How to Build your Neighborhood Group
Tips on Starting and Building a Strong Neighborhood Group
City of Arvada, Neighborhood Engagement
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Introduction

“Vibrant Community and Neighborhoods” is a priority within The Strategic Plan which the Arvada City Council adopted by Resolution R16-074 on May 16, 2016. The Plan states: “Strong neighborhood associations, citizens engaged in civil life and the arts, and a long-term sustained focus on the safety and success of our children will bring out the best of our character and ensure Arvada is the place we want to raise our children for generations to come.”

Acknowledgements

Portions of this City of Arvada How to Create a Neighborhood Group manual were adopted from the following resources:

- City of College Station, TX: Taking Action!
- City of Longmont, CO: Neighborhood Group Leaders Association
- City of Orlando, FL: iLead Training Source
- City of Providence, RI: Neighborhood Association Tool Kit
- City of Sioux Falls, SD: Neighborhood Association Handbook

Neighborhood Engagement Coordinator

Your Neighborhood Engagement Coordinator works with citizens to organize and develop new neighborhood groups, as well as helps established neighborhood groups grow and thrive. The coordinator is available to assist neighborhood leaders to learn about and access various resources designed to bring folks together, collaborate with City departments, other governmental agencies, and local non-profits to reach goals and address concerns.

The City of Arvada has many tools to assist, including the Know Your Neighbor Grant, Neighborhood Block Party Trailer, and Neighborhood Movie Program (see Appendix for more information. We can also connect neighborhood groups with each other through the Neighborhood Leader Network, and city-wide challenges and events.

What is a Neighborhood Group?

It is a group of neighbors, and sometimes business owners, school faculty or staff, and church officials, who meet regularly to share ideas and work cooperatively to make their neighborhood a better place to live. Neighborhood engagement is an important partnership between City government, residents, and businesses.

“As neighborhood people, we have the responsibility to advise governments and others of neighborhood values, culture and history; to listen to the views of all residents; to help one another to care for children, the aging and others in need; to promote self-sufficiency of residents and economic and social development of the neighborhood; to guide our youth; to look out for the safety of our homes and streets, maintain our properties, and make proper use
of public facilities; and to strive diligently to achieve liberty and justice for all.” (see Appendix - A Declaration of Neighborhood Roles, Rights & Responsibilities)

Benefits of Having a Neighborhood Group
A neighborhood association has many quality-of-life benefits including:
- Connecting neighbors so they know each other through social events
- Working cooperatively on common goals such as physical improvement
- Providing a better representation of the neighborhood as a whole when communicating with government officials and other groups
- People looking out for each other, which provides a greater sense of security
- Pride and ownership in a strong community
- Building and maintaining a safe and healthy neighborhood
- Receiving updates on public meetings and City projects in organized neighborhood (when enrolled)
- Identifying common challenges and resolving conflict
- Building a pool of invested volunteers for community projects and emergencies

How is a Neighborhood Group Different from a Homeowner Association?
Membership in a neighborhood group is voluntary and open to anyone who lives or has a business in the neighborhood. Homeowner associations require homeowners to be members and are legal entities which usually require dues for maintenance of common areas.

Does My Neighborhood Already Have a Neighborhood Group?
Contact the Neighborhood Engagement Coordinator at the City of Arvada to see if there is an active neighborhood group in your area. If your area already has one, contact information can be provided to you. If your neighborhood does not have an active neighborhood group, use this guide for helpful tips on how to get started, and apply for the $100 Know Your Neighbor gift card grant and the $250 Planning Grant.

How to Start a Neighborhood Group
There are several different thoughts on the best way to begin a neighborhood group, ranging from informal to very formal. Every neighborhood is unique and should begin with a method which best suits the population.

