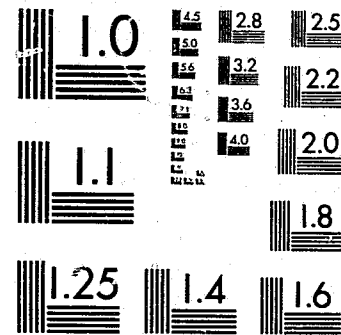


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THE HOW'S WHY'S WHAT'S AND WHAT'S NOT OF ORGANIZING A BLOCK ASSOCIATION



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MAYOR



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Joel L. Shain
Mayor

TO THE RESIDENTS OF ORANGE:

Latest available reports indicate a tremendous upsurge in crime throughout the nation. The proper handling of these criminal situations is of vital concern to law enforcement officials. It is hoped the background material herein, will help to stimulate your knowledge of the problems we are constantly facing. The members of the Orange Police Department and I hope it helps generate a spirit of cooperation.

Also, I want to thank all who made this booklet possible.

Joel L. Shain

Joel L. Shain
Mayor

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT:

This manual was prepared and written by Ms. Paulette Geanacopolus of the Lenox Hill Neighborhood Association, Inc., of 331 East 60th Street, New York, New York 10021.

The City thanks her for allowing us to reprint this manual for the benefit of our citizens.

* * *

Special thanks to the Orange Police Department's Crime Watch Program and Officer Don Wactor for promoting the idea and editing the material for use in the City of Orange.

Copies may be obtained from:
Mayor's Office - 266-4005
Crime Prevention Unit - 266-4140

(CPU-124-6/82)

WHY ORGANIZE A BLOCK ASSOCIATION?

BECAUSE Sometimes, as an individual, you may not be able to make the changes that are needed

or

Sometimes, needed services are not available

or

Sometimes, the services may be available, but you may not know they exist or how to obtain them

and

BECAUSE Sometimes, you get tired of being completely anonymous, and would like to get to know your neighbors.

If you were to start looking at the various problems that exist in this city today - crime, unemployment, housing inadequacies, social isolation, lack of proper sanitation services - you would probably feel overwhelmed if not helpless, and quickly close the door to your apartment or home. But, if you were to start reducing these same problems to the block level - to a human scale - you would soon realize that these problems are not only manageable, but that you and your neighbors, as a group, could resolve many of them. Many blocks in this community have organized block associations specifically because they have recognized that a group of neighbors, working together around common interests and common goals, can accomplish much more than one person, working alone.

Block associations do not only have to solve problems; nor do they have to be organized because of a crisis or an emergency situation. We have found that one of the main threads that keeps many block associations going and growing, is the bond that develops among neighbors. Then, "neighbor" no longer remains a term that is used to identify the person living next door, but it develops a meaning that transcends socio-economic and age differences. There is an improvement in the quality of life on the block as people begin to realize that their apartment - their home - is part of a community, and that community is the block.

We strongly believe that a sound and stable community can be developed and maintained by forming coalitions between the new neighbors and the old, between the more affluent and the less, and between the young and aging. As block associations are formed, people begin to feel much safer on their block, because they recognize and know their neighbors, and look after one another. As people know and work with each other and develop neighboring relationships, a natural helping network evolves.

The following manual provides a very practical step-by-step process to help you organize and maintain a solid block association. We hope this information will be of use to you, and we wish you great success.

THE HOW-TO'S OF ORGANIZING A BLOCK ASSOCIATION

BEFORE YOU BEGIN:

So, you're thinking about organizing a block association. Before you do anything about putting your thoughts into action, ask yourself why you want to start one. What is the reason you think your block might benefit from a block association? You should consider that the reason you may want a block association may not be the same reason(s) that other residents of the block might want one.

Are you willing to be open about other ideas? Are you willing to let the block, as a whole, determine priorities and what activities will be undertaken? If your answers are yes, read on.

STEP ONE: LOOK AT THE BLOCK CLOSELY

Take a walk, slowly, up and down your block, and really look at it closely. Try to get a "feel" for the block.

Look at the physical structures of the block.

- What kinds of buildings are on the block?
- How many buildings are there? About how many apartments are in each? (You can count mailboxes).
- In what condition are the buildings?
- Are there any abandoned or unfinished buildings?
- Are there any stores or businesses on the block? Where are they located?
- Are there any vacant lots or alleyways?
- What is the condition of the sidewalks and streets?
- What is lighting on the block like?
- Are there any schools or institutions on the block?
- What is the garbage situation on the block?

It may be helpful to draw a map of the block.

Look at how people are USING the block.

- Are people sitting on building stoops?
- Are people talking to each other?
- Is it a "transient" block - used by people passing through?
- Are there children playing outside?
- Do you see teenagers or elderly people?
- Do you notice anyone looking out of their windows?
- Is there a store that appears to be a focal point for people on the block?

After you have finished your "observations" make a list of the positive and negative things that you have noted about the block.

STEP TWO: TALK TO YOUR NEIGHBORS

Start talking to people who live and work on the block, either people you may know, or people you see on the street. You may find it difficult, at first, but don't be afraid or embarrassed. Chances are that people will be enthusiastic. The worst that can happen is that they will say they are not interested. If you are really serious about organizing a block association, at some point you will have to talk to people you don't know, so you may as well start now.

