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A blue-tinted illustration of a neighborhood with houses, trees, and a snow-capped mountain in the background. An airplane is flying in the sky above the mountain.

Neighborhood
Association
Workbook

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Mayor's Message

Dear Renton Citizen:

Renton is blessed with many advantages including a beautiful setting, a terrific location for commerce, an outstanding system of parks and recreational opportunities, and most importantly, people like you that care about your neighborhood and your city. It is with that in mind that we have put together this self-help handbook to assist people interested in becoming more involved in their neighborhood.

Although the city is not in a position to organize associations for every neighborhood in the city, we are interested in forming a partnership with any organized groups that are actively working to improve our community. Toward that end, the city of Renton has taken two actions: 1) published this handbook to assist residents and businesses that want to form an association focused on improving their neighborhood; and 2) established a "Neighborhood Program" designed to foster a stronger tie between Renton citizens and their city government. The handbook contains useful information about what it takes to form an association and how to keep one going. The Neighborhood Program is staffed by city employees that have volunteered to act as liaisons for several neighborhood groups throughout the city. These "neighborhood liaisons" function as the contact between neighborhoods and city government to provide information, answer questions, help solve problems, and identify assets in the community.

Not all of our neighborhood problems can be addressed by city government, but by working together we can do much more and at less cost to the taxpayers. Renton is committed to its neighborhoods. Whether you are currently a member of a neighborhood or community group, or would like to form one, I encourage you to read through this handbook and explore the ways it can help you. I also invite you to contact our Neighborhood Division at 425-430-6595 for more information about Renton's Neighborhood Program.

Thank you for your involvement and your efforts to make Renton a quality community where people choose to live, work, and play.

Sincerely,



Kathy Keolker
Mayor

Introduction

This Neighborhood Association Tool Kit has been designed to help you organize your own neighborhood association. It will show you the basic steps to get your neighborhood organization up and running.

WHY ORGANIZE?

Before you begin asking your neighbors to organize, they must first be shown some of the reasons and benefits for forming a neighborhood association. Some of the advantages neighborhood associations serve are:

- ♦ Supplying a channel through which neighborhood goals can be met.
- ♦ Unity and communication that allows for a voice and influence into what happens in surrounding areas.
- ♦ Provide an effective communication link with the City government and other influential groups.
- ♦ Helping residents work together for the preservation and improvement of their neighborhood.
- ♦ Facilitating neighborhood social activities.



Neighborhood Associations

Following are some of the various steps that may be needed to form a neighborhood association:

STEP ONE:

ORGANIZING THE NEIGHBORHOOD

Various factors help a neighborhood to gain a sense of identity and a reason to organize: changes in nearby land use, the need for improvements or for purely social reasons.

STEP TWO:

DEVELOPING THE CORE GROUP

To get started, you will need a small group of committed neighbors to form the association. The number of people needed will depend on the size of the area you want to organize. Examples of groups to be represented are:

- ♦ Homeowners selected to represent each block or street
- ♦ Business owners
- ♦ Apartment residents, managers, owners
- ♦ Church leaders
- ♦ School staff members

When you have a commitment from five to ten people, set up a meeting at a comfortable place, such as someone's house. Do this quickly, before your contacts lose interest. Explain to the potential committee members what you have in mind and what you want them to do.

Keep the neighborhood advised of the activities of the newly forming neighborhood association through one of the communication tools discussed on page seven. At this point, do not be concerned about having a general meeting of all the people in the area.

IMPORTANT TIP

If the group gets too large, it could become unmanageable and result in low productivity.



Neighborhood Associations

STEP THREE:

DEVELOPING A NEIGHBORHOOD PLAN

The health and vitality of a neighborhood depends on the ability to plan for its future. If the neighborhood is viewed as a permanent home for families and businesses and as a continuing investment, then steps need to be taken to address changes that will occur. A neighborhood plan is a guide that provides a framework for future decision making.

A neighborhood plan contains broad statements about what the residents would like to have happen (goals) and principles they would like to see followed (policies). It also contains suggestions for strategies on how to reach goals. (See Appendix I.)

STEP FOUR:

ESTABLISHING BOUNDARIES

An important step at the beginning of a neighborhood plan is to determine its boundaries. Typical boundaries may be determined by roads or natural features along the border of the neighborhood. A review of the City map and a tour around the area may suggest logical boundaries for a manageable sized area.

Once boundaries have been determined, a complete list of residents and property owners should be obtained. The list should be kept current throughout the process to allow every neighbor to become involved. In order to get a complete list, you may need to go door-to-door, also check with the City's Neighborhoods & Strategic Planning Division or City Clerk's Office.

