CITY OF DES MOINES

Neighborhood Association Toolkit

2026



Vibrant Accessible Welcoming

TOOLKIT NAVIGATOR *FIND WHAT YOU NEED, FAST!*

The Toolkit Navigator is your quick-reference guide to everything included in the Neighborhood Association Toolkit. Use it to scan for summaries, find page numbers, and identify exactly when to use each resource. Whether you are onboarding a new leader, planning an event, or updating policies, the Navigator helps you jump straight to the tools you need. No digging required.

Additional Search Tip: Within the PDF, use CTRL+F (or Command+F) to search for a keyword such as "budget" or "Polk County Print Shop."

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	Annual Calendar of Events	10	You are planning the year and need to track key deadlines.
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	Board Minutes and Action Items	27	You need tips for accurately documenting meeting outcomes and complying with City requirements.
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	Decision Making	29	You need help prioritizing projects and making group decisions using a clear matrix.
	Board Transitions and Organizational Filing Structure	29	You are preparing for leadership changes and organizing files for smooth transitions.
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WELCOME

Introduction to the Neighborhood Toolkit



The City of Des Moines serves more than 217,000 residents throughout 46 neighborhoods.

CONTACT US

For more information contact the Neighborhood Outreach Coordinator.

Heather Tamminga, CAE

Neighborhood Outreach Coordinator

Neighborhood Services Department

(515) 283-4775

Neighborhoods@dmgov.org

On behalf of the Mayor, City Council, and City of Des Moines staff, ***thank you*** for stepping into a leadership role within your neighborhood association. Your role is vital to the success of the City of Des Moines. Neighborhood associations play a critical role in building community, sharing ideas, and working cooperatively to make Des Moines a great place to live, work, and play.

As a leader of your neighborhood association, you have important responsibilities. Your neighborhood association is like any other organization—full of policies, procedures, and time-honored practices that you need to know to lead effectively.

The Neighborhood Association Toolkit is your guide to effective leadership. On the following pages, you will find information about organizational best practices, and ideas from other neighborhood associations. The Toolkit is designed to meet every neighborhood association in their current stage of organizational maturity. Explore and implement the new ideas and tools relevant at this time. The templates found within the Toolkit are downloadable and customizable. The Index provides additional resources. The Toolkit is updated with new resources frequently.

The City of Des Moines does not provide legal advice. The information and templates found in this Toolkit are provided as general information. Consulting with legal counsel and CPAs experienced with nonprofit organizations always is recommended.

WHAT IS A NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION?



A neighborhood association is a group of residents, businesses, and community partners who share a desire to create neighborhood identity and promote opportunities for engagement among neighbors. Neighborhood associations represent the position of the collective neighborhood and provide input to the City Council, Boards and Commissions, and City staff on issues affecting neighborhoods.

Neighborhood associations are different from homeowners associations.

- **Voluntary:** Neighborhood associations are voluntary organizations of residents, businesses, and community partners working together to improve the quality of life within the defined neighborhood. Neighborhood associations are community-minded and focus on the intrinsic sense of belonging to a community.

- **Mandatory:** Homeowners associations are created to maintain common areas and enforce private deed restrictions; members are charged mandatory dues to belong.

Recognized Neighborhood Associations

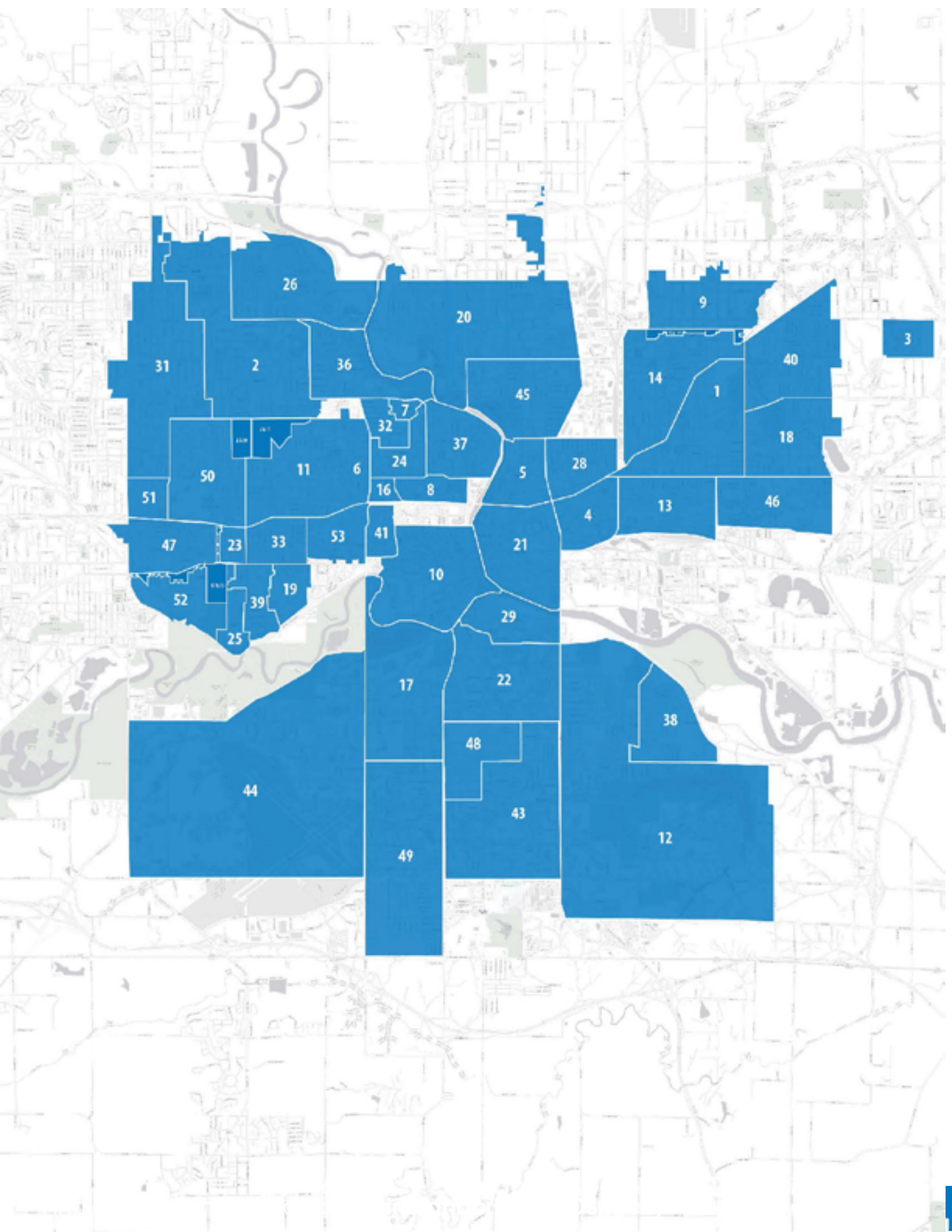
The Neighborhood Recognition Policy defines how the City of Des Moines recognizes neighborhoods.

Recognized neighborhood associations gain access to:

- Technical assistance from City staff on neighborhood association best management practices, which includes access to the Neighborhood Association Toolkit and invitations to participate in City-led leadership training.
- City staff assigned to be key contacts and neighborhood partners, including a Neighborhood Based Resource Delivery Officer (Policy Department), neighborhood inspector, and Parks liaison.
- Use of City facilities according to department policies and code. This includes up to two (2) rentals of Parks/Parks facilities per year.
- Reserve the DSM Party Pod, available at no cost to support community events.
- Serve on the Neighborhood Outreach Advisory Committee.
- Participation in the Neighborhood Flower Program.
- Apply for the Polk County Betterment Grant regardless of 501(c)(3) status. The Polk County Board of Supervisors waives the tax-exempt requirement for Recognized neighborhood associations only.
- Apply for the City's Capacity Building Grant (when available).

DES MOINES NEIGHBORHOODS

1	**ACCENT**	Accent Neighborhood Association Facebook Page
2	**Beaverdale**	beaverdale.org
3	**Brook Run**	brookrun.fun
4	**Capitol East**	Capitol East Neighborhood Association Facebook Page
5	**Capitol Park**	Capitol Park Neighborhood Association Facebook Page
7	**Chautauqua Park**	Chautauqua Park Neighborhood Association Facebook Page
8	**Cheatom Park**	
9	**Douglas Acres**	douglasacres.org
10	**Downtown Des Moines**	desmoinesdna.com
11	**Drake**	dna.wildapricot.org
12	**Easter Lake Area**	easterlakedsm.com
13	**Fairground**	Fairground Neighborhood Association Facebook Page
14	**Fairmont Park**	fairmontparkdsm.org
16	**Good Park**	Good Park Neighborhood Association Facebook Page
17	**Gray's Lake**	grayslakena.org
18	**Gray's Woods**	grayswoodsdsm.org
19	**Greenwood Historic**	Greenwood Historic Neighborhood Association Facebook Page
20	**Highland Park/Oak Park**	highlandoakdsm.wordpress.com
21	**Historic East Village**	eastvillagedesmoines.com
22	**Indianola Hills**	Indianola Hills Neighborhood Association Facebook Page
23	**Ingersoll Park**	ingersollpark.com
24	**King Irving**	King Irving Neighborhood Association
25	**Linden Heights**	Linden Heights Neighborhood Association Facebook Page
26	**Lower Beaver**	lowerbeaver.org
28	**Martin Luther King, Jr. Park**	MLK Jr. Park Neighborhood Association Facebook Page
29	**McKinley School/ Columbus Park**	https://mscpneighborhood.wixsite.com/welcome
31	**Merle Hay**	merlehay.org
32	**Mondamin Presidential**	
33	**North of Grand**	northofgrandneighborhood.org
36	**Prospect Park**	prospectparkna.org
37	**River Bend**	riverbendneighborhood.org
38	**River Woods**	
39	**Salisbury Oaks**	sonadsm.com
40	**Sheridan Gardens**	Sheridan Gardens Neighborhood Facebook Group
41	**Sherman Hill**	shermanhilldsm.org
43	**South Central DSM**	South Central DSM Facebook Group
44	**Southwestern Hills**	swhna.com
45	**Union Park**	unionparkdsm.com
46	**Valley High Manor**	
47	**Waterbury**	waterburyneighbors.org
48	**Watrous Heights**	watrousheightsna.com
49	**Watrous South**	watroussouth.org
50	**Waveland Park**	wavelandpark.org
51	**Waveland Woods**	wavelandwoods.org
52	**Westwood**	westwoodneighborsdsm.com
53	**Woodland Heights**	Woodland Heights Organization Facebook Page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Annual Calendar of Events

Monthly

Month of Board Elections

Report board leadership updates to Neighborhoods@dmgov.org immediately following board elections. Information is used to update the neighborhood association listing found online, https://findneighborhoods.dsm.city, and is shared with City staff.

Annual

March 30:

Annual Application for Recertification Due

Recognized neighborhoods are required to submit an Annual Application for Recertification in accordance with the City's Neighborhood Recognition Policy. The recertification application ensures that neighborhood associations recognized by the City Council are active and allows neighborhood associations to provide updates on organizational changes that occurred over the past year. Information is used to update the neighborhood association listing found online, https://findneighborhoods.dsm.city, and is provided to City departments and City Council members.

August 1–November 30:

Capacity Building Applications Accepted (when funding is available)

See the Neighborhood Grants section to learn about the current year's requirements and to download the grant applications.

Tax Filing

File taxes on the 15th day of the 5th month following the end of the neighborhood association's fiscal year. E.g., if the fiscal year ends December 31, taxes are due May 15. If the fiscal year ends June 30, taxes are due November 15. For questions about tax filing, consult with a CPA experienced in nonprofit organizations.

Neighborhood Signs

Neighborhood associations may want to construct a sign(s) to identify and welcome residents to their neighborhood. To ensure visibility and traffic flow, and to maintain the attractive appearance of the neighborhood, the City of Des Moines does require a review and in some instances the issuance of a permit prior to the construction of a neighborhood sign.

There are two types of neighborhood signs that can be constructed in Des Moines:

1. Monument signs may be placed on private property; and
2. Pole signs installed on a signpost or pole located in the public right-of-way.

The ability to have a sign is dependent on location and the requirements for that location.

Process for Receiving City Approval to Construct a Neighborhood Monument Sign

A Recognized neighborhood association must contact the Zoning Enforcement Division at (515) 283-4207 or dz@dmgov.org. Zoning Enforcement staff will review current policy and procedures for monument sign requests.

Process for Receiving City Approval for Neighborhood Pole Sign in the City Right-Of-Way

A Recognized neighborhood association must contact the Traffic and Transportation Division at (515) 283-4973 or transportation@dmgov.org. Traffic and Transportation staff will review current policy and procedures for sign requests.

Governance

Governance Documents

Following is the hierarchy of governing tools for nonprofit organizations, including neighborhood associations.

Document	Purpose	Learn More
Mission Statement	The mission statement declares the purpose of the organization. The mission statement is required when applying to become a 501(c)3 tax-exempt organization, when filing Articles of Incorporation, and is included annually on tax returns.	Read the Mission Statement section to learn more.
501(c)3 Tax-Exempt Status	501(c)3 tax-exempt status defines the organization's relationship with the Internal Revenue Service. Benefits include tax-exempt status, grant opportunities, and discounted postage.	Read the 501(c)3 Tax Exempt Status section to determine if tax-exempt status is right for the neighborhood association.
Articles of Incorporation	Articles of Incorporation allow the organization to register as a nonprofit organization and establishes a relationship with the State of Iowa. Incorporation benefits include limited volunteer indemnity.	Read the Articles of Incorporation section to learn about the benefits of incorporation and incorporation resources.
Neighborhood Recognition Policy	Recognized neighborhoods must establish and maintain the capacity to represent the views of the neighborhood and must meet the minimum standards for meetings annually. This policy establishes a relationship with the City of Des Moines.	Read the Recognized Neighborhood Associations section to understand the requirements of recognition.
Bylaws	Bylaws are a clear outline of the rules and procedures that govern the organization.	Read the Bylaws section to learn what should be included in this governing document.
Policy Manual	A policy manual is a single collection of policies and procedures adopted by the board of directors. Policies must be consistent with the mission statement and bylaws.	Review the Policies section for a set of recommended policies.
Strategic Plan	The strategic plan outlines the long-term goals and strategies of the organization.	Read the Strategic Plan section to learn how to keep planning simple and achievable.
Annual Budget	The annual budget supports the strategic plan.	Read the Financial Management section to learn budget basics and download a budget template.
Organizational Chart	An organizational chart illustrates the roles and relationships within the organization to aid decision making, communication, and recruitment.	A sample Organizational Chart Template is found in the Templates section. Refer to the Index for resources.

Mission Statement

The neighborhood association's mission statement is its most important governance tool. The mission statement declares the purpose of the neighborhood association and is required when applying to become a 501(c)3 organization, filing Articles of Incorporation, and completing annual tax returns. The mission statement drives the neighborhood association.

Foundation of a Mission Statement

Mission statements are:

- **Active**, compelling and answer what, who, and why. What does the neighborhood association provide, to whom, and why?
- **Brief**. A mission statement is 30 words or fewer.
- **Memorable**. Each board and committee member should be able to recite the mission statement from memory when talking about the neighborhood association with community members.
- **Conversation starters**. After hearing the mission statement, community members should feel curious and ask deeper questions.

Refer to the **Index** for resources.



501(c)3 Tax-Exempt Status

A 501(c)3 tax-exempt status defines the organization's relationship with the federal government. Becoming a 501(c)3 tax-exempt organization is not a requirement of Des Moines' neighborhood associations. Each neighborhood association should evaluate the benefits of becoming a 501(c)3 tax-exempt organization.

Ask:

1. Will the benefit of a 501(c)3 tax-exempt status drive the organization to meet its mission?
2. Does the neighborhood association plan to apply for grants and other outside funding?
3. Do the benefits outweigh the costs (financial and time) of the application process?
4. Is the neighborhood association prepared with a plan to ensure annual required filings are met?
5. Is there a leader who can spearhead the filing process, or does the neighborhood association have the ability to work with an attorney?

Benefits of a 501(c)3 tax-exempt status include:

- **Tax-exempt.** The neighborhood association is exempt from federal and state corporate taxes.
- **Limited liability protection** for directors and officers, except in cases of unpaid taxes and gross negligence.
- **Grant opportunities.** Foundations, corporations, and government agencies often require applicants to be 501(c)3 tax-exempt organizations to receive grants.
  - The City of Des Moines' Neighborhood Grant Program is available to all recognized neighborhood associations; 501(c)3 tax-exempt status is not a requirement.
  - Polk County Betterment Grants are available to all recognized neighborhood associations; 501(c)3 tax-exempt status is not a requirement.
- **Discounted postage.** The United States Postal Service gives nonprofits the option to take advantage of special bulk mailing rates.
- **Discounts on publicity.** Media outlets often provide free or discounted rates for public service announcements and press releases.
- **Credibility.** Residents, local businesses, and community groups may consider the neighborhood a more credible organization.
- **Deductible donations.** Individuals and businesses can deduct contributions—including membership dues—on their personal and corporate taxes.

How to Become a 501(c)3 Tax-Exempt Organization

Follow the step-by-step application process found on the IRS website. Refer to the **Index** for resources.

Download the **501(c)3 Nonprofit Law Basics Handout** (found under the Neighborhood Training Library tab) to learn more.

Articles Of Incorporation

Incorporation is different than 501(c)3 tax-exempt status. Incorporation establishes the organization's relationship with the State of Iowa. Here are reasons why incorporation matters.

- **Recognition** as a nonprofit in the State of Iowa.
- **Establish identity** and preserve the name of the neighborhood association.
- **Risk mitigation through limited volunteer indemnity.** Incorporation offers certain protection to volunteer leaders. An incorporated neighborhood association can be sued in its corporate name. An unincorporated neighborhood association can be sued in the names of the members. Incorporation allows for a separation between volunteer leaders acting in good faith and the neighborhood association. Further, the maximum liability of an incorporated neighborhood association for contract claims and personal injury or property damage are generally limited to the amount of assets in the organization. Insurance is used to cover the costs to defend against litigation.
- **Apply for an Employer Identification Number (EIN).** An EIN is required to open a bank account in the neighborhood association's corporate name.
- **Establish** legally binding contracts.
- **Receive Neighborhood Grant Funding** from the City of Des Moines (when available).
- **A step toward 501(c)3 tax-exempt status** should the neighborhood association wish to pursue this option.

How to Become Incorporated

1. Draft Articles of Incorporation and file them online with the Iowa Secretary of State. There is a one-time fee of $20.
2. Receive a certificate of acknowledgment upon approval of filing.
3. File biennial reports with the Secretary of State at no cost.

Templates

1. Hire an attorney. An attorney can draft and file the neighborhood association's Articles of Incorporation.
2. Larned A. Waterman Iowa Nonprofit Resource Center offers Secretary of State services and paperwork assistance, https://inrc.law.uiowa.edu/our-services.
3. Reference the customizable Articles of Incorporation Template found in the **Templates** section. Instructions to file Articles of Incorporation with the Secretary of State are included.

No matter the method, ensure that the Articles of Incorporation meet the minimum requirements to form a nonprofit in the State of Iowa. Requirements are found online, https://sos.iowa.gov/nonprofits/MinCodeReq.html

Refer to the **Index** for resources.

Bylaws

Each neighborhood association is governed by a set of bylaws. Bylaws establish the management of the neighborhood association and outline the relationship between the neighborhood association and members. Bylaws should be clear, concise, and available to all members; they often are posted on the organization's website for easy access. It is recommended that bylaws are reviewed annually to ensure the neighborhood association is following its own procedures, or to amend as needed. While bylaws should be detailed, they should not be so specific that the board of directors is unable to make policy decisions without first amending the bylaws.

Bylaws should contain:

- Mission and purpose of the neighborhood association
- Membership qualifications and admission procedures
- Directors and officers qualifications, terms of office, election, powers, duties, and removal
- Voting requirements and procedures
- Meeting notification requirements
- Fiduciary and administrative policy
- Indemnification
- Dissolution
- Amendment procedures

In any case where bylaws and the Articles of Incorporation conflict, the Articles of Incorporation supersede the bylaws.

Templates

1. Hire an attorney. An attorney can draft, review, and recommend amendments for a neighborhood association's bylaws.
2. Larned A. Waterman Iowa Nonprofit Resource Center offers governance assistance, http://inrc.law.uiowa.edu/our-services.
3. Reference the customizable bylaws Template found in the **Templates** section.

No matter the resource, ensure that the bylaws conform to the Revised Iowa Nonprofit Corporation Act, https://www.legis.iowa.gov/docs/ico/chapter/504.pdf?msclkid=b680747fb1de11ecb7b0896b42bc63ec

Refer to the **Index** for resources.

Strategic Plan

Strategic planning helps a neighborhood association stay focused on its mission by setting long-term goals and deciding how to use resources. The annual budget reflects the priorities in the strategic plan.

To choose a clear direction, the association must first understand where it stands now and what paths it can take moving forward.

