



NEIGHBORHOODS **1st**

Volunteer Manual

A Tool for Navigating Neighborhoods 1st

We  City Life!



CITY OF HAGERSTOWN, MARYLAND

A CHARACTER COUNTS! COMMUNITY

Department of Community & Economic Development

14 North Potomac Street, Suite 200a

Hagerstown, MD 21740

Phone: (301) 739-8577, Ext. 111

E-mail: DCED@hagerstownmd.org

Neighborhoods 1st.

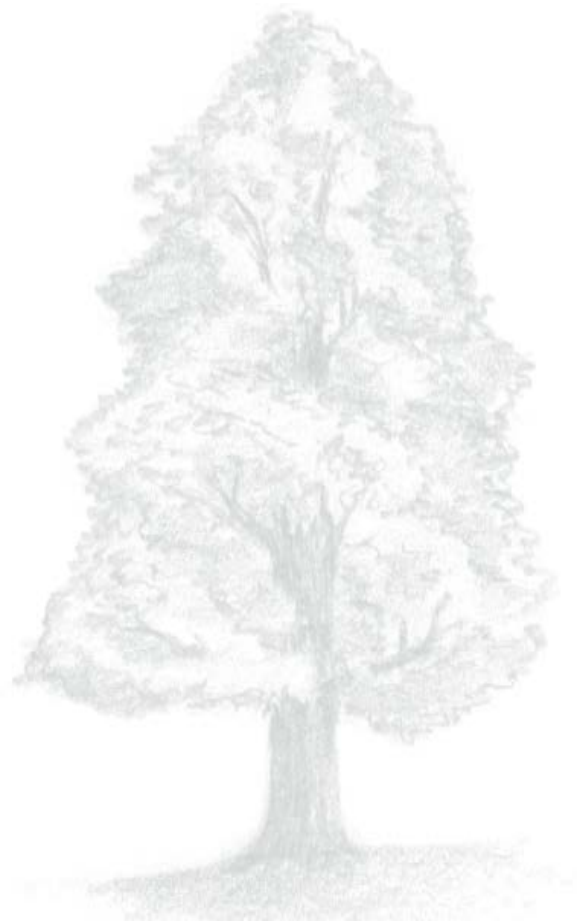
The Neighborhoods 1st program creates a venue for **neighborhood based** citizen groups to **engage** & **collaborate** with local government in **community building** & placemaking.

This network of neighborhood groups works in **partnership** with the City of Hagerstown to **plan** and **implement** neighborhood events and projects which contribute to the **livability** & **sustainability** of their **unique** communities.

3 Core Principles.

Beautification. Neighborhoods 1st empowers citizens to creatively enhance their neighborhoods. It supports groups in the creation of vibrant and holistic places in their community. Whether it is re-imagining unused space by adding landscaping, a garden, creating playground or gathering together for clean-up days and gateway enhancements, each project contributes to community building and sense of pride & ownership in neighborhoods.

Community. Increased communication among neighbors creates deeper levels of respect for both people and property in the community. Neighborhoods should be welcoming, safe and inclusive; where diversity is a shared and celebrated value and residents are engaged with their community and their government. In an age where getting to know your neighbors is a rarity, Neighborhoods 1st focuses on creating a context for community building and friendship.



Safety. Neighborhoods need to be safe and sustainable; free from crime; where residents benefit from positive social interaction. Neighborhoods 1st fosters and supports clean, attractive communities where citizens regularly have open dialogue with one another, working together to decrease crime and promote a sense of safety the neighborhood.

Why?

Successful neighborhood groups have many benefits. Here are just a few:

Meet your Neighbors. Develop relationships with your neighbors, develop community and create a safer more sustainable neighborhood. Work together to realize your goals.

Be heard. Communicate with City staff to help them know how best partner with your neighborhood in a focused manner. Neighborhoods 1st groups allow citizens regular communication with City staff this collaboration between staff and you and your neighbors aids in achieving your goals for a quality neighborhood.

Ownership. The key to a great neighborhood is establishing an attitude of ownership. As neighbors work together a bond of ownership and pride is created.

Funding. The City realizes that kick starting neighborhood projects takes start-up funding. Every year the City budgets \$1,000 for each Neighborhoods 1st Group to be used for community building and neighborhood improvement projects.



How?

Collaborative Leadership is key. A core group of strong leadership provides a Neighborhoods 1st group with guidance, stability, continuity, motivation, unity of purpose, and sustainability for the future.