IMPORTANT TIP

Designate your neighborhood group's boundaries. Don't try to include too large of an area.



Neighborhood Associations

STEP FIVE:

DELEGATING RESPONSIBILITIES TO CORE GROUP

The following are examples of possible volunteer responsibilities:

Neighborhood Inventory. An inventory is a collection of facts about the area including population, housing, land use and other elements unique to the neighborhood.

Issue Identification. Issues and concerns can be identified through surveys sent to the residents or through a series of neighborhood meetings. The concerns may deal with crime, physical improvements, transportation corridors, preservation of unique features, rezoning, social functions or other special interest concerns such as neighborhood renovation.

Review Neighborhood Goals. The draft neighborhood plan should be reviewed and changed as your association continues to grow and develop.

Review and Evaluation. Progress of the plan must be monitored and evaluated on a regular basis to ensure its success. Periodic evaluations should be done to recognize successes, detect problems, and suggest improvements in the program.



Leadership

CULTIVATING LEADERSHIP

The importance of qualified leadership is often overlooked as a neighborhood association develops. Strong leadership gives an organization:

- ♦ Guidance
- ♦ Stability
- ♦ Continuity from year to year
- ♦ Motivation to take action
- ♦ Unity of purpose

A part of your job as a neighborhood organizer is to identify and develop leaders. The task of recruiting and developing leaders has to be an ongoing activity through the lifetime of your neighborhood association.

Some general points to keep in mind are:

- ♦ Your contributions to the neighborhood are your abilities and skills to organize. Therefore, try to delegate other responsibilities like event planning.
- ♦ Search continually for many “potential” leaders, not just one or two.
- ♦ Leaders can become burned out. Have new leaders ready to step in when necessary.
- ♦ Identify people who have the time to devote to the work of the neighborhood association.
- ♦ New leaders may develop as the concerns of the neighborhood association change. Keep your organization open and flexible enough to bring new members and leaders into your neighborhood association.
- ♦ Look for individuals who have shown that they:
 - ♦ Want to succeed and want their group to succeed
 - ♦ Communicate well with people
 - ♦ Can motivate people to take collective action
 - ♦ Are knowledgeable about the neighborhood, its people and their interests
 - ♦ Have an allegiance to the neighborhood and the association
 - ♦ Know how to share power

Nobody likes to attend meetings that are a waste of time. As t

IMPORTANT TIP

Have members visualize what they want in the neighborhood. This will help in developing goals.



Meetings

CONDUCTING MEETINGS

nizer, you have the opportunity and responsibility to make meetings productive and even pleasant. The following is a guide:

MEETING PREPARATION

A CHECK LIST

- ♦ Decide on a convenient time and date to meet by consulting with your core group and neighbors.
- ♦ Develop a well-planned agenda for the first meeting.
- ♦ Determine a method of follow-up to remind the neighborhood volunteers. This may be done by use of:
 - ♦ Phone calls
 - ♦ Letters
 - ♦ Fliers
- ♦ Locate a place that is centrally located and familiar to the neighbors. The location can set the mood and friendliness of the meeting. Try to estimate the size of the expected attendance. The room should be comfortable, but not so large as to make the people feel lost.
- ♦ Set up the room for the meeting in advance. Tables and chairs should be in place.
- ♦ Display any handouts near the entrance.
- ♦ The room temperature should be comfortable.
- ♦ Set up and test any special equipment in advance.
- ♦ Serve refreshments only if it will enhance the friendliness of the meeting and not interrupt it.

Organizations accomplish their objectives through the dedicat

IMPORTANT TIP

Stick to agenda, meet only when necessary because “too many meetings burn out volunteers.” Try to limit meetings to an hour.



Committees

WORKING WITH COMMITTEES

The tasks and the types of committees depend on the overall purpose and structure of your neighborhood association. The types can generally be divided into two major categories.

INTERNAL AFFAIRS

Examples:

- ♦ Fund-raising/finance
- ♦ Meeting Arrangements
- ♦ Communications/Publicity
- ♦ Bylaws
- ♦ Social Events

NEIGHBORHOOD AFFAIRS

Examples:

- ♦ Housing Conditions
- ♦ Police—Neighborhood Relations
- ♦ Economic Development
- ♦ Neighborhood Maintenance
- ♦ Community Services and Resources
- ♦ Traffic Safety

To maintain active, productive, motivated members on the committees:

- ♦ Encourage members to participate in the association and the committee planning process.
- ♦ Define and discuss the goals and objectives of the committee.
- ♦ Provide reasons for the actions to be considered by the committee and the neighborhood association.
- ♦ Give recognition to members and committees who have contributed to the advancement of the neighborhood association.
- ♦ Make meeting time and committee work as productive as possible. No one wants to feel they are wasting time.
- ♦ Help members develop communication skills.

