



NEIGHBORHOOD GROUP STARTER KIT

Creating connection, Inspiring change



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GROUP

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WHY START A NEIGHBORHOOD GROUP?



Create unity and belonging

Bring people together to foster a sense of community and unity within your neighborhood.



Give everyone a voice

Provide a platform for residents to be heard and share their concerns with one another.



Improve communication with leaders

Make it easier for community members to voice their concerns directly to local leaders.



Safe spaces for conversations

Create supportive, safe environments for meaningful conversations and collaboration.

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1

RECRUIT AND ORGANIZE A GROUP OF NEIGHBORS



FORM A CORE GROUP OF NEIGHBORS

Start by forming a small group of dedicated and motivated neighbors within your ward, who are passionate about improving the community. This core group will serve as the foundation for organizing the neighborhood efforts.



LEADERSHIP STRUCTURE: GROUP LEADER AND BACKUP

Choose a group leader to guide the initiative and a backup leader to ensure continuity and support. Together, this leadership team will help define the group's mission and purpose, establish clear goals, and plan the first meeting.



RECRUIT A DIVERSE GROUP

Focus on recruiting a diverse group of neighbors, representing various interests and perspectives within the community. A mix of voices and experiences will strengthen the group and make it more inclusive.



EFFECTIVE RECRUITMENT STRATEGIES

Use a combination of strategies to reach potential participants, such as:

- **Social media:** promote your group on neighborhood Facebook pages and community groups. If your Alderman distributes a newsletter, ask if they can include the meeting schedule.
- **Door-to-door visits:** personally invite neighbors to join the group, building trust and connection.
- **One-on-one conversations:** engage in casual conversations with neighbors to personally encourage involvement.

Collect contact information (emails, phone numbers) to build your group's contact list and keep everyone engaged.

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PLAN AN EFFECTIVE FIRST MEETING



PLAN YOUR FIRST MEETING

To ensure your neighborhood group gets off to a strong start, careful planning for your first meeting is essential. Choosing the right time, location, and format can help ensure maximum participation and engagement from your neighbors.



SELECT THE RIGHT TIME

Choose a time that works for most neighbors, considering work, family, and community events. Evening or weekend meetings are often ideal, but a quick survey can help pinpoint the best time.



CHOOSE A LOCATION

Choose an accessible, welcoming location with enough seating and easy directions. Community centers, parks, or public places work well. If an in-person meeting isn't possible, consider virtual options.



CREATE AN ENGAGING FORMAT

Create a clear, focused agenda and keep the meeting on track. Introduce the group, share its mission, and allow time for everyone to contribute in an open, inclusive environment.



MAXIMIZE PARTICIPATION

Promote your meeting effectively to encourage participation:

- **Use social media:** share meeting details on social media channels.
- **Door-to-door invitations:** personally invite neighbors to attend.
- **Follow-up reminders:** send out reminder emails or messages about the meeting.

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CREATE AN ACTION PLAN



Identify key concerns

Prioritize concerns, determining which can be handled by residents and which need law enforcement or City Departments (e.g., Building & Zoning, Animal Control, Code Enforcement).



Set clear, achievable goals

After identifying concerns, work with your group to set clear, realistic, and measurable goals that provide direction and help track progress.



Create a roadmap for action

Assign responsibilities, set realistic timelines, and determine needed resources to guide your group's efforts toward its mission.



Monitor progress and adjust as needed

Regularly check progress and adjust based on feedback or changing needs. Follow-up meetings should include updates on concerns and discussions on topics such as crime prevention, suspicious activity, and property standards. Plan events like National Night Out or neighborhood clean-ups to build relationships and increase participation.

Tip: Stay focused!

Limit goals and concerns to a few key issues to keep the group focused and ensure meaningful progress.