Tell the people you talk to that you have been thinking about getting a group of neighbors together to discuss whether or not the block might benefit from a block association. Ask them if they are interested in coming to such a meeting, and ask that they start thinking about what common needs and common problems exist and how a block association may resolve them. Exchange names and telephone numbers with the people and let them know when you will be contacting them about the meeting. Keep a list so that you don't leave anyone out. Try to call the meeting within one or two weeks following these talks so that people's interest will not wane.

Now that you have a core group of people - 4 or 5 - who have expressed an interest in TALKING ABOUT ORGANIZING A BLOCK ASSOCIATION, you are ready for:

STEP THREE: CALL A PRELIMINARY MEETING

This meeting can be held in your home. Offer some refreshments if you can - coffee/tea and cookies are fine. Don't start "business" right away so that people can have the opportunity to talk to each other first.

When you are ready to start, introduce yourself and then ask people to introduce themselves and tell in which building or home they live. Ask them to tell a little about themselves, such as how long they have lived on the block, what their interests are and why they came to this meeting. Since you may be the only person to have spoken to each one, it is important to share the information you may have learned with the rest of the group. You can give an overview of what you noted about the block when you did your "observation".

Encourage everyone to have a say. BUT, at this stage, DISCOURAGE PEOPLE FROM DISCUSSING PRIORITIES.

KEY QUESTIONS TO RAISE:

- Why organize a block association?
- Are there common needs/problems among the block's residents?
- What would be the purpose(s) of a block association?
- What does each person want the block association to accomplish AS A GROUP?

Keep in mind that this meeting is only a beginning. Depending on the discussion, you may all decide, for some reason, that the time is not ripe for organizing a block association. If, though, things seem to be moving along well, talk about calling a second planning meeting. Ask if each person at this meeting could talk to their neighbors and bring one person, each, to another planning meeting, to be called the following week. (Try not to wait more than two weeks for the second meeting). Ask if someone else would like to host the meeting.

STEP FOUR: CALL A SECOND PLANNING MEETING

Basically, the process at this meeting will be very similar to the first, but as new people will be there, it is important to encourage their participation and ideas. Ask the new people to identify what is important to them on the block, and, AS A GROUP, start placing issues in order of importance. Include in this listing any issues that may have been raised during the first meeting that may not have been mentioned at the second. Keep in mind that although this group is, in effect, setting priorities, it is still a small group, and these "priorities" are only tentative.

With this larger group of people (6 - 8) you have the makings of a "steering/organizing" committee for the block association, but REMEMBER, YOU STILL DON'T HAVE A BLOCK ASSOCIATION.

Start talking about calling a full meeting of the block.

KEY QUESTIONS TO RAISE

1. WHEN WILL THE MEETING BE HELD?

Select alternative dates in case the place you would like to hold the meeting is not available. Generally, an evening during the week, or a Sunday afternoon, is a good time to hold the meeting.

2. WHERE WILL THE MEETING BE HELD?

If there is a school, church/synagogue, community room, large lobby of a building located on the block or nearby, ask one or two people to take on the responsibility of finding out if the meeting can be held there. Although it is best to have the meeting on the block, this may not always be possible. Find out if chairs can be supplied at potential meeting sites. Some groups, when advertising a meeting, tell people to bring their own chairs. If a place wants to charge a fee for the use of a meeting room, appeal to their sense of community and ask that this be a donation to the upcoming block association. Another possibility is to negotiate an "exchange - of service" e.g., if the institution provides a free meeting site, the block association when formed will do "X" for the institution.

3. HOW WILL THE MEETING BE ADVERTISED?

Generally, fliers - a one page announcement - are the best way to publicize the meeting. Someone in the core group may have artistic skills and could design the flier. Or, you can purchase "press-on" letters from a local art supply store and make up the flier that way.

Be creative in designing the flier. Use a catchy phrase, such as:

"NOTICE TO NEIGHBORS: MEETING TO DISCUSS FORMING A BLOCK ASSOCIATION"
or
"COME AND MEET YOUR NEIGHBORS" Use your imagination!

When you design the flier, be sure that the DATE, TIME AND PLACE of the meeting stand out clearly. Try not to make it too wordy, so that if someone is just glancing at it they will know what it is about. You might consider including the name and phone number of someone from the steering committee in case people want more information about the meeting.

Make up enough fliers to distribute to everyone on the block. By counting mailboxes, you can easily find out how many apartments or homes are on the block. Ask if someone in the group can duplicate "x" number of copies of the flier at their job, or if each person could xerox/mimeograph 100 copies each. If this isn't possible, find out if there is a local printer who could print up the flier for free. You can tell him/her that their name will be on the flier - "Printing Services Donated by -----". Or, find out if there is a community center or neighborhood-based agency in the area that could print up the fliers for you.