Strategic planning generally answers three key questions:

1. What do we do?
2. Who do we serve?
3. How do we succeed?

Best practices illustrate:

- All neighborhood residents, businesses, and community partners should be invited to engage in the development of a strategic plan. The goal is to create a plan that represents the diversity of the neighborhood.
- Strategic planning should occur every three years.
- An annual review of the strategic plan is critical. An annual review allows the neighborhood association to identify progress and shift strategies as new data and circumstances provide updated insight.
- No more than five goals should be adopted on the plan. Keep expectations realistic. Volunteer leaders juggle many commitments. Realistic goals and expectations are essential in forward movement.
- Keep it simple. Strategic planning can feel overwhelming. Ensure that plans capture measurable goals and strategies, a timeline, person(s) accountable, and resources required.
- Use a facilitator to lead in the creation of the plan. A facilitator may include a professional facilitator, a resident in the neighborhood who has experience in this area, or an engaged member currently not on the board of directors. Members of the board should not facilitate a strategic planning session. This allows board members to better participate in the process while leaving personal agendas behind.

Templates

1. Research free templates found online.
2. Reference the customizable Strategic Plan Template found in the **Templates** section.

Refer to the **Index** for resources.

Refer to **Ideas In Action** to learn about Drake Neighborhood Association's strategic planning process.

Policy Manual
Recommended Policies

Conflict of Interest

A conflict of interest occurs when a person in a position of authority over an organization may benefit financially, either directly or indirectly, from a decision they make in their leadership capacity. It is the responsibility of leaders to declare a conflict of interest and allow the board of directors to adhere to procedures outlined in a conflict of interest policy. A conflict of interest policy provides an additional layer of transparency in decision making and works to ensure the neighborhood association operates in a matter consistent with its purpose.

A conflict of interest policy should:

- Be reviewed annually by each member of the board of directors, committee chairs, and committee members
- Allow each recipient of the policy an opportunity to disclose conflicts and sign and date a disclosure statement
- Be filed in the organization's permanent files

Templates:

1. Hire an attorney. An attorney can draft, review, and recommend a conflict of interest policy.
2. Larned A. Waterman Iowa Nonprofit Resource Center offers governance assistance, https://inrc.law.uiowa.edu/our-services.
3. Reference the customizable Conflict of Interest Template found in the **Templates** section.

Refer to the **Index** for resources.



Political Endorsements

Always keep the neighborhood association's mission in mind when talking politics. The purpose of a neighborhood association is to enhance the quality of life by creating neighborhood identity and encouraging engagement among neighbors vested in the community.

If the neighborhood association is recognized by the Internal Revenue Service as a 501(c)(3) organization, it is critical to understand that "all section 501(c)(3) organizations are prohibited from directly or indirectly participating in, or intervening in, any political campaign on behalf of (or in opposition to) any candidate for elective public office," according to the Internal Revenue Code. While neighborhood associations should check with their private counsel about tax implications, the City does not object to neighborhood associations, regardless of tax-exempt status, practicing as if they are tax-exempt.

Neighborhood associations may provide educational information to the public about issues; however, they should not advocate a particular point of view about the issues that tend to promote particular candidates or issues. Iowa law prohibits the expenditure of public funds for political purposes, which has been broadly interpreted by Iowa courts and the Iowa Ethics and Campaign Disclosure Board. The following lists are intended to provide guidance to avoid such pitfalls.

The neighborhood association **may**:

- Hold non-partisan forums and allow candidates equal opportunity to address residents.
    - Equal opportunity means equal time for each candidate. If holding a forum, consider how the forum will be moderated, how much time each candidate will receive to speak, and how much time each candidate will receive to respond to questions.
- Provide voter information such as voting locations and hours.

The neighborhood association **may not**:

- Use City funds to contribute to Political Action Campaigns (PACs).
- Use any City funds to support a political candidate, campaign, or issue. Any comingling of City funds with other neighborhood association funds could amount to a violation and should be avoided.
- Use any City services, City equipment, City supplies, City facilities (not otherwise available to the public), or City employees on City time to support a political candidate, campaign, or issue.
- Use any of the above City resources to make written or verbal statements supporting or opposing a political candidate, campaign, or issue.
- Use any of the above City resources to distribute campaign materials.

Although members of a neighborhood association may engage in political activities as individuals pursuant to their First Amendment right to freedom of speech, the neighborhood association may not engage in political activities utilizing City resources in any manner. Individual leaders may participate in political campaigns and advocacy issues outside of their role in the neighborhood association but should avoid actual or implied use of City resources in doing so, including referencing their leadership position to the extent City resources are implicated. Refer to the **Index** for resources.

Template

Reference the customizable Political Endorsements Template found in the **Templates** section.

Compensation Policy

A compensation policy ensures board members and volunteer leaders understand they are not employees of the organization and serve without compensation–including salary, stipend, or contract fees. Expenses should be incurred and paid for directly by the neighborhood association. If expenses are related to a grant received, ensure expenses are incurred by the neighborhood association or check with the funder to confirm reimbursement protocol.

Template

A sample Compensation Policy Template is found in the **Templates** section.

Document Retention

A document retention policy ensures that key records of a neighborhood association are appropriately retained and available for future leaders. It is best that organizational records are held in a centralized location, such as Google Drive, Share Point, or Dropbox. Use the Board Transition Checklist as an outline to determine which board position may be holding physical files. Read the **Board Transitions and Organization Filing Structure** section to learn more about the transition to electronic storage.

Template

A sample Document Retention Policy Template is found in the **Templates** section.

Refer to the **Index** for resources.

Financial Management and Internal Controls Policy

Adoption of a Financial Management and Internal Controls Policy is a requirement of the Neighborhood Recognition Policy.

A board of directors has a fiduciary duty to safeguard the organization's assets and ensure all assets support the organization's mission. A financial management and internal controls policy is a board's guide to financial management. It includes:

- How financial institutions and investment of funds are approved
- Use of credit cards
- Financial reporting practices
- Separation of duties and responsibilities for receiving, depositing, and spending the organization's funds.
- The number of signatories on a bank account (note: a minimum of two (2) signatories is required by the Neighborhood Recognition Policy)
- Cash reserve goals

Template

A sample Financial Management and Internal Controls Policy Template is found in the **Templates** section.

Refer to the **Index** for resources.

Investment of Funds Policy

An investment policy ensures that excess cash is conservatively invested to safeguard the neighborhood association's assets of funds. An investment policy outlines approved and prohibitive investment vehicles, ensures internal controls, and outlines advance approval of funds by a board of directors.

Template

A sample Investment of Funds Policy Template is found in the **Templates** section.

Loan Policy

A well-crafted loan policy should ensure that (1) loans cannot be taken out for the benefit of any volunteer leader, member, or other business loan or entity and (2) loans on behalf of the neighborhood association are subject to approval of the board of directors and are limited in scope. As a rule of thumb, it is recommended that neighborhood associations do not obtain loans. Rather, if funding is required the neighborhood association should develop strategies to raise funds through grants, donations, or sponsorships.

Template

A sample Loan Policy Template is found in the **Templates** section.

Social Media Policy

Social media is a powerful tool to increase neighborhood engagement. However, an online presence exposes the organization to liability for defamation and intellectual property infringement. Exposure can be minimized with a policy that includes identifying who has access to social media accounts and guidelines for posting and engagement.

Template

A sample Social Media Policy Template is found in the **Templates** section.

Technology Management Policy

Organizations are responsible for protecting access to all electronic information management systems, such as email marketing software, websites, online payment processing, social media accounts, email addresses, and shared filing systems. Additionally, organizations are responsible for protecting the information collected and shared via these accounts. A Technology Management Policy provides a framework for protecting confidential electronic information.

Template

A sample Technology Management Policy Template is found in the **Templates** section.

Refer to the **Index** for resources.

Whistleblower Policy

The Sarbanes-Oxley Act provides federal legal protection for whistle blowers. This Act prohibits retaliation against whistle blowers related to accounting and financial procedures. Although there is a federal law protecting whistle blowers from retaliation, it is important to have a board-approved policy. This sends a message of transparency to residents, businesses, and community partners.

A whistleblower policy should contain:

- A definition of reportable activities
- A mechanism for reporting complaints
- Protection from retaliation
- A method for complaint resolution

Template

A sample Whistleblower Policy Template is found in the **Templates** section.

Refer to the **Index** for resources.

Operations

Board Responsibilities

Neighborhood association leaders are responsible for the direction of the organization. The board of directors:

- Governs
- Develops policy
- Sets a course for the future
- Maintains focus on the mission and strategic goals
- Manages financial resources
- Avoids micro-managing committees and committee members

Core responsibilities include:

1. Determining and advancing the neighborhood association's mission and purpose
2. Ensuring effective organizational planning
3. Securing adequate resources (funds, time, volunteers, technology)
4. Resource and financial oversight
5. Determining, monitoring, and enhancing programs and services
6. Promoting the neighborhood's image
7. Upholding legal and ethical integrity and maintaining accountability
8. Assessing board performance
9. Recruiting new board members

The functions and responsibilities for each board position may be written in the bylaws and should be outlined in a leadership manual.

Practical Steps for Service

High performing boards are mission driven and resident focused. High performing boards:

- Are accountable to follow through on commitments
- Uphold the governing documents
- Envision success
- Work as a team, no individual agenda is more important than the whole
- Value relationships
- Focus on outcomes and impact

Board members should meet the following expectations for success:

- Study and understand the mission statement, bylaws, policies, and strategic plan. Make sure decisions support and align with these governing documents.
- Attend all board meetings
- Use the Board Report Template and Project/Budget Request Template to submit reports and requests to the board
- Prepare for meetings by reviewing the agenda and supporting documents
- Start and end meetings on time

- Understand parliamentary procedure
- Set reasonable expectations for self and others
- Ask key decision making questions to verify board action supports the mission statement and strategic goals
- Listen more, speak less
- Avoid micro-management
- Check personal and political agendas at the door
- Respect confidentiality
- Support board decisions once a vote is approved

Board Orientation

A board orientation should cover:

- **Governance**
    - Mission and history of the organization
    - Organizational chart and current board member contact information
    - Articles of Incorporation
    - bylaws
    - Policies and procedures
    - Current strategic plan
        - How the strategic plan is developed
        - How strategies are implemented
    - Annual budget
        - The budget process
        - How budget decisions are made
        - Financial goals

- **Operations**
    - Board roles and responsibilities
    - Committee structure, roles, and responsibilities
    - Detailed review of who is responsible for the organization's various activities
    - Board expectations
    - Meeting dates
    - How agendas are developed
    - How decisions are made

- **Risk management**
- **Communication tools**
- **Programs and events**

Annual orientations are recommended, and all board members—from new to seasoned—should attend. Training together creates opportunities for knowledge transfer and team building.

Use the Board Transition Checklist as a guide for the transition of specific leadership roles. As an example, an outgoing treasurer should meet with the incoming treasurer to review specific activities related to the financial management of the organization. The Board Transition Checklist provides a list of responsibilities to cover and document. It is the responsibility of outgoing board members to successfully transition responsibilities to incoming board members.

Refer to the **Index** for resources.

Template
Refer to the LBNA New Leader Welcome Kit, courtesy of the Lower Beaver Neighborhood Association, as an example of a board orientation.

Board Training

Board orientation focuses on the neighborhood association. Annual board training emphasizes leadership skills and best management practices for any nonprofit organization. Annual board training is the most effective tool in developing and maintaining high performing boards.

Neighborhood Leadership Workshops focus on the specific training needs of Des Moines' neighborhood associations. Workshops are offered throughout the year at no cost. Find the current calendar online, dsm.city/neighborhoodassociations.

Funding: When available, the Neighborhood Association Capacity Building Grant can be used to offset expenses related to board training.

Refer to the **Index** for additional training resources.

Evaluate Board Performance

Board self-evaluations are critical to measuring a board's effectiveness to lead. Effective self-evaluations identify areas for organizational improvement and remind board members of their roles and responsibilities. Annual board self-evaluations are another critical component for high performing boards. Reference the Neighborhood Association Wellness Assessment found in the **Templates** section. Contact neighborhoods@dmgov.org for assistance with this tool.

Committee Responsibilities

Committees are responsible for carrying out the direction of the neighborhood association. Committees do not have management authority except those delegated to them in the bylaws or by the board. Committees offer the highest opportunity for resident engagement.

Core responsibilities include:

1. Understanding the purpose and mission of the neighborhood association and the committee's role within the organization.
2. Completing the tasks to carry out projects/events.
3. Representing the perspective and diversity of all neighbors.
4. Meeting on a routine basis.
5. Developing a pipeline for future leadership.

The functions and responsibilities of each committee should be outlined in a leadership manual.

Committee vs. Task Force

The terms 'committee' and 'task force' are not interchangeable. This is an important note when seeking volunteers.

A committee performs a specific organizational function and is part of the larger governance process. Committees allow residents to take a deeper dive into volunteer service for the neighborhood association. Committee roles and responsibilities may be written in the bylaws and in a leadership manual.

A task force brings people together to solve a specific problem. It is short in duration and specific in focus. There is a clear beginning and an end. A task force allows residents to get involved, offer feedback, and accomplish a task quickly. The functions and responsibilities of a task force are not included in governing documents.

Meeting Attendance

It is important to routinely attend and participate in board meetings. Most neighborhood association boards are small. The absence of even one member can have a dramatic effect on a meeting. As an elected leader of the neighborhood association, you have the responsibility of setting the direction and policies for the organization. Much of this is discussed and approved during board meetings. Board meetings are an opportunity to develop valuable relationships with neighbors and learn more about the neighborhood to a degree that makes your investment of time and resources worthwhile.

It is recommended that board agendas, minutes of the last meeting, financial reports, and reports containing information for action are sent one week in advance of the meeting. Board members are encouraged to review information carefully before participating in the meeting and be prepared to provide information on any areas of responsibility to which they are assigned.

There will be times when you cannot be at meetings. In that event, please notify the president as soon as possible. An absence may affect quorum and lead to rescheduling the meeting. Ensure you comply with the neighborhood association's bylaws and understand your attendance requirements.

The Board Attendance Tracker is found in the **Templates** section.

Board Agenda Requests and Board Reports

To be as efficient and as effective as possible, board meetings are conducted using a set agenda. Prior to the meetings, the neighborhood association president should send an email requesting agenda items. Board members should respond at that time using one of two methods:

- Submitting a written report using the Board Report Template or
- Submitting a project or budget request using the Project/Budget Request Template

Written reports are updates on a specific project and identify if action is required. If action is required, an agenda item is created. If the written report is informational only, it may be included as a consent agenda item. Written reports do not require a verbal update during the meeting. If a board member has a new proposal for consideration, which includes unplanned actions or unbudgeted expenses, the Project/Budget Request Template should be used.

These procedures ensure:

- Important issues are part of the meeting
- Adequate time is devoted to discussion
- All board members are prepared for discussion
- Budget requests can be reviewed and researched by the treasurer in advance

A Board Report Template and Project/Budget Request Template are found in the **Templates** section.

Board Meeting Agenda Development

This section addresses best practices in board meeting agenda development; these best practices are for use when board meetings are separate from membership meetings.

A well-crafted board meeting agenda ensures meetings are as effective as possible. Refer to the Board Agenda Template as you read through this section.

1. **Logo**. Adding the neighborhood association's logo at the top of the agenda adds a heightened awareness to the professionalism of the organization.

2. **Mission**. Neighborhood associations are mission focused. Including the mission on the agenda is a visual reminder to keep conversations centered on the organization's mission.

3. **Date, time, and location**. Even if the meeting is consistently held on a particular date, time, and location pattern, a reminder is important—especially for newer board members and guests.

4. **Attendees and guests**. List the names and titles of board members, and names, titles, and organizations of guests.

5. **Call to Order and Welcome**. The call to order marks the time the meeting officially begins. A roll call should be taken to mark those present and absent at the beginning of the meeting. If a board member arrives after the call to order, their time of arrival should be noted in the meeting minutes.

   A welcome and icebreaker are essential; this allows board members to connect on a personal level and build relationships. Building trust and relationships are critical, especially during difficult conversations. Think of a new, fun icebreaker at the beginning of each meeting. You may be surprised at what you learn you have in common with your neighbors.

6. **Disclosure of Conflicts of Interest**. Refer to the Conflicts of Interest section and sample Conflicts of Interest Policy Template. A conflict of interest occurs when a person in a position of authority over an organization may benefit financially, either directly or indirectly, from a decision they may make in their leadership capacity. It is the responsibility of leaders to declare a conflict of interest and allow the board of directors to adhere to procedures of a conflict of interest policy. The opportunity to declare a conflict of interest should be offered at the beginning of every board meeting. All conflicts should be noted in the meeting minutes.

7. **Consent agenda**. A consent agenda allows the board to approve routine and non-controversial items in a single vote. Reports included in a consent agenda are not verbally reiterated. If an item in the consent agenda does require discussion, it can be moved from the consent agenda and added as an additional agenda item.

8. **Governance and operational items**. This includes a review of the finances and any issues that affect the operations of the neighborhood association. Governance and operational items set the stage for additional agenda items and ensure the business of the organization is addressed.

9. **Big picture discussion**. A big picture discussion is focused discussion about a trend or key challenge facing the neighborhood association. Remember, boards set the course for the future. Addressing what is ahead emphasizes this responsibility. Big picture discussions allow boards to address challenges before they escalate to a crisis or take advantage of opportunities. The ideal discussion length is 20 minutes. These discussions should take place toward the beginning of the meeting, before meeting fatigue sets in; discussion may spark ideas related to other agenda items.

10. **Strategic plan items** refer to board action required to move initiatives forward.

11. **Additional business** may include any items moved from the consent agenda, budget requests, or new discussion items for consideration at future meetings. This is not a time to surprise other board members with project or funding requests. Informing board members of future requests is appropriate; surprise requests are not.

12. **Old business** is not included on the Board Agenda Template. Relevant updates should be included in the consent agenda or strategic plan/action updates. Old business should not be used as an opportunity to rehash decisions previously made by the board.

13. **Next steps**. As a best practice, summarize the action items, person(s) responsible, and timeline at the end of each meeting. This keeps board members on the same page as the meeting adjourns.

14. **Adjourn**. Don't forget to officially end the meeting. A motion, second, and vote are required to adjourn. The time of adjournment should be documented in the minutes.

15. **Timed discussion**. The Board Agenda Template does list estimated time frames for discussion. Inclusion of times sets the expectation for the pace of the meeting, how much time is allotted for discussion, and helps to ensure the meeting is facilitated so that it ends on time.

A Board Agenda Template is found in the **Templates** section.

Watch the **"Board Meeting Agenda Development" video** in the Neighborhood Training Library.

Board Minutes and Action Items

Refer to the Board Minutes and Action Items **Template** as you read through this section. Additionally, review the Board Agenda Template next to the Board Minutes and Action Items Template to better visualize how the agenda and minutes mirror each other.

Board minutes are an official record of the decisions made during the board meeting. Board minutes document the organization's history and are required to be kept as part of the organization's permanent files. Minutes should be stored in a shared drive (read the section on Organizational Filing Structure) or accounted for during leadership transitions (review the board Transition Checklist).

The following should be captured in board minutes:

- Date, time, and location of the meeting
- List of board members and guests present and list of board members absent
- The time the meeting is called to order and the time the meeting is adjourned
- A declaration of conflicts of interest
- The introduction of agenda items
- Voting on agenda items
- Status updates

The following items are not reflected in meeting minutes:

- Verbatim conversation and in-depth discussion of agenda items
- Comments made about any person or business. A good rule of thumb is to avoid slanderous conversations altogether. This protects the organization and board members against defamation and libel claims. Read more about this in the Risk Management section.

While not required, it is helpful to include a summary of action items as a supplement to the minutes. Action items hold board members accountable to tasks and timelines, while ensuring the work of the neighborhood association remains mission focused and strategic.

As a best practice, minutes and action items should be distributed within one week of the board meeting. This serves as a reminder of the board's decisions while conversations are relatively fresh, and allows board members time to complete their agreed-upon tasks.

A Board Meeting Minutes and Action Items template is found in the **Templates** section.

Watch the **"Meeting Minutes and Action Items" video** in the Neighborhood Training Library.

Parliamentary Procedure

Parliamentary procedure is a set of rules used to conduct business at meetings. Use of parliamentary procedure allows everyone to hear and understand information to make decisions without confusion or hearsay. Roberts Rules of Order is a manual of parliamentary procedure; it is known as the foremost guide to parliamentary procedure.

Using parliamentary procedure does not need to be complicated, however, all board members should have a basic understanding of its guiding principles.

The basics include:

- **Setting an agenda** ensures that important business is covered and discussions are on topic. Refer to the section on Board Meeting Agenda Development and Membership Meeting Agenda Development for best practices.
- **Motions** are proposals for action.
- A **Second** is required for the motion to be discussed. Without a second, a motion will not be considered.
- **Amendments** may be made to a motion if they improve the intent or clarify the original motion.
- **Discussion** of the motion follows before a vote.
- **Tabling** lays the motion aside. This may be used to temporarily postpone consideration of an issue.
- **Calling the Question** refers to ending the discussion and voting on the motion.
- **Voting** is the official action to adopt, amend, table, or stop the motion. Voting may include voice ("all those in favor say 'aye"), roll call, show of hands, or ballot.
- **Minutes** protect the organization by recording the time and location of the meeting, participants, and the outcome of the motions. Minutes are not a place to record conversations. Refer to the section on Board Minutes and Action Items for best practices.
- **Quorum** is the number of board members required to conduct business. Refer to the neighborhood association's bylaws for quorum requirements.