Learn. Take a survey of the area you feel is your neighborhood. Is there currently a neighborhood group in existence? Is a Neighborhoods 1st group already recognized by the City's Department of Community Development?

After completing your research you find that a neighborhood group is not currently established in your area, begin discussing the idea of a neighborhood group with others. It's important to involve as many people as possible in creating a neighborhood group as each individual brings valuable resources to the organization, including expertise, skills and experiences.

Think about what areas of the community should be represented, what skills and experiences would be valuable for leading this new group, and who are the stakeholders in your neighborhood?

- Neighbors
- Schools (elementary, middle, high, private, and nurseries/daycares)
- Churches
- Apartment residents, managers and owners
- Scout Group Leaders
- Lodges and Fraternal Organizations
- Local business people
- Labor organizations
- Local professionals
- Special interest and civic organizations

Invite everyone you come into contact with in your neighborhood to an open meeting to discuss the idea of a neighborhood group, and ask those who you had identified as members of your temporary organizing committee to do the same. Whether a picnic at the park, a meeting at the local library or school, or coffee in your home, the neighborhood benefits just by people getting to know each other better. The location and type of gathering will depend upon how many people indicate interest in attending.

Define the place. 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 which form the boundaries along the border of the neighborhood. City planning staff have done extensive research on the physical development of each of the City's neighborhoods; their research paired with neighborhood input is used to develop neighborhood boundaries.

Meetings.

Here are some tips for getting the most out of neighborhood meetings:

Getting Started.

- Meet regularly, once a month works great.
- Consult with Neighbors on scheduling & send out meeting reminders ahead of time.
- Develop a well-planned agenda for each meeting.
- Place matters. The location sets the tone of the meeting. Collaborate on place ideas, community centers or neighborhood restaurants are great locations. Location should be comfortable and friendly.
- Be ready. Set-up the room for the meeting in advance, display handouts near the entrance, and test any special equipment in advance.
- Serve refreshments only if it will enhance the friendliness of the meeting and not interrupt it.
- Document. Have someone take notes including a list of assigned tasks.

At the Meeting.

- Stick to the agenda.
- Limit the meeting to an hour.
- Try to solicit as many viewpoints as possible from the members to ensure a sense of being heard.
- Ask specific attendees to take on items that need to be completed.

At the 1st Meeting. During the first meetings of a prospective neighborhood group – both of the organizing group and the first neighborhood-wide meeting – a lot of questions need to be asked of those participating and it's important to listen to the answers your neighbors are giving:

- Is there interest in creating a group?
- What will be the general purpose of the group?

- What are the assets the group wants to strengthen or the issues that the neighborhood stakeholders want to address?

The neighborhoods program utilizes a neighborhood planning process for leading prospective groups to becoming recognized Neighborhoods 1st organizations, as well as creates a Neighborhood Priorities document to be utilized during the continued growth and development of the neighborhood group.

Encourage members to stay active and motivate productivity, attempt to delegate even the simplest of tasks. This continues to keep participants engaged and provides them with a sense of contributing to the efforts of the organization.

Prioritize. Neighborhood Priorities can be identified through many different vehicles including facilitated community meetings, surveys, and targeted focus groups. The priorities may deal with safety, physical improvements, transportation corridors, preservation of unique features, rezoning, social functions or other special interest concerns such as neighborhood renovation or revitalization.

The priorities around which neighborhoods organize are as unique and diverse as the members of the individual communities and should be developed by group consensus. Take the time to listen to what the members of your neighborhood are saying are their priorities.

Bylaws. Bylaws describe how group is going to conduct its business by establishing rules for governing the group and serves as a constitution for establishing the legal requirements of the organization. Bylaws also govern the way the association functions as well as the roles and responsibilities of its officers. They are important to the maintenance of order and credibility in the group, as well as define the purpose, procedures and role of the neighborhood group.

A template for creating an organization's bylaws is included in the back of this manual. Use only those areas that are relative to your neighborhood group. When writing an organization's bylaws, it's important to be specific yet allow flexibility for growth and change.

Once written, bylaws should be reviewed periodically to assure that the organization's purpose has not changed and to ensure that the rules created by the bylaws are continuing to meet the needs of the group. Following the adoption of an group's bylaws and after each subsequent amendment, a copy should be filed with City staff.

Recognition. The following checklist is to be utilized as a guide in establishing recognition as a City of Hagerstown Neighborhoods 1st group. Please refer to the “Standards for Recognition of Neighborhoods 1st Groups of the Neighborhoods 1st Program Guidelines for detailed information on securing recognition.

