

**MAYOR MIKE DUGGAN**



CITY OF DETROIT / DEPARTMENT OF  
**NEIGHBORHOODS**

**BLOCK CLUB, COMMUNITY  
ASSOCIATION AND COALITION  
STARTER KIT**



# The Department of Neighborhood

## **INTRODUCTION TO COMMUNITY ORGANIZATION**

A block club may be a neighborhood organization whose members come from the neighborhood and whose purpose is to solve problems of the members. The key to organizing is getting members who will develop and carry out programs. It is important to know the best way to get individuals to work together as a team, and to make each one feel as though they are a part of the team so they will be willing to participate. Voluntary participation and creative citizen leadership is the key to the development of strong communities – and communities are made up of people who live in neighborhoods, which is the grass roots of a community organization. It is also a way in which the men and women who participate become better neighbors, better citizens and better democratic Americans.

## **THE LEADERSHIP TEAM – HOW CAN WE GET MORE PEOPLE INVOLVED?**

The first job of the leadership team is to organize a way to contact other people on the block. There are a number of communication channels used by other block clubs such as posters, flyers, and announcements in the community or church newspapers. But for your first block club meeting, personal contact is best.

## **DECIDING WHOM TO CALL ON AND WHAT THE BOUNDARIES SHOULD BE**

Though eventually you may hope that everyone in the area will be involved in block activities, remember that there is always room for growth. Only a few dedicated people are needed to get your group started. Make decisions on where to start.

The actual boundaries of the organization could possibly be only half of a block, one side of the block, both sides of the street facing each other, both sides facing the alley, or even a single apartment building. The boundaries will depend on such factors as how large is the block, the population density, size of available meeting places, and the nature of the problems in the neighborhood. For example, if your problems center on alley up-keep, you might want to organize residents on both sides of the alley.

The group should be large enough to tackle your problems with some assurance of success, but not so large that there is little chance for people to get to know one another, let alone trade ideas.

Once you decide the boundaries, you should proceed to contact everyone who lives in those boundaries including, owners, renters, newcomers and seniors. A letter should be mailed to all residents stating the agreed upon block standards. All the residents will depend on each other for the enforcement of these standards. For example, even those persons who don't comply with such

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things as cutting their grass, putting trash in the proper storage containers or keeping up the exterior of their property should be contacted to participate. Only by getting everyone to cooperate can others be influenced and persuaded to conform to the wishes of the rest of the neighbors. Remember though, that such people should never be invited to the meeting to be lectured about their undesirable behavior. It is only by including everyone in the decision-making on what's in the best interest of the entire block that will ensure a better standard of living for all.

### **STATING THE PURPOSE OF THE VISIT (INTRODUCTIONS)**

First, introduce yourself as a neighbor and explain the purpose of the visit. Inform the individual that you have been speaking with other neighbors who are interested in starting a block club and explain how their attendance is needed at the first meeting. Emphasize both the opportunities of getting to know their neighbors and how problems can be solved through the organization. Some individuals will want to socialize; others will be interested only in problem solving. Actually, most successful block clubs include both kinds of programs. It is important to stress from the beginning the value of setting up a block club. The continuation of a block club gives everyone the sense of being a part of a community and of sharing goals and ideas with neighbors. It also provides the machinery for working out immediate and long-range problems as they arise.

### **THE FIRST MEETING**

After the leadership team has contacted the neighbors who may become block club members, there should be a decision on who will be the temporary president for the first meeting and an agenda created. The agenda is nothing more than a list of things to discuss or do. Since you have already talked to many neighbors, you should have a good idea of what their concerns are.

Here are some things you will probably want to include in the first meeting agenda:

- Explanation of why your neighborhood should have a block club
- Point out problems that need group attention and action

Invite a speaker from an already established and successful neighborhood organization to describe how their group got started and some of the possibilities for your group. If you don't know of any other groups in your area, call your Department of Neighborhood District Managers and we can put you in contact with one.

### **VOTE ON THE QUESTION OF WHETHER TO FORM AN ORGANIZATION**

Elect officers (usually a president, vice-president, secretary and treasurer) for a temporary period, such as three months.

Appoint temporary special committees such as: Constitution and by-laws committee, membership committee, complaint/investigation committee, etc.

Set a time and place for the next meeting. Notification of members is usually the responsibility of the Secretary.

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### **ELECTION OF PERMANENT OFFICERS AND WRITING OF THE CONSTITUTION**

As shown above, temporary officers are elected at the first general meeting, usually for a period of three (3) months. In that three (3) month period, the Constitution and by-laws are written, the membership may increase, some projects are decided upon and some temporary committees may function.

Once the Constitution and by-laws are adopted, it sets the rules for electing permanent officers, defines their duties, and outlines the period of time they may serve.

The Constitution and by-laws Committee should prepare a Constitution and by-laws for presentation at a general meeting. The Constitution and by-laws is a document informing the purpose and goals of the organization; membership requirements; rules by which the organization will be governed; and the duties of the offices and committees. At the meeting, the proposed Constitution and by-laws are read in order to make changes or revisions. The members vote on its adoption and, once adopted, the Constitution and by-laws can only be changed according to the methods written into it.

