



How to Organize Your Block

**Neighborhood Stabilization Team
Room 418 City Hall
Tucker & Market
St. Louis MO 63103
314-622-4628**



Introduction

What is a block anyway? Is it a child's toy or a square section of land with buildings? A block is our community in microcosm—the buildings and the people. It is neighbors knowing each other, people watching out for each other. It is people working together to clean alleys, plant trees and flowers or working with City government to meet area needs. It is where we live, raise our families, where we work and play. What happens on one block affects the street, which affects the neighborhood, which in turn affects the whole of St. Louis. The stronger our blocks, the stronger our City.

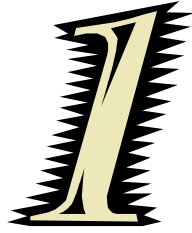
What happens on blocks where people don't know each other...blocks where there are problems—from trash and debris to gangs and drug activity to housing development issues? How can problems be solved and issues addressed? The answer is organizing a block unit. Block units create the foundation for a stronger, safer and more vital neighborhood. It is the building block of a neighborhood organization.

How does a block get organized? Most often it is through the efforts of one individual. A person who has a heart for the community and wants to do something to change the block for the better. 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.

But how does all this happen? Where can you start and what are the basics? This information will help you through the process, step-by-step, offering examples, specifics and listing available resources.

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





Know Your Resources

The first Step in organizing a block is to know your resources. Who can help you? What organizations can you tie into?

■ Neighborhood Stabilization Team - 622-4628

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 various city departments and agencies to deal with problem properties. Their mission is to resolve issues which have a negative impact on residents and their neighborhoods.

■ **Citizens Service Bureau - 622-4800**

The Citizens Service Bureau is the customer service department for City government. Call the CSB to register complaints about 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 and help to set up Neighborhood Watch training.

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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.





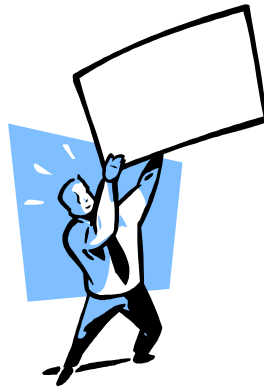
Getting the Word Out About the Meeting

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 how you 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 handwrite it or do it on 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, 2007

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*

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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. There will be many issues to discuss, but keep it simple. True block organization success comes from taking on projects and issues a few at a time. If you try and address everything at once, you could end up spreading your resources too thin and accomplishing little.



The Agenda

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

Your agenda is what will 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 and 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 City programs and services. For instance, Citizen's Service Bureau takes complaints and distributes them to the various agencies and tracks the progress. The Police department has the Neighborhood Watch program that trains residents on how to observe and report crime. 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 the meeting 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. Your best bet is to 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 ensures good attendance.



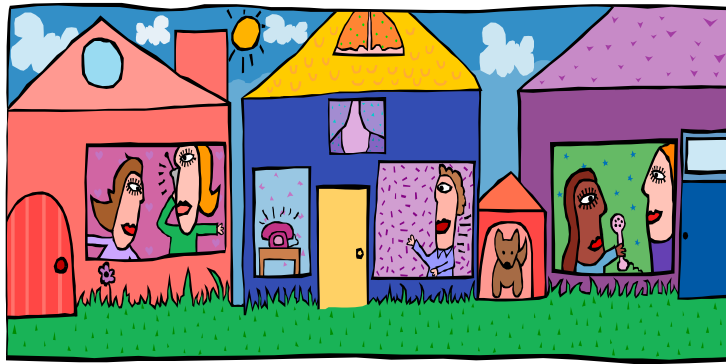
The Future

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

How do you ensure your block's continued success? By continuing the basics:

Communication of meetings, prioritizing concerns and issues, developing and implementing projects and working with City agencies and other neighborhood organizations, such as your local neighborhood association or Housing Corporation.

Additionally, make sure new block residents hear 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 owner is invited to participate as well as the tenants. If it is a multi-unit complex, be sure that the property managers or others responsible for the property are invited to be a part of the block unit. Continually update the block 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. There may be many concerned people on a block and maybe they're individually talking with City agencies, the police department and their alderman and not feeling very effective. By getting organized you and your neighbors will have a unified, powerful voice that will be heard. It only takes one person to get things started. If you're reading this, then you may be that person. Block organization....it's simple, effective and your ticket to a better neighborhood.



HELPFUL NUMBERS

Adopt-a-Lot Program LRA	622-3400
Aid for Victims of Crime	652-2623
Animal Regulation Center	353-583
Building Division	622-4671
Citizen's Service Bureau	622-4800
Gateway Greening	FAX 567-6765
Environmental Health	612-5300
Health & Hospitals	612-5100
Human Services Department	612-5900
License Collector's Office	622-4528
Neighborhood Stabilization Team	622-4628
Operation Brightside	772-4646
<u>Parks, Recreation and Forestry</u>	
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
<u>St. Louis Police Department</u>	
Narcotics, Gang and Homicide Hotline	241-2677
Public Affairs	444-5606
Street Department	647-3111
St. Louis Metropolitan Urban League	371-0040
Victim/Witness Unit	622-4373