- ☐ Check on the library periodically to make sure it is well stocked.

5. Spread the word

- ☐ Encourage use of the library through social media and word of mouth.
- ☐ Decide if you want to have a policy, such as a book exchange, or a simple book borrow/return.

Neighborhood Clean-Up Checklist

Neighborhood clean-ups are a great way to clean up a public space such as a park, vacant lot, sidewalks, or streets. They are also an excellent opportunity to organize your community and create connections through service.

- ☐ Determine what needs to be cleaned up in the neighborhood. Is there a park that could be attended to? Are there areas of your neighborhood right along the river that could use some extra tidying? Does the neighborhood, in general, need trash picked up along its residential streets? How about vacant lots? Leaves?
- ☐ Choose a coordinator or planning committee for the clean-up.
- ☐ Determine date, time, and meeting place for clean-up.
- ☐ Get the word out among residents (through flyers, newsletters, phone calls, social media) and recruit volunteers to help on the day of the clean-up.
- ☐ Gather trash bags, yard waste bags (for leaves, etc), and rakes— whatever materials you will need— for the day of the clean-up.
- ☐ Determine whether you will have refreshments available during the work party, and secure those, if necessary.
- ☐ A few days before the work party, make reminder phone calls to your volunteers.
- ☐ After the event, say thank you to your volunteers. This can be done with a follow-up party to celebrate your accomplishments, or perhaps through a neighborhood newsletter article.
- ☐ Evaluate your clean-up and make notes about what went well and what you might do differently in the future.

Some ideas for making the event fun and challenging:

- Make an Instagram challenge. Take before and after pictures of the space cleaned in order to have a clear representation of the difference you made. Have volunteers take pictures of the clean up during the event and post them on social media (like Instagram) in order to encourage and others to come join and show followers and the rest of Lansing what you are doing. Also, include these pictures on your community's social media page and newsletter.
- Keep track of how much trash you collected. If you do a weigh in of the trash, you could use this as a yearly measure if you decide to do this event again.
- Get kids involved! Put together small groups of kids with an adult supervisor to do a trash pick-up challenge. On a basketball court or cemented area, lay out a line of painter's tape for each team. Have the kids layout the trash along the line and the longest line wins. Remember to have each person wear gloves and instruct the adults to pick up all glass, sharp objects, or suspicious material.

Holiday Party Checklist

Choose a coordinator or planning committee for the holiday party.

- ☐ Determine date, time, and place of party.
- ☐ Give the holiday party a name. Perhaps "Holiday Party" is enough, but maybe you want to emphasize the inclusive nature of the event by calling it something else. Holidays to consider including might be: Christmas, Hanukkah, Kwanzaa, Ramadan (check on time of year, as it varies), and the Winter Solstice.
- ☐ Plan the program. Possibilities might include:
  - Potluck meal, featuring foods from a variety of cultural and religious traditions
  - Cookie exchange
  - Canned food drive
  - Warm clothing drive
  - Food basket assembly
  - Games and/or movies
  - Talent show
  - Arts and crafts for children
  - Honoring an individual in the neighborhood for service contributions made throughout the year
  - Presentations from various groups about the significance of their holiday celebrations
  - Gift exchange
- ☐ Create and distribute invitations or flyers about the event to your neighborhood residents.
- ☐ Make a special effort to reach out to people who may not have family in the area
- ☐ Assemble and set up decorations for the party.
- ☐ Assemble any materials (games, arts/crafts, baskets, etc.) needed for the program.
- ☐ Determine whether you need the following, and assemble them, if needed:
  - Tables and chairs
  - Set-up, break-down, and clean-up crews
  - Trash cans/recycling containers
  - Photographer
  - DJ and/or sound system
  - Movie playing equipment
  - Paper plates, cups, and plastic ware
  - Food and beverages
  - Game and activity supplies
  - Neighborhood membership list with space for more entries
  - Donation box
- ☐ Evaluate your holiday party and make notes about what went well and what you might do differently in the future.

Meet the Candidates Event Checklist

- ☐ Some neighborhoods sponsor events in which neighbors can meet candidates for local political offices. These can be an excellent way to promote civic responsibility and increase neighbors' knowledge of both issues and candidates. In order to learn the dos and don'ts of a Meet the Candidates Night and to hold the event, please contact the City Clerk at 517-483-4131 or city.clerk@lansingmi.gov.

- ☐ Choose a coordinator or planning committee for Meet the Candidates Night.

- ☐ Select a date, time, and place for the Candidates Night, preferable 8, but at least 4 weeks in advance, and confirm that the day and time are available for the facility you've chosen (local community centers, schools, neighborhood centers, etc)/

- ☐ Contact candidates and issues campaigns to get the event on their calendars – again, at least four but preferably eight weeks in advance. Remember to invite only those candidates for whom members of your neighborhood can actually vote, and make sure not to miss any candidates or sides of the issue.