Adapted from *ABC's of Parliamentary Procedure*.

Refer to the **Index** for resources.

Watch the **"Parliamentary Procedure" video** in the Neighborhood Training Library.

Decision Making

Ideas and energy flow at every meeting. Neighborhood associations have limited resources and need to ensure wise investment of resources for maximum impact, engagement, and mission alignment. Each idea should be evaluated against the neighborhood association's mission, strategic plan, and the resources (time and money) available and required for implementation.

How do you decide which ideas to pursue and which to table? Ask these core questions:

1. Does the idea support the mission of the neighborhood association?
2. Does the idea support the strategic plan of the neighborhood association?
3. Does the idea have a strong impact on the neighborhood?
4. Does the organization have the resources (people and financial) to develop and follow through on the idea?

If the answer is yes to all four questions, the idea hits the 'sweet spot' for the neighborhood association and the board should proceed to strategy development.

Watch the **"Decision Making: Saying 'Yes' and 'No' to Good Ideas" video** in the Neighborhood Training Library.

Board Transitions and Organizational Filing Structure

Board transitions can create disruption in the operations of a neighborhood association. The use of the customizable Board Transition Checklist removes some of the stress of transition and helps ensure a smooth transfer of critical files. Use the Board Transition Checklist to identify documents and tasks that need to be transferred to a new board member, and to set expectations on deadlines and accountability.

Bonus Idea: Use the Board Transition Checklist to set up a filing structure for the neighborhood association!

Many neighborhood associations are shifting to Google Drive as a shared space among board members. Creating a centralized resource creates consistency in the management of the organization and reduces the likelihood that the key organizational files are lost when leadership changes. Use the Board Transition Checklist to help organize a filing structure. Using Google Drive as an example:

1. Create a folder named Permanent Administrative Documents. Within this folder, create a sub-folder named Articles of Incorporation. Upload the neighborhood association's Articles of Incorporation here.
2. Looking at the Board Transition Checklist, use the documents named under Permanent/Administrative to create additional sub-folders.
3. Continue this for each section outlined on the Board Transition Checklist.

Board transitions then become a process of granting new board members access to a shared drive and providing an orientation on how to find, use, and create files within the existing structure.

A Board Transition Checklist is found in the **Templates** section.

Watch the **"Board Transitions" video** in the Neighborhood Training Library.

Financial Management

Employer Identification Number (EIN)

Applying for an Employer Identification Number (EIN), also known as a Federal Tax Identification Number, is a free service offered by the Internal Revenue Service (IRS). Even though the neighborhood association is not an employer, an EIN is needed. An EIN allows neighborhood associations the ability to:

- **Open a bank account.** Most banks require an EIN number to open a bank account in the name of the neighborhood association. With stricter banking requirements, an EIN requirement is becoming a common practice
- **Apply for 501(c)3 tax-exempt status.** An EIN number is required to apply for a 501(c)3 tax-exempt status
- **File taxes.** An EIN number is required when filing a nonprofit tax return
- **Receive the Neighborhood Association Capacity Building Grant** offered by the City of Des Moines (when available)

How to Apply for an Employer Identification Number:

1. Ensure you have a copy of the Articles of Incorporation Certification.
2. Apply online, https://www.irs.gov/businesses/small-businesses-self-employed/apply-for-an-employer-identification-number-ein-online.
3. Or, download form SS-4, https://www.irs.gov/pub/irs-pdf/fss4.pdf and apply by mail.
4. Apply as a Non-Profit/Tax-Exempt Organization and select Banking purpose for reason for applying.
5. Save a copy of the submitted application.
6. Ensure a copy of the EIN is saved in the organization's permanent files. The EIN should be kept for the lifetime of the organization.

Lost or Misplaced Employer Identification Number

If the neighborhood association's EIN is lost or misplaced, follow these instructions from the IRS, https://www.irs.gov/businesses/small-businesses-self-employed/lost-or-misplaced-your-ein.

Refer to the **Index** for resources.

Bank Accounts

After receiving an Employer Identification Number (EIN), a bank account can be established in the name of the neighborhood association. A board of directors must approve the establishment of any account and authorize the signatories. This is accomplished through a Corporate Resolution.

The board of directors must vote to approve the Corporate Resolution. Clearly identify in the meeting minutes the approval of the Corporate Resolution. Here is an example of how the meeting minutes may read:

> It was moved to approve a Corporate Resolution certifying that [Name], [Name] Neighborhood Association Secretary, is duly authorized to open a bank account for the [Name] Neighborhood Association at [Insert Bank Name] and that [List Authorized Signers] are authorized to draw, sign, accept, endorse, or make checks or other orders for the payment of money, access online banking for the Corporation, and make changes in names of individuals in the designated positions of Authorized Officials. The motion was seconded. There was a call for discussion. All in favor. Motion carried.

A completed Corporate Resolution and a copy of the meeting minutes approving the Corporate Resolution must be returned to the financial institution. Ensure any additional documents are returned as required by the financial institution.

The neighborhood association should follow best practices for ensuring the integrity of financial accounts. This includes:

- A minimum of two (2) signatories on any financial institution account
- The person who writes checks is different from the person who signs checks
- All bank accounts are routinely reconciled
- Financial reports are provided at each board and membership meeting
- Establishment of a Finance Committee which shall assure that internal controls are implemented, monitored, and followed to protect the assets of the association. A Finance Committee assures segregation of duties.

Templates

There are several options when developing a Corporate Resolution for board approval.

1. Financial institution. Ask the financial institution for a sample Corporate Resolution.
2. Larned A. Waterman Iowa Nonprofit Resource Center offers templates and education assistance, https://inrc.law.uiowa.edu/our-services
3. Reference the customizable Corporate Resolution Template found in the **Templates** section.

Board Responsibilities: Financial Oversight

The Duty of Care requires leaders to use reasonable care and good judgment in making decisions on behalf of the neighborhood association. (Read the Risk Management section to learn more about the Duty of Care). Reading, reviewing, and asking questions about the organization's finances are critical aspects to a board of directors fulfilling its fiduciary responsibility.

The following sections provide basic information to help board members meet their responsibilities.

Refer to the **Index** for resources.

Basic Accounting Terminology

Assets are resources owned by the neighborhood association. Assets include the balance in the bank account, certificates of deposit (CDs), accounts receivable, and inventory such as supplies for events, t-shirts, and gift cards for giveaways.

Budget supports the mission of the neighborhood association and its strategic plan. The organization's priorities are accounted for in the budget.

Cash basis accounting is a system that recognizes revenue and expenses as they are received and paid. Transactions are recognized as they occur. Cash basis accounting does not use mechanisms such as accounts payable and accounts receivable. Cash basis accounting is the most commonly used accounting system by Des Moines neighborhood associations.

Cash flow is the amount of cash available to the neighborhood association for operations.

Expenses are the costs involved to run the neighborhood association.

Fiscal year is a 12-month period used for accounting. A fiscal year may be calendar year (January 1–December 31) or fall within a different 12-month time frame, such as July 1–June 30 or in alignment with the neighborhood association's annual meeting. The fiscal year should be noted in the organization's bylaws. Refer to the bylaws template in the **Templates** section to see an example.

General and administrative expenses are necessary expenses to support the neighborhood association. Examples include: a website, PO Box, banking fees, and marketing software.

General ledger shows each transaction. This is like a checkbook ledger. It shows the date, description, and debit or credit for each transaction.

Generally Accepted Accounting Principles (GAAP) are the rules and guidelines that govern the accounting profession. You may hear this term when speaking with an accounting professional.

Liabilities are financial obligations that have not been paid, such as an invoice received but not paid.

Revenue is the income/contributions received to run the neighborhood association.

Statement of Activities show the revenue, expenses, and gains/losses in all areas of the organization.

Statement of Financial Position shows the neighborhood association's assets, liabilities, and equity at a given point in time. A balance sheet is assets – liabilities = equity.

Budgeting

The annual budget reflects the priorities of the neighborhood association's strategic plan. Following are some budgeting basics.

1. **Set a calendar.** Determine when the budget will need to be approved and work backwards from there. Include time for board discussions, to research real numbers for budget items, and for budget revisions. It can take two to three months to build a budget.

2. **Review the strategic plan and prioritize goals.** If the organization does not prioritize strategic goals, they will not be accomplished. Determine which goal(s) will be prioritized; build the priorities within the budget.

3. **Develop a draft.** There are four keys in developing the draft budget:

    a. **Forecast** current year-end projections. The board will need to understand the outcome of the current fiscal year.

    b. **Use real numbers.** Do not estimate expenses, especially during a time where operational costs are increasing due to inflation. Reach out to vendors/suppliers and work to collect updated costs. Board members should assist in this process. For example, if a board member oversees newsletter printing and distribution, ask them to contact the printer and USPS for updated costs.

    c. **Don't cut budget items.** The draft should collect all the data. Do not try to cut expenses or programs. That is a full board discussion. Simply collect all updated revenue and expense information.

    d. **Notes.** Show your work. The use of a notes column in the budget will help board members remember what the budget line item supports and how the budget number was created. It creates continuity for future board leaders.

4. **Review the budget.** Once the draft is created, hold a board meeting to review the budget. During this step, the board should work together to realign the budget and strategic priorities and make determinations about increases or decreases in income or expenditures. This is an open dialog, and each board member should participate in the process. Too often it is easy to defer to the treasurer. The treasurer leads the process but does not hold the authority to determine the organization's priorities or how funds are used. This is the role of the full board.

    Following the initial review, the treasurer should update the proposed budget and present revisions at the next board meeting. This process continues until there is consensus on the proposed budget.

5. **Approve the budget** in accordance with the neighborhood association's bylaws and policies.

6. **Review the budget throughout the year and adjust accordingly.** It is recommended the budget is reviewed by the board on a quarterly basis. If income and/or expenses were not as expected, the board should amend the budget and account for changes. Do not wait until year-end to navigate budget shortfalls or to realize missed opportunities.

Template
Reference the customizable Budget Template found in the **Templates** section.

Bonus Idea: Use the Budget Template as a checklist of budget line items for neighborhood associations.

Download the **Financial Management Handout** (under the Neighborhood Training Library tab) to learn more.

Membership Dues

The decision to charge membership dues is at the discretion of each neighborhood association. Some neighborhood associations charge dues to offset the expenses of running the association. Others rely solely on donations, grants, advertising, sponsorships, and other fundraising efforts to pay for expenses. Each board should thoughtfully consider its best approach to ensure the financial stability and longevity of the neighborhood association while ensuring resident engagement.

Refer to the Financial Management and Grant Writing sections of this Toolkit to learn more about budgeting and grant opportunities.

Resource
Reference the Neighborhood Association Membership Dues Information in the **Templates** section for data on which neighborhood associations charge membership dues, dues amounts, and membership categories.

Budget Requests

Throughout the year, budget requests may be brought to the board for consideration. The board should develop a process for accepting, reviewing, and approving budget requests. Use of the Project/Budget Request Template provides a systematic approach to collecting information and considering budget requests.

Template
Reference the customizable Project/Budget Request Template found in the **Templates** section.

Finance Committee

A Finance Committee ensures transparency and financial oversight for the neighborhood association.

A Finance Committee:

- Consists of three (3) to five (5) members. Members may include board members, past presidents, and members of the neighborhood association.
- Reviews the organization's financial policies and makes recommendations for improvement.
- Develops the annual budget.
- Presents financial reports.
- Develops long-term financial goals.
- Audits the financials annually.

Financial Management and Internal Controls

A board of directors has a fiduciary duty to safeguard the organization's assets and ensure all assets support the organization's mission. A financial management and internal controls policy is a board's guide to financial management. Read the Financial Management and Internal Controls Policy found in the **Policies** section of the Toolkit. A policy template and resources are included.

Financial Reports: Questions Board Members Should Ask

1. Does the budget support the strategic plan?
2. Are the financial reports timely, complete, and easy to understand?
3. Are expenditures in line with the approved budget?
4. Does the board need to make any budget or program modifications?
5. Is grant funding spent in accordance with grant guidelines?
6. What income and expense items are increasing/decreasing? What are the reasons?
7. Does the organization have financial reserves?

Tax Returns

The City of Des Moines does not provide legal advice. Consulting with CPAs experienced with nonprofit organizations is recommended for questions about nonprofit tax returns.

Download the Taxes Handout (under the Neighborhood Training Library tab) to learn more.

Risk Management

The following are best practices that every neighborhood association can employ to mitigate risk for the organization.

Legal Principles of Management
There are three legal principles that are the organization's first line of defense in risk management.

1. **Duty of Care** requires leaders to use reasonable care and good judgment in making decisions on behalf of the neighborhood association.

   Ask: *Is this the best possible decision for the neighborhood association?*

2. **Duty of Loyalty** requires leaders to be faithful to the neighborhood association, avoiding conflicts of interest.

   Ask: *Does this decision benefit my workplace/business or other board service more than it benefits members of the neighborhood association?*

   Ask: *Do I have a financial interest (real or perceived) in the outcome of this decision?*

If the answer is 'yes,' there is a duty to disclose the conflict(s) of interest. Reference the Policy section to learn more about managing conflicts of interest.

3. **Duty of Obedience** requires leaders to comply with the neighborhood association's governing documents. Governing documents include mission statement, Articles of Incorporation, Neighborhood Recognition Policy, bylaws, and policies and procedures. Read the section on Governance to learn more about the purpose of each of the governing documents.

   Ask: *Does this decision fall within the scope of the neighborhood association's governing documents?*

Incorporation

Incorporation in the State of Iowa provides limited volunteer indemnity and offers certain protection to volunteer leaders. An incorporated association can be sued in its corporate name. An unincorporated association can be sued in the names of board members. Incorporation allows for a separation between volunteer leaders acting in good faith and the neighborhood association.

Further, the maximum liability of an incorporated association for contract claims, personal injury, or property damage are generally limited to the amount of assets in the association. Read more on Articles of Incorporation to learn about the benefits of incorporation.

Insurance

There are a variety of insurance options for neighborhood associations and leaders.

Personal Insurance

Check with your agent to see if your homeowners/renters insurance/umbrella policy offers board service coverage.

Professional Liability (Directors and Officers Insurance)

Professional liability, also known as directors and officers or D&O insurance, protects against damages from claims resulting from negligent or wrongful acts in the course of the duties carried out by directors, officers, and volunteers. Coverage also covers expenses incurred in defending lawsuits arising from alleged wrongful acts of officers or directors.

> *Example of Use*: A neighborhood association member states the board of directors did not follow its bylaws during a recent election; the member files a claim against the board of directors stating that they were excluded from voting. A professional liability insurance policy would be used to cover the legal expenses incurred in defending against the claim.

General Liability Insurance

General Liability insurance provides coverage for bodily injury or property damage that could occur at a neighborhood event.

> *Example of Use:* The neighborhood association is hosting a summer picnic and rented a tent to seat people at picnic tables. A large gust of wind blows the tent over and hits a car in the parking lot causing damage. A general liability insurance policy would cover property damage. The tent also injures a person. A general liability insurance policy could cover personal injury.

Events Cancellation

Insurance protects events from a loss of revenue or committed expenses due to cancellation, interruption, or postponement of an event.

> *Example of Use:* The neighborhood association planned its annual fall festival, complete with rented activities and a caterer providing hamburgers, hot dogs, and treats. Des Moines is surprised with an October blizzard which cancels the event. The neighborhood association still owes the contracted vendor fees. An events cancellation policy would cover the expenses incurred.

When available, the **Neighborhood Capacity Building Grant** can be used for insurance premiums. Contact an insurance agent for details.

Chose Your Words

Do not engage in slanderous conversations. As the adage goes, if you don't have anything nice to say, don't say it at all! Repeating hearsay, even if you believe it to be fact, can land a volunteer and the neighborhood association in legal trouble. At all times, demonstrate by word and action the highest level of conduct.

Contracts

Do not contract or enter into real or perceived legally binding obligations on behalf of the board of directors. Do not make commitments outside of the board of directors approval.

The neighborhood association should adopt a policy regarding contract review and signature. All contracts should be approved by the full board of directors, with approval noted in the meeting minutes, prior to signature. The neighborhood association may seek legal counsel to review contracts prior to signature.

Download the **Risk Management and Insurance Handout** (under the Neighborhood Training Library tab) to learn more.

Communications

The Golden Rules of Communication

1. **Consistency is key.** If residents know when to expect to hear from the neighborhood association, they are more likely to pay attention. For example, a newsletter sent the 3rd week of the month should be sent at the same time for the coming months. Or, social media posts should be made on the same day of the week.

2. **Say something important or interesting.** The communications schedule depends on how often there are updates and new information. Don't send a weekly message if there is nothing new to share. The frequency of your communications (weekly, bi-weekly, or monthly) should be dictated by the amount of new information to share.

3. **Communicate with clarity.**

    a. **Tone:** Use a conversational tone when informing residents of activities and use a persuasive tone when making a call to action.
    b. **Voice:** An active voice is clear and concise. An active voice means that the subject of a sentence performs an action. For example: write "The board approved a $5 reduction in membership fees," instead of "A $5 reduction in membership fees was approved by the board."
    c. **Simple sentences:** Consider the diversity in readership. Short, direct sentences and paragraphs are easier to understand. Long, complex messages are skipped.
    d. **Inclusive language:** Practice the principles of inclusive language. Download the *Inclusive Language Guide* from the American Psychological Association's website, https://www.apa.org/about/apa/equity-diversity-inclusion/language-guidelines.
    e. **Address one idea or issue at a time:** State the issue (1 sentence), relevance to the neighborhood (1–2 sentences), what problem is solved or created (1–2 sentences), and conclusion or call to action (1–2 sentences).

4. **Engage, connect, and build relationships.** Don't talk *at* neighbors; create a conversation *with* them. Encourage everyone to share ideas, stories, or give feedback. Tag and mention the neighborhood association on social media. Maintain a two-way conversation.

5. **Communication supports operations.** A mailer, website, or social media presence alone will not grow the organization. Growth and capacity building occurs when the organization provides valuable and unique connections and resources. Communication brings awareness to programs.

Print Communication

Print communication is an incredibly valuable tool, and it bridges the gap between the awareness of the neighborhood association and its digital presence.

Receipt of a printed postcard or newsletter notifies new residents of the existence of a neighborhood association and reminds long-time residents of upcoming meetings. Flyers or posters hung in a conspicuous place can be eye-catching. Yard signs serve as a reminder of upcoming meetings.

There are a variety of print options and cost saving tips to meet every budget.

Postcards

Cost Saving Tip:

- Send one postcard annually using the Every Door Direct Mail® program and list all meeting dates, times, and locations, and website and social media information.
- Consider a smaller postcard (4x6) to lower postage costs.

Newsletters

Cost Saving Tip:

- Solicit advertising from area businesses to offset printing and distribution costs.
- Work with a local printer to determine the most cost-effective layout and print options. For example, is printing on the front and back of an 11x17 sheet of paper and folding a cost-effective option?
- Mail using the Every Door Direct Mail® program or, if the neighborhood association is a 501(c)3 tax-exempt organization, inquire with the United States Postal Service for nonprofit postage rates.
- Instead of mailing, elect block captains to hand deliver newsletters.

  Note: postal regulations prohibit delivering mailable matter not bearing postage to a mailbox. USPS regulations do not govern what can be placed in a mail slot or at a front door. (Source: USPS).

Flyers or Posters

Reminder

- Ask area businesses for permission prior to hanging flyers or posters.

Business Cards

How to Use:

- Provide business cards with the neighborhood association's contact information to board and committee members. These highly engaged leaders can hand out business cards when talking with neighbors.



Watrous South Neighborhood Association orders business cards from Vista Print.

Door Hangers

How to Use:

- Elect block captains to hang door hangers on each door.

Yard Signs

How to Use:

- With permission, place yard signs in board and member yards to remind residents of upcoming events.
  Note: City of Des Moines' Zoning Ordinance prohibits signs placed in the Right-Of-Way. Ensure the neighborhood complies with the City's Zoning Ordinance.



The Watrous Heights Neighborhood Association posts yard signs at the entrance to meetings. Photo courtesy of the Watrous Heights Neighborhood Association.

PRINTING AND MAILING RESOURCES

Print Communication Handout

Download the **Print Communications Handout**, found in the Neighborhood Training Library, for design, printing, and distribution options from Des Moines neighborhood associations. The handout included detailed examples to replicate and resources for all neighborhoods.