EXAMPLES

IMPORTANT TIP

Find out what issues are most important in your neighborhood.



Communication Tools

GETTING THE WORD OUT

You'll be planning a lot of great programs in your neighborhood—don't keep them a secret. Spread the word. This will help others in the neighborhood join the efforts and take part in making a difference. Here are a few ways to get the word out:

- ♦ Neighborhood association newsletter
- ♦ Weekly area newspapers
- ♦ Schools, churches and club newsletters
- ♦ Door-to-door handouts
- ♦ Neighborhood Survey:
 - ♦ Mail
 - ♦ Phone
 - ♦ Door-to-door
- ♦ Person-to-person by phone to:
 - ♦ Friends
 - ♦ Neighbors
- ♦ Bulletins, notices, pamphlets, posters, fliers placed with permission in:
 - ♦ Schools
 - ♦ Laundromats
 - ♦ Libraries
 - ♦ Supermarkets
 - ♦ Local restaurants
 - ♦ Stores
 - ♦ Waiting rooms in dentist/doctor's offices
- ♦ The City's Web page
- ♦ Booths at local events
- ♦ Speakers at:
 - ♦ Business groups
 - ♦ Service clubs
 - ♦ Youth groups
 - ♦ Schools/Churches
- ♦ Cooperative efforts with adjoining neighborhoods
- ♦ Lawn signs
- ♦ Letters
- ♦ Telephone tree
- ♦ E-Mail

IMPORTANT TIP

Spread the word about all the good things your group is doing.



Finances

BANK ACCOUNT

Over the course of time, every neighborhood association accumulates money for one reason or another. The association needs a management system in place for dealing with these funds. What kind of bank account should be opened and how do you go about opening an account for your organization? Either a person or a corporation can open a bank account. If you are a corporation and you also have non-profit status, you may be eligible to receive free banking privileges at some banks.

STEP ONE:

OBTAIN A TAX IDENTIFICATION NUMBER

A tax identification number is a federal tax number that is filed with the IRS. The number enables the bank to report the earnings of the association's account to the IRS for tax filing purposes. You get an ID number from the IRS. If you don't have a tax ID number, or feel that it is not necessary, you can open an account with a member's personal Social Security number. Often the secretary will use his/her number. The person whose number is being used is liable for paying taxes on the interest income reported by the bank to the IRS. This means that the money in the account is considered the personal money of the ID holder and taxes must be paid, as it is additional income. Also, if there is ever a lien against the person's assets, those moneys are considered personal property and can be assessed.

STEP TWO:

OBTAIN INFORMATION ON FEES AND CHARGES

Research the fees and charges assessed at different banks and credit unions. Some have better programs than others. Banks may waive service charges to organizations that provide a necessary public service. The decision to waive the charge is at the discretion of the individual bank. If you are a non-profit organization and are eligible for a nonprofit account, there may be no charge for the service the bank is offering. You, however, must take the type of account offered by the bank.

STEP THREE:

OBTAIN IMPORTANT DOCUMENTATION

If you are a non-profit corporation, you must bring a copy of the Articles of Incorporation stamped, "Filed", by the Corporation Commission to the bank. If you are not a corporation, bring a copy of your bylaws or the minutes of your first meeting. You must also state the names and titles of people who are authorized to conduct business for the organization. Personal identification, such as a driver's license, credit cards or passport, is required to open any type of account.

OBTAIN SIGNATURE CARDS

Signature cards must be signed by the secretary of your neighborhood association

Finances

STEP FOUR:

along with anyone else who will be signing on the account. You will then also need a director's signature (an officer of the corporation or a designated director). If you file a copy of your association's bylaws with the bank, it allows greater ease in obtaining new signature cards.

OBTAIN AND ADOPT RESOLUTION

STEP FIVE:

The bank will provide a card with wording for a resolution authorizing the bank account. The resolution must be adopted by the board of the nonprofit organization or the members of an unincorporated association. If you pay for an account, you can choose any account you feel would meet your needs, even a combination of a couple different accounts.

CHECKING:

TYPES OF ACCOUNTS

Any accounts open to individual customers are open to neighborhood associations. The least expensive usually have minimum deposit requirements. Your association should obtain pre-numbered checks. The use of non-numbered checks is not an acceptable practice for neighborhood associations.