4. HOW WILL THE FLIER BE DISTRIBUTED?

Depending on the number of people in the steering/organizing committee, and the number of different buildings they live in, you can:

- a) ask each person to post fliers in their own building (lobby, elevator, laundry room, etc.) and leaflet under each door.
NOTE: If people will be leafletting under doors, make sure that they know to place the flier completely under the door so that it does not show from the hallway.
- b) ask each person to do this in two buildings on the block.
- c) ask superintendents to help in the distribution.
- d) ask merchants on the block if you can post notices on store windows.
- e) ask each person to distribute leaflets to every home on a particular block.

Be sure that every building has at least one flier posted in the lobby. Decide on the date by which all fliers should be posted. Usually, 3 - 5 days notice is fine.

5. SHOULD THE ORGANIZING/STEERING COMMITTEE PREPARE A SHORT QUESTIONNAIRE TO GIVE OUT AT THE FULL MEETING?

A good way to get people's opinions about their concerns for the block is to ask them to complete a questionnaire. By conducting this survey, people will feel that they really are a part of the process. Also, filling out a questionnaire will give people something tangible to do at the beginning of the meeting. In addition, it will be important for the block association, when and if formed, to find out:

- a) WHO the people are?
- b) WHAT are their occupations? hobbies? interests? skills? You are not being nosy by asking this information: you are finding out what the RESOURCES of the people are in terms of how they can help the block association. (e.g., If the block association, at some point, decides to incorporate, an attorney who lives on the block might be willing to do this; but, if you didn't know that he/she was an attorney, you wouldn't know to ask.) Consider making up a 3 x 5 card file of members listing their "resources information."
- c) What are the concerns of people living on the block?
- d) Can they serve on a committee to do "X"?
- e) Can they write for a block Newsletter?

The questionnaire can be filled out and returned as people first come to the meeting. See "SAMPLE QUESTIONNAIRE" - Attachment 'A'. Ask if someone from the steering/organizing committee can type and duplicate the questionnaire that is developed BY THE GROUP. If one or two people from the steering/organizing committee volunteers to draw up the questionnaire, it is suggested that a system be set up so that the other members of this committee can review the draft prior to finalizing it.

6. SHOULD YOU HAVE NAME TAGS, A SIGN-IN SHEET, AND REFRESHMENTS AT THE FULL MEETING?

Generally, the answer to all three should be yes. Members of the steering/organizing committee can ask local merchants to donate some refreshments for the meeting. Make up a sign indicating who the contributing merchant(s) is/are. Decide on who will obtain name tags, who will sit at the sign-in table, and who will distribute and collect the questionnaire. (Have pencils available).

7. SHOULD A SPEAKER BE INVITED TO THE FIRST MEETING?

If one or two people from the steering/organizing committee feel comfortable enough talking about block association, it is not necessary to invite an outside speaker. However, if the planning group decides they would like a speaker, you can consider inviting the president of a nearby block association. Call the Orange Police Department's Crime Prevention Unit to find out the closest block association to your block.

8. WHO SHOULD CHAIR THE FIRST MEETING?

Take a vote of the steering/organizing committee to decide who should chair the first meeting. This person should identify him/herself ONLY as the chairperson of that meeting. REMEMBER: Since there still is no block association, any "position" held is TEMPORARY.

9. SHOULD MINUTES BE TAKEN OF THE FIRST MEETING?

Yes. A summary of what took place at the first full meeting of the block association can be distributed to everyone, and can serve as the basis for a block newsletter. It is also suggested that the results of the questionnaire be included in the summary. Decide, among the steering/organizing committee, WHO will take and write-up the minutes.

10. SHOULD THE STEERING/ORGANIZING COMMITTEE DEVELOP AN AGENDA FOR THE FIRST MEETING?

Yes. As a group, decide WHAT will be discussed, and IN WHAT ORDER. Remember that a "social" part will be the beginning of the meeting to give people the opportunity to talk to one another. Make copies of the agenda to distribute to people who attend the first full meeting. Decide WHO will type up and duplicate the AGREED-UPON agenda.

YOU ARE NOW READY FOR:

STEP FIVE: THE FIRST FULL BLOCK-WIDE MEETING

GOAL: TO DECIDE WHETHER OR NOT THE BLOCK COULD BENEFIT FROM A BLOCK ASSOCIATION

The person chairing this meeting can give an overview of how and why the steering/organizing committee came together, and some of the reasons why they feel the block might benefit from a block association. DO NOT tell the people who attend what it is that YOU want done. If you do, one of two things may happen - people will smile and never come back, or, they will say, "Great, we hope you enjoy doing it!" and, never come back.

Although the steering/organizing committee probably has accurately identified the common needs and issues of the block, it is important to encourage participation from as many people as possible. Chances are that those in attendance will come up with the same issues as the committee. After all, they live on the block, too, so have confidence in your neighbors, be patient, and give them the opportunity to experience some of the process of organizing.

If a blackboard or large sheets of paper are available, list the issues raised, and encourage the group to talk about how these things can be resolved.

After discussion, TAKE A VOTE as to whether or not the block should have a block association.

KEY QUESTIONS TO RAISE:

1. WHY did the people come to this meeting?
2. WHY have a block association?
3. WHAT would be the purpose of the block association?
4. WHAT can each person DO?