A common denominator is the neighborhood organizer. Volunteer to start the process! Form a core group of interested neighbors to help out. Start with people you already know. Contact neighbors using Nextdoor, Facebook, or the PTSA. Identify people who are willing to step forward and take action. The City of Arvada requires you have 4-5 committee members when you enroll in the Neighbors Connected: Neighborhood Strong program as a way to ensure you form a sustainable neighborhood group. You need folks to support each other in this effort. Some ideas of people to include might be homeowners, renters, youth, elderly, civic leaders, schools, and local business owners.
1. Hold a social event like a block party, festival, ice cream social or potluck. Getting people together socially will make it more likely that they will want to participate in a neighborhood group. Gather your neighbors’ contact information (Great opportunity to use our Know Your Neighbor Grant).

2. Some neighborhoods prefer to have a more structured format with a board consisting of officers and chair people. One Arvada neighborhood association has a board which meets monthly. Established block captains are responsible for a designated area within the neighborhood. Block captains act as liaisons between the board and neighbors. The board members and block captains form a committee which typically meets quarterly. Neighborhood gatherings may be organized depending on topic.

3. Schedule a Meeting of the committee or Board.
   - Choose a date, time, and location that will be convenient for most everyone. Doodle is a great scheduling tool.
   - The committee decides how to proceed with organizing their neighborhood, the goals, proposed neighborhood boundaries and resources within the boundaries, ground rules for meetings, a communication strategy for connecting with neighbors, selects a date, time, and place to hold a broader neighborhood meeting, as well as the agenda for the first meeting (see Appendix) or festival.
   - Keep minutes, summarize agreements reached, and schedule a broader meeting.
   - Contact the Neighborhood Engagement Coordinator, Charise Canales at 720.898.7535 or ccanales@arvada.org, for assistance organizing your initial meetings. She is also available to share information regarding various resources available to your group and some of the benefits of enrolling your group.

4. Schedule a Broader Neighborhood Meeting, Event, or Festival.
   The goal is to bring people together to get to know each other socially, or to share ideas as to the assets and concerns of the neighborhood. Consider the following in holding your meeting or festival:
   - Determine the best time and date. Make sure your event doesn’t conflict with other community events.
   - Hold it at a location where people feel comfortable such as a park, neighborhood school or community center, etc.
   - Make it fun - include food, perhaps music and games for kids. Consider applying for the Planning Grant to assist with supplies.
   - Think about how to publicize the meeting or event, such as NextDoor, Facebook, email, flyers, signs in the park, clubs, school staff, PTA, churches, etc.
Meeting - Create the meeting agenda (see Appendix for Sample Agenda and Ground Rules). The idea is to gather opinions on what is important to neighbors and recruit others to participate.

- Discuss the value of having a neighborhood group.
- Identify goals, priorities, and ideas for projects that interest your group.
- Learn about community resources that help address the priority issues from the Neighborhood Engagement Coordinator.
- Determine how the neighborhood wants to organize.
- Have a map where people can give their input about the physical boundaries of the neighborhood.
- How will you keep the momentum going?
- Set a time, date, location, and topic/s of discussion for the next meeting.

Festival – Things you may consider if you are planning a neighborhood festival:

- If you think the event will be larger than 100 people, a permit may be necessary. Permits require a 60-day lead time. Visit our website to see if a permit will be required, or contact your Neighborhood Engagement Coordinator for more information.
- The Arvada Fire Department has many resources available to educate citizens and enjoy being part of neighborhood events. Contact Michelle Cherniske at 303.425.9203, or michelle.cherniske@arvadafire.com.
- The Arvada Police Department has a variety of fun resources designed to connect with children and families. They will speak with older youth who may be considering careers in law enforcement, as well as have available sector officers appear at your event to meet and interact with citizens. Contact your sector commander for more details.
- How many volunteers will be needed?
- How much money will your event require? What are possible funding sources?
- Local merchants may donate items if you will have prizes for games, or can sponsor your event.
- Will you need to arrange for portable toilets?
- What resources may be needed that neighbors can donate (power, water, tools, beverages, snacks).
- This may be a good time to begin branding your neighborhood with a logo on publications, clothing, etc.

5. Facilitate the Neighborhood Meeting or Festival.

Meeting:
Set up the meeting space with your committee members. Meeting space set in a learning circle or a horseshoe shape is most conducive to an environment where all people can learn and contribute equally.

Welcome your neighbors and ask them to sign in. Provide an agenda.