- ☐ Invite neighborhood and other city residents through newsletter , social media, and/or flyers and/or phone calls; you may even wish to pursue advertising the event in local newspapers; and perhaps you want to advertise the event in other neighborhood newsletters, as well.

- ☐ Arrange for refreshments, if any.

- ☐ Arrange for decorations, if any.

- ☐ Arrange for a table on which candidates or issues campaigns may make materials available at the event.

- ☐ A week or two before the event, confirm with the candidates that they will still be able to make it.

- ☐ Arrange to have both a moderator and a timekeeper with a hand-buzzer, so that candidates/issues may receive equal time in an unbiased manner.

- ☐ After the event, send thank you cards to the candidates who participated.

- ☐ Evaluate your Meeting the Candidates' Night event and make notes about what went well and what you might do differently in the future.

Andy Schor, Mayor

Bulk Trash Pick-up Event Checklist

Bulk trash pick-up events are an excellent opportunity for volunteerism in your community, as well as a way for neighbors to get rid of large trash items (such as tires and appliances). You must be in a CDBG-eligible neighborhood for the city to do a trash-pickup. Call (517)-614-9695 to see if your neighborhood qualifies.

- ☐ Choose a coordinator or planning committee for the event.
- ☐ Contact the Neighborhood Resource Coordinator, Andi Crawford at 517-410-3904 to express interest in doing a trash pick-up. She will then get in contact with the development office who will be in charge of accepting your request. Funding is not guaranteed for a trash-pick up and money will be available based on number of groups that organize a trash pick- up and past use. When you call, the City will reserve a date for your neighborhood provided that you return within two weeks the forms they send you to fill out.
- ☐ Follow the directions on their application carefully, and remember to include a map of the area that will be serviced and a list of 10 volunteers who can be available to help the drivers load the trucks.
- ☐ If you have a newsletter, advertise the month of the pick-up (BUT NOT THE SPECIFIC DATE) well in advance, so that people in your neighborhood can begin setting their trash aside.
- ☐ The week of the pick-up, develop and distribute a flyer that includes:
  - specific date and start time of the pick-up
  - information about when to place trash on their curb
  - name and contact information for neighborhood coordinator who can answer questions
  - guidelines for what trash will and will not be picked up.
  - (**Note**: The City has an electronic flyer available that details most of this information, which you can modify, as needed. See Appendix for example flyer.)
- ☐ Two weeks before the pick-up, contact the Development Office (517) 483-4066 and confirm the time and number of trucks the City will be sending (you will need five volunteers per truck), as well as where in the neighborhood volunteers will meet up with the trucks.
- ☐ A few days before the pick-up, make reminder phone calls to volunteers who agreed to help out with the pick-up, and let them know where to meet.
- ☐ On the day of the pick-up, you might consider having coffee, tea, and doughnuts (or lunch refreshments, if applicable) available for the volunteers and City employees who will be loading the trash onto the City's trucks.
- ☐ In addition to the volunteers who are helping load the trucks, you may wish to encourage each individual neighbor who has placed trash at their curbsides to come out and help load. (This may be impossible for some folks who are elderly and/or disabled, of course.)
- ☐ After the event, say thank you to your volunteers. This can be done with a follow-up party to celebrate your accomplishments, or perhaps through a neighborhood newsletter article.
- ☐ Evaluate your trash pick-up and make notes about what went well and what you might do differently in the future.

Porchfest/Stoopfest Checklist

A Porchfest or Stoopfest is a music festival held in a neighborhood. Neighbors volunteer their front porches or yards for local musicians to perform for a one day event. This is a good opportunity for neighbors to get out and meet each other, as well as encourage people outside the neighborhood to come see what's going on in your neighborhood.

Steps:

- ☐ Choose a coordinator or planning committee for Porchfest/Stoopfest.
- ☐ Determine budget for any equipment, food, necessary permits, etc.
- ☐ Apply for grants, such as the Neighborhood Advisory Board (NAB Grant), or hold a fundraiser to raise money for Porchfest/Stoopfest.
- ☐ Select a date for your Porchfest/Stoopfest at least six months in advance, and determine times/shifts for musicians to perform.
- ☐ Secure musicians to perform. Network with people who know musicians, and advertise through social media and arts publications to find interested performers. Determine what genre they play, and what equipment and porch size they will require. Also consider booking back up performers in case of cancellations.
- ☐ Ask neighbors if they are interested in offering their porch for the event.
- ☐ Advertise the event through social media, newspapers, arts publications, and flyers.
- ☐ Create materials, such as a schedule of the performers, a map of the performance sites, and signs for the event.
- ☐ Designate a "home base" for the event, such as a park or a tent, that will serve as a Check-in point for musicians, neighbors, and visitors. Hand out any materials here, and consider offering food and drinks.
- ☐ Recruit volunteers to help with event set up and coordination.
- ☐ A week or two before the event, confirm with the musicians, as well as neighbors offering their porches, to ensure no problems on the day of.
- ☐ Take pictures and record musicians for social media, and to advertise for the next Porchfest
- ☐ Thank the musicians after the event by providing food and refreshments.
- ☐ Take note of the good and bad during the event, and keep it in mind for the next time the event is planned.