Canva

Canva is a user-friendly graphic design platform that allows users to create a wide range of visual content, including postcards, newsletters, flyers, business cards, door hangers, and social media posts. It offers a drag-and-drop interface, customizable templates, and a vast library of images, fonts, and design elements, making it accessible for both beginners and professionals. Nonprofit organizations, such as neighborhood associations, can access Canva for free. Visit www.canva.com

The Drake Neighborhood Association developed a series of Canva templates which are available to Des Moines neighborhood associations. Contact Neighborhoods@dmgov.org to request access or to provide additional templates to share.

Every Door Direct Mail ®

The United States Postal Service offers the Every Door Direct Mail® program. This service allows the neighborhood association to send flyers, postcards, and other flat mail up to 3.3 ounces at a reduced rate to every mailing address within the neighborhood's boundaries. Address information is not needed; mail routes are selected in the mailing process.

Use the USPS online tool at or visit your local post office for information and assistance.

Polk County Print Shop

The Polk County Print Shop works with neighborhood associations on print needs.

Capitol Park Neighborhood Association shares instructions for contacting the Polk County Print Shop:

Contact

(515) 286-3217
printshop@polkcountyiowa.gov

Link to Printing Request Form

https://support.polkcountyiowa.gov/support/home

- Click on Sign Up in the upper right hand corner.
- Follow the prompts to set up an account.
- Once logged in, click IT Service Request then click Print Shop Requests.
- Any field with an * are required fields.

Process

- Allow at least two (2) weeks lead time for printing; three (3) weeks lead is preferred.
- Submit the printing request and upload a completed design in a Microsoft Publisher, Microsoft Word, or PDF file type. The print shop does not provide design services.
- If using the Every Door Direct® Mailer program, let the Print Shop know the specific mail routes with your request. They will bundle mailers for the routes.
- You will receive a quote before printing.
- You will be contacted when the job is ready to pick up.
- To pick up:
  - Make a check payable to **Polk County Treasurer** and bring it with you to pick up.
  - Pickup is in the basement parking lot. Enter the Polk County Admin building via the delivery bay door, which is accessed from the west side of the building on 2nd Avenue. **Traffic through this lot is one way.** To enter, you will ring the Print Shop and they will open the bay door for you.
  - Once in the underground parking lot, you will see a ramp and a doorway leading into a hallway that connects to the Print Shop.
  - After picking up your print job, exit the building via the bay door on the east side of the building that connects to Water St.



Websites

A website does not need to be complicated to create or manage. First, leadership should determine how the website will be used. In this process, remember that just because a feature is optional does not mean that it is best for your needs or that it will be used.

Carefully consider:

- Is the website informational only, providing a space to promote the purpose of the organization and upcoming meetings and events? If you answer yes, many basic plans and templates will meet this purpose.
- Do you want email addresses for association leaders to be hosted as part of the package? Or does your current way of managing email addresses work?
- Will the website be used to allow members to join, renew membership dues, or register for social events online? If so, consider websites that allow for e-commerce and registration components.
- Do you want to post videos? Look for plans that allow video hosting and storage.
- Is an integrated marketing program high on your wish list? Then look for a program that allows you to send emails and newsletters through the website.

Once you identify and prioritize needs, begin to research the best options. Choose a platform and package that can grow with the neighborhood association over time.

Below are easy-to-use platforms that offer a variety of options that include templates, e-commerce and marketing add-ons, and customer support.

Platform	Plan Options Begin At*	Information
Weebly	$0	www.weebly.com
Webador	$3	www.webador.com
Blue Host	$4.99	www.bluehost.com
IONOS	$6	www.ionos.com
Go Daddy	$10.99	www.godaddy.com
SquareSpace	$16	www.squarespace.com
Wix	$17	www.wix.com
MailChimp	$20	www.mailchimp.com
Network Solutions	$21.99	www.networksolutions.com
Wild Apricot	$63	www.wildapricot.com

**Pricing accurate as of most recent Toolkit Update. Always check online for updated pricing.*

Brook Run Neighborhood Association shares additional website considerations:

- A custom domain fee is $20–40 annually.
- Save money by paying webhosting fees yearly instead of monthly.
- Use a professional logo that is simple, colorful, and recognizable.
- Find a web designer. Ask for volunteers in your neighborhood, reach out to the high school and offer silver cord hours, or pay a contractor.
- Get a free email address (eg, Gmail) or use an add-on from the web hosting service.
- Keep the website up to date and ensure content is accurate and fresh.

- Use photos and include a photo gallery of past events.
- Consider valuable add-ons: PayPal, Square, Zeffy, Venmo, CashApp, or Apply Pay
- Include an Events page
- Additional pages may include the About Us, Board Members, Community News, Meeting Minutes, and Contact Us
- Monitor web stats to find out the most popular pages

Email Campaigns

Email communication compliments print communication and social media. Often, individuals are willing to give out an email address more than any other form of contact. Like websites, email does not need to be complicated to create or manage. In addition to following the Golden Rules of Communication, email lists should be kept up to date and offer subscribers an opportunity to opt out.

Some website platforms offer email marketing add-ons. This can be a powerful way to manage both a website and email marketing with one vendor. Additionally, some programs provide analytics and insight into messages sent by email. For example, analytics can provide the date and time emails are most likely to be opened and read. This allows leaders to pinpoint the best time to send important messages, such as calls for volunteers or upcoming meeting notices.

Constant Contact offers nonprofit discounts and plans starting at $12/month.
https://www.constantcontact.com/

Mail Chimp offers plans starting at no cost.
https://mailchimp.com/

HubSpot offers plans starting at no cost.
https://hubspot.com/

Social Media

If social media is part of the neighborhood association's outreach strategy, don't be intimidated by the various social media platforms available. Not every platform will be useful to your neighborhood association. If the neighborhood isn't on social media, consider asking residents which social media platforms they currently use or start with these platforms:

Facebook: Create a group for neighborhood residents, helping to create a more personalized connection.

Instagram: Instagram has unique traits, including the most visual format (when compared to other social media platforms), appeal to a diverse, younger audience, and offers engaging stories and reels. Use it for storytellling and showcasing neighborhood events.

X (formerly known as Twitter): This platform is made for news, so use it for updates, news of the area, and other quick snippets of information.

Nextdoor: This platform is made for neighborhoods. Neighborhood association leaders can see what residents are talking about and post neighborhood news.

Download the **Social Media Handout** (under the Neighborhood Training Library tab) to learn more.

Engagement

Engaging Membership Meetings

Membership meetings are where the action happens! Following are tips to set the tone for engagement and participation.

- **Survey residents** within the neighborhood association's boundaries to determine the best day of the week and time of day to hold meetings. It is hard to balance the needs of everyone, however, asking the question is the first step toward broader engagement. See the section about **Resident Surveys** for more information.

- **Ensure the meeting schedule is consistent.** For example, if the meeting is the first Tuesday of every March, June, September, and December at 6:00 p.m., ensure the schedule remains consistent. Changing the meeting patterns leads to confusion and disengagement.

- Meetings should **begin—and end—on time.** Meetings should not run over time. If meetings are known to run over time, fewer residents will attend.

- **Distribute an agenda in advance,** either through the website, social media, email, or mail. Let residents know the purpose of the meeting, what to expect, and how to prepare.

- **Always remind** residents of the date, time, and location for the next meeting.

- **Create a welcoming atmosphere** to ensure residents return to meetings. Consider asking a volunteer to stand at the door and welcome everyone as they arrive. If the volunteer recognizes that someone is new, provide direction on how to sign-in, where to sit, and restroom location. Further, facilitate an introduction and immediately help them connect with neighbors.

  Several of Des Moines' neighborhood associations ask board members to wear neighborhood shirts. This helps new attendees quickly identify whom to ask for questions.

  When residents leave with a sense of belonging, they are more likely to return to meetings and volunteer for future activities. Each interaction must be a positive one.

Membership Meeting Agenda Development

To be as efficient and effective as possible, membership meetings—like board meetings—are conducted using a set agenda and parliamentary procedure.

A well-crafted agenda ensures that residents are apprised of current board discussions and strategic activities and offers ample engagement opportunities with neighbors and guest speakers. Below are a few tips and best practices picked up from Des Moines' neighborhood associations.

Refer to the Membership Meeting Agenda **Template** as you read through this section.

- **Logo.** Adding the neighborhood association's logo at the top of the agenda adds a heightened awareness to the professionalism of the organization.

- **Mission Statement.** Neighborhood associations are mission driven, resident focused. Including the mission statement on the agenda is a visual reminder to keep conversations centered on the organization's mission.

- **Date, time, and location.** Even if the meeting is consistently held on a particular date, time, and location pattern, a reminder is important—especially for new attendees.

- **Guests.** List the names, titles, and organizations of guests.

- **Welcome and Introductions.** Following a call to order, the next item on the agenda should be a welcome of all attendees. Have an ice-breaker question ready and ask attendees to introduce themselves, share where they live (if comfortable), and answer the ice breaker. For example, what is your favorite hidden gem in the neighborhood and why? This is time well-spent, as new attendees feel welcomed and all attendees feel more connected to their neighbors.

- **Business Profile.** Invite one local business to the meeting and offer an opportunity to introduce its service(s) to the community. This isn't a sales pitch or an endorsement; it is a great opportunity to build connections between businesses and residents. Read the next page to learn more.

- **Elected Officials:** Neighborhood association meetings are tangible connection points between residents and elected officials. This is an opportunity for residents to hear updates and voice concerns. It is important that neighborhood associations facilitate this opportunity effectively. Remember, often there are several neighborhood association meetings in one night and elected officials try to attend them all. When an elected official arrives at the neighborhood meeting, it is appropriate to conclude the current conversation, introduce the elected official and allow them time on the floor, and then pick up with the next agenda item.

- **City Reports**
  - Neighborhood Officer
  - Neighborhood Inspector
  - Parks and Recreation Liaison
  - Any additional City guests

- **Guest Speaker or Program.** Consider an engaging speaker or program that impacts the neighborhood. For speaker ideas, reference the document named **Potential Speakers for Neighborhood Association Meetings** found in the **Templates** section.
- **Neighborhood Association Business**
    - Approval of previous meeting minutes
    - President's Report
    - Treasurer's Report
    - Committee Reports and Event Updates as applicable
    - Call for volunteers
- **Neighborhood Celebrations.** End on a positive note. What are good things happening around the neighborhood that need celebrated?

A sample Membership Meeting Agenda is found in the **Templates** section.

Watch the **"Membership Meeting Agenda Development" video** in the Neighborhood Training Library.

IDEAS IN ACTION

Merle Hay Neighborhood Association Features Local Businesses at Membership Meetings

The Merle Hay Neighborhood Association has a simple—and effective—approach at their quarterly neighborhood meetings. Following the Call to Order, the next agenda item is the Neighborhood Business Spotlight. Here, the neighborhood association invites one local business to give an elevator speech and introduce their services to the community.

Does your neighborhood association engage with local businesses? If so, email Neighborhoods@dmgov.org and share your strategies. Real-world examples will be included in future Toolkit updates.

Meeting Frequency and Length

Recommendation: Avoid Monday meetings that conflict with City Council meetings.

Meeting frequency depends on the needs and activities of the neighborhood association. A resident survey will gauge preferences. Using Des Moines' neighborhood associations as a benchmark, meetings with the highest attendance rates are held quarterly.

Frequency	Pros	Cons
Quarterly	Meetings are seen as a 'don't miss,' since they are held every three months. This results in higher attendance rates.	Meetings may be longer (1.5 hours) to fully conduct business.
Bi-Monthly (every two months)	Meetings may be elevated as a priority as they are held every two months.	Meetings may be less impactful if there is not a continuous stream of new business or topics of interest.
Monthly	Those with robust strategic priorities may benefit from more frequent touch points.	It's easy to skip a meeting since there is another one the next month. Often, many months can be skipped consecutively which leads to disengagement.

It's recommended that meetings are one hour, or 1.5 hours maximum. Neighborhood associations are competing for the time and talent of residents. Meeting fatigue sets in at the one-hour mark; it is demonstrated that engagement wanes and residents start to 'slip out' to attend to other evening responsibilities. A well-crafted and facilitated agenda leads to a timely adjournment. If meetings are expected to be longer, it is wise to communicate with residents of the time upfront.

Remote Meetings

In 2021, in response to COVID-19, the Revised Iowa Nonprofit Corporation Act was amended to prescribe how members can participate in remote meetings. The sample bylaws Template illustrates how to update the neighborhood association's bylaws to include remote meeting participation. Refer to Article V Section 4 for guidance within the template.

The same principles of agenda development, parliamentary procedure, and meeting protocol apply to remote meetings. A good rule of thumb is to treat remote meetings with the same level of professionalism and courtesy as in-person meetings.

Here are best practices for remote meetings:

- **Test technology before the meeting.**
  - Ensure the meeting host understands how to use the technology. This may require a few practice sessions with other board members prior to the meeting.
  - Ask speakers to log into the meeting 15 minutes early to ensure sound, video, and screen sharing work.
- **Send the links.**
  - Ensure residents, Council members, City staff, and guests have the meeting log-in information.
  - Encourage attendees to log in at least five to 10 minutes early, just as they would arrive to an in-person meeting early. This helps to ensure that sound and video work, any last-minute technology updates are made, and that everyone is comfortable with camera placement.
- **Turn on cameras.**
  - Yes, it can be awkward to make eye contact into your camera and to see yourself on-screen, but the ability to see each other on camera helps to build relationships. Ask everyone to log in with cameras on.
- **Mute microphones.**
  - Many software options will allow for meetings to begin with microphones muted. Use this option or ask attendees to turn cameras on and microphones off when entering the meeting space. Background noises are distracting.
- **Include everyone.**
  - Watch for changes in body language, eyes darting off screen, and monitor the integrated chat feature. Look for raised hands, give ample opportunities for attendees to unmute for questions, or call on each attendee to ask if there are questions. It can take longer to generate questions and spark dialog. Attendees tend to speak up once they recognize everyone will be heard.
- **Do not record meetings.**
  - As a best practice, do not record meetings. If a meeting will be recorded, announce it in advance. Some people are not comfortable being recorded and it can have negative effects on engagement.

Hybrid Meetings

Neighborhood associations may want to hold hybrid meetings—some attendees participate in person, and some participate remotely. With a limited technology budget, neighborhood associations may need to be creative. Tips include:

- Use an external camera and microphone, allowing for better picture and sound quality for remote participants. Consider using a Meeting Owl.
- Ask speakers and guests to stand next to the laptop used for remote participation. This allows more participants to see, hear, and participate in conversation.
- Remind speakers and guests to make eye contact with the camera and engage with remote attendees.
- Ask a leader to monitor the remote chat and to mute/unmute attendees for questions.

Event Planning

Neighborhood events are a great way for neighbors to come together, get to know each other, and learn about the neighborhood association in a fun, relaxed atmosphere. For some, events are the primary interaction with the neighborhood association. For others, attending an event can be a starting point for deeper engagement.

The following is a list of event planning best practices. To add to this list, email Neighborhoods@dmgov.org.

Establish purpose.

Ask:

- What is the purpose of the event?
- Does the event fit into the neighborhood association's mission?
- What are the goals and desired outcomes of holding an event?
- What resources (financial and volunteers) are available to carry out the event?

Determine key logistics.

- Name the event.
- Decide on the format. Is the event an outdoor event with activities, the DSM Party Pod, and food trucks, or is this an indoor event with a structured program?
- Estimate the expected attendance. The expected attendance will dictate many decisions, including the location.
- Identify a location. A visit to several locations may be required to determine if the location meets the needs of the event. Ensure the location is accessible to all persons.
- Select a date and time. In date selection, determine if there are any holidays or major events that will compete with the date.
- Check the availability of the DSM Party Pod.

Develop a timeline.

Start planning the event at least nine months prior to the event date. This ensures that volunteers can complete tasks without stress and allows for ample time to promote the event. Include:

- Reserving a location and the DSM Party Pod.
- Creating a budget.
- Recruiting volunteers.
- Ordering event signage with sponsor logos and audio-visual equipment.
- Confirming speakers or entertainers.
- Inviting City representatives and guests.
- Requesting permits.
- Ordering/purchasing food.
- Event marketing.

Reserve the DSM Party Pod: Just Add Neighbors.



Recognized Neighborhood Associations can reserve the DSM Party Pod for free to host neighborhood association-sponsored events and activities. The Party Pod provides all the essentials needed to create a fantastic event—just add neighbors!

The Party Pod can be used in parks, on closed streets, or at other permitted locations.

Included Equipment

- (6) 6-foot tables
- (40) folding chairs
- Camtainers: (2) 5-gallon Camtainers, (1) for coffee and (1) for hot water
- Coolers: (1) 150-quart cooler, (2) 62-quart coolers, and (3) 5-gallon water coolers
- (2) 10X10 canopies with 40 pound canopy weights for each
- Portable Sound System with Microphone and Bluetooth
- 50-foot Extension Cord
- Grill and Grilling Utensils (LP not provided; must be supplied by the neighborhood association)
- (10) Traffic Safety Cones

Included Activities

- 17-foot adjustable net for soccer, volleyball, and pickleball
- Activ Flyers (frisbees)
- Balls (3 soccer balls, 3 basketballs, 3 footballs, 3 volleyballs, and 3 playground balls)
- Bases for wiffle ball and kickball
- (2) Cornhole
- Crossnet with Crossnet ball
- Giant Connect Four
- Giant Jenga
- Giant Yahtzee
- (6) Hula Hoops
- (12) Jump Ropes
- Kan Jam
- Ladder Toss
- Pickleball Paddles and Balls
- Ring Toss
- Sidewalk Chalk
- Spikeball
- Wiffle Ball Bat, Ball, and Tee

How to Make a Reservation

- The DSM Party Pod may be reserved by Des Moines' Recognized Neighborhood Associations only.
- There is no fee to use the Party Pod.
- Reservations are accepted on a first-come, first-served basis.
- The Party Pod is available from May 1–October 15 each calendar year.
- The Party Pod may be reserved one time per calendar year.

Visit DSM Party Pod to review the Reservation Calendar, Reservation Application Form, and the Reservations, Usage Guidelines, and Permit Process in full.

Event committee recruitment.

Recruit an event committee and designate a committee chair. Use the strategies found in the Engagement section under Volunteer Management. Ensure you employ the Volunteer Recognition strategies.

Create a budget.

Budget items may include:

- Food
- Beverages
- Paper goods and utensils
- Facility rental
- Tent, table, and chair rental
- Events insurance
- Permit fees
- Audio-visual equipment
- Design, print, and mailing of marketing materials
- Costs associated with special activities
- Entertainment
- Event signage
- Trash containers
- Prizes
- Name badges

Read about Budgeting in Financial Management section. Use the Budget Template found in the Templates section as a guide.

Solicit sponsors, apply for grants.

As the budget is created, determine fundraising opportunities in the form of sponsorships and grants. Sponsorships may include cash donations or in-kind donations such as food, beverages, prizes for drawings, or supplies. Ensure sponsors are thanked by placing logos on event signage, on all promotional materials, and mentioning them at the microphone. Consider asking sponsors to welcome attendees at the event by greeting residents at the entrance, providing a welcome at the microphone, or having a booth at no cost.

When available, the City's Capacity Building Grant may be used to support events. Additional grants may be available. Read the Grant Writing section to learn about grants available to neighborhood associations.

Get insurance quotes.

Research general liability and events cancellation insurance policies. General liability insurance provides coverage for bodily injury or property damage that could occur at a neighborhood event. Events cancellation protects events from a loss of revenue or committed expenses due to cancellation, interruption, or postponement of an event. Learn more about both types of insurance in the Risk Management section.

Apply for Permits.

See next page for detailed process.

Reserve a Location.

PARK OR PARKS FACILITY

- Reserve a Parks facility online
- Reservations may be made up to 365 days in advance.
- Permit Fee: There is no cost up to two (2) events per year.
- If using the grill, will need to complete a Grill Permit. No cost for this permit.
- Contact the Parks and Recreation Department at parks@dmgov.org or (515) 237-1386.

PRIVATE PARKING LOT

Then, contact the Zoning Enforcement Division, dz@dmgov.org or (515) 283-4207. A City staff person will determine if a Temporary Use Permit or Conditional Use Permit is required.

RESIDENTIAL STREET CLOSURE

Then, apply for a **Street Use Permit** online

- Application must include: maps of street closure(s), a 20 ft. fire lane, set-up and tear-down time, and copy of flyer/notification to impacted residents. Notification must include: date and time of barricades set up, "no through traffic allowed but local residents allowed access," time of amplified sound, and contact information (cell and email) for person hosting the event.
- Apply for the permit 90 days in advance of the event.
- Permit Fees:
  - Residential – Large (events past sunset or events longer than one block): $10 application fee + barricade equipment ($50–100)
  - Residential – Small (no closed intersections): $25

Food Trucks

While reserving the event location, indicate if food trucks are planned for the event. Ask to see the food truck's inspection tag to ensure food trucks are current on their annual inspection. Contact firedepart@dmgov.org with questions on food truck inspections.

PARK OR PARKS FACILITY

- Specific processes outlined in Chapter 74, Sec. 74-210 apply and are addressed in the Parks reservation process.
- Contact the Parks and Recreation Department at parks@dmgov.org or (515) 237-1386.

