

The Nuts & Bolts of Organizing a Neighborhood Association

The City of Bellevue believes in strong neighborhoods. The City Council encourages neighborhood groups to organize and participate in city affairs. City staff offers assistance with forming neighborhood associations and addressing neighborhood issues. If you are interested in organizing an association for your neighborhood, consider these ten easy steps:

1. **Identify a vision**

The first important step is to identify your purpose or "vision" for the organization. Next, determine whether others share your vision.



2. **Talk with people**

Talk with your neighbors; find out what they consider your neighborhood's strengths, weaknesses, short-term and long-term needs. Ask whether they would participate in a community organization, and if so, what kind of organization would best suit the needs and character of the neighborhood. Mobilize a nucleus of neighbors to help you with the initial organizational steps.

3. **Communicate - spread the word**

If there is sufficient interest in organizing and supporting a community association, your next step should be to involve the broader neighborhood in your efforts. Consider mailing or distributing flyers door-to-door to invite neighbors to your first meeting.

4. **Hold a meeting**

Hold an organizational meeting to define your purpose and elect officers. Be prepared to present an organizational plan. Solicit ideas. Keep an attendance record, and take minutes.



5. **Adopt bylaws**

Draw up a simple set of bylaws - an organizational plan that describes such things as: the purpose of the organization; who is eligible for membership; how officers are selected; how often the group meets; how dues are assessed, and how the bylaws can be amended. Draw upon models from other associations.

6. **Incorporate**

Complete the State of Washington Articles of Incorporation and file for your status as a state non-profit corporation.

7. **Deal with finances**

Apply for your Employer Identification Number. Open a bank account. Collect dues. Pay your initial expenses.



8. Build an image

Make key contacts; let the community know you're there. Communicate with the City Council. Talk to the media. Identify the "stakeholders" in your neighborhood. Talk to local businesses, schools, churches, other organizations in your area.

9. Celebrate success

Identify an early project that can be accomplished quickly to promote a sense of community and to reinforce confidence in the new neighborhood association. Provide recognition for volunteer efforts and celebrate success.



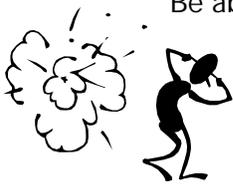
10. Avoid common pitfalls

Be absolutely clear about your purpose, and stay focused on your mission.

Start slowly and be inclusive

Don't get too big too fast.

Draw upon others' experience. Seek and accept advice.



Assistance with any or all of these steps is available from the City of Bellevue Neighborhood Liaison Program. Contact Cheryl Kuhn, 452-4089, or your local Neighborhood Liaison.