SAVINGS:

If you make limited withdrawals, you might be better off with a savings account rather than a checking account. The best arrangement is often a savings account with checking privileges. These, however, usually require a minimum balance.

There are two things to consider when determining the type of bank account for your neighborhood association:

- ♦ How often you will withdraw money?
- ♦ The amount of money you have and whether there is enough to keep a minimum balance in the account or to pay service fees, if any?

UNPRODUCTIVE ASSOCIATION OR COMMITTEE

Look for the following conditions:

IMPORTANT TIP

Run your neighborhood association like a business. Open a bank account.

Stumbling Blocks

POSSIBLE PROBLEMS:

- ♦ Fear of the possible results.
- ♦ Conflicting loyalties of some members.
- ♦ Interpersonal conflicts.
- ♦ Poor leadership.
- ♦ Rigid decision-making methods, not allowing open discussion.

When such problems occur, encourage open, respectful discussion. Let the members try to identify the obstacles in their way.

UNDERSTANDING AND MANAGING CONFLICT

One of the primary benefits of forming a neighborhood association is the improvement in communication between neighbors. However, there will be times, in spite of our best efforts, when communication will break down, and a conflict will develop. A simple unresolved conflict can escalate and cause serious damage to relationships and to a neighborhood association, so it is very important that neighbors do their best to handle these situations constructively.

One of the biggest obstacles to managing conflict well is that most of us find conflict to be very uncomfortable. As a result, we either try to avoid dealing with it, or we approach the conflict as if we were going to battle, determined to “win”. There is, however, another approach to this common dilemma, one that accepts conflict as a normal aspect of any relationship or organization. Seen in this light, one can approach conflict resolution as an opportunity for growth, change and new understandings. Consider using the following tips the next time you are faced with the challenge of effectively resolving a conflict:

1. **Talk directly.** Direct conversation is much more effective than sending a letter,



Stumbling Blocks

NEIGHBORLY COMMUNICATION:

- banging on the wall, throwing a rock, or complaining to everyone else.
- 2. Choose a good time.** Try to talk in a quiet place where all parties can be comfortable and undisturbed for as long as the discussion takes. Don't approach the other person as he or she is leaving for work or after you've had a bad day.
 - 3. Plan ahead.** Plan out what you want to say ahead of time. State clearly what the problem is and how it affects you.
 - 4. Don't blame or name call.** Antagonizing the other person only makes it harder for her or him to hear you.
 - 5. Give information.** Don't judge or interpret the other person's behavior. Instead, give information about your own situation and feelings and how the person's behavior affects you.
 - 6. Listen.** Give the other person a chance to tell his or her side of the conflict completely. Relax and listen; try to learn how the other person feels.
 - 7. Show that you are listening.** Although you may not agree with what is being said, tell the other person that you hear her or him and are glad that you are discussing the problem together.
 - 8. Talk it all through.** Get all the issues and feelings out into the open. Don't leave out the part that seems too difficult to discuss.
 - 9. Work on a joint solution.** Two or more people cooperating are much more effective than one person telling another to change. Be specific. "I will turn my music off at midnight," is better than "I won't play loud music any more."
 - 10. Follow through.** Agree to check with each other at specific times to make sure that the agreement is still working.

ONE-YEAR NEIGHBORHOOD PLAN DEVELOPMENT GUIDELINE

1. Identify one to three issues that are major concerns to the neighborhood.

EXAMPLES:

IMPORTANT TIP

Invite community leaders to speak to your group.

Appendix I

NEIGHBORHOOD PLAN:

- A) Crime prevention/reduction
 - B) Land use/Zoning
 - C) Traffic control issues
 - D) Include at least one social activity (kick-off or year end celebration)
2. Form a committee for each issue to spearhead the drive to resolve the issue.
HINTS:
 - A) Keep committees small (3 to 10 members)
 - B) Appoint or elect a chairperson
 - C) Develop a realistic timeline to resolve the issues
 3. Identify available resources that can be utilized to assist the committee.
EXAMPLES:
 - A) Various City departments (Police/Fire/Neighborhoods)
 - B) Local business and community services
 - C) Talents and skills of residents
 4. Identify strategies and goals.
EXAMPLES:
 - A) Form Block Watch groups for every block
 - B) Have members of the neighborhood attend the City's Citizen's Academy where they learn about the inner processes of the Police Department.
 - C) Have half of the groups operating within 6 months
 5. Set up a timeline for all goals. Include times for different steps, as well as anticipated completion where appropriate.
 6. Implement strategies.