Once the group has voted to have a block association, see if they can decide on ONE project to work on FIRST that is:

BROAD-BASED: - affecting many residents
SHORT-TERM: - Can be completed quickly
VISIBLE: - to encourage the "skeptics" that you really want to help the block and not just yourself.

If, of course, the group has come together because of an emergency situation, that would take priority; however, if the association is being organized in non-crisis times, try to select a project that will give people the opportunity to work on something that affects MANY residents, that can be successful, and completed quickly. Sometimes, new associations break-up into committee structures too soon. The problem with this is that they run the risk of organizing several committees before they really have one, solid block association. Keep in mind that people have to learn how to work with one another, to trust each other and develop neighboring relationships.

SOME DON'TS OF BLOCK ASSOCIATIONS!!!

- DON'T drop projects without a good reason. And, make sure that people know why something has been dropped or postponed.
- DON'T try to do everything yourself. Remember that the leadership of a block association IS NOT the block association. The leadership REPRESENTS the membership.
- DON'T commit the block association to an activity or to a stand on an issue without FIRST bringing it to the full membership for DISCUSSION and VOTE.
- DON'T move too fast for the membership. You may be ready to start working on a community-wide or city-wide issue, BUT the block association may not. BE REALISTIC ABOUT WHAT THE BLOCK ASSOCIATION CAN DO AND CANNOT DO. Always take into account what the resources of the block association are, and what people - power is available. There is nothing wrong with saying to someone, whether that person is another community leader, a city official, or legislator, etc., that the block association cannot do "X" at this time.

- DON'T let in groups develop. People may develop friendships but if new people coming to meetings perceive cliques and in-groups at block association gatherings they may never return. Make it a point of welcoming new people to the association.
- DON'T be rigid. The block association should have the flexibility to respond to and address major changes in the block's priorities and perspectives.
- DON'T confuse WANTS and NEEDS. In working with a group that uses the democratic process (which is what block associations should use) not everyone will get what they want. BUT, a well-organized group can satisfy many of the needs of its membership.
- DON'T be afraid or embarrassed to ask for help if things seem to be floundering. Sometimes, a third person can help you see where things are breaking down and help you get back on the right track.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS FOR BLOCK ASSOCIATIONS

1. ELECTION OF OFFICERS

After the block association has met a few times, hold elections to elect at least a president and a treasurer for a six-month or one-year term. If you think that it might be difficult to have people take minutes on a rotating basis at meetings, elect a secretary; also. You can consider, as well, electing a vice-president to have a "second line of leadership" ready in case the president has to resign for some reason (e.g., moving off the block).

Open elections LEGITIMIZE the leadership of the block association. It is also good for everyone's morals if there is movement within the leadership. The office of "president" is not just a title. It holds with it certain responsibilities and no one, either the membership or the president himself/herself should assume that it is a life-time appointment. If many of the members of the block association feel that the president or other officer should remain in office, there should be the established structure through which the officer can be removed and replaced.

In planning and holding elections, some block associations develop a nominating committee to select a slate of officers. This system has been utilized, mainly, by larger associations. Other block associations hold open nominations at a meeting preceding the meeting at which elections are held. All such activities should be WIDELY publicized on the block.

2. BY-LAWS

Simple by-laws should be drawn up to build-in the structure of the block association. By-laws should always be put in written form, with copies available to all members. Basically, by-laws should state the name, area and purpose of the block association, membership eligibility, the when, how and who of elections, regular (standing) committees, the option to develop ad hoc committees, and who can call a meeting.

Many sets of by-laws state that in addition to the officers of the organization having the authority to call a meeting, a certain percentage of the members can call a meeting, too. By including this clause, your block association will prevent a situation where the president, for whatever reason, does not call a meeting, or has not called one for a long time. See Sample By-Laws, Attachment "B".

3. INCORPORATION

The majority of block associations are not incorporated; however, those that are incorporated do so for two reasons:

1. It limits the individual liability of the officers and places fiscal responsibility on the organization.
2. If incorporated as a Class "B" corporation, the block association can file for tax-exempt status under Article 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Service Code which would allow contributions to the block association to be tax-deductible.

Incorporation papers must be filed through the New Jersey Department of State. Tax-exempt status must be filed through the Internal Revenue Service of the federal government.

4. DUES

Most block associations charge membership dues - anything from \$1.00 per person/household and up. When determining the amount for dues, try to keep the amount a reasonable rate so that people who cannot afford a large amount are not frozen out. People who can afford more can be asked to make a contribution to the block association in addition to their dues.

As soon as the block association starts collecting dues, it is strongly recommended that a BANK ACCOUNT be opened in the name of the block association REQUIRING TWO SIGNATURES FOR ALL TRANSACTIONS. Most block associations have checking accounts rather than savings accounts so that they don't have to file for taxes on the interest earned.

The treasurer of the block association is responsible for maintaining accurate and up-to-date records of all income and expenses. This does NOT have to be a complicated activity, but it is a necessary one. A treasurer's report should be given at EVERY block association meeting.

It is not necessary to obtain approval of the full membership for every check written; however, each project/activity undertaken by the block association should have a budget, in writing.

5. STEERING/ORGANIZING COMMITTEE

Even if the block association has elected officer, it is recommended that this committee remain in existence, at least for the first year, on an open basis. By giving people as much opportunity to participate in the process, the block association will ensure better "workers" and better leaders.

