

Neighborhood Association

New Member Orientation Guide

Part of the
NeighborWorks Pocatello
Neighborhood Association
Toolbox

A Resource for
Community Building and Engagement

Welcome!

Congratulations on taking the initiative to join a neighborhood association. Neighborhood Associations are a great asset to the community because they provide a space for the people of your neighborhood to come together and develop an idea of what the neighborhood should be. A neighborhood association provides a space for people to discuss shared concerns or identify areas for improvement, and develop and implement a plan to address the issue. The neighborhood association provides a space for neighbors to build relationships with one another that are necessary for collective action to be effective. Neighborhood Associations also provide a means for effective engagement within city government processes. You will find that participating in a Neighborhood Association can be a personally enriching experience, while also providing a better chance for making change in your community. This guide will help you better understand and navigate the processes and procedures of a Neighborhood Association.

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Who Members Are

All association members are volunteers, and there are many ways to volunteer—some requiring more time than others. Volunteers use personal expertise and talent to advance association goals and objectives, they help organize events, gather donations, and create and distribute communication materials—among other things.

A Neighborhood Association's bylaws are the governing rules of the organization. They help maintain consistency and organizational purpose when leadership changes. The bylaws define the association's:

- Purpose (what the organization is established to do)
- Boundaries (the area established to determine membership)
- Membership requirements (those beyond simply living in the neighborhood)
- Governing structure (descriptions of leadership positions and how they are chosen)
- How changes to the bylaws can be made

Other subject areas may also be covered in the bylaws. Ask neighborhood association leaders for a copy of the bylaws and become familiar with the purpose and processes they outline.

Bylaws

Structure

Neighborhood Associations have organizational characteristics that place a high value on member authority and give members the power to influence the direction of the organization. One of those organizational characteristics is the power structure.

While other organizations may have many levels within their power structure, neighborhood associations rarely have more than two levels.

This is important, as it is one of the safeguards that keep the association from devolving into a group that only serves the interests of neighborhood leaders.

A typical organizational structure might look something like this:

Higher Level: President/Chair, VP/VC, Secretary, and Treasurer. These positions may also be part of a Board of Directors which would also include committee chairs and other members. Members at this level play a bigger role in the decision making process (in that they help shape the options) but they also give more of their time to the association.

Lower Level: All other voting members of an association would be part of this level. They still have power but it is slightly less, as is their time commitment to the association.

Leading

As with any organization, Neighborhood Associations need leaders. Leaders commit time and energy beyond that of other members, to spearhead special projects or initiatives and guide the day-to-day work of the association. Neighborhood Associations need a large pool of qualified leaders to share leadership work and responsibilities, reducing the workload placed on any one leader. Technology has made it easier for leaders by increasing access to information and resources and making communication faster.

Leadership positions vary, as does the time commitment that they require. Being a leader may mean being the chair of a sub-committee and coordinating the efforts of sub-committee members to achieve a specific purpose. It may