



# **How to Organize Your Block**

**Neighborhood Stabilization Team**  
**1520 Market Street, Room 4000**  
**St. Louis, MO 63103-2631**  
**314-657-1392**

**Francis G. Slay**  
Mayor, City of St. Louis

**Charles Bryson**  
Director, Department of Public Safety

**Joe Thele**  
Neighborhood Development Executive  
Neighborhood Stabilization Team



# Introduction

Every block is an important part of the fabric of our city - the people, the parks, the housing, the schools and the businesses. It is neighbors pulling together, watching out for each other. It is people working together cleaning alleys, planting greenery and working with City government to meet needs. It is where we live, raise our families, where we work and play.

What happens on a block affects the quality of life of the neighborhood, which in turn affects the city as a whole. The stronger, and more organized blocks are, the stronger our City will become.

What happens on blocks where people don't know each other, where they are not organized? Simply, where there is no organized efforts, problems are not solved.

Block units create the foundation for a stronger, safer and more vital neighborhood.

But how does a block get organized? Most often it is through the efforts of one individual. That person has a heart for where they live and desires to see continued improvement. It starts with that one person and grows. One person contacts another person, and that person contacts another. . . .until most or all people on the block are involved in working together to proactively direct their block's present and future.

How do you get started? The information in this booklet will give you a step-by-step procedure, offering examples, specifics and listing available resources.

Block organization—it's simple, efficient and it's your ticket to a stronger neighborhood.



# 1

## **Know Your Resources**

*The first Step in organizing a block is to know what resources exist to help you.*

One of the most important resources is the Neighborhood Stabilization Team and the Neighborhood Stabilization Officers.

■ Neighborhood Stabilization Team - 657-1392

The Neighborhood Stabilization Officers (NSOs) are the link between your neighborhood and City government. NSOs facilitate city service delivery and work with you to resolve problems. They are assigned by Ward, and work with the Aldermen, the police and city departments and agencies to deal with a wide range of programs. Their mission is to resolve the problems that have a negative impact on residents and their neighborhoods.

■ Citizens' Service Bureau - 622-4800

The Citizens' Service Bureau (CSB) is the customer service department for City government. Call the CSB to enter requests for City services. For example, if your trash is not picked up or you have a street light out on your block, just call the CSB and they will notify the responsible City department for you.

■ St. Louis Metropolitan Police Public Affairs Office - 444-5606

Learn what police district serves your block and who your Police Public Affairs Officer and Problem Property Officers are. They can provide your block with statistics and crime reports, ensure that a police officer attends the block meeting to act as your liaison with the police department.





## **Time and Place for the Meeting**

*Choose a convenient time and place for the meeting so it will be well attended.*

Decide a time and place for your first meeting. You will want a time that is convenient for as many people on the block as possible. For instance, scheduling a Monday, 10:00 AM meeting may not be well attended if most people on your block work 9:00AM to 5:00PM, Monday through Friday.

As your meetings continue, you may want to make the time and place routine. One block unit for example, meets the second Wednesday of each month at the local library branch.





## **Getting the Word Out About the Meeting**

*People cannot attend what they don't know about.*

*Letting block residents know when the meeting  
will happen is vital to its success.*

A flyer is one of the best ways to let everyone on the block know about the meeting. A flyer should state the time, location and reason for the meeting. It doesn't have to be fancy. You can hand write it or do it on the computer—but do it.

Once the flyer is made, it's up to you to distribute it. You can mail it, but your best luck comes from door-to-door distribution. It is very important to invite your Alderman, district police officers and your Neighborhood Stabilization Officer.

**Sample Flyer**



***Announcing***  
**BLOCK MEETING**  
**for the**  
9900 Block of  
**Happy People Lane**

***Time: 6:00 PM***

***Place: Goodbook Branch of the Public Library***

***Date: July 1, 2008***

**Don't miss this important meeting!!!**

*Residents of each household are asked to attend so you can be informed about what is happening on your block.*





## Meeting Content

*What will you talk about in the first meeting?  
What are residents' main concerns for the block?*

Decide the most important topic for the first block meeting. You may come up with the topic by talking to block residents and hearing from them what their concerns are. If there's not time to talk to a lot of residents, choose the topic according to your understanding of the block.