6. MEMBERSHIP DRIVE

Although the recruitment of new members should be an on-going activity, the block association should have a comprehensive membership drive once a year. Set up tables at key sites on and near the block, such as outside supermarkets, banks, etc., on weekends and during the evening as people are returning home from work. Have literature available on the activities and accomplishments of the block association, as well as a listing of the current activities that still need more volunteers. Once people have joined the association, do a "follow-up". Telephone them and/or send them a letter welcoming them to the association and remind them of the committees/task forces they were interested in and let them know when this group will be meeting. Consider sending new members the assessment questionnaire.

Some block associations, as a service to their neighbors, distribute literature on the community services and resources available, as a part of the membership drive.

As much as possible, try to recruit new members by PERSONAL CONTACT. Talking to someone face-to-face or over the telephone is much more effective than only relying on mimeographed letters or fliers. People can ignore a letter, but they won't ignore you.

7. NUMBER OF MEMBERS

The success of a block association should NOT be measured on a quantitative basis. Oftentime, it is better to have 15-30 people who are willing to work, rather than 150-300 people who only want to advise. As long as the block association continues to deal with common concerns of the block, remains open for new ideas by maintaining ongoing communication with block residents - whether or not they are "paid" members, and has a clearly, defined purpose (to answer the question, "Why should I join?"), the block association will continue to grow and strengthen.

8. FUND RAISING

Most blocks are not able to raise the amount of money they need for their various projects and activities through collection of dues. Therefore, they conduct fund raising events in order to be able to carry out their work.

In deciding what type of event your association could undertake, remember to BE REALISTIC. Don't take on a project that requires 100 people working full-time, if you only have 20 people available on a very part-time basis.

When raising funds, it is recommended that the block association tell potential contributors specifically WHY it is raising money, e.g.,

- two-week summer camp for "x" number of older adults
- 5 trees
- sponsorship of a block team in a community league
- "x" number of walkie-talkies for block security patrol

Remember not to by-pass the obvious. Ask landlords for contributions. If the block association is doing beautification of the block, it increases the property value of their investment, so why not ask landlords to pay for all or part of a tree in front of their building?

Membership applications can include the option of making a contribution to the block association, as well as the dues payment. For example:

Enclosed are my membership dues\$1.00
I would also like to make a contribution of\$

Local Merchants can be asked for contributions, also. Some of the smaller shops may not be able to contribute money, but they may be able to donate goods or services for a special event or raffle. Just remember to credit the name of the store for the donation made.

Some fund-raising projects that have been conducted by block associations and have been very successful are as follows:

cake sales	car washes
book sales	theatre parties
wine & cheese parties/other social	raffles
flea market	block parties

9. MEETINGS

Basically, block associations hold meetings for two reasons:

1. to provide residents with a regular opportunity to meet and get to know each other.
2. to collectively decide upon programs, strategies and activities.

Depending on the organizational development of a block association, its size, as well as the desires of the members, two recommendations are made to assist in determining the frequency of meetings:

1. Committees of the association meet on their own on a regular basis, and then, on a quarterly basis - once every three months - the full membership meets for a social/business gathering, at which programs are reviewed, goals re-defined, evaluations made, and new goals set.

2. To maintain ongoing communication with all residents of the block, and to allow them the opportunity to present an "upcoming" problem to the association for resolution, full meetings are held on a monthly basis.

To a certain extent, the frequency of meetings defines, or perhaps even determines the degree of unity of the group. For this reason, it is important that block associations meet on a regular basis, whether monthly or quarterly. The by-laws developed by the association should state whatever has been decided by the group as the frequency of meetings. In addition, notices should be posted within three to five days prior to the scheduled date publicizing the date, time and location of the meeting.

10. PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT

Based on the common needs and interests of the block's residents, the block association AS A GROUP should decide on programs and activities to be undertaken.

For each activity COLLECTIVELY decided upon, it is recommended that GOALS and OBJECTIVES be determined, and, if necessary, put in writing.

KEY QUESTIONS TO RAISE

1. WHY should the block association do "X"?
2. Is there a COMMON need for the block association to do "X"?
3. What RESOURCES are available?
4. WHERE, and TO WHOM can the block association go for help?
5. Has any other block associations in the vicinity tried this activity? If yes, can they be contacted for a discussion on their successes, failure, etc.?
6. What are the TASKS involved to do "X"?
7. How much TIME will be needed?
8. Will doing "X" require money? If yes, HOW MUCH? Does the block association have these funds, or can it raise them?

In developing programs, it is important to keep things in perspective, by looking at the total "picture" of the block association. If several activities and programs are in motion, do the people involved in each feel connected to other residents of the block? Or, are they feeling that they are "doing their own thing" rather than working for and with the block association?

For each program being developed, it is important, in addition to setting GOALS and OBJECTIVES, to develop a WORK-PLAN that includes:

- WORK-PLAN
1. WHAT will be done?
 2. HOW will it be done - STEP-BY-STEP activities
 3. WHO will be needed to accomplish it, including the number of people, and the kinds of skills they should have, or could learn?
 4. TIME-TABLE for accomplishing
 5. EVALUATION of success or failure - how will the association measure what it did?