At the start:

- Have no less than five (5) active members.
- Hold one or more well-publicized general neighborhood meetings for the purpose of information and development of boundaries, group objectives, and bylaws.
- Develop and adopt bylaws.
- Have elections to identify leadership.
- File a copy of the bylaws with the city staff along with a letter requesting official recognition.
- Following each meeting -- general membership, executive, or other committee meeting -- file a copy of the meeting minutes with city Staff.

Ongoing:

- Following each meeting -- general membership, executive, or other committee meeting -- file a copy of the meeting minutes with city staff.
- Develop annual neighborhood priorities.
- Have the organization’s chair, or his/her designee, attend monthly leadership team meetings to represent the neighborhood on city-wide issues and initiatives.

Implement.

- **Use easy-to-understand language in listing priorities.** State things succinctly and specifically.
- **Include order of priorities and timeline.** This is especially important if the plan recommends a wide range of costly items, such as street repairs, park rehabilitation or other capital improvements.
- **Use budgeting forms.** When the implementation costs are identified in the document, the plan tends to be immediately perceived as realistic. Use similar projects in other neighborhoods as examples.

Recruit to Retain. Keeping members of a Neighborhoods 1st group interested and involved takes some time and careful thought as to how best to engage your neighbors. Recruiting and retaining members is important for the longevity and leadership succession of any group. Here are some ideas for keeping neighborhood participation:

- Have members go door-to-door calling on their neighbors and asking them to participate in a project or effort such as an upcoming neighborhood clean-up day, the Night of Lights, or the city's recycling services.
- Distribute printed materials to encourage residents to get involved. The neighborhoods program has ready-made one-sheets about Neighborhoods 1st, or utilize the talents of one of the group's members to write and design a neighborhood-specific brochure or newsletter. Make sure to include the group's meeting date, time and location.
- Designate block captains who can distribute flyers and newsletters to those on their blocks, welcome new residents, serve as a point of contact for specific issues, and organize volunteers to help with activities of interest to the neighborhood group.
- Community gatherings or other events are also excellent recruitment tools. Sponsor a booth at a neighborhood event. Members are able to discuss face-to-face with attendees about Neighborhoods 1st and the specific group, and sign-up interested participants

Here are some ideas to keep in mind in order to retain active members:

- Help new members find a place in the organization. Always welcome new members and attempt to make them feel at ease with the group. Officers and other members should watch for new faces at each meeting and welcome them.
- Encourage new ideas and input at all levels of the group. People who are new in the group can see things in a new light and provide new solutions to old problems. New perspectives can assist the whole group in problem solving.
- Have a well-planned meeting will also display a sense of accomplishment from the beginning. Have a written agenda for every meeting, one where there is a defined outcome being sought for each item, and stick to it.
- Maintain current membership records. Designate an officer or other member of the neighborhood group to keep a list of all contacts within the neighborhood to include names, addresses, phone numbers, family member names, occupations, special talents, areas of interest, etc.
- Have fun! Sponsor parties and celebrations to get to know your neighbors better. Events should appeal to all members of the neighborhood, including children, and will foster a strong sense of community spirit among your neighbors.

Leadership Succession. A part of the job as a neighborhood leader or organizer is to identify and develop leaders. The task of recruiting and developing leaders has to be an ongoing activity throughout the lifetime of a neighborhood group. Some general points to keep in mind:

- A leader's contributions to the neighborhood are the abilities and skills to organize. Therefore, delegate responsibilities for special tasks throughout the group.

- 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.
- Keep the organization open and flexible enough to bring new members and leaders into the group.
- Look for individuals who have shown that they:
 - want to succeed and what the 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 group.
 - know how to share power and build consensus out of multiple perspectives.
 - can lead the group in achieving its goals and objectives.

Projects & Events. Projects and events can serve to unite a neighborhood, and often times may be used as a catalyst for beginning a neighborhood group. Groups need to submit a project & event approval form to City staff 4-6 weeks before a project or event (see Neighborhoods 1st Guidelines for more information). Following are some of the most common projects and events undertaken by neighborhood organizations, as well as checklists and tips in assuring success.

Neighborhood Clean-ups. Often held in the spring and/or the fall of each year, neighborhood clean-ups offer several opportunities to neighborhood groups including collection of trash and debris in common areas or in yards of neighbors who may be unable to maintain their property; developing a sense of teamwork throughout the neighborhood as residents work together on a project; and

Block Parties. Block parties, next to neighborhood clean-ups, are the most frequently organized events for a neighborhood.