While there may be many issues to discuss, keep it simple. True block organization success comes from taking on only a few projects and issues at a time. If you try and address everything at once, you will spread your resources too thin and accomplish little.



## **The Agenda**

*Now that you know what to discuss, you need to let the people at the meeting know.*

Your agenda will help ensure a productive and timely meeting. It should be simple, brief and informative.

### **Sample Agenda**

- 1. Call Meeting to order***
- 2. Welcome and Introduce Special Guests***
- 3. Explain purpose of a Block Unit***
- 4. Discuss Primary Concerns:***
  - Recent Burglaries***
  - Graffiti, Trash and Debris on Block***
- 5. Assign tasks***
- 6. Plan Next Meeting***
- 7. Adjourn/Refreshments***



## **Information at the Meeting**

*Information is Power*

Have information at the meeting regarding various resources, programs and services. For instance, the Citizens' Service Bureau takes requests and distributes them to the various agencies and tracks the progress. The Neighborhood Stabilization Team can assist with City service delivery, resolving problem property issues and act as liaison to service agencies and elected officials. Utilizing information like this will assist you in getting things done in the neighborhood. The information is readily available...and free.



## The First Meeting

*You've done all the legwork and people showed up.  
How can you make sure the meeting is a success?*

■ **Be sure to stick to the main topic on the agenda.**

Other issues will come up and people will want to talk about everything at the first meeting—but keep it simple. Prioritize the issues that come up and set aside time to address them at future meetings.

■ **Be sure everyone who wants has an opportunity to talk.**

But be sure that they stick to the main agenda topics. This ensures the involvement from all residents.

■ **Elect a Block Captain.**

This is extremely important to the block organization. The block captain is the liaison between your block unit and City Hall, the police department and the neighborhood organization.

■ **Begin a Phone/Address List.**

Be sure all meeting attendees sign their names, addresses and phone numbers. This is your best tool for communicating future meetings and knowing who you can contact for projects.

■ **Plan Your Next Meeting**

The best audience is a captive audience. Setting the next meeting date while in your current meeting ensures good attendance.



## The Future

*You've made it through the first meeting  
....now what?*

**How do you ensure your block's continued success?**

**By continuing the basics:** Publicize the time and date of meetings, prioritize the concerns and issues, develop and implement projects and work with City agencies and other neighborhood organizations, such as your local neighborhood association or housing corporation.

Additionally, make sure new residents on your block or the surrounding area are told about the block meetings and activities and invite them to be part of the group. If there are rental properties on your block, make sure the property owners are invited to participate as well as the tenants. If there are multi-unit complexes, be sure the property managers or others responsible for the properties are invited to be a part of the block unit. Continually update the block's phone/address list and listen to each other so there is agreement about the main issues and concerns facing your block.



## **SUMMARY**

**Block organization is a powerful, effective tool for making positive changes where you live. By becoming organized you and your neighbors will have a unified, powerful voice that must be heard. It only takes one person to get things started. If you're reading this, then you may be that person.**



## **HELPFUL NUMBERS**

Adopt-a-Lot Program LRA .....	622-3400
Aid for Victims of Crime .....	652-2623
Animal Regulation Center .....	353-5838
Building Division .....	622-4671
Citizens' Service Bureau .....	622-4800
Crime Stoppers Tip Line .....	866-371-8477
Environmental Health .....	612-5300
Gateway Greening .....	588-9600
Health Department .....	612-5100
Human Services Department .....	612-5900
Neighborhood Stabilization Team .....	<b>657-1392</b>
Operation Brightside .....	772-4646
Parks, Recreation and Forestry:	
Parks .....	289-5300
Recreation .....	289-5320
Forestry .....	613-7200
Public Safety Department .....	622-3391
Refuse Division .....	353-8877
St. Louis Agency on Training & Employment .....	589-8000
St. Louis Community Schools .....	231-4591
Street Department .....	647-3111

### **St. Louis Police Department**

Narcotics, Gang and Homicide Hotline .....	241-2677
Public Affairs .....	444-5606
Victim/Witness Unit .....	622-4373

**622-029 (ML6/08)**