In determining the STEP-BY-STEP tasks that are required to complete a project as well as the WHO part of the work-plan, try to develop tasks that require different LEVELS OF PARTICIPATION from each person. Not everyone has the same amount of time, energy or commitment, and by offering levels of involvement, there will be a greater potential for participation. Also, try to approximate the amount of time that will be needed of each person, e.g., one hour/week; one hour/month, etc. People will be much more willing to be part of something if they know what is involved.

In addition, in defining the tasks to be done by each person, place them in sequential order so that each person knows where their task fits into the "whole" of the project. This will also be helpful in keeping track of how close you are to your timetable, and in giving you information on who might need some extra help to complete their part.

FOLLOW-UP is an important part of every block association activity. Keep in touch with people, find out how things are going, and if necessary, remind them that the next person is waiting for them to finish their piece. (e.g., If three people have volunteered to design, duplicate and distribute a meeting notice, each has to wait for the prior to finish their part before the next one can start on theirs). This need not be done in a reprimanding way, in fact, it should not. Give people the benefit of the doubt - chances are they are reliable, but perhaps something has happened at their work or in their personal lives that is preventing them from keeping to the timetable. If this happens, offer to find someone to help them complete their piece. Keep in mind, though, that some people are "chronic-laters". If experience has shown that someone rarely, if ever, follows through on what they have said they will do, the next time they volunteer, either politely refuse, or see if you can recruit a second person to work with them to "ride herd". (You can "politely" refuse by saying that he/she has always worked so hard, that its time for a rest, etc.).

FORMAT: SUGGESTED WORK-PLAN FOR A BLOCK ASSOCIATION PROGRAM

EXAMPLE: PROGRAM FOR BLOCK ASSOCIATION CRIME PREVENTION COMMITTEE
START-UP DATE FOR ACTIVITIES: October 1

GOAL	OBJECTIVES	TIMETABLE	# OF PERSONS
TO REDUCE CRIME AND FEAR OF CRIME ON BLOCK	1. Research crime statistics for block at police department.	by Oct. 31	2-3
	2. Develop & distribute literature on #1 to residents.	by Nov. 15	1-2 prepare 10 distribute
	3. Call a block-wide meeting. Invite Crime Prevention Officer.	by Nov. 30	5-6 prepare meeting
	4. <u>MEETING FOLLOW-UP</u>		
	a) coordinate Operation Identification Enrollment Campaign	12/1-1/31	2-4 people
	b) Schedule Self-Protection Seminar	by Dec. 15	2 people
	c) Schedule Block-Watcher Training Program	by Jan. 15	2 people
	d) Coordinate Home Security Checks by Crime Prevention Officer on building-by-building basis.	12/1-1/31	2 coordinate "x" building captains
	e) <u>Through Block Newsletter</u>		
	1. Distribute information on Victim/Witness Assistance Program; N.J. Crime Victim Compensation; Federal Crime Insurance, etc.	by Jan. 15	Newsletter committee plus 1-2 from crime prevention comm.
	2. Survey residents to determine interest in group purchasing of pick-proof cylinders; lock plates; angle irons; window gates; window locks, etc.		
	5. <u>MEASURE SUCCESS OF ACTIVITIES</u>		
	a) Track crime statistics for block over a 3 month period and compare with same 3 month period in previous year.	Feb.-April	2-3 people
	b) Through Block Newsletter, survey residents to assess any change in residents fear of crime.	March	Newsletter committee plus 1-2 from Crime Prev. Comm.

BUDGET: \$25 - \$60 for cost of mimeographing literature; Operation I.D. engraving tools and Self-Protection Film can be borrowed for free from the Police Department.
OPTIONAL: \$100 - \$500 to assist low-income residents to purchase needed security devices.

11. NEWSLETTER

Newsletters are helpful in keeping an on-going communication with the block's residents. A one page handout is fine - it's enough to keep people in touch with what is happening, and what the future plans of the association are. It is suggested that each newsletter include a request for new ideas, and that a contact person's name, address and phone number be listed for those residents wanting more information.

Many block associations include a membership application in each issue of the newsletter. Also, the association can consider putting in a "Neighbors Column" which lets people know who is doing what; e.g., a resident who is giving a recital, two neighbors from the block getting married, etc.

12. BLOCK "SYMBOLS" / BULLETIN BOARD / BLOCK T-SHIRTS, ETC.

Block associations can consider purchasing an inexpensive bulletin board to be posted in a visible location on the block, or in a local shop window. (If it is posted on a building wall, permission from the owner will have to be obtained.) Meeting notices, community events, and other block-related news can be posted on the bulletin board. In addition, residents can use the bulletin board for an "exchange-of-services" such as babysitting, dog-walking, etc. It can also be used to inform block residents of available community resources such as social service programs, locations of Social Security office, etc.

To increase block "identify" the block association can consider designing and obtaining special T-shirts, buttons, decals, bumper stickers, note paper, etc. Not only are these items helpful in fund-raising, but they give people a sense of belonging.