Other Projects. Neighborhood groups have taken on other projects such as *feature enhancements* like neighborhood murals, landscaping, and playground equipment, as well as *holiday lights contests* and *fundraising projects* to support the neighborhood’s efforts. Each neighborhood is different, and the types of projects taken on by each neighborhood are driven by the needs and interests of its stakeholders.

If your group is interested in carrying out any of these activities, consult with City Staff for guidance on moving forward.

Citywide Involvement.

City-wide Gatherings. City-wide gatherings with all Neighborhoods 1st volunteers invited are typically held in March & September.

Leadership Team Meetings. The most innovative ideas and effective plans in community organizing all begin with a group of concerned citizens willing to brainstorm and exchange ideas. Neighborhoods 1st Leadership Meetings provide an environment which encourages creativity and effective problem solving.

Held once a month, Neighborhoods 1st Leadership is invited to participate and lend their interest and support. Representation from every group monthly is encouraged. This network of neighborhood representation from throughout the city also serves as a source of support and encouragement between peers who have taken on the responsibility of a leadership role in their community.

In addition to discussing issues of city-wide impact, training on leadership topics, and interacting more closely with city staff are also a benefit of participating in the meetings.

Partnership with the City. The neighborhoods program is wholly supported by Mayor, Council, and staff alike. To this end, the program is in place to provide resources to recognized groups for improving their neighborhoods. Support can include funding, personnel, and capacity-building training and resources.

Whether a block party or a neighborhood clean-up, the City of Hagerstown is excited to support these neighborhood activities through promotion and publicity; facilities and equipment; educational programming; and other city services. To access these services, a “Project/Event Approval Form” form should be submitted to City staff along with a proposed budget outlining anticipated expenses.

This request will be routed to the appropriate departments ensuring communication between the neighborhood and the departments of the requested services.

Helpful Templates.

Bylaws.

Name

The name of the group shall be _____.

Purpose

The purpose of the group shall be to promote a better neighborhood and community through group action.

Membership

Any person who resides in the area between _____ to _____ from _____ to _____ is eligible for membership. Membership is also eligible to property owners, business owners, churches and non-profit organizations located in this area.

Officers

The officers shall be a President, Vice President, Secretary and Treasurer, who shall be elected in (month) of each year. The term of office shall be one year.

Committees

The membership may establish necessary committees at any meeting. The President may also establish such committees. Committee chairpersons shall be appointed by the President.

Executive Committee

The officers and committee chairpersons shall constitute the Executive Committee and may act for the group between meetings.

Meetings

Regular meetings will be held on the _____ of each month, or more often deemed necessary.

Minutes

Minutes will be kept of all official board, committee and general membership meetings. One copy will be maintained by the group and one copy filed with the City of Hagerstown.

Quorum

A minimum of _____ members must be present to conduct official business.

Amendments

The bylaws may be amended at any regular meeting. Two thirds (2/3) of those members in attendance approve the amendment.

Notes:

1. These sample bylaws are for guidance only. It is up to your group to establish bylaws which you feel comfortable with.
2. The paragraphs dealing with Membership and Minutes must be included in your bylaws.
3. Titles of officers and term of officer are up to the group.

Officer Job Descriptions.

President

Goal: To provide leadership and direction to the general membership, standing and ad-hoc committees.

Duties and Responsibilities:

- Act as principal officer and spokesperson of the organization.
- Prepare agenda for membership and Executive Committee meetings.
- Preside over all regular and special membership and Executive Committee meetings, leading orderly discussions by tactfully and politely enforcing rules that offer every member a chance to speak for or against a motion.
- Determine whether or not enough members (a quorum) are present to conduct business.
- Call special meetings as necessary.
- Sign, with appropriate officers, corporate and legal documents.
- Maintain current knowledge of programs and activities of the organization.
- Manage standing committees, including formation and appointment of chairpersons and members.
- Serve as ex-officio member of all committees.
- Act as liaison between the organization and the City of Hagerstown's Neighborhoods 1st program.
- Ensure follow-through on all assigned tasks.
- Work to identify and recruit new members, officers, and committee chairpersons and members.

The President cannot, without specific board approval, borrow funds in the name of the organization or otherwise act beyond the scope of the authority established by the organization's documents and membership.