Designate someone to take pictures and someone to take notes.

Ice breakers & introductions – make it fun!

Begin promptly and follow the agenda you developed.

Be sure you have neighbors’ contact information (name, address, phone and email), and encourage them to participate in future meetings. You may also want to suggest they bring a neighbor with them next time – use their networks!

Recap what you accomplished, what you will cover at the next meeting, and when and how people will be contacted with updates and invitations.

Festival:

Get volunteers to help set up and clean up after the event.

Have a booth set up to promote the benefits of an association and ask folks for contact information to receive a newsletter or notification regarding other meetings and events.

Designate a few people to take pictures.

Advertise your neighborhood brand.

6. Have Fun! Keep it interesting and fresh.

Schedule regular meetings and events to stay connected and accomplish your goals.

Develop a neighborhood plan to help your neighborhood group take inventory of the assets and concerns in your area, make decisions, and take action.

Building Membership

Get people from every walk of life involved. Every person has a special gift or talent. When people feel they can connect or contribute to a particular thing, the group has additional value to that member.

Always welcome new members and take the time for introductions. New members may want to get involved but may not know how to get started. It may be helpful to have a list of volunteer opportunities members can help with. Personally invite members to get involved and ask them sign up for as many activities as they would like to take part in. Encourage new ideas, and be receptive to different perspectives.

Tools to build membership include:

Build your Board – A small board can be powerful, encourage new leadership, and promote a shared workload.

Committees are a good way to get people involved, keep people interested, spread the workload, and increase membership. You may need to build membership before committees are useful. (see Appendix)

Connect and advertise through local schools, PTSAs, and recreation centers
Facebook and Nextdoor

Neighborhood identity and branding – the neighborhood group should be visible and recognizable as a legitimate group. Ideas could include: a logo used on tee shirts, hats and signage used during promotions and events, and promotional materials

Park kiosks are a great way to communicate with neighbors who use the park.

Recruit block captains to connect with folks in a designated area.

Social events like potlucks, festivals, movies in the park are easy for new members.

Specific types of projects draw people in. For example, history, safety, fundraising for schools, green projects, and neighborhood volunteer projects.

Sustaining and Transfer of Leadership

Join the City of Arvada’s Neighborhood Leader Network who meet quarterly and share ideas.

Start delegating and sharing leadership – everyone has unique skills & interest

Stay in touch through regular meetings and social media, such as NextDoor, Facebook, Google Drive, Docs, Sheets, etc.

Get folks involved in projects.

Neighborhood of the Year Award:

Given annually at our Neighborhoods Reception, this award serves as an opportunity to celebrate the successes of all of our neighborhood groups.

Neighborhoods can self-nominate and make a case for how they have built a vibrant, connected community. Our committee will award the top 3 neighborhoods, who will receive a Neighborhood Identifier sign, and a neighborhood mini-grant

Any Neighbors Connected group is eligible that has facilitated neighborhood improvement in the past year by bringing neighbors together to complete projects, programs, or events that develop strong community bonds and neighborhood pride.
Appendix

Agenda and Ground Rules (sample)

Agenda

- Call to Order – by group leader or facilitator
- Introductions – of people in attendance, especially new members
- Old Business – reading of previous minutes to refresh members
  - Reports from committees, if applicable – report to the group progress towards goals and objectives. Allow time for Q & A.
- New Business – facilitator opens floor for new ideas or topics and opens the floor for discussion
  - Announcements – by guest speakers, calendar with next meeting time, date, and location
- Summary of Action Items
- Adjournment – by facilitator

Ground Rules

Simple ground rules can help the group stay focused.