As you can see, block associations CAN be successfully organized, and, more importantly, SUCCESSFULLY MAINTAINED. In order for a block association to continue to go and grow, keep the following tips in mind:

1. Regularly reassess the purpose(s) of the block association, and its priorities.
2. Develop realistic plans and activities.
3. Make sure the leadership is representative of the block.
4. Maintain on-going communication with all residents of the block, whether paid members of the association or not.
5. Use the block association to enhance "neighboring".
6. Don't let factions develop - deal with crises as they come up; solve problems before they become crises.

Neighbors working together make the block their home and find in it a source of mutual support and enjoyment. Block spirit will endure and so will the block association.

ATTACHMENT "A"

SAMPLE SURVEY FOR BLOCK ASSOCIATION

NAME _____ # IN HOUSEHOLD _____

ADDRESS _____ APT # _____ OCCUPATION _____

TELEPHONE (DAY) _____ (EVENING) _____

1. How long have you lived on this block? _____

2. Would you say the block is SAFE? _____ SOMEWHAT SAFE? _____ UNSAFE? _____

3. Would you say the block is ATTRACTIVE? _____ UNATTRACTIVE? _____ NEITHER? _____

4. Would you be willing to work with your neighbors to:

a) plant some trees and flowers? _____

b) make the block safer? _____

c) make the block cleaner? _____

d) improve the lighting on the block? _____

e) improve city services on the block? _____

f) etc., etc., etc. (Use your imaginations) _____

g) other (please specify) _____

5. Do you have a skill that would be useful to a block association such as:

carpentry	designing	organizing
painting	photography	pep-talking
writing	working with	other (please specify)
typing	electricity	

6. Would you be willing to:

_____ serve on a "steering/organizing" committee for the block?
 _____ serve as the contact for your building?

7. Are you interested in developing block-based services for:

homebound elderly	food co-ops	other (please specify)
childcare	adult recreation	
single parents	youth recreation	
housing clinics	dog-walking	

8. Do you have other suggestions for improving our block? _____

ATTACHMENT "B"

SAMPLE BY-LAWS FOR A BLOCK ASSOCIATION

1. NAME: The name of this Association shall be _____

2. PURPOSE: The purpose of the Association shall be to promote a better community through group action, site such specific goals as the members may set.

3. MEMBERSHIP: Any person residing on _____ between _____ and _____ is eligible for membership.

4. OFFICERS: The Officers of the Association shall be President, Vice-President, Secretary and Treasurer. They shall be elected by the entire membership in _____ (month) of each year and shall serve a term of _____.

5. COMMITTEES: The Standing (regular) Committees of the Association shall be _____ (membership), _____ (security), _____ (etc.). The majority of members at any meeting may set up ad hoc committees that are time-limited to deal with specific problems that may arise. Chairpersons of the committees shall be appointed (or elected) by _____. Chairpersons of the standing committees shall serve on the Association's Executive Committee for the length of their term. Chairpersons of the Ad Hoc Committee shall serve on the Executive Committee for the duration of their committee.

6. EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE: The Officers of the Association and the Committee Chairpersons as stated above shall become the Executive Committee. This Committee shall call special meetings, take action between meetings as instructed by the membership, and deal with emergency problems.

7. MEETINGS: Regular meeting of the Association shall take place every _____ month(s). Members shall be notified of meetings at least one week in advance. The time and place of such meetings shall be determined at the convenience of the general membership. Meetings shall be called by the Executive Committee (or President). Meetings can also be called by a consensus of 51% of the membership of the Association. An annual meeting of the Association shall be held in _____ (month) at which time elections will be held.

8. QUORUM: At least (20) % of membership must be present to conduct official business.

9. VOTING: A majority of voting members present will be required to take any action, pass a resolution, or instruct the Executive Committee members to act on any matter.

10. AMENDMENTS: These by-laws may be amended at any regular meeting. Members must be notified one week in advance of the amendment proposed and 2/3 of those present and voting must approve the change.

ATTACHMENT "C"

TO THE LEADERSHIP OF A BLOCK ASSOCIATION

- A LEADER is sensitive and listens to others
- shares leadership and develops it in others
- is organized in his/her association work
- delegates responsibility
- is accountable to his/her membership
- makes people feel they are important
- is accessible to his/her membership
- does not "take over"
- sticks to the goals set by the group, and doesn't walk into every meeting with new goals and activities
- helps the group analyze its own condition
- deals constructively with conflict and disagreement
- mediates arguments between and among members
- guides the group in setting realistic goals
- helps the group develop a work-plan that has clearly defined steps; a realistic time-table; and that can be measured for success/failure
- keeps records that are accurate and consistent such as copy of by-laws, yearly membership totals & recruitment techniques, all written communications, publicity, etc., minutes or summaries of every meeting held, all correspondence, records of committees' work, records of elections and other.

TO THE MEMBERS OF A BLOCK ASSOCIATION

- A MEMBER. has both the RIGHT and the RESPONSIBILITY to question what the leadership is saying and doing, even if it means disagreeing with them.
- REMEMBER: The leadership represents YOU!
- REMEMBER: The leadership is accountable to YOU!