Since a Constitution and by-laws are not an easy document to write, a sample is incorporated in this document for your review.

### **HOW THE ORGANIZATION WORKS – GOALS AND OBJECTIVES**

You now have a permanent organization that meets on a regular basis. There are still many unanswered questions. How are meetings conducted? How does your group select and reach its goals? Where can you go for assistance? The answers to these questions will determine how well your organization works.

The difference between the purpose of a block club and its goals is not always spelled out clearly. This can lead to conflict between members since they might not be able to agree on specific actions for the group.

Determine what the overall purpose of the organization is to be: Should it be political, social, or deal only with neighbor problems?

Goals related to the chosen purpose should then be developed. It is possible that members want the group to be both political and deal with neighborhood problems.

This should be encouraged whenever it is possible, demand that neighborhood representatives be included on any political committee whose decisions affect the neighborhood.

**General Goals:** The general objective of any neighborhood organization should be to improve the living conditions for all neighbors in a given geographical area and the community in general. The goals of a neighborhood organization are usually:

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- To improve the physical and moral environment of the neighborhood
- To eliminate nuisance or unwholesome influences in the neighborhood
- To cooperate with various City of Detroit departments and other agencies in improving the health, safety, physical, economic and cultural standards of residents
- To develop a spirit of cooperation among the residents

If you follow these informational steps, you should be able to organize a strong community group with a minimum amount of difficulty. Once you have organized your group, you should also register it with the Department of Neighborhood District Managers in your area. We have attached a Registration Form to this document. Remember to submit an update when your organization elects new officers.

**BELOW IS A SAMPLE CONSTITUTION.** Its purpose is strictly to give some insight and or suggestions for the development of your own constitution.

### **SAMPLE CONSTITUTION**

Perhaps the most necessary step in organizing a block club is the drafting of a constitution and by-laws. These documents explain the purpose of the block club, how it is to function, how it may be changed, and who are to be its members. In other words, the constitution and by-laws are the life-giver of the group. It further serves to avoid possible conflicts in an organization by setting forth the rules and guidelines beforehand.

Many of you may choose to incorporate features of your own choosing according to the particular needs and desires of your membership. Remember, our sample is only a guide for you.

### **SAMPLE CONSTITUTION PREAMBLE**

We, the residents living within the limits of (Oak Street and Elm Street), bounded by Poplar Street and Pine Street (1), being desirous of combining our efforts for the purpose of promoting a greater sense of cooperation among and between us; maintaining and improving our property; and developing a sense of individual obligation to the area in which we reside, do ordain and establish this Constitution.

### **ARTICLE 1 – (NAME OF ORGANIZATION)**

The name of this organization shall be the Oak-Elm Block Club.

### **ARTICLE II – BOUNDARIES**

The territorial limits of this block club shall be Oak and Elm Streets between Poplar and Pine Streets.

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## **ARTICLE III – MEMBERSHIP**

All residents, residing within the stated boundaries, who subscribe to the purposes of the Oak-Elm Block Club stated in the Preamble, shall be eligible to become members in this club.

## **ARTICLE IV – MEETINGS**

Regular meetings shall be held each month at (time) and (place) as determined. Special meetings may be called by the President or the Chairman of the Board with one fourth (1/4) of the membership, with notice given at least three (3) to five (5) days in advance.

## **ARTICLE V – OFFICERS**

The elective offices of this club shall be: President, Vice-President, Recording Secretary, Corresponding Secretary and Treasurer. The term of office shall be one (1) year for all of the above offices unless otherwise stated.

## **ARTICLE VI – ELECTIONS**

### *Section 1 – Nominations*

At the regular meeting each year in October, a nominating committee shall be formed with volunteers of the group. Four (4) additional persons shall be elected to serve on the committee by: a majority of the members of the club present and voting at the October meeting.

The seven-member (7) nominating committee shall recommend candidates at the November meeting for the annual election in December. Nominations may also be made from the floor.

### *Section 2 – Balloting*

The Officers shall be elected by secret ballot at the first regular meeting in December. A simple majority of all votes cast at the meeting shall be necessary for the election of any officer.

If no candidate shall receive a majority of the entire votes cast, there shall be an immediate run-off election held between the two candidates receiving the highest number of votes cast.

If the two candidates receiving the most votes shall receive a tie vote, a run-off shall follow immediately. If the tie is not broken after the run-off, the Executive Board shall vote by secret ballot at its next meeting to choose one of the two candidates.

### *Section 3 – Installation*

Officers elected shall be installed at the first meeting in January.

## **ARTICLE VII – EXECUTIVE BOARD**

### *Section 1 – Membership*

There shall be an Executive Board that shall be comprised of the Officers the immediate past President, and two members elected by the membership as board members.