- Try to attend every meeting
- Act for the benefit of the group
- Be polite and make constructive comments
- Treat all members with respect
- Discuss projects and challenges, not personalities
- Accept group decisions after a vote has been taken

Committee Ideas

- Communication Committee - Nextdoor, Facebook, flyers, newsletter, kiosks in the parks, clubs, PTSA, schools, churches, yard signs
- Neighborhood Safety Committee -
  - Work with the Arvada Police through their Neighbors Connected program to educate residents on crime prevention
- Fundraising Committee – community garage sales, membership dues, donations from businesses, fundraising events, etc.
- Green Committee - Organizes neighborhood clean-ups and beautification projects
  - Neighborhood Coordinator is available to inform group about opportunities and funding sources to help rehab a disabled or elderly neighbor’s home or yard
  - Organizes tree plantings and beautification projects
- Healthy Living Committee – cooking & eating, exercise, mental health
- History Committee – work with Arvada Historical Society to collect an oral history of your neighborhood, culminating in a DVD that could be shared with existing and future neighbors
- Social Committee - Block Party/ Neighborhood Movie Night/Neighborhood festival
- Welcome Committee – welcome baskets, orientation for new members
Communication Tools

- Email
- Facebook (Groups/Pages)
- Flyers
- Kiosks
- Nextdoor
- Yard Signs

Declaration of Neighborhood Roles, Rights & Responsibilities

A Declaration of Neighborhood Roles, Rights & Responsibilities

We come together as neighborhood people working to preserve and improve our neighborhoods.

As neighborhood people, we have the right to self-determination and empowerment; to be advised and consulted on public policies and public-private initiatives affecting our neighborhoods; to have our neighborhood values, culture and history recognized and respected; and to have the authority and the resources to establish neighborhood organizations.

As neighborhood people, we have the responsibility to advise governments and others of neighborhood values, culture and history; to listen to the views of all residents; to help one another to care for children, the aging and others in need; to promote self-sufficiency of residents and economic and social development of the neighborhood; to guide our youth; to look out for the safety of our homes and streets, maintain our properties, and make proper use of public facilities; and to strive diligently to achieve liberty and justice for all.

As neighborhood people, we look to a variety of governments, voluntary organizations, businesses and philanthropy to meet neighborhood needs for personal, social and economic development; to fund neighborhood organizations and services; to respect neighborhood values, culture and history; and to be held accountable for how their actions affect our neighborhoods.

As neighborhood people, we ask that the actions of neighborhood residents and organizations, governments, businesses and philanthropy be guided by the principles of equity, participation and accountability.

*Adopted May 16, 1993 by the membership of Neighborhoods, USA*

Fundraising and Money Saving Ideas

Having seed money available for flyers, advertising, supplies and events is important so that not one person or group is absorbing costs.
- Car show, garage sale, register as a non-profit so you may receive donations, sell hotdogs at events, neighborhood cookbook, raffle tickets
- Saving money – ask neighbors and local businesses to donate food items, beverages, tools and materials for projects or any other items needed.

**Neighborhood Group Example (sample)**

See [Columbine Neighborhood](#)

**Neighborhood Project Ideas:**

- Block Clean up – spring clean-up, recycling project, beautification
- [Block Party](#) – use City of Arvada resources to connect neighbors
- Build a “Little Free Library”
- Car Show – use as a fundraiser for association, project, or local school
- Construct Dog Poop dispensers – to place in parks
- Develop Neighborhood Identity Signs – involve your community to develop a unique identity for your neighborhood
- Fundraisers for your neighborhood group, a special project, or a local school – sell hotdogs, popcorn, etc., during a potluck, car show, movie in the park, or festivals
- [Movie Night in the Park](#) – free package available through Neighbors Connected
- [National Night Out](#) – National Night Out is a community effort to reduce crime and the fear of crime in our neighborhoods. This annual celebration is held the first Tuesday in August
- Neighborhood Festival (seasonal, holidays, diversity)
- Neighborhood Garage Sale – can be a fundraiser for neighborhood group or local school
- Neighborhood History Project – involve seniors to create a CD/DVD of history to share with new neighbors in welcome baskets
- Neighborhood Party
- Neighborhood Potluck
- Plant [Garden in a Box](#) kits to beautify neighborhood
- Welcome Baskets for New Neighbors

**Resources Available:**

[Neighbors Connected](#) – Resources available through City of Arvada Neighborhood Engagement

- Block Party Trailer
- Know Your Neighbor Grant
- Neighborhood Improvement Grants
- Neighborhood Movie Package
- Planning Grant
- Neighborhood Leader Network