PRIVATE PARKING LOT

- A **Temporary Use Permit** or **Conditional Use Permit** is required.
- Apply online
- Apply for a permit 90 days in advance of the event.
- Permit Fee: $150
- If a Temporary Use or Conditional Use Permit are required for the event location, a separate application and fees are not necessary. Include the information for food trucks during the permitting process for the location.

RESIDENTIAL STREET CLOSURE

- A **Street Use Permit** is required.
- Follow the application process in step **#3: Reserve a Location**.
- There are no additional fees.

Amplified Sound Permit

Neighborhood Associations must apply for an Amplified Sound Permit if using the Sound System (Block Rocker XL) available in the Party Pod. Amplified sound is not allowed on a residential property.

- Apply online >> Select **Sound Permit**
- Apply at least 30 days in advance of the event.
- Must include the authorization letter provided with the issuance of Park or Street Use Permit and event map.
- Expect a 7–10 business day review window.
- Permit Fee: $40/single day
- Contact: dz@dmgov.org or (515) 283-4200

Tent Permit

A permit is not required to use the two (2) canopies included in the Party Pod. Tent permits are only required if they are over 400-square-feet with sides or 700-square-feet without sides. See page 10 of the Outdoor Events Requirement Guide.

- Apply online >> Select **Fire Temporary Permit – Tent, Canopy, Membrane Structure**
- Permit Fee: $175
- Contact: firedept@dmgov.org

Promote the event.

Consider developing artwork to brand the event. Create a comprehensive strategy to promote the event throughout the neighborhood. A promotional plan may include print materials mailed to every home, social media, flyers, advertising, radio spots, and press releases. Review the Communications section to learn more about best practices in using these strategies.

Write a staging guide and a script.

A staging guide is an instruction manual for the event. It outlines the event by the time of day and details each activity that should occur during a specific time frame. It also tells volunteers where they need to be and their responsibility. Key event information, including the contact name and cell phone for the committee chair, president, other volunteers, and vendors, is included. All volunteers should receive a copy of the staging guide. It should be written clearly so that all volunteers understand the inner workings of the event's logistics.

A script eases nerves caused by public speaking. A script can include a welcome to residents, introduction of speakers and guests, and key information about the neighborhood association. A script includes the talking points that may be otherwise forgotten in the excitement.

Day of the event reminders.

- Ensure there are volunteers to greet residents with a smile, provide name badges, and capture contact information.
- Assign a volunteer to take photos. Place signage that informs residents they may be photographed. Gain written parental consent before photographing children.
- Arrange for a clean-up crew.

Event follow-up.

- Send thank you notes to speakers, entertainers, sponsors, and volunteers.
- Share event photos on social media and in newsletters.
- Debrief with the event committee and board of directors. What went well? What can be done better next time? Did the event meet its goals?
- *Most importantly, celebrate holding a successful event.*

Resource: Download the Community Events Handout (under the Neighborhood Training Library tab) to learn more.

Resident Surveys

Asking for input from all residents, business owners, and community partners within the neighborhood is important. It is easy to ask for input from those who regularly participate. It requires more initiative to ask for input from those who do not engage with the neighborhood association. However, the time invested in collecting feedback from all residents, business owners, and community partners provides data for better decision making.

There are countless questions to ask. In creating questions, the board needs to determine: What do you really want to know? Are you prepared to act upon the information received? Keep the survey short–10 or fewer questions. Only ask questions in which you are prepared to act upon once the information is received.

To do this, you will need to employ several methods of data collection:

1. **Online**: Use a template to create a survey, then post a link to the survey on the neighborhood association's website and social media platforms. Survey Monkey, Mail Chimp, Microsoft Forms, and Google Forms provide easy-to-use, low-cost survey options. Check with the neighborhood association's website provider to ask if surveys are provided as part of the hosting package.

2. **Email**: Send a link to the survey via email.

3. **Newsletters**: Include a link to the survey in electronic newsletters. If you print a newsletter, ensure that the URL to the survey is uncomplicated and that the URL is not hyperlinked. Hyperlinked URLs do not translate to print. As with email, if the newsletter is sent to members only, responses will be narrow. The board may consider sending a print newsletter or postcard using the Every Door Direct Mail® program as outlined in the Communications section.

4. **Mail**: Mail a printed survey to everyone within the neighborhood's boundaries. Clearly communicate where surveys should be returned. If budget allows, consider a prepaid return envelope. As with newsletters, the Every Door Direct Mail® program will deliver a printed survey to each household in the neighborhood.

5. **Door Knocking**: Door knocking provides a great opportunity to meet neighbors, talk about the neighborhood association, and gain feedback. This requires the most effort but can garner the best results. Board and committee members may divide the neighborhood into sections and spend a few weekends surveying neighbors. Create a short script that volunteers can use to help introduce themselves and the reason for the survey. Remember to bring information about the neighborhood association, a list of upcoming meetings and events, and ensure each conversation ends with an invitation to participate. Input data from door knocking into a centralized place so that results can be analyzed.

6. **Neighborhood Events**: Host a booth at the neighborhood's events. This is a great opportunity for volunteers to connect with residents, share information about the neighborhood association, and ask questions.

7. **Businesses and Community Partners**: Work with the businesses and community partners within the neighborhood's boundaries. Ask if they would be willing to post a flyer with a QR code to the survey, put a stack of postcards near the register or door, or make an announcement in an email or bulletin. Don't forget to ask for their input, too! It is important to establish strong relationships and consider the needs of with businesses and community partners.

Volunteer Management

Volunteer Recruitment

Cultural, demographic, and technological changes have shifted volunteer expectations, even among neighborhood associations. Therefore, neighborhood associations must consider adding less formal, flexible, and short-term opportunities to boost volunteerism.

The following are two volunteer trends that gained traction.

Virtual Volunteering

Virtual volunteering is a great option for neighbors who cannot attend meetings. Virtual volunteering includes activities that can be completed in whole or in large part at home and online. Here are some virtual volunteering ideas:

- Website management, including design and timely updates.
- Social media management.
- Social media advocacy and reposting content on volunteers' social networks.
- Newsletter writing.
- Newsletter editing.
- Newsletter design and production coordination.
- Language translation of neighborhood resources.
- Establish a filing structure for the organization on a shared platform.
- Set-up and manage online meetings.
- Serve as a host for online participants during hybrid meetings.

Microvolunteering

Microvolunteering offers small, noncommittal opportunities that help the neighborhood association. Microvolunteering opportunities are short assignments that contribute to the success of the organization while lightening the load for leaders. These opportunities are flexible, project-focused, and have a short timeline. They have a lower threshold of commitment.

Recruitment Strategies

Define the position before seeking volunteers.

- Clearly identify the responsibilities that need to be completed.
- Define the skill set and knowledge needed to fill the role. Ensure volunteers possess or can readily learn the skills and knowledge needed to fill the role.
- Articulate in writing the value of volunteering in this role.
- Write a position description that outlines the responsibilities, skill set and knowledge required, and value. Use this position description when seeking volunteers through all the neighborhood association's communication channels.

Personally invite a neighbor to contribute.

- Often, when a personal invitation to volunteer is extended the invitation is accepted.
- After an invitation is accepted, it is important to respond immediately with a thank you note, a welcome letter, and a position description of the role and responsibility. Strike while the iron is hot. An immediate follow-up keeps the volunteer excited.

Create a positive experience.

- The initial volunteer role will set the stage for future participation. First impressions matter. Serve as a helpful and available resource to the volunteer as they carry out responsibilities.
- Provide a volunteer orientation, especially for the more complex tasks. For example, if someone agrees to coordinate a neighborhood event, an orientation should include the mission of the organization, purpose of the event, and resources available.
- Express sincere appreciation and recognize the volunteer's contribution to the organization.
- Ask for feedback on the volunteer experience.
- Offer additional volunteer opportunities to deepen engagement with the organization.

Designate a volunteer liaison.

- Designate a volunteer liaison to serve as a resource for all volunteers. This increases the organization's ability to serve as a resource, recognize volunteers, communicate new opportunities, and measure impact. This streamlines the volunteer's experience and provides one point of contact for all activities.

Recognize Volunteers

Recognizing volunteers is essential. Acknowledgment helps volunteers feel valued and reinforces the impact of their contributions. Celebrating their efforts also encourages continued engagement and inspires others to get involved.

Here are a few ideas to recognize volunteers.

1. **Personalized notes** sent by the board president. Personalized notes offer an opportunity to specifically recognize contributions. Notes can be mailed or hand-delivered with a treat.
2. **Call and check-in** with volunteers. Calls offer a way to connect and catch up, and strengthen the bond between the volunteer and organization.
3. **Listen,** and actively seek feedback from volunteers. Implement new ideas and procedures that will benefit the volunteer experience.
4. **Profile volunteers** in newsletters and on social media. Highlight individual volunteers by including a photo, volunteer role, and motivational testimony on why the volunteer chooses to impact the neighborhood. Feature groups of volunteers and accomplishments. Always include a call to action for the next volunteer opportunity.
5. **Write a reference letter** for a volunteer who is applying for a job, internship, or school program. Or, write a LinkedIn endorsement that highlights specific skills the volunteer demonstrates.
6. **Give swag** to new volunteers. Many neighborhood associations have shirts, tote bags, and other merchandise. New volunteers will be proud to wear/use swag and will feel included in the organization.
7. **Create a Volunteer Service Award**, or awards, and present them to volunteers at the neighborhood association's annual meeting.
8. **Plan** a special volunteer appreciation event to thank volunteers.
9. **Include family**. Ensure you invite families to any volunteer celebrations. It's important that families recognize their family member's contributions.
10. **Gift a potted plant**. Volunteers will watch their gift grow and will be reminded of the neighborhood association as they take care of it. Or, give a gift card to a neighborhood restaurant or shop.
11. **Celebrate National Volunteer Week** every April. National Volunteer Week recognizes the significant contributions made by volunteers. Any of the above ideas can be implemented as a focused effort during this week.

Neighborhood Grants

Neighborhood Association Grant Overview

The Neighborhood Association Capacity Building Grant supports the work of Des Moines' neighborhood associations. Funding is evaluated on an annual basis. When available, applications are accepted from August 1-October 31. For current year funding availability, application, and year-end report, contact Neighborhoods@dmgov.org.

	Capacity Building Grant
Purpose	Funding for resources required to uplift neighborhood associations and reach the next level of operational or organizational maturity. **Funding is available for each recognized neighborhood association.**
Eligibility	• Must be a Recognized Neighborhood Association and in good standing with the City of Des Moines. • Must be incorporated as a nonprofit corporation in the State of Iowa. • Must have an Employer Identification Number (EIN). • Must have an independent bank account established in the name of the neighborhood association with two (2) account signers. • Must authorize City access to association's bank statements upon request. • Must refrain from any political endorsements. • Must complete the Capacity Building Grant Application. • Must complete a Year-End Report.
Funding Available	Funding is evaluated on an annual basis. For current year grant funding, contact Neighborhoods@dmgov.org.
Application Timeline	August 1-October 31 Funding is awarded upon application approval.
Year-End Report Timeline	June 30
Eligible Expenses	**Governance** • Articles of Incorporation Filing • 501(c)3 Application • Board Leadership training. Training programs must focus on nonprofit board, leadership, or operations training. **Financial** Banking Fees Insurance

Neighborhood Grants Cont.

Neighborhood Association Grant Overview

	Capacity Building Grant
Eligible Expenses (Cont.)	**Communications & Outreach** • Zoom, GoToMeeting, Teams • Website Hosting and Maintenance Fees • Email Marketing Software (MailChimp, Constant Contact, etc.) • Canva • Translation Services • Boundary-wide Mailings • Newsletters and Postcards **Neighborhood Events** • Event promotions/advertising • Entertainment • Permits **Items not expressly outlined under Elibible Expenses are Ineligible Expenses.**
Ineligible Expenses	• Alcohol • Food • Legal fees for neighborhood association or members • Donations • Gift cards or gifts • Campaign contributions • Beautification projects • Welcome baskets • Public records requests • Board member/member stipends • Neighborhood signs/neighborhood monument signs • Items not expressly outlined in Eligible Expenses

Grant Writing

Before you begin searching for grant funding to support a project, the board of directors should create a clear and comprehensive project plan. The plan should specify project details, how the project will be carried out, and success strategies. The project should have SMART(ER) goals.

- **Specific**: What does the neighborhood association want to achieve with the project? Who is involved and who will be impacted? Where is the project located? What resources or limitations are involved? How will the grant support the work?
- **Measurable**: How will progress be tracked and outcome be measured?
- **Achievable**: Is the project realistically achievable? How? Provide evidence that the neighborhood association can complete the project. Detail the approach and strategy to implement the program.
- **Relevant**: Is the project's goal consistent with the organization's goals? Does it fit into the strategic plan?
- **Timely**: The project should have a clear beginning, middle, and end. Projects should not be ongoing. When will the project be completed?
- **Evaluated**: How will the project be evaluated throughout the planning and implementation process? How will the project be evaluated after it is completed?
- **Reviewed**: How will the outcome of this project affect future projects in the community?

Once the board of directors has a clear written understanding of the project, research for grant funding can begin. Following are best practices when applying for grants.

1. Apply for one specific project.
2. Use a team-based approach to writing a grant. Identify persons who can write, research, and edit the application.
3. Review grant application and eligibility guidelines carefully. Confirm the neighborhood association qualifies to apply for the grant and that the project aligns with the funder's goals. Remember: funders do not give funding because an organization has a need. They give funding because they like what the organization is working to accomplish.
4. Highlight the application elements the funder is requesting. Submit all application elements. If elements are missing, the application will not be considered.
5. Understand the deadline and submission processes, and the criteria for evaluating proposals.
6. Do not wait until the last minute to apply. Develop a timeline to prepare and submit the application and supporting materials. Ask any specific questions of the funder at least three to four weeks in advance of the submission deadline. Submit the application and supporting materials on time.
7. Write with clarity. Clearly articulate the project's goals and objectives.
8. Do not use jargon.
9. Tell a compelling story—how will the project benefit the community?
10. Focus more on solutions than problems.
11. Use visual aids to illustrate information.
12. Confirm that the budget makes sense. Double check that all numbers add up correctly.
13. Do not include unnecessary attachments.
14. Proposals should be self-contained. Do not include links to outside resources and information.
15. Guarantee information is accurate.

Grant Opportunities

Neighborhood associations may research the below grant opportunities. Unless expressly stated, neighborhood associations must be 501(c)3 tax-exempt organizations to apply for grants. Read the Governance section to learn how to become a 501(c)3 tax-exempt organization.

City of Des Moines Capacity Building Grant

Funding is evaluated on an anuual basis. When available, applications are accepted from August 1–October 31. For eligibility, read the Neighborhood Grants section. ***This grant is available to all Recognized neighborhood associations in good standing with the City of Des Moines. Neighborhood associations do not need to be 501(c)3 tax-exempt organizations to apply.***

Learn more at https://www.dsm.city/departments/neighborhood_services/neighborhood_associations/leadership.php

Polk County Community Betterment Grant

Many neighborhood associations benefit from the Polk County Community Betterment Grant. This grant is designed to provide financial support to nonprofit organizations that provide cultural, recreational, and educational services to citizens. Applications are accepted December 1–February 28 annually. ***Neighborhood associations do not need to be 501(c)3 tax-exempt organizations to apply, however, they must be a Recognized neighborhood in good standing with the City of Des Moines.***

Learn more at https://communitygrants.polkcountyiowa.gov/

Prairie Meadows Community Betterment Grant

Prairie Meadows Community Betterment Grants range from $100–$99,999. Grants support qualified organizations seeking to improve the lives of those in the community. Review the website for grant cycles, guidelines, and application instructions.

Learn more at https://www.prairiemeadows.com/about-us/grant-programs

AARP

AARP Community Challenge Grant focuses on creating livable communities by addressing public spaces, social engagement, transportation, and housing. Capacity buidling mircrogrants area available also.

Learn more at AARP.org/CommunityChallenge

Greater Des Moines Community Foundation

The Greater Des Moines Community Foundation offers three nonprofit grant programs: Leadership Grants, Capacity Building Grants, and Strategic Alignment Grants. Review the website for grant cycles, guidelines, and application instructions.

Learn more at https://www.desmoinesfoundation.org/nonprofit-resources/grantmaking

Alliant Energy Foundation

The Alliant Energy Foundation invests in local community organizations in Iowa. In part, funding focuses on community safety and engagement. In this category, the foundation supports community events.

Learn more at https://www.alliantenergy.com/communitysupportandsafety/communityprograms/alliantenergyfoundation

Bankers Trust Charitable Giving

The Bankers Trust Charitable Giving program supports nonprofit organizations that serve communities in Central Iowa. Funding priority is given to organizations that impact community development and culture and inclusion.

Learn more at https://www.bankerstrust.com/about/community/charitable-request-form/

Casey's General Stores Charitable Giving Program

The Casey's General Stores Charitable Giving Program supports nonprofit organizations in the communities the company serves in the Midwest and South regions of the country. Sponsorships, food, and monetary donations are provided to community events and a wide range of community betterment projects.

Learn more at https://www.caseys.com/community

EMC Insurance Foundation

The EMC Insurance Foundation supports organizations in Central Iowa. The Foundation's areas of interest include education, youth, community projects, and emergency needs.

Learn more at https://www.emcins.com/aboutemc/communityinvolvement.aspx

Greater Des Moines Habitat for Humanity

GDM Habitat created a Neighborhood Launch Program and offers grants of up to $1,000. Funds go toward projects that improve quality of life and create impact in neighborhoods by bringing residents together.

Learn more at https://gdmhabitat.org/launchgrant/

Keep Iowa Beautiful

Keep Iowa Beautiful grants support the beautification efforts of Iowa communities, including aesthetics, recreations opportunities, and landscapes of neighborhoods.

Learn more at https://keepiowabeautiful.org/grants-scholarships/grants/

Grant Research Tools

Des Moines Public Library

The Des Moines Central Library houses free print and electronic grant resources. Library staff provide nonprofits and individuals training on finding grant-makers and determining grant prospects. Staff also can assist in locating resources on writing proposals.

Learn more at https://www.dmpl.org/grants

Iowa Grants Guide

The Iowa Grants Guide is a database of almost 700 funders in Iowa or with an Iowa connection. This service is provided by The Larned A. Waterman Iowa Nonprofit Resource Center.

Learn more at https://inrc.law.uiowa.edu/iowa-grants-guide

Grant Research Tools

The National Council of Nonprofits offers tools to aid in grant research.

Learn more at https://www.councilofnonprofits.org/tools-resources/grant-research-tools

Grant Submission Checklist

Below is a checklist of items that funders may request as part of the grant application process.

- Annual Report of the accomplishments/status of the neighborhood association
- Articles of Incorporation
- Board authorization to apply for the grant, most frequently found in meeting minutes
- Budget, including the organization's operational budget and detailed budget of the specific project in which the neighborhood association is seeking funding
- Bylaws
- Conflict of Interest Policy
- Copy of most recent tax return: IRS Form 990, 990-EZ, or 990-N (postcard)
- Current board roster
- Financial Report
- Financial Management and Internal Controls Policy
- Insurance Certificate(s)
- Letter of Determination (proof of 501(c)3 tax-exempt status)
- List of additional funding agencies that are part of the activity/project
- Mission statement
- Organizational chart

Download the **Grant Writing, Advertising, and Sponsorships Handout and Grant Writing: Tips and Opportunities from Local Funders Handout** (under the Neighborhood Training Library Tab) to learn more.

POPULAR PAGES

City webpages to bookmark

Whether you're speaking with a new resident or a current one who isn't familiar with the City's website, here are six of the more popular pages people search for.



Garbage, Recycling, and Yard Waste

DSM.city/publicworks

Under the Department of Public Works, information about solid waste collection can be found on our website.

Find collection schedules, guidelines for recycling and yard waste, and learn about the annual Spring Cleanup to Reduce Urban Blight (aka SCRUB) event series.

- Garbage Collection
- Recycling Collection
- Yard Waste Collection
- Holiday Collection Schedule
- SCRUB Events and Guidelines
- Adopt-a-Street Program



Permits and Inspections

DSM.city/pdc

Many residents don't realize the permits needed for work they do to their home including:

- Adding a Deck
- Remodels
- Repairs
- Installing Fencing
- Sidewalks and Driveways

Find applications and make payments online. There are also calculators to help estimate the cost of a permit for electrical, mechanical, and plumbing work.

- Permit Application Forms
- Search for Permits
- Residential Info
- Commercial Info
- Construction Codes
- Tax Abatement Info



Neighborhood Inspections

DSM.city/nid

The Neighborhood Services Department focuses on the health and safety of neighborhoods.

- Abandoned Wells
- Animal Waste
- Illegal Dumping
- Illegal Parking in Front Yards
- Interior Unsanitary Conditions
- Junk and Debris on Private Property
- Mosquito Control
- Nuisance Odors
- Pest Control
- Rental Inspections
- Septic System and Sewer Line Failure
- Weeds and Grass

VISIT OUR WEBSITE: DSM.city



City Government

DSM.city/government

It's important that residents know their City Officials. On the Government page of the website, learn about the Mayor and City Council members.