ATTACHMENT "D"

CHAIRING A MEETING

The person chairing a meeting of a block association is responsible for:

1. Preparing for the meeting; agenda based on the direction of the association's steering committee or general membership.
2. Encouraging participation and discussion by as many members as possible (based on the number of people in attendance).
3. Keeping the meeting on track by directing discussion and moving the agenda.
4. Keeping the meeting within the time frame as set by the group.
5. Mediating arguments between and among members that may arise.
6. Bringing issues to a vote to reinforce group process on decisions.
7. Clarifying decisions made by the group, including reviewing the task assignments necessary to act on the decision.
8. Following-up on the decisions made at the meeting.

Many beginning block associations rotate the responsibility of chairing a meeting. This system enables a number of people to learn this skill; it allows members, prior to elections of the association, to see a person "in action" as a chairperson to provide them with information on who could be an effective leader of the block association; and, if a meeting pertains to an issue being worked on by one of the committees, that committee head might be the chairperson as she/he is most familiar with the subject matter.

Some basic tips for a chairperson that may make the difference between being an authoritarian or being a facilitator are as follows:

INTRODUCE YOURSELF and if the group is a reasonable size have everyone present introduce him/herself as well. Give some introductory information on WHY the meeting is being held and why YOU are chairing it.

STRUCTURE THE MEETING by telling people how the meeting will proceed. Review the agenda items. If it's a large group, it may be best to ask people to raise their hands to be called on. Discuss setting a time limit for the meeting or for sections of it. Depending on the agenda items, it may be best to have part of the meeting as a whole group, and part of it in sub-groups for more focussed discussion.

DIRECT THE DISCUSSION by keeping people on track towards the purpose of the meeting. Keep in mind that nothing will be done if people keep fragmenting the discussion by bringing up new or non-related issues. It is up to the chairperson to correct this should it happen. Remind people that new issues may be brought up during the agenda item, "new business". When an agenda item is raised, people should understand what is expected of them. Does a decision have to be made? Is this a preliminary discussion to give members something to go away with and think about? Also, if people are becoming repetitive, the chairperson can correct this by re-capping what has been said, thus far. Think about how you phrase a question or how you can introduce an agenda item. For example, if tree planting is to be discussed, you can introduce this by saying, "The next agenda item is planting trees. Let's discuss how many the association can afford, and where they should be planted," rather than thwarting ideas by saying, "We are planting a tree in front of 'x' building. A chairperson must be very careful to limit their own opinions."

TUNE-IN to what people are saying, how they are saying it, and what they are doing at a meeting. Always look at the group when you are speaking to them, or if someone is making a comment. Look for "non-verbal" signs that indicate agreement or disagreement. If these non-verbal signs do not turn into verbal comments, try to make them explicit by saying "I see a lot of heads nodding - does that mean we agree?" Or, "So-and-so, your're frowning (or look puzzled) - did you have something to add?" ("or would you like clarification?"). It's always best to refer back to the group rather than speaking all-knowing or initiating a one-on-one dialogue with the person speaking.

VOTING/DECISION MAKING. Never assume that there is agreement on any point until it is put to a vote - whether by show of hands, or by written ballot - and there is an obvious majority opinion. People who vote on an issue "buy-into-it", feel more committed to it, and have a greater investment in the block association.

DO NOT ABUSE THE POWER OF THE CHAIR. Since the chairperson is the one who calls on people to speak, he/she can also ignore others, or speak ad infinitum him/herself. This must be avoided. A chairperson facilitates discussion and does not dictate decisions. A chairperson should remain neutral, and NOT give his/her opinion on an issue; he/she should be able to offer the pro's and con's of alternative methods in order to facilitate the decision-making process.

MEDIATE ARGUMENTS. If disagreements arise, and they probably will, it is the chairperson's responsibility to resolve them. She/he must remain impartial and fair, should not become emotional or angry, and do whatever possible to place the argument in the context of rules of order that can contain it. Each "side" can be asked to state their view point, placing a time limit on the length of the statement; then, the membership can be asked to vote on the issue. This format may help to change a problem from what may be a personal gripe to a process of peer group control. In all situations, the chairperson must act as a role model towards resolution of the conflict.

REVIEW WHAT HAS TO BE DONE following discussion and a vote, so that people fully understand what the various task-assignments are in order to accomplish something, how many people will be needed and for what length(s) of time, and who will be doing what. The chairperson can ask for volunteers or can pass around a sign-up sheet; in either case, though, he/she should ensure that one person (if the task needs several) will take on temporary responsibility of convening the tasks force." If people have voted to do something, but do not volunteer to carry it out, this may mean that they may be feeling that they were railroaded into the decision; or, there is already too much to do; or, they do not completely understand what needs to be done; or, the task is isolating and unpleasant. If this happens, the chairperson should help the group explore why this has occurred. This process will help the group see which projects are lingering sentiment that "all we do is talk about things, but nothing ever gets done".

BE ORGANIZED by following the agenda, using a wristwatch, and keep a checklist of what happens.

KEEP A SENSE OF HUMOR and keep things in perspective.

(b)

FOLLOW-UP on decisions made by staying in contact with people and finding out how things are going. This is important both to encourage people to stay on the time table, as well as to let them know that their work is appreciated.

(c)

END