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REFERENCE SHEET: WHAT YOU NEED

- **Group leaders and members:** must live within ward area, where the group is being established
- **Meeting requirements:** meet once a month; maximum 1 hour or every two months; maximum 1.5 hours
- **Q&A:** reserve 15-20 minutes for questions and answers
- **Leadership positions:** Leader, Co-Leader, and Secretary/Timekeeper
- **Sign-in sheet:** this will be shared with the City of Aurora Community Engagement Staff for collection of data on group growth and participation
- **Agenda:** done at least 48 hours prior and sent to the Community Engagement Specialist for review and printing
 - Community Engagement Specialist will be responsible for creating/updating each groups agenda
- **Brainstorm topics:** plan at the beginning of the year, one topic per month
 - Property Standards
 - Community Services
 - Senior Services
 - Youth Services
 - Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI)
 - Special Events
 - 3-1-1 / Customer Service
 - APD-COP Officer
 - Streets
 - Tree Program
 - Census
 - Other City of Aurora Departments
- **Registration process for groups:**
 - Fillable form
 - Promotion of groups
 - Orientation for Neighborhood Group Leaders
 - Leadership Workshops for both Alderpeople and Neighborhood Group Leaders
 - Neighborhood Group Toolkit Training/Review
 - Roberts Rules
 - EDI Training
 - “How to be a leader?” Training

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TIMELINE AND OUTREACH

Timeline

- Start planning for your next neighborhood meeting a few weeks in advance
- Review minutes/notes from the previous meeting to help determine agenda for the next meeting
- Arrange guest speakers (i.e. subject matter experts, community organizations, other agencies, City officials, and park district officials)
- COA Aldermen's Office and Community Engagement team must approve of all guest speakers
- Aldermen's Office would assist with coordination of COA guest speakers only
- Create your agenda and have it ready to go at least one week in advance. Forward it to Ward Alderman, COP officer(s), Community Engagement Specialist and others
- Prepare fliers and distribute them one week prior to the meeting; emails and phone text message blasts should be made at the same time (you can have a calling tree or captains)
- Encourage others to bring a neighbor, maybe add an incentive for those who bring neighbors to the meeting
- Ensure the meeting room is set up and any materials, snacks, or other items are prepared about 30 minutes before the meeting
- Suggestion: have a monthly donation box passed around to help supply snacks and beverages

Outreach

- Create a Neighborhood Group flier for the ward, include meeting dates for the year and locations. This flier would be created by the Aldermen's Office
 - Ensure all communications are in both English and Spanish
- Please adhere to the guidelines and maintain a professional tone in all communications

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NEIGHBORHOOD GROUP TEMPLATES

The following Neighborhood Group templates are included:



Mission statement



Leadership team



Meeting schedule



Agenda



Contact information sheet

NEIGHBORHOOD GROUP MISSION STATEMENT

A mission statement is a one-sentence statement that defines your organization's purpose, who it serves, and how it serves them.

Example 1: Make-A-Wish: We grant the wishes of children with life-threatening medical conditions to enrich the human experience with hope, strength and joy.

Example 2: Amnesty International: To protect people and end human rights abuses by conducting research and taking action.

Name of Organization: _____

Mission Statement:



NEIGHBORHOOD GROUP LEADERSHIP TEAM

Name of Organization: _____

Neighborhood Group Leader (NGL) - Presides over meeting; agenda.

Co-Neighborhood Group Leader (Co-NGL) - Works with NGL and performs duties of NGL in their absence, responsible for timekeeping.

Secretary (optional) - Record and maintain meeting minutes.

Treasurer (optional) - Maintains financial records of the group and completes filing for the organization.



NEIGHBORHOOD GROUP MEETING SCHEDULE

Set a consistent meeting schedule, such as the first Tuesday of each month, and aim for 1-hour meetings, or 1.5 hours if semi-monthly. Planning your meetings for the entire year ensures they are easily accessible and can be shared with attendees in advance. Consistency is key to maintaining engagement and participation.

Name of Organization: _____

Meeting information (dates, times, location, other):



NEIGHBORHOOD GROUP AGENDA

Name of Organization: _____

1. Welcome and call to order (Group Leader) grounding and civility call.
2. Introductions
3. Guest speakers (decided prior to the meeting, and please refer to the list of topic options)
4. Discussion and possible actions on issues and concerns (concerns from previous meetings, action plan, new concerns)
5. Additional comments from the group
6. Adjournment
7. Next meeting date; please mark your calendars



CONTACT INFORMATION

City of Aurora contact information:

Alderman's Office

aldermensoffice@aurora.il.us

630-256-3020

Customer Service

csdivision@aurora.il.us

630-256-4636

Community Affairs

comengdiv@aurora.il.us

630-256-3590