Use a clickable map to find out who represents you.

Find out when City Council meetings are held and view upcoming agendas.

Learn about appointed staff members and the designated leadership for each City department.

- Email the Mayor and City Council
- Request Mayor Appearance
- Request a Proclamation
- Contact a Department Director



Police Department

DSM.city/dmpd

The Des Moines Police Department webpage provides in-depth information about public safety services.

Frequently called numbers are included to help residents in non-emergency situations reach:

- Animal Control
- G&S and Crow Tow for Police & Zoning Impounds
- Non-Emergency Communication Center
- Polk County Jail
- Public Information Office

- Frequently Called Numbers
- Police Forms/Documents
- Office of Professional Standards
- Response Map
- Neighborhood Based Service Delivery



Parks & Recreation Department

DSM.city/parks

For residents looking to explore the 75 parks within Des Moines, the Parks & Recreation Department webpage provides valuable information.

Search the Parks Directory to locate parks near you and discover the amenities available at each location.

Browse and register for the numerous recreational programs held each year.

Apply for permits and make reservations to host weddings, picnics or other events at a public park.

- Parks Directory
- Trail Maps
- Permits and Reservations
- Recreation Programs
- Volunteer Opportunities

NEIGHBORHOOD INFORMATION

Find My Neighborhood

Currently, there are more than 40 active neighborhood associations partnered with the City of Des Moines.

A neighborhood association is a group of residents, businesses, and community partners who come together to create neighborhood identity and promote engagement among neighbors. Neighborhood associations represent the position of the collective neighborhood and provide input to the City Council, Boards and Commissions, and City staff on issues affecting neighborhoods.

Neighborhood associations are led by volunteers. Participation in a neighborhood association directly impacts your neighborhood, your street, and your community

Using the Find Neighborhoods search from the Neighborhoods Association page, residents can enter their address and find:

- Boundaries and maps of the association
- Links to the neighborhood association's website or social media
- The board members of the neighborhood association and their contact info
- Neighborhood association meeting dates, times, and location



findneighborhoods.DSM.city

Show Me My House

Show Me My House helps residents find relevant information based on where exactly in Des Moines they live.

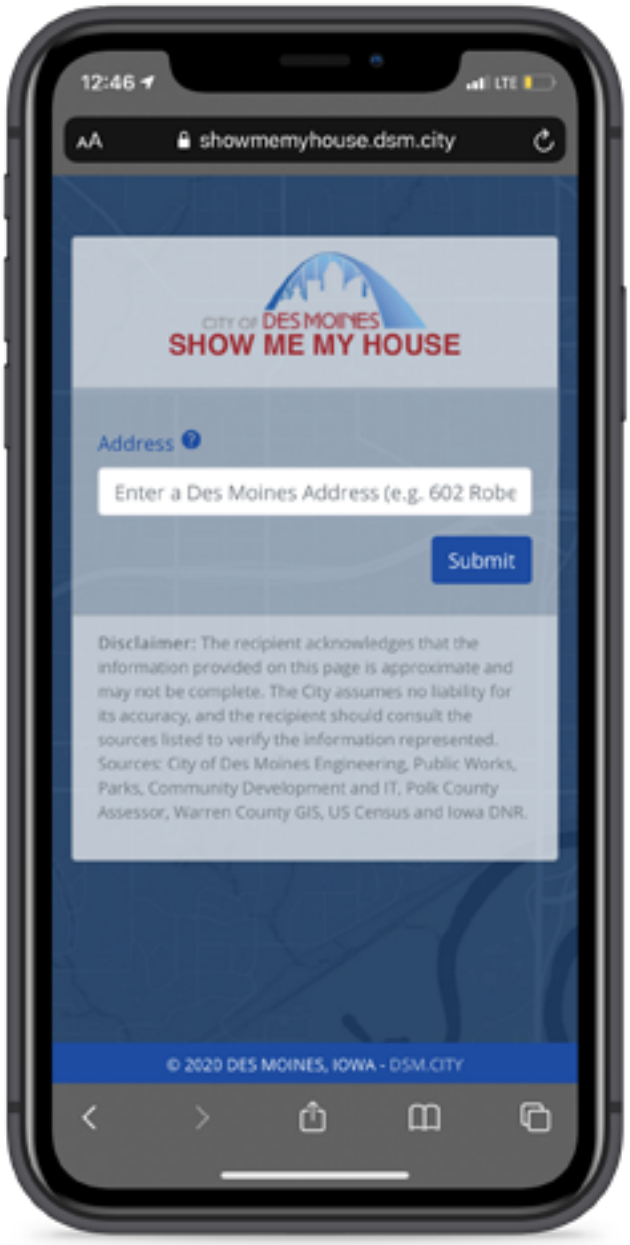
By entering a City of Des Moines address, learn specifics about your property including:

- Garbage, Recycling, and Yard Waste
- Wards and Elected Officials
- Snow Ordinances and Routes
- Neighborhood Based Service Delivery (NBSD) Officers
- Neighborhood Name

Residents also have a link to their home on the Polk County Assessor website to discover more about their building and property assessment.

You can also find specific contact information for your assigned permit inspectors, assigned neighborhood police officer, as well as your City Council representation.

showmemyhouse.DSM.city



STAY CONNECTED

Ways to Keep Residents Informed

The City of Des Moines has a variety of outlets to communicate with its residents.





Social Media

We are on Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, YouTube, and Nextdoor.

We use our social media accounts to promote City events and information from different departments as well as from various organizations in the metro.

Our YouTube channel streams City Council meetings as well as Zoning Board of Adjustments and Plan and Zoning Commission meetings. These are broadcast through our TV channel DMTV 7 which can also be found on Mediacom Channel 7 and streaming live on our website.

Our Communications Office also posts updates, events, and other important information residents need to know on the Nextdoor App.

- **facebook.com**/DesMoinesGov
- **instagram.com**/DesMoinesGov
- **linkedin.com**/company/city-of-des-moines
- **youtube.com**/CityofDesMoinesIowa
- **nextdoor.com**/pages/city-of-des-moines

Mobile App

Two mobile apps are available to help residents communicate with the City.

myDSMmobile
MyDSMmobile allows residents to request service or report popular issues such as:

- Graffiti
- Potholes
- Storm Water or Sanitary Sewer Problems
- Street Light Outages
- Traffic Signal Problems

Visit **DSM.city/report**. In your app store, search "**myDSMmobile**"

Des Moines Police Department

Des Moines Police Department allows residents to:

- Submit tips
- Call the Mobile Crisis Care Team
- Register for the WatchDSM Community Camera Program
- Receive critical incident alerts
- Connect with neighborhood officers
- Get DMPD news releases

In your app store, search "**Des Moines Police Department**"

STAY CONNECTED

Ways to Keep Residents Informed

The City of Des Moines has a variety of outlets to communicate with its residents.





Email Notifications

Residents can sign up to have a variety of informational emails sent to their inbox by subscribing to the City's email list. They can be:

- Alerts, notifications, and press releases
- Newsletters and publications
- Road closures and construction
- City Council information
- Boards and Commissions information
- City activities and events
- Meeting agendas
- Civil and Human Rights information
- Bids and Requests for Proposals for the City

- Sign up at **subscribe.DSM.city**

Website

The City of Des Moines website is the most reliable source for up-to-date information for residents. Visitors can explore the City calendar to find upcoming events, public meetings and key program registration dates all in one place.

The News & Media section provides timely press releases covering important City initiatives, events and issues that impact our community.

The Communications Office page serves as a central hub for staying connected. Residents can access the City's social media channels, watch DMTV or livestream City meetings on YouTube, or download the latest issue of City Source and sign up for City newsletters.

- Visit us at **DSM.city**

STAY INVOLVED

Ways to Be Involved In Government

With your experience as a leader in Des Moines, your perspective and knowledge is needed to help guide the decision makers serving on City Council and our Boards & Commissions.

Contact City Council

If you have an idea for a solution to improve your neighborhood, we encourage you to start a discussion with your elected officials.



MAYOR
Connie Boesen
connieboesen@dmgov.org
(515) 240-7929



AT LARGE
Carl Voss
carlvoss@dmgov.org
(515) 210-0237



AT LARGE
Mike Simonson
mikesimonson@dmgov.org
(515)238-0874



WARD 1
Rob X. Barron
robbarron@dmgov.org
(515) 238-7799



WARD 2
Linda Westergaard
lindaw@dmgov.org
(515) 988-4288



WARD 3
Josh Mandelbaum
joshmandelbaum@dmgov.org
(515) 250-3384



WARD 4
Joe Gatto
joegatto@dmgov.org
(515) 402-2626

Request to Speak at a City Council Meeting

Any City resident, property owner or taxpayer may request to speak on a regular Agenda by filing such request in writing with the City Clerk on or after the date ten days preceding a regular Council meeting but prior to 5:00 P.M. on the Sunday preceding a regular Council meeting.

Speakers may provide written materials to Council for review at the Council meeting, subject to Council's acceptance. Video and audio materials may not be played or otherwise utilized at or during the Council meeting. Such materials shall be provided to the City Clerk upon submitting the request required under this Rule 16 so that the Clerk may arrange for the City's Information Technology staff to scan any such materials for viruses or other issues. Once such materials are scanned and determined safe, Information Technology will then notify Council that the item(s) are available for Council to review at Council's convenience.

All such speaker requests, up to a maximum of twenty items, shall be placed under a single item number, but last on the agenda, by lettered paragraph and limited collectively to no more than sixty minutes in duration. Each item shall receive up to three minutes time and shall not be recalculated or additional speakers recognized if the time used by any speaker is less than three minutes or the collective time for all speakers is less than sixty minutes. No other person may speak on any such item.

Any requested item not included on the agenda due to the collective time limit and maximum number of items specified herein being exceeded, shall, subject to such time limit and maximum number of items applied to each Agenda for a subsequent regular meeting, move in the same order received by the City Clerk to the Agenda for the next regular meeting or, as necessary, the Agenda for the next subsequent meeting(s), with any new timely requests added to the end of the list of pending speaker items in the order received. Any person may have no more than one speaker item request pending at a time and the City Clerk shall not accept a new request from a person that has a request pending.

Apply to Serve on a Board or Commission

Your elected officials rely on the expertise of established Boards and Commissions to make informed policy decisions. Appointments by City Council are made to Boards and Commissions each month as terms expire or as vacancies occur.

As openings occur on boards and commissions, we feel fortunate to be able to draw upon the expertise and dedication of our residents. Once submitted, your application will be considered and remain on file for three years.

You can submit your application and up to five Boards and Commissions you would be interested serving on by visiting **DSM.city/government/boards_commissions/index**.

If you have any questions about the process, please contact the City Clerk's Office at (515) 283-4209 or cityclerk@dmgov.org.

Board/Commission	Regular Meeting Schedule	Term Length	More Info
Access Advisory Board	Third Wednesday of each month	Four years	https://www.dsm.city/boards_commissions/access_advisory_board/index.php
Airport Authority Board	Second Tuesday of each month	Four years	https://www.flydsm.com/about-us/authority-leadership
Building and Fire Code Board of Appeals	Second Thursday of each month	Three years	https://www.dsm.city/boards_commissions/building_and_fire_code_board_of_appeals.php
Civil Service Commission	First and third Tuesdays of each month	Four years	https://www.dsm.city/boards_commissions/civil_service_commission.php
Des Moines Civil and Human Rights Commission	Second Thursday of January, March, May, July, September, and November	Three years	https://DSM.city/boards_inner_T56_R16.php
Food Security Task Force	Biweekly on Thursdays or TBD	One year	https://www.dsm.city/boards_commissions/food_security_task_force.php
Greater Des Moines Sister Cities Commission	Second Tuesday of each month	Five years	https://www.dsm.city/boards_commissions/greater_desmoines_sister_cities_commission.php
Historic Preservation Commission	Third Wednesday of each month	Three years	https://www.dsm.city/boards_commissions/historic_preservation_commission.php
Housing Appeals Board	Second Wednesday of each month	Three years	https://www.dsm.city/boards_commissions/housing_appeals_board.php
Housing Services Board	Third Wednesday of each month	Three years	https://www.dsm.city/boards_commissions/housing_services_board.php
Library Board of Trustees	Third Tuesday of each month	Six years	https://www.dsm.city/boards_commissions/library_board_of_trustees.php
Parks and Recreation Board	Fourth Tuesday of each month	Four years	https://www.dsm.city/boards_commissions/parks_and_recreation_board.php
Plan and Zoning Commission	First and third Thursdays of each month	Five years	https://www.dsm.city/boards_commissions/plan_zoning_commission/index.php
Urban Design Review Board	Second and fourth Tuesdays of each month	Three years	https://www.dsm.city/boards_commissions/urban_design_review_board.php
Water Works Board of Trustees	Fourth Tuesday of each month	Six years	https://www.dsm.city/boards_commissions/water_works_board_of_trustees.php
Youth Advisory Board	Meetings TBD	12-months	https://www.dsm.city/boards_commissions/youth_advisory_board.php
Zoning Board of Adjustment	Fourth Wednesday of each month	Five years	https://www.dsm.city/boards_commissions/zoning_board_of_adjustment.php

Templates

All templates are found online, **DSM.city/natoolkit**

Articles of Incorporation Template

Board Agenda Template

Board Attendance Tracker Template

Board Meeting Minutes and Action Items Template

Board Report Template

Board Terms Template

Board Transition Checklist

Budget Template

Bylaws Template

Compensation Policy Template

Conflict of Interest Template

Corporate Resolution Template

Document Retention Policy Template

Financial Management and Internal Controls Policy Template

Financial Report Template

Investment of Funds Policy Template

LBNA New Leader Welcome Kit

Loan Policy Template

Membership Meeting Agenda Template

Neighborhood Association Membership Dues Information

Organizational Chart Template

Political Endorsements Policy

Polk County Print Shop Information

Potential Speakers for Neighborhood Association Meetings

Project Budget Request Template

Social Media Policy Template

Strategic Plan Template

Technology Management Policy Template

Wellness Assessment

Whistleblower Policy Template

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Resources of Neighborhood Associations

Neighborhood Recognition Policy: https://cms2files.revize.com/desmoines/document_center/Neighborhood%20Services/Neighborhood%20Development/Neighborhood%20Recognition%20Policy.pdf

Nonprofit Resources

Sign up for the monthly *Neighborhood Update* newsletter
https://visitor.constantcontact.com/manage/optin?v=0011WP7IlgRMnTr0LcR9P8QCsUAEuwRhRIpDEDoWXy2-tetTjMz41ZAlaxYzZQjLV-QYIwv65QSOcpWQxT8PZWa8gZVh1odJivQ

Larned A. Waterman Iowa Nonprofit Resource Center
Workshops, training, and resources to support nonprofit organizations in Iowa.
https://inrc.law.uiowa.edu/

Community Foundation of Greater Des Moines
Training, grant opportunities, and support services available to nonprofit organizations in the Des Moines metro.
https://www.desmoinesfoundation.org/

Mission Statement

Donorbox Blog
How to Write an Awesome Nonprofit Mission Statement
https://donorbox.org/nonprofit-blog/nonprofit-mission-statement

Becoming a 501(c)3 Tax-Exempt Organization

Internal Revenue Service
Small to Mid-Size Tax Exempt Organization Workshop
https://www.stayexempt.irs.gov/home/resource-library/virtual-small-mid-size-tax-exempt-organization-workshop

Internal Revenue Service
Charitable Organizations
https://www.irs.gov/charities-non-profits/charitable-organizations

Internal Revenue Service
Things Organizations Should Know about Applying for Tax-Exempt Status
https://www.irs.gov/newsroom/things-organizations-should-know-about-applying-for-tax-exempt-status

Internal Revenue Service
Application Process/Step-by-Step Guide
https://www.irs.gov/charities-non-profits/application-process

The Larned A. Waterman Iowa Nonprofit Resource Center
https://inrc.law.uiowa.edu
https://inrc.law.uiowa.edu/our-services

United States Postal Service
What is Nonprofit Mail?
https://faq.usps.com/s/article/What-is-Nonprofit-Mail

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Articles of Incorporation

Iowa Secretary of State Forming a Nonprofit
https://sos.iowa.gov/nonprofits/forming.html

Bylaws

Revised Iowa Nonprofit Corporation Act
https://www.legis.iowa.gov/docs/ico/chapter/504.pdf?msclkid=b680747fb1de11ecb7b0896b42bc63ec

The Larned A. Waterman Iowa Nonprofit Resource Center
https://inrc.law.uiowa.edu

Strategic Plan Resources

The Larned A. Waterman Iowa Nonprofit Resource Center
https://inrc.law.uiowa.edu

American Society of Association Executives
How Strategic Planning is different in a Post-COVID World
https://www.asaecenter.org/~/link.aspx?_id=0E779702D68D4F64A7745B53CF0AF8F4&_z=z

Organizational Chart

Microsoft – Business Insights and Ideas
How to Make the Best Org Chart for Your Business
https://www.microsoft.com/en-us/microsoft-365/business-insights-ideas/resources/make-org-charts-for-your-business

Conflicts of Interest

Internal Revenue Service
What is the Purpose of a Conflict of Interest Policy?
https://www.irs.gov/charities-non-profits/form-1023-purpose-of-conflict-of-interest-policy

The Larned A. Waterman Iowa Nonprofit Resource Center
https://inrc.law.uiowa.edu

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Political Endorsements

Internal Revenue Service
The Restriction of Political Campaign Intervention by Section 501(c)(3) Tax-Exempt Organizations
https://www.irs.gov/charities-non-profits/charitable-organizations/the-restriction-of-political-campaign-intervention-by-section-501c3-tax-exempt-organizations

Document Retention

National Council of Nonprofits
Document Retention Policies for Nonprofits
https://www.councilofnonprofits.org/tools-resources/document-retention-policies-nonprofits

Financial Management and Internal Controls

National Council of Nonprofits
Financial Management
https://www.councilofnonprofits.org/tools-resources/financial-management

National Council of Nonprofits
Internal Controls for Nonprofits
https://www.councilofnonprofits.org/tools-resources/internal-controls-nonprofits

Technology Management

National Council of Nonprofits
Cybersecurity for Nonprofits
https://www.councilofnonprofits.org/tools-resources/cybersecurity-nonprofits

Whistleblower

American Society of Association Executives
How to Write an Effective Whistleblower Policy
https://www.asaecenter.org/asae-home/resources/articles/an_plus/2020/february/how-to-write-an-effective-whistleblower-policy

National Council of Nonprofits
Whistleblower Protections for Nonprofits
https://www.councilofnonprofits.org/tools-resources/whistleblower-protections-nonprofits

Board Orientation

City of Orlando
New Board Orientation for Neighborhood Organizations
https://www.orlando.gov/Our-Government/Get-Involved/iLead-Neighborhood-Leader-Training/iLead-Guides/New-Board-Orientation-for-Neighborhood-Organizations#section-1

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Resources of Neighborhood Associations

Lower Beaver Neighborhood Association
LBNA New Leader Welcome Kit
https://cms2.revize.com/revize/cityofdesmoines/Documents/Departments/Neighborhood%20Services/Neighborhood%20Associations/Neighborhood%20Toolkit/Templates/New%20Leader%20Welcome%20Kit.pdf?t=202510211411090

Board Training

City of Des Moines Leadership Workshop Sessions
Specific training for Des Moines' neighborhood associations, offered throughout the year at no cost.
https://www.dsm.city/departments/neighborhood_services/neighborhood_associations/leadership.php

Community Foundation of Greater Des Moines
On Board: the Basics of Being an Effective Board Member is offered throughout the year for $10 per person (fee may change). https://www.desmoinesfoundation.org/nonprofit-resources/trainings

Larned A. Waterman Iowa Nonprofit Resource Center
Lectures, workshops, and nonprofit training offered throughout the year. https://inrc.law.uiowa.edu/events

Board Minutes and Action Items

Study the City Council meeting and the City's Boards and Commissions minutes for examples of meeting minutes.
https://www.dsm.city/government/city_council/meetings/index.php
https://www.dsm.city/government/boards_commissions/index.php

Employer Identification Number (EIN)

Internal Revenue Service
Search for Tax Exempt Organizations
https://apps.irs.gov/app/eos/

Charities and Nonprofits
https://www.irs.gov/charities-and-nonprofits

Do You Need an EIN?
https://www.irs.gov/businesses/employer-identification-number

Five Things to Know about the Employers Identification Number
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-vD0KolS124&t=10s

Financial Management

National Council of Nonprofits
https://www.councilofnonprofits.org/tools-resources/financial-literacy-nonprofit-boards
https://www.councilofnonprofits.org/tools-resources/financial-management
https://www.councilofnonprofits.org/tools-resources/budgeting-nonprofits

Parliamentary Procedure

Roberts Rules of Order – The Official Website
https://robertsrules.com/

The A-B-C's of Parliamentary Procedure
https://www.channingbete.com/schools-prek-12/college-career-and-life-planning/life-skills/the-a-b-cs-of-parliamentary-procedure/p-CBC0022

Neighborhood Training Library: Parliamentary Procedure Video
https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLBHmhqDB2nMQepdWVgzzmoeoLpN551slB

IDEAS IN ACTION

The following Ideas in Action section illustrates the best practices found in this Toolkit and highlights practical and innovative programs implemented in Des Moines' neighborhoods. The goal of this section is to amplify the work in each neighborhood association.