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## *Section 2 – Duties*

The Executive Board shall be responsible for overseeing the day-to-day business of the club, for preparing the agenda for meetings and for the other duties that normally fall to Executive Boards.

## *Section 3 – Quorum*

A majority of the members of the Executive Board shall constitute a quorum.

## *Section 4 – Meetings*

Meetings of the Executive Board may be called by the President alone, or by the President upon the request of any two (2) members of the Executive Board.

## **ARTICLE VIII – CONDUCT OF MEETINGS**

### *Section 1 – Quorum*

One-fourth (1/4) of the membership of the block club shall constitute a quorum for the transaction of any legal business which may come before them at any meeting properly called.

### *Section 2 – Robert’s Rules*

All meetings shall be conducted according to Robert’s Rules of Order. (Revised Edition)

## **ARTICLE IX – FAILURE TO ATTEND**

The officer of any office, who fails to attend three (3) consecutive regular meetings of the block club without satisfactory excuse to the President or the Executive Board, shall automatically vacate the office.

## **ARTICLE X – BY-LAWS**

By-laws for a block club shall be adopted by a simple majority vote of those members present and voting at any regular meeting.

**PLEASE NOTE:** By-laws will cover block club affairs which are subject to frequent change, (such as the amount of dues, qualifications for membership, place and time of meetings, name composition and duties of standing committees, etc.) which the Constitution outlines the more permanent characteristics of the block club.

## **ARTICLE XI – AMENDMENT**

The Constitution of a block club may be amended; provided, however, that the following steps are taken in succession:

- The proposed amendment is given to the Secretary in writing
- The proposed amendment is read at the regular meeting
- All members are given due notice by mail of the proposed Amendment

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- Two-thirds (2/3) of all members present, vote in favor of adopting the proposed amendment. (At least one (1) week must pass between Steps (3) and (4), and only at the annual meeting can the count be amended)

### **ARTICLE XII – ADOPTION**

This Constitution and by-laws shall become operative upon a two-thirds (2/3) vote in favor, held at the annual meeting. Notice of changes is sent by mail at least one (1) week prior to all residents within the territorial limits of the block club. The annual meeting can be your last meeting for the year, holding elections of your block club officials at that time.

The by-laws maybe amended at any regular meeting provided that notice of such changes will take place, and notice of the changes is sent or given to the members at least one (1) week prior to the meeting. The by-laws amended can be adopted by a majority vote.



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<p><b>The Department of Neighborhood District 6</b> XXXXXX. * Detroit, MI XXXX District Manager -XXXXXX –Phone: 313-236-XXXX DEPUTY MANAGER - XXXXX PHONE: 313-236-XXXX <a href="mailto:@detroitmi.gov">@detroitmi.gov</a> /<a href="mailto:@detroitmi.gov">@detroitmi.gov</a></p>
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## Community Organization Registration Form

To officially register your group with The Department of Neighborhood, please fill out and return this form to the address or email above. Please remember to submit a new registration form each time your officers change.

**PLEASE TYPE OR PRINT**

DATE: \_\_\_\_\_ 2013

Organization's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Type of Organization:    ☐ Block Club                      ☐ Community Association/Coalition  
                                 ☐ Business Association           ☐ other (list)

Mailing Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**Officers' Contact Information (President, Vice President, Treasurer, Secretary, etc.):**

**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Title:** \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code: \_\_\_\_\_

Daytime Phone: (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Title:** \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code: \_\_\_\_\_

Daytime Phone: (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Title:** \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code: \_\_\_\_\_

Daytime Phone: (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Title:** \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code: \_\_\_\_\_

Daytime Phone: (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

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## Community Registration Form Page Two

Purpose of organization: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

When do you meet? [*Example:* First Monday of each Month, except for: list month(s)]

\_\_\_\_\_ Time: \_\_\_\_\_

Location of meetings – including address: \_\_\_\_\_

How many are in your current membership? \_\_\_\_\_

Elections are held when and how often? \_\_\_\_\_

When did your group first organize? \_\_\_\_\_

Do you have a “hotline” or “info-line” phone number? \_\_\_\_\_

If yes, please list number: \_\_\_\_\_

Please list the **boundaries** of your organization.

North Street \_\_\_\_\_

South Street: \_\_\_\_\_

East Street \_\_\_\_\_

West Street: \_\_\_\_\_

**NOTE:** It is the policy of the DON **not** to disclose the personal information provided in this registration with persons outside of the Mayor’s Office and other city departments. We will, however, provide a list of the names of registered community organizations, their meeting dates, times and locations, **unless** the location is a private residence. If your group does or does not want your meeting information included in this public list, please check the appropriate box below, sign and indicate the office you hold in your organization. Thank you.

☐

**Yes**, please include our organization’s name, meeting date, time and location in your list for Public information and distribution.

Signed By: \_\_\_\_\_ Title: \_\_\_\_\_

☐

**No**, please do not include our organization’s name, meeting date, time and location in your list for public information and distribution.

Signed By: \_\_\_\_\_ Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Please mail/email this form to your DON District Managers.

~ **Thank You** ~