Vice President

Goal: To ensure continuity in the leadership of the organization by supporting and assisting the President.

Duties and Responsibilities:

- In the absence of the President, assume all duties and responsibilities of that office, including preparing for and presiding over membership and Executive Committee meetings; maintaining current knowledge of programs and activities of the organization, and acting as principal spokesperson for the organization.
- Support the current President.
- Become oriented to all duties and responsibilities of the President.
- Attend and participate in all membership and Executive Committee meetings.
- Coordinate committee chairpersons and report status to the Executive Committee.
- Perform other duties as assigned by the President.

Treasurer

Goal: To provide financial management and fiscal controls for the organization.

Duties and Responsibilities:

- Monitor receipt of all monies due to and held by the organization.
- Ensure that all funds are properly deposited and disbursed in a timely manner.
- Provide financial reports of the organization to the membership and/or Executive Committee as needed.
- Oversee the preparation of the annual budget and monitor its implementation.
- Sign fiscal forms and instruments as necessary.

Secretary

Goal: To oversee the record keeping and correspondence of the membership and the Executive Committee of the organization, ensuring compliance with relevant provisions of the bylaws and Neighborhoods 1st program guidelines and policies.

Duties and Responsibilities:

- Record the minutes of meetings of the membership and Executive Committee and maintain a permanent, accurate record of the activities of the meetings.
- Be familiar with previous minutes in order to provide needed information to the President.
- Send notices in accordance with the provisions of the bylaws.
- Ensure that organizational records are protected for long-term safekeeping, including filing duplicate copies with the City of Hagerstown's Neighborhoods 1st program.
- Maintain directory of members, including names, addresses, phone numbers, email addresses, and current position with the organization.
- Sign appropriate organizational documents as needed.
- Monitor parliamentary procedure as needed.
- Maintain organizational record book.
- Sign official corporate correspondence.
- Update bylaws, as needed, when relevant resolutions are adopted.
- Attend and participate in all membership and Executive Committee meetings.
- Assume responsibilities of the President in the absence of the President and Vice President.

Members:

The foundation of the [example] Neighborhoods 1st organization is the active involvement of all members. Members of the group commit to the following:

- Invite others to join the organization.
- Actively work to achieve the mission and vision of the organization.
- Attend a minimum of six (6) meetings annually.
- Participate annually in at least two functions sponsored by [example] Neighborhoods 1st.
- Provide insight and propose solutions to neighborhood challenges.
- Work together in the spirit of teamwork for the betterment of the Neighborhood

Minutes.

MINUTES

Name of NEIGHBORHOODS 1ST GROUP

Insert Date

Members Present:

List all names of those who are in attendance who are members of the group. Include designation of officers of the group.

Members Absent:

List those members of the group who would otherwise be in attendance at the meeting, especially officers.

Others Present:

List the names of any special guests that may be present at the meeting, including guest speakers and observers.

AGENDA

(The format for the meeting minutes should follow the meeting agenda's format.)

Old Business

1. *Insert subject title from agenda for the meeting.*

Insert description of discussion.

Motion: *Insert any details of any action taken regarding the agenda item and who made the motion.*

Second: *Insert the name of the member who seconded the motion.*

Motion *(insert one of the following four options)*

passed unanimously

passed with ___ votes for ___ against

denied unanimously

denied with ___ votes for ___ against

1. *Insert any additional Old Business items as shown by the above example.*

Reports *(Insert the title of each report as appropriate.)*

Chair's Report

Treasurer's Report

Police Report

Special Guest's Presentation *(Include under the "Reports" heading a brief description of any presentations made by special guests.)*

Adjournment

The next meeting is scheduled for *insert day, date, time and location of the next meeting.*

Submitted by: *Insert the name and title, if appropriate, of the person who prepared the minutes.*

Resources.

Taking Action! A Manual for Neighborhood Associations, City of College State, Texas

Neighborhood Workbook: A Self-Help Aid to Neighborhood Planning, City of Fort Worth, Texas

A Guide to Community Planning, The Enterprise Foundation

Helpful Web Links

Hagerstown Police Department – Report a Concern, File a Police Report, Get a Copy of a Police Report: www.hagerstownpd.org/

Code Administration Permitting – Report a Property Code Concern/Code Violation:
<http://www.hagerstownmd.org/215/Online-Services-Report-a-Concern>

Neighborhoods 1st – Group Information, Maps, Contacts
<http://www.Neighborhoods1st.net>