Email Neighborhoods@dmgov.org to share programs, initiatives, and best practices that contribute to the success of the neighborhood association. Staff will schedule a time to learn about the idea. Contributions will be featured in Toolkit updates.

IDEAS IN ACTION

Fairmont Park Savings Cards Benefit Schools, Residents, and Businesses

Challenge: Fairmont Park Neighborhood Association (FPNA) contacted the three schools within the neighborhood's boundaries and discovered that the schools needed support in covering some basic needs and essentials for their students.

Solution: FPNA created a savings card in 2014, which promotes area businesses and offers discounts on services provided to the card holder. The FPNA board contacts area businesses to ask for participation. The businesses do not pay to participate. They do agree to honor the discount offered when the saving card is presented. As an example, one neighborhood restaurant offers 20% off the total purchase, while a neighborhood veterinary clinic offers 20% off the total price of service, and a local tire repair service offers $20 off a purchase.

FPNA designs and produces the yearly savings card, which costs less than $0.40 each. The savings cards are available to residents for a $10 donation. The proceeds are used to fund three schools' wish lists and many other organizations.

"It is a win-win-win," said Jeff Witte, FPNA leader. "The savings card promotes area businesses, helps residents save money, and supports our neighborhood schools."

Result: The savings card program started in 2014. In the first two years, the proceeds from the savings cards were approximately $2,000 annually. Demand for the savings cards remains high and now FPNA donates money to the schools plus additional organizations within the neighborhood to support youth sports, band uniforms, and child safety programs.

"We have developed a demand for the cards," said Witte. "If they aren't ready early, I start to get phone calls. Everyone feels good about this program."

Connect: Gain more insight by contacting the Fairmont Neighborhood Association at https://findneighborhoods.dsm.city/

IDEAS IN ACTION

Gray's Lake Neighborhood Association Builds Membership through Block Challenge Grant Program

Challenge: The Gray's Lake Neighborhood Association (GLNA) wanted to increase resident involvement in the neighborhood association, create opportunities for neighbors to get to know each other, and improve properties.

Solution: GLNA embraced and promoted the City's Block Challenge Grant Program (BCG Program). The BCG Program brings neighbors together to build community and neighborhood identity while improving the physical appearance of Des Moines' neighborhoods.

"I went to a meeting for the Coalition of South Side Neighborhood Associations (CSSNA) and first learned about the Program," said Heidi Ogden, GLNA leader. "I knew it was a great opportunity for GLNA and residents to get involved."

Ogden met with City staff to learn more about the BCG Program. Following, GLNA posted BCG Program information through its communications channels to generate interest. Additionally, board members personally reached out to residents and shared BCG Program information.

"Once we find someone interested in the Program, I meet with them individually to talk about it and help them start building a team of neighbors," explained Ogden. "I make sure they understand the initial Team application process and deadlines.

"Additionally, I talk about GLNA," continued Ogden. "I ask for contact information from the neighbors, invite them to the GLNA meetings, and ensure that they receive information from us."

Result: The result has been two-fold.

First, in 2022 and 2023, 60 households in the Gray's Lake neighborhood participated in the BCG Program. Households received $102,425.05 in Program funding to complete home improvement projects including new driveways and sidewalks, windows, roofs, and landscaping. The BCG Program spurred total investments of $352,293.05 into the neighborhood.

Second, GLNA experienced an increase in the number of residents attending meetings.

"We even have new board members because of the Program," exclaimed Ogden. "More residents are aware of the neighborhood association and are reaching out and getting involved.

"There is more to our neighborhoods than traffic, safety, and lost pets," continued Ogden. "If neighborhood associations want to get engaged with their neighbors, then they need to be a good neighbor. There are so many benefits to this Program, the biggest of which is that it creates a tight-knit community."

Funding: Information about the Block Challenge Grant can be found online, Block Challenge Grant (dsm.city)

Connect: Gain more insight by contacting the Gray's Lake Neighborhood Association at https://findneighborhoods.dsm.city/

IDEAS IN ACTION

Drake Neighborhood Association Impacts the Neighborhood through Strategic Planning

Challenge: The Drake Neighborhood Association (DNA) has a neighborhood plan which was developed in 2009, updated in 2011, and updated again in 2017–2018 with Invest DSM. (The Drake neighborhood is in one of Invest DSM's four Special Interest Districts.)

The board of directors wanted to take a strategic approach to support the neighborhood plan, cultivate new relationships with community partners, create new engagement activities, and increase capacity.

Solution: The board implemented a strategic planning process. The annual process allows the board to plan for the year to ensure requirements/obligations are being met and to assign board members as champions for strategic initiatives. The board sets aside time to determine the best approach in aligning opportunities with neighborhood partners and creating awareness in the neighborhood about the positive impact of community relationships.

A typical approach to DNA's strategic planning process follows:

- Update documents to educate and ground new board members on the history and structure of the board.
- Review the strategic plan action points and what has been accomplished.
- Identify the focus for the upcoming year.
- Determine what the board needs to do differently, or activities needed to keep the organization healthy.
- Assess strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats.
- Review assets in the neighborhood and how the organization can be a partner.
- List grant opportunities.

With the outputs from the above discussions, the board of directors creates a strategic plan for the year ahead, makes board and committee assignments, and establishes deadlines.

Result: Strategic planning helps acclimate and level set the board of directors. The process challenges the board to not do what always has been done, rather, to understand the purpose and meaning behind actions and try new approaches.

"It helps us to focus on activities that have a long-term impact on the neighborhood, not just building goodwill," said Lori Calhoun, DNA leader. "It demonstrates we are intentional and helps us advocate for neighborhood change; this also has a positive impact as we request assistance from partners and share with our neighbors how things are changing for the better!"

Learn more about strategic planning in the Governance section of the Toolkit. Reference the customizable Strategic Plan Template found in the **Templates** section.

Connect: Gain more insight by contacting the Drake Neighborhood Association, https://findneighborhoods.dsm.city/

IDEAS IN ACTION

ACCENT Holds Upcycling Event

Challenge: The ACCENT Neighborhood Association wanted to create a space where neighbors help neighbors.

Solution: ACCENT modeled its "Take It or Leave It" program after a similar program held at Evelyn K. Davis Park.

"We thought it was a program worth replicating," said Kevin Marken, ACCENT leader. "It's a good way to upcycle home goods."

ACCENT partnered with St. Joseph Catholic Church & School (located across the street from the neighborhood's boundaries) and U-Haul (located within the neighborhood's boundaries). Both organizations provide complimentary space for the event. The Take It or Leave It program is held at St. Joseph Catholic Church & School. Residents are invited to donate good quality clothing, household goods, and furniture during a set two-hour window, on a Friday. U-Haul provided space to store early donations.

Volunteers collected and sorted all donations and created a streamlined shopping experience for residents to take items at no cost on a Saturday. Donations included coffee and end tables, exercise equipment, tools, cookware, home décor, and gently used clothing and shoes.

The event is marketed through flyers, email, Facebook, and faith-based organizations.

Result: ACCENT received donations from 40 households and saw 30 shoppers during the event. All extra items were donated to the D.A.V. Thrift Store.

In the first year, Marken shared that the event was successful and will become an annual neighborhood event. The annual event has grown to serve an average of 50 shoppers. Additionally, the event is now hosted at the East Side Library.

Connect: Gain more insight by contacting the ACCENT Neighborhood Association, https://findneighborhoods.dsm.city/.

IDEAS IN ACTION

Cultural Exhibitions, Food, and Families: Lower Beaver Celebrates its Diverse Community

Challenge: The Lower Beaver Neighborhood Association (LBNA) is an increasingly diverse community. The neighborhood is truly multi-cultural, with more than 20 languages spoken in the neighborhood's elementary school. As part of an evolving strategy, the neighborhood association wanted to increase awareness of the organization, establish neighborhood identity, and celebrate the multitude of cultures within the neighborhood.

"Neighbors don't know each other or speak the same language," said Jeremy Geerdes, LBNA leader. "We are community and wanted to celebrate the diversity of the community. We are all in this community together."

Solution: The idea of Summerfest, a one-day event, was born out of a brainstorming session with the board of directors. The goals of the event are to increase awareness of the organization and celebrate the neighborhood's diversity. Summerfest is communicated using a variety of mediums including banners and yard signs, Facebook ads, emails to LBNA's list of 350+ subscribers, area schools, invitations, marketing with boarding neighborhood associations, and press releases.

Result: Summerfest includes cultural exhibitions, food trucks, education booths and highlight services available to immigrant and refugee families, and children's activities.

In the first year, more than 200 neighbors attended the event. Now, an average of 250 neighbors attend annually. The neighborhood association sees a boost in awareness, increasing the email subscriber list and number of Facebook followers.

The most unexpected outcome is that "we learned we can do bigger events," Geerdes said. "That was a needed shot of confidence, especially coming out of COVID. Things go better when the whole team is involved. We can see success."

The **Neighborhood Association Capacity Building Grant** can be used toward event promotions and advertising, entertainment, and permit fees.

Connect: Gain more insight by contacting the Lower Beaver Neighborhood Association, https://findneighborhoods.dsm.city/.

IDEAS IN ACTION

River Bend Surveys All Residents; Results Sharpen Marketing and Engagement Efforts

Challenge: The River Bend Neighborhood Association (RBNA) aspired to better understand resident needs and create a marketing effort to raise awareness of the neighborhood association. The goal was to build capacity and create conduits of opportunity for residents.

Solution: In 2019, RBNA partnered with a public relations firm—with ties to the neighborhood—and developed a plan to conduct house meetings and focus groups with residents. However, the pandemic stopped progress of this initiative.

In 2021, the goal remained, however, the mechanism to gain feedback shifted from meetings and focus groups to a neighborhood survey.

"We didn't feel it was safe from a health perspective to bring everyone together in a focus group setting, so we decided to send a resident survey to all households within the neighborhood's boundaries," said Kelly Hellstern, RBNA leader. "It was hard to decide on the questions to ask since we had limited space. We had to really focus on core questions."

In partnership with the public relations firm, RBNA created a tri-fold brochure that marketed the neighborhood association and included a three question survey. The survey asked:

1. How do you find out about community news and activities that you participate in? (Response options listed.)
2. Why would you join a neighborhood association? (Response options listed.)
3. Would you be interested in becoming a River Bend Block Captain or joining the neighborhood watch program to improve safety and community connections on your street? (Response options listed.)

The survey was placed on one panel of the brochure. The panel was perforated and included paid returned mailing information on the other side. Residents could complete the survey, neatly tear it off the brochure, and mail it back quickly. The brochure also included a QR code. Residents could scan the QR code and take the survey online. The online survey was translated into a few of the common languages spoken within the neighborhood.

Additionally, participation was incentivized. Respondents who included their contact information on the survey were entered into a drawing to win a $50 gift card. This allowed RBNA to collect contact information for residents and develop new relationships.

Result: The survey was mailed to the neighborhood's approximate 1,200 residents. There was a two percent response rate.

"We learned how people find out about neighborhood news and RBNA activities," said Hellstern. "Now we have a better understanding of where to focus our communication and marketing.

"We were surprised at the interest in our Block Captain program," Hellstern continued. "We can now get more residents engaged with their neighbors."

The RBNA board used the survey feedback to determine the organization's strategies.

Additionally, the survey provided visibility. Even if a resident didn't respond, the awareness and contact information for RBNA was marketed throughout the neighborhood's boundaries and increased the awareness of the organization.

Polk County Betterment Grant funding was awarded and used to partner with the public relations firm and develop and print the mailer.

Learn More: Asking for input from all residents, business owners, and community partners within the neighborhood is important. It is easy to ask for input from those who regularly participate. It requires more initiative to ask for input from those who do not engage with the neighborhood association. However, the time invested in collecting feedback from all residents, business owners, and community partners provides data for better decision making.

Learn more about resident surveys in the **Engagement** section of the Toolkit.

Connect: Gain more insight by contacting the River Bend Neighborhood Association at https://findneighborhoods.dsm.city/.

IDEAS IN ACTION

Southwestern Hills Celebrates Neighbors Night Out with 450+ Residents

Challenge: Ten years ago, the board of directors for the Southwestern Hills Neighborhood Association (SHNA) made a strategic decision to strengthen neighborhood involvement and create a strong voice to represent the City's most southwestern residents.

Solution: Neighbors Night Out was created. The event is held at the same time as National Night Out. The goal of the event is a night of conversation with neighbors.

A free catered meal is available to all who attend, and usually includes hamburgers, brats, chips, fruit, and sno-cones. City officials and departments attend to engage with neighbors. Additionally, residents can enter drawings to receive gift certificates from area businesses and restaurants ranging from $15–25.

"Soliciting donations from area businesses and restaurants is a good connection point to the neighborhood association," said George Davis, SHNA leader.

Neighbors Night Out is promoted through several mediums including postcards sent to all households within the neighborhood's boundaries, email, and social media.

"A mass mailing is key to attendance," said Davis. "The cost to mail the postcard is worth the investment when neighbors come out to participate."

Result: The event started small but has grown to more than 450 residents annually. SHNA has seen a direct result in membership growth, reporting an average of 30 to 40 memberships paid at the event annually and an average of 100 residents at the quarterly neighborhood association meetings.

"The best result is that we see neighbors coming out to embrace the neighborhood," said Davis. "You need to have a committed board to carry out the work and ensure you include activities for everyone."

Polk County Betterment Grant funding is used to support Neighbors Night Out.

Learn More: A cost-effective way to send mail to all residents is through the United States Postal Service's Every Door Direct Mail® program. This service allows the neighborhood association to send flyers, postcards, and other flat mail up to 3.3 ounces at a reduced rate to every mailing address within the neighborhood's boundaries. Read the **Communications** section of the Toolkit to learn more.

Connect: Gain more insight by contacting the Southwestern Hills Neighborhood Association at https://findneighborhoods.dsm.city/.

IDEAS IN ACTION

Beaverdale Home improvement Fair Connects Home Programs and Local Contractors

Challenge: Residents within the boundaries of the Beaverdale Neighborhood Association (BNA) became eligible for Neighborhood Finance Corporation (NFC) home improvement loans in 2011. BNA sought to promote the availability of NFC programs to complete home improvement projects.

Solution: The BNA organized the first Beaverdale Home Improvement Fair in 2011. It began as an event that featured NFC and contractors from a variety of trades. Residents could ask NFC questions about its programs and identify contractors to get project bids. The first Fair was so successful that BNA hosted three more over a two-year period.

After an event hiatus, BNA revived and expanded the Fair in 2023. The Fair included booth spaces for NFC, Invest DSM, and the City of Des Moines' Block Challenge Grant Program, along side 16 local contractors.

Each free two-hour event was held at the Northwest Community Center from 6:00–8:00 p.m. On average, more than 100 residents attended and learned about home improvement grants and forgivable loans, then discussed project needs with contractors.

The Fair was marketed through a variety of communication channels including: flyers at local businesses, emails to residents using Mailchimp, Facebook, the BNA website, and the BNA newsletter delivered to all residents. Additionally, contractors were willing to send emails and flyers to their customer list and post event information on their social media.

Result: The result of the Fair includes residents bringing improvement dollars into the neighborhood. Additionally, the event focuses on local contractors and supports those businesses within and near the neighborhood.

Connect: Gain more insight by contacting the Beaverdale Neighborhood Association at https://findneighborhoods.dsm.city/.

IDEAS IN ACTION

Fairground Neighborhood Association and DMFD Collaborate for Trunk or Treat

Challenge: Fairground Neighborhood Association (FNA) and the Des Moines Fire Department on Dean Avenue were seeking new ways to collaborate.

Solution: A Trunk or Treat event was established on Beggars Night. Neighbors are recruited to set up decorated vehicles and hand out candy in the Fire Department's parking lot. Each vehicle supplies its own treats. The Fire Department brings out a truck and lets kids look inside and learn about fire safety. FNA distributes its newsletter and a postcard to build awareness of the organization. An estimated 100 kids stop by the event with their parents.

"It's a great way to get neighbors off of their front porch and to come together for the kids in the community," said Tina Payton, FNA leader.

Result: As a result, FNA has seen a greater awareness of the neighborhood association and increased interest in participation. FNA plans to grow the Trunk or Treat event by recruiting more vehicles and promoting the event earlier.

"It's a fun event and a great way to collaborate with the fire department," said Payton. "We want to keep building this community event."

Connect: Gain more insight by contacting the Fairground Neighborhood Association at https://findneighborhoods.dsm.city/.

IDEAS IN ACTION

North of Grand Experiences Increase in Volunteerism through Focused Effort to Build Email List

Challenge: Like many neighborhood associations, the North of Grand Neighborhood Association (NOG) was mostly dormant during the pandemic. When it was safe to meet again, NOG focused on resident re-engagement and made an ambitious goal: to collect one email address for every household within the neighborhood's boundaries.

Solution: "The first step is to sit down and ask, 'where are we interfacing with North of Grand residents,'" said Jim Stavneak, NOG leader. "This is a focused effort."

NOG canvasses the neighborhood with flyers for the quarterly and annual meetings. When residents arrive, NOG ensures email addresses are collected from every attendee. Additionally, the neighborhood association hosts a table at block parties and National Night Out. When a resident provides an email address at these events, they receive a ticket and are entered into a drawing to receive gift cards from area restaurants.

Board members also ask for email addresses when they see neighbors out in the neighborhood.

"We literally ask at every opportunity," said Stavneak.

Result: There are approximately 350 households within NOG's boundaries. Within one year, 1/3 of the email addresses have been collected.

"We have seen an uptick in volunteering as a result of sending relevant communications to confirmed email addresses," said Stavneak.

NOG reports that participation in the I-235 Clean-Up Day doubled, and four new neighbors expressed interest in board leadership. NOG also reports increased engagement with the board as residents talk about neighborhood improvements.

Connect: Gain more insight into by contacting the North of Grand Neighborhood Association at https://findneighborhoods.dsm.city/.

IDEAS IN ACTION

Union Park's Spark UP Hosts PorchFest DSM

Challenge: Spark Up Union Park (Spark UP) is a group of Union Park residents that focuses on creating community events that support the Union Park Neighborhood Association (UPNA). The Spark UP committee wanted to bring neighbors out into the neighborhood and celebrate Union Park's unique identity.

Solution: PorchFest is a national movement that connects local musicians with a porch where they can perform while residents stop, listen, and visit with neighbors. This grass-roots movement began in Ithaca, New York, and has spread across the United States and Canada. The idea for PorchFest DSM stemmed from Dave and Anne Ducharme-Jones, local musicians, who performed at the KC PorchFest.

"We were approached with this idea before the pandemic," said Jack Daugherty, UPNA leader. "It was felt that Union Park would be a perfect place to hold this type of event. When it was safe to meet again, we pursued the idea."

On the event website, (www.porchfestdsm.org) PorchFest DSM is described as "a rolling music festival held on the welcoming front porches of the residents of Union Park."

In its first year (2022), the event featured 17 local musicians playing on 17 beautiful porches all within walking distance and zigzagging across the Union Park neighborhood. Indie, jazz, folk rock, rockabilly, and blues artists could be found playing one-hour sets. Set times were scheduled so that porches were within walking distance, but not so close that there were competing concerts.

Result: An estimated 600+ people attended the event. Additionally, Des Moines' media outlets covered the event including We Are 5 Local Iowa News, KCCI News, and Iowa Public Radio.

"It was a big team effort, but we recognized each other's strengths," said Daugherty. "We broke the event into teams, and everyone contributed."

As an example, a team of four canvassed the neighborhood looking for porch hosts. Hosts provided a porch, a place to plug in equipment, and space on their lawn for neighbors to sit and listen. Another team solicited local bands, while others focused on marketing, scheduling, and event merchandise.

"What we learned is just do it," said Daugherty. "Have an event, only do what you know you can do, and keep it simple. Once you start and gain momentum, you can make it better next year."

Polk County Betterment Grant funding was used to support this event.

Additionally, Spark UP solicited sponsors including Iowa State Bank, Neighborhood Development Corporation, and Captain Roy's.

Connect: Spark UP plans to organize and host PorchFest DSM in Union Park annually. If other neighborhood associations would like to organize a PorchFest on the same day, Spark UP leaders are available to help organizers get started. Contact Jack Daugherty, Union Park president, at info@unionparkdsm.com.

IDEAS IN ACTION

Gray's Woods Neighborhood Association Builds Relationships, Membership through Door Knocking

Challenge: The Gray's Woods Neighborhood Association (GWNA) mailed over 700 meeting notices to residents but did not see an increase in meeting attendance.

Solution: GWNA launched a door knocking initiative to personally reach out and invite residents to meetings and events.

"We decided the only way to grow was to get on a personal level and start talking with residents," said Steve Laws, GWNA leader. "It's exciting to meet people and find out what they are up to and their concerns for the neighborhood."