Andy Schor, Mayor

Neighborhood Yard Sale Checklist

Sponsoring a neighborhood yard sale can be an excellent way to pool resources and bring people together. In addition, they usually attract larger crowds, so they are mutually benefit all participating households. Neighborhood yard sales can also be used as fund raising opportunities, where you might ask participating households to make a flat fee donation or share a percentage of their profits with the neighborhood organization. When holding a yard sale, please be mindful of the city sign ordinance (do not place sign on right away or utility pole, etc). The Lansing State Journal or City Pulse are both great resources to advertise your sale and receive tips on holding a yard sale. To hold a community yard sale on a city parking lot, please contact Parking Services at (517)-483-4240 or parking@lansingmi.gov for permission.

- ☐ Choose a coordinator or planning committee for the neighborhood yard sale.
- ☐ Select a date/days and time(s).
- ☐ Determine whether you will require participants to make a donation to help cover advertising and/or other costs, and how much that donation will be. If no donation will be required, determine how you will cover the costs of advertising your yard sale.
- ☐ Advertise the yard sale to your neighborhood through flyers and social media, and seek out households who wish to participate, keeping track of those who are interested.
- ☐ Write and place notices in the Lansing State Journal, City Pulse, etc. advertising the event. It can be helpful to poll participating neighborhoods about what types of items will be for sale, so you can include that in your ad.
- ☐ Develop and post signs at entrance points to the neighborhood on the day(s) of the yard sale to help people find it.
- ☐ Remind interested neighbors of the yard sale a week or so before the event, and collect donations in advance from those who are participating, if applicable. Remind people to have cash on hand so they may make change for customers.
- ☐ Determine whether you want to set up a refreshments stand, what will be offered, at what cost, and who will staff it. Again, this can be an excellent way to fundraise for your neighborhood organization (or another organization, if you wish to do it as a community service).
- ☐ If you are collecting a percentage of profits as donation to the organization, contact participants soon after (preferably the last day of) the yard sale to collect money and give receipts.
- ☐ Remove signs posted at entrance points to the neighborhood after the event is over.
- ☐ Evaluate your yard sale and make notes about what went well and what you might do differently in the future.

Welcome Basket Checklist

A welcome basket can be a way of welcoming a new neighbor to the community, and let them know they have a friend in the area. It can also be a chance to give them information on opportunities in the neighborhood, or let them know of any events or organizations.

- ☐ Choose what kind of basket or bag you are going to use. You may not want to choose something too expensive if you have an influx of new neighbors. Decorate your basket with ribbons, paint, etc.
- ☐ Choose what items you want to go into the basket. Possibilities include non-perishable food items (keeping in mind food allergies), coupons or gift cards to local establishments, trinkets or handmade gifts, soaps, or any gifts that are unique to the neighborhood.
- ☐ If you are leaving the basket on the doorstep of the house, make sure you have a label stating who the basket is from, along with your address so they can thank you later on.
- ☐ If you are giving the basket to them in person, be friendly but respect their privacy as they move in. There will be plenty of time to get to know one another.
- ☐ Include a welcome letter from you or your organization. You may wish to include some information about the neighborhood, including organizations and meeting times, upcoming events, or recommended places for food, shopping, and recreation.

Walking Wednesdays

What is a Walking Wednesday?

A Walking Wednesday is a walk through your neighborhood with neighbors, City officials, City Council members, Lansing Police Officers, and anyone else who may be interested in the assets of your neighborhood, and the areas of improvement or interest. These events are typically held on a Wednesday during spring, summer, or early fall. However, the Neighborhood Resource Team is happy to schedule a Walking Wednesday whenever it works best for your community.

How to Schedule a Walking Wednesday

To schedule a Walking Wednesday, please contact the Director of the Department of Neighborhoods and Citizen Engagement, Andi Crawford (Andi.Crawford@lansingmi.gov or 517-614-9695) with several dates and times that work best for you, your community organization, and your neighbors.

Neighbors in Westside Neighborhood learning about their

historic homes on a Walking Wednesday. (July 2017)