THE ENERGETIC NEIGHBORHOOD ORGANIZATION
General Meeting Agenda
July 8, 1998 - 7:00 p.m. - 8:00 p.m.

IMPORTANT TIP

Always keep a written record of your plan and ongoing assignments. This will provide guidance for your association.

Appendix II

SAMPLE AGENDA:

1. Introductions

2. Officer Reports

- a) Treasurer
- b) Membership
- c) Business liaison
- d) Housing/Maintenance
- e) Block Watch Captains

3. Guests

- a) John Doe, Transportation Department
- b) Tony Angler, Traffic Division

4. Old Business

- a) Update on illegal dumping on vacant lot
- b) Proposition 301 Block Watch Grants
- c) Daytime burglaries

5. New Business

- a) National Night Out Events
- b) Tree Planting Program
- c) Nominations for Officers
- d) Election of New Officers

6. Open Floor to Members

7. Adjourn

Reminder: Next Meeting is August 7, 1998, at 7:00 p.m.

YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD ORGANIZATION
MEETING HIGHLIGHTS
July 8, 1998

REPORTS . . . *TREASURER:* We added \$35 to our account bringing our total to

Appendix III

SAMPLE MINUTES:

\$324.23. No expenses were recorded. **MEMBERSHIP:** Tim Lewis announced that 21 welcome wagon packets were delivered the previous month to new residents. **BUSINESS:** The Downtown Planning Committee has established an alliance between residents and businesses in our area. A major grocery store chain will be locating in the old strip mall; the developer has expressed an interest in working with the neighborhood to address our concerns. **HOUSING/MAINTENANCE;** Jill announced that the Housing Committee assisted three elderly homeowners clean up their yards over the weekend. Another three homes will be done in August; please see Jill if you can help. **BLOCK WATCH: AII** has been quiet this summer. Regular meetings are held every third Monday of the month.

GUESTS . . . John Doe, from the City's Transportation Department gave an overview of the process for getting historic streetlights. He also informed us that the cost for each light would be \$550.00! At this time, it was voted to table the issue until funding could be acquired. Tony Angler, of the Traffic Division, gave a presentation on cut-through traffic and the top options we had to combat it. Most members expressed a dislike for speed bumps. Placing no left turn signs and limiting through traffic seem to be the favored methods of dealing with the problem. Mr. Angler is willing to work with the neighborhood in order to find an acceptable solution.

OLD BUSINESS . . . An arrest has been made for illegal dumping in the vacant lot. The police could not provide any details, only to say that there has been a marked decrease in illegal dumping since the arrest. The police credited an alert Block Watch member for making the call that led to the arrest. Three 301 Block Watch grants were submitted for areas within our boundaries. Good work to the three Block Watch Captains who followed through on this grant opportunity. Next year all Block Watches should submit an application. Daytime burglaries continue to be a problem and you are reminded to keep your home secure when you leave for work.

NEW BUSINESS . . . National Night Out is on August 1, 1995. Everyone is invited to come to the park at 7:00 p.m. to meet your neighbors. Free hot dogs and sodas will be provided. The National Forestry Service has supplied us with 50 trees and a planting weekend has been set for the weekend of the 11th. Please volunteer to help plant these beautiful trees. Nominations for 1995/96 Officers were as follows: President-Ran Vegas and Beatty White; Vice President-Zacharia Abraham, Trey Kies and Samantha Sooner; Treasurer-Bob Smillie; and Secretary-Terry Ruggels, Kevin Kilgore, and George Kage. Elections followed the nominations and the new officers are: **President-Beatty White; Vice President-Trey Kies; Treasurer-Bob Smillie; Secretary-George Kage**

Reminder: Next meeting is scheduled for August 7 1995, at 7:00 p.m.

Appendix IV

SAMPLE FLIER:

THINGS CHANGE AROUND HERE?

TRASH, SIDEWALKS, GRAFFITI, OTHER?

Come share your bright ideas!
TOGETHER WE CAN MAKE IT HAPPEN
WHEN WE MEET AT THE NEIGHBORHOOD CENTER:

THURSDAY, MARCH 16TH

6:00 PM 7:00 PM

1234 N. 5TH AVENUE

For more information regarding this handbook or the
City of Renton's Neighborhood Program, contact:
Economic Development, Neighborhoods & Strategic Planning Department

1055 South Grady Way
Renton, WA 98055

Notes...



(425) 430-6595

You can also visit the city website at: www.ci.renton.wa.us
Or e-mail the Neighborhoods Division at: nmcquiller@ci.renton.wa.us