While door knocking, GWNA distributes information important to the neighborhood including SCRUB flyers, handouts for resources, and information from previous meetings.

"We try to meet people where they are at and offer resources," said Laws. "We found out one neighbor needed to have a tree removed and needed financial assistance. We were able to connect the neighbor to Neighborhood Finance Corporation, which provided funding for the tree removal. The neighbor is happy and now knows they can contact GWNA for help."

Result: Building personal relationships has directly impacted meeting attendance.

"We went from a handful to a room full of attendees at our most recent meeting," shared Laws. "The room at Four Mile Community Center was full.

"Door knocking may not be comfortable, but it's effective," continued Laws. "It takes two to build a relationship and for us that's the neighborhood association and the neighbors. When we take time to build that bond, residents feel welcomed to attend."

Connect: Gain more insight by contacting the Gray's Woods Neighborhood Association at https://findneighborhoods.dsm.city/.

IDEAS IN ACTION

Mondamin Presidential Neighborhood Association's Flower Garden Provides Space for Relaxation

Challenge: The Mondamin Presidential Neighborhood Association (MPNA) acquired a vacant lot on the corner of 19th Street and College Avenue. Neighborhood leaders wanted to create a welcoming entry point into the neighborhood.

Solution: Terri Mitchell, MPNA leader, took a Master Gardener class. As part of the class, she designed a garden space for the vacant lot.

"Everyone pitched in to help," said Mitchell. "We received donations from the community. The City provided flowers and landscapers donated a lot of materials and supplies. Several community members from across the City donated plants."

Today, the garden includes a main flower garden, a butterfly garden, a wildflower garden, ornamental grasses, a Hosta bed, and a rose bed. It also includes bird houses painted by the neighborhood children, two donated deer, and two benches.

"There is a lot more to the garden than what you see when you are driving by," said Mitchell.

Volunteers from the neighborhood help take care of the garden. Additionally, Habitat for Humanity and Rock the Block volunteers have assisted in planting and maintenance.

"Through Rock the Block, we had volunteers from Walmart help maintain the garden," said Mitchell. "They also donated rakes and a lawn mower. It's a project for everybody."

Result: The garden has instilled neighborhood pride and provides a peaceful retreat.

"The benches in the garden are used all the time," said Mitchell. "A lot of seniors sit in the garden and relax, and people waiting for the bus often sit on the garden benches. One grandfather in the neighborhood brings his grandkids and shows them around.

"We also put up seasonal decorations," continued Mitchell. "People stop and take photos. Kids are involved in caring for the garden. There is a lot of neighborhood pride."

Additionally, neighbors who help in the garden receive extra plants or plant splits as a thank you. This drives beautification efforts throughout the neighborhood.

Connect: Gain more insight by contacting the Mondamin Presidential Neighborhood Association at https://findneighborhoods.dsm.city/.

IDEAS IN ACTION

River Woods Forms Relationship with School and Discovers New Path to Connect with Renters

Challenge: River Woods Neighborhood Association (RWNA) contacted River Woods Elementary School's parent teacher association and asked how RWNA could support the school. A long-standing, collaborative relationship was formed.

Solution: Over the years, RWNA has met the needs of students, families, and teachers by hosting the following programs:

- Santa Clause visits at the school. RWNA coordinates a visit from Santa and serves hot chocolate, cookies, and popcorn while kids visit with Santa. The school's youth chorus leads a sing-along of holiday songs.
- Back to School Welcome. RWNA serves treats to students and families while students meet their teachers.
- Parent/Student Night. At this event, parents attend classes and students participate in activities. RWNA has a table at the event where volunteers distribute giveaways and information about the neighborhood association.
- Teacher Appreciation. RWNA brings snacks and treats for the teachers.

Additionally, the River Woods Elementary School principal attends RWNA's quarterly meetings and provides insight and updates on the school's activities.

Result: The strong relationship between RWNA and River Woods Elementary School has provided better community connections and more awareness of the neighborhood association.

"Partnering with the school is a great way to connect with all neighborhood families, including renters," said Denise Benda, RWNA leader.

"Call the school and ask to speak with the principal or attend a PTA meeting," continued Benda. "Ask 'what are the current needs?' and then fill those gaps."

Connect: Gain more insight by contacting the River Woods Neighborhood Association at https://findneighborhoods.dsm.city/.

IDEAS IN ACTION

Salisbury Oaks Neighborhood Association Increases Membership, Neighborhood Awareness through Annual Garage/Plant Sale

Challenge: The Salisbury Oaks Neighborhood Association (SONA) wanted to encourage more neighbors to socialize and build awareness of the neighborhood for potential residents.

Solution: SONA launched the annual Garage/Plant sale, now a 17-year tradition in the neighborhood.

"This event has existed for many years and Des Moines metro residents look forward to it," said Mark Pritchard, SONA leader. "We receive calls from the surrounding neighborhoods asking us when the garage/plant sale will be held."

The event is typically held the second Saturday in May and any SONA member can participate and sell items. Event planning begins three months in advance. The board includes information in its quarterly newsletter and places yard signs around the neighborhood with information on how to sign up.

SONA members can sell individually or host a multi-family sale in one driveway. During the sign-up process, participants are asked to categorize the items they are selling: antiques, toys, housewares, kids clothing, furniture, etc. The SONA board creates a map of the homes participating. On one side of the map is a list of addresses and categories of items sold, and the other side is an actual map pinpointing the location of the sales. Maps are available at each home participating, that way those shopping can pick up a map at their first stop.

Additionally, the board sells plants and herbs at the SONA community garden at 42nd Street and Tonawanda. Plants/herbs are donated by members. Funds from this portion of the event are used to maintain and add to the community garden throughout the year.

SONA manages the marketing of the annual Garage/Plant sale through social media and yard signs strategically placed in the neighborhood, including yard signs in the yards of those participating.

Result: "This is a great event that brings our neighborhood together," said Pritchard. "Members get to know each other, membership in SONA increases, and we bring awareness to our great neighborhood.

"Homes sell fast here," continued Pritchard. "They generally sell by word-of-mouth and when people leave, they do not move too far away. The garage/plant sale has helped to build a strong community."

Connect: Gain more insight by contacting the Salisbury Oaks Neighborhood Association at https://findneighborhoods.dsm.city/.

IDEAS IN ACTION

Waveland Park Neighborhood Association Distributes Quarterly Newsletter to Every Household

Challenge: The Waveland Park Neighborhood Association (WPNA) aimed to distribute its quarterly newsletter to every household while balancing budget limitations.

Solution: The WPNA board implemented a two-prong approach to ensure every household received the quarterly newsletter while working within budget constraints.

First, WPNA transitioned the newsletter printing to the Polk County Print Shop. The Polk County Print Shop is operated in support of Polk County offices and provides cost-effective printing solutions to neighborhood associations.

A guide to working with the Polk County Print Shop is available in the Templates section.

Next, WPNA established volunteer block captains who hand deliver the newsletter to each household.

"Our newsletter editor oversees the production including writing, layout, print, and distribution through the block captain," said Nick Coleman, WPNA leader. "When the newsletters are printed, our editor picks them up. She invites everyone to her home for a social gathering and to pick up the newsletters. Block captains are expected to deliver newsletters within one week."

Each block captain delivers newsletters to 100–200 households, which takes about 1.5 hours of walking the neighborhood. Newsletters are taped to doors or placed in door handles. Note: postal regulations prohibit delivering mailable matter not bearing postage to a mailbox. USPS regulations do not govern what can be placed in a mail slot or at a front door. (Source: https://faq.usps.com/s/article/Restrictions-for-attaching-flyers-posters-etc-to-a-mailbox)

Result: Ensuring newsletters reach every household has resulted in increased membership and event participation.

"We see an uptick in membership checks in our PO box after newsletters are delivered," shared Coleman. "We also see an increase in attendance at our events like National Night Out.

"The newsletter is part of the branding process for WPNA," continued Coleman. "It's no longer a question of if we will distribute a newsletter, we just do it every quarter. Next, we will explore an added monthly update that will be sent digitally."

Learn More about print communications and cost-saving strategies in the Communications section of the Toolkit.

Resource: Download the Print Communications Handout from the November 2023 Neighborhood Leadership Workshop to learn more.

Connect: Gain more insight by contacting the Waveland Park Neighborhood Association at https://findneighborhoods.dsm.city/.

IDEAS IN ACTION

Neighborhood Cookout Increases Participation in the Waveland Woods Neighborhood Association

Challenge: The Waveland Woods Neighborhood Association (WWNA) experienced a decline in its monthly membership meetings. Often, the same core members were attending. WWNA leaders felt the organization was not living its mission to build community.

Solution: WWNA transitioned its monthly meetings to quarterly meetings tied to an event. With this new format, WWNA launched the annual Neighborhood Cookout.

The premise of the Neighborhood Cookout is simple:

1. Find a street that lends itself to easy foot traffic.

   "People weren't sure what it was going to be, so location is key," said Joe Judge, WWNA leader. "Make sure the location is highly visible so people can walk or drive by and check it out before committing."

2. Set-up tents and yard games in neighbors' yards.
3. Place a grill at the end of a driveway and have a volunteer "grill master" ready to grill.
4. Keep the food simple. WWNA purchased burgers, brats, vegetarian options, and all the fixings. The neighborhood association also supplied a watermelon salsa, chips, water, and juice boxes. Neighbors made cookies.

WWNA markets the event through its quarterly newsletter, distributed to all 377 households in the neighborhood's boundaries, and by word-of-mouth.

"We create a lot of excitement just by word-of-mouth," said Judge. "People are more likely to attend when they know others are attending."

In the final 30 minutes of the Cookout, WWNA holds a business meeting.

"Most people stay, and we have a good crowd for the business meeting," shared Judge. "We have a meeting agenda and stayed focused. A 30-minute meeting allowed neighbors to stay engaged."

Result: Of the 377 households in the neighborhood, approximately 55 residents attend the annual Neighborhood Cookout.

"After the first cookout, people came up to me for several weeks thanking the neighborhood association for holding an event and saying it was a great party," said Judge. "It helped us achieve our ultimate goal of getting to know neighbors. And it helped us build momentum for future events."

Connect: Gain more insight by contacting the Waveland Woods Neighborhood Association at https://findneighborhoods.dsm.city/.

IDEAS IN ACTION

Chautauqua Park's Progressive Dinner Fosters Community and Pride in Historic Homes

Challenge: Chautauqua Park Neighborhood Association (CPNA) has two key characteristics: (1) its historic homes and (2) its size. At 110 households, it is one of the smallest neighborhoods in Des Moines.

Solution: "Our neighbors are drawn to the neighborhood because of its history and size," said Lindsey Azizeh, CPNA leader. "We are social, and we like to talk about the history of our homes. The Progressive Dinner allows us to do both—we get to know each other while appreciating the inside of each other's homes."

The Progressive Dinner is simple:

1. CPNA looks for at least three (3) hosts to open their homes. There is a host for the appetizers, one for the main dishes, and one for desserts.
2. CPNA works with the hosts to pick a date for the dinner. Generally, the date is in December when homes are decorated with lights and holiday decorations.
3. CPNA provides funding to each host to purchase paper products: napkins, plates, disposable cups, and silverware.
4. The Progressive Dinner is marketed through a printed flyer which is hand-delivered to each home as well as signs posted in yards throughout the neighborhood. The flyer includes event information and a QR code to RSVP and sign up to bring an appetizer, main dish, or dessert to share.

"It's really a potluck with crockpots on the countertop," said Azizeh. "There is nothing formal about it and we work to make it easy for the hosts."

The Progress Dinner schedule allows neighbors to come and go as their schedules permit and provides a 15-minute window to walk to the next home.

- Appetizers are served at the first home from 5:00–6:00 p.m.
- The main dish is served at the second home from 6:15–7:15 p.m.
- And dessert is served from 7:30–8:30 p.m.

Result: "The Progressive Dinner builds community and creates recognition for CPNA," shared Azizeh. "We want to create an environment where neighbors feel comfortable having conversations in their homes."

"This is when you can say, I'm your neighbor. These are my kids. I love your decorations," continued Azizeh. "It allows us to create community outside of our CPNA meetings where you can sometimes feel rushed."

The hurdle to a Progressive Dinner is finding hosts, shared Azizeh. She offered encouragement.

"It's easier than most people make it," said Azizeh. "This year, we found success by looking to board members and committee folks who were eager to open their homes. The neighborhood association can offset the expense of the supplies and communicate clearly with hosts and neighbors. You don't need a formal structure. All you need is an open home, food, and people."

Connect: Gain more insight by contacting the Chautauqua Park Neighborhood Association at https://findneighborhoods.dsm.city/.

IDEAS IN ACTION

Ingersoll Park's Summer Happy Hours Create Deeper Neighborhood Roots

Challenge: As a smaller neighborhood association, with approximately 300 households, the Ingersoll Park Neighborhood Association (IPNA) wanted to increase socialization opportunities in an already close-knit community.

Solution: IPNA launched Summer Happy Hours, an idea that stemmed from a resident who moved to Des Moines from a larger community.

"Scale is the key," said Nathan Riggle, IPNA leader. "A happy hour is a right-sized event for this size of neighborhood."

IPNA holds Summer Happy Hours in June, July, and August. The event is held on a Friday from 5:00–7:00 p.m. in a host neighbor's backyard. The host provides snacks for everyone, and neighbors bring drinks to share. Happy Hours are kid-friendly events.

"IPNA has a reliable email communication system with neighbors reading and responding to emails," said Riggle. "We put out a call looking for three volunteers to host in June, July, and August. The host volunteers their yard and snacks and IPNA markets the event to the neighborhood."

Result: An average of 20–30 neighbors attend each Happy Hour event.

"There is increased neighborhood awareness and networking with neighbors," said Riggle. "People who attend are very dialed into the neighborhood. You can tell there is a lot of great networking growth happening."

Summer Happy Hours remain on IPNA's social events calendar.

"After two years, we know the event is sustainable," said Riggle. "We are looking at how we can offer similar events in fall and spring.

"Social events are really important to neighborhoods but figure out what works best for your neighborhood," continued Riggle. "We know that IPNA has a unique structure for Summer Happy Hours. Don't get frustrated if a particular event doesn't work."

Connect: Gain more insight by contacting the Ingersoll Park Neighborhood Association at https://findneighborhoods.dsm.city/.

IDEAS IN ACTION

Woodland Heights Organization Plants a Streetscape Salsa Garden

Opportunity: A Woodland Heights Organization (WHO) neighbor noticed empty flower beds along Ingersoll Avenue and sowed a few tomato seeds. The seeds–and an idea–grew into a streetscape salsa garden and collaborative opportunity among WHO, The Avenues of Ingersoll & Grand, and Eat Greater Des Moines.

Solution: Lauren Kollauf, Executive Director of The Avenues of Ingersoll & Grand, noticed the tomato plants growing and embraced the idea of an edible streetscape. Kollauf connected WHO and Eat Greater Des Moines.

"The three organizations partnered to get two large planter beds going," said Cameron Gale, WHO leader.

Tomatoes, peppers, and green onions were planted, and signs were posted to let the public know that picking and eating the produce is free.

"Eat Greater Des Moines donates the plants, and The Avenues donates signs and marketing," said Gale. "WHO neighbors donate tomato cages, and we focus on maintaining the garden and end-of-season clean up."

Result: WHO notes an increased level of participation among neighbors.

"We have a lot of neighbors who like growing food," said Gale. "This allows them to do something they find valuable and is outside of attending regularly scheduled meetings."

Gale stated that the streetscape garden is easy work as long as a few neighbors are willing to volunteer. He shared that it takes one to two hours a year to plant, and one to two hours to clean up.

"The public does their part by making sure all of the fresh produce is picked," joked Gale.

Additionally, WHO holds a popular salsa contest at the neighborhood picnic which brings some awareness to the salsa garden.

"It's worth the time to be visible in the neighborhood and to provide a service to those who may not have the space to grow food," said Gale.

Connect: Gain most insight by contacting the Woodland Heights Organization at https://findneighborhoods.dsm.city/.

IDEAS IN ACTION

Capitol Park Hosts Annual Dia de los Muertos Celebration

Challenge: The elementary school within Capitol Park Neighborhood Association's (CPNA) boundaries reports more than 60 percent of students speak Spanish as a first language. With an understanding of the community's make-up, CPNA sought to create leadership opportunities and community connection with neighbors who speak Spanish as a first language.

Solution: In 2017, Día de los Muertos was created to be an annual festival with a cultural and educational perspective. The event is typically organized by neighbors in the Latino community to ensure the event is genuine. Día de los Muertos includes a food truck, commemorative altars, piñatas, face painting, cultural dancers, a bilingual DJ, a catrina/catrino costume contest, and an event favorite–Mexican hot chocolate and pan de muerto, a traditional Mexican sweet bread.

Additionally, there are booths from social service organizations, businesses, and vendors who want to reach culturally specific audiences. Staff from the East Side Library donates interactive kid's crafts and materials to help others learn more about the Day of the Dead.

The event is promoted through email, Facebook, direct door mailers, and flyers handed out at the elementary school's trunk or treat event. All event marketing is in English and Spanish.

"Día le los Muertos has a fall party feel and is truly inclusive of all neighbors," said Chelsea Lepley, CPNA leader. "Attending neighborhood meetings is not a measure of how much people care. This event connects neighbors.

"Representation is important," continued Lepley. "If this neighborhood is putting its effort and resources into something that is championed by Latino neighbors, then we are demonstrating inclusiveness. It's a huge opportunity to celebrate, learn, and display diversity."

Result: Día de los Muertos has grown annually, with more than 200 attendees participating. During the event, CPNA focuses on growing its email and communications list. One creative approach is giving everyone a free ticket for a taco from the food truck if they provide an email address.

"We use email addresses to keep the community informed on upcoming e vents and activities," said Lepley.

The goal is to continue to grow the event through community connections and increase the awareness of and volunteerism for the neighborhood.

Connect: Gain more insight by contacting the Capitol Park Neighborhood Association at https://findneighborhoods.dsm.city/.

IDEAS IN ACTION

Merle Hay Neighborhood Association Keeps Kids Warm

Challenge: The Merle Hay Neighborhood Association (MHNA) noticed elementary students attending school without warm winter clothing.

"Our neighborhood is diverse and has families settling here from other countires," said Kathy Battles, MNHA leader. "Many families have never experienced an Iowa winter. In my granddaughter's preschool, kids were coming to school wrapped in blankets. We had to do something."

Solution: MNHA started the Keep the Kids Warm winter clothing drive. At the MHNA October annual meeting, the organization collects money and *new* winter clothing donations.

"The key is that this clothing drive focuses on new clothing," said Battles. "Every kid deserves to receive nice, new, warm clothing."

Following the October annual meeting, a group of volunteers uses the donated funds to purchase winter clothing.

"We go out and scout department stores, Costco, and Sam's and look for the best deals we can find," said Battles. "We use our rewards, store points, and employee discounts to get the best bang for the dollars."

New coats, boots, stocking hats, gloves, snow pants, scarves, and mittens are delivered either to Hillis Elementary School or Moore Elementary School; both schools are in the MHNA boundaries and each school alternates when it receives the donations.

All clothing is delivered to the receiving school in early November before Thanksgiving break.

"A lot of times you see giving trees for these types of donations between Thanksgiving and the December holidays and donations are delivered after the holiday season when kids return to school," stated Battles. "But it's Iowa and it's cold in November. We work hard to get our donations delivered early."

Result: In the program's first year, MNHA collected $500 in donations.

"At the time, I worked at Younkers and used my 25% off discount to purchase coats, boots, hats, and gloves," explained Battles. "I was able to get $1,200 worth of clothing with that $500!"

Six years later, MHNA received $1,796 in donations. Additionally, neighborhood awareness has increased, and many neighbors make and donate fleece and knitted hats, gloves, and scarves.

Battles offers the following advice to those neighborhood associations that may want to start winter clothing drives:

1. Talk to the schools and find out if this is a viable idea. If it is, ask them what is needed.
2. Solicit businesses for cash or merchandise donations. Focus on locally owned stores as they are most likely to give back to the community.
3. Connect with neighborhood restaurants and ask if they will donate a portion of sales back to the neighborhood association. Battles shared that Applebee's on Merle Hay Road donated $468 in sales toward the winter clothing drive. Donations were made through Applebee's Together We Care Tuesday program.
4. Get the word out to neighbors so that everyone is watching for sales.
5. Ask for volunteers to do the shopping. Volunteers can sign up for rewards programs at stores throughout the year and use the rewards toward clothing purchases.
6. When shopping, keep the hangers. Schools can hang the clothing so that it's more convenient for them to distribute what is needed.
7. Request the school and Parent/Teacher Association to make social media posts to collect donations. It's a great opportunity to develop strong relationships with the schools.

IDEAS IN ACTION

8. Accept handmade items, such as hats, gloves, and scarves.

"The name of the program says it all," said Battles. "We are keeping kids warm. Whatever we can do to help children, then that's what we need to do."

Connect: Gain more insight by contacting the Merle Hay Neighborhood Association at https://findneighborhoods.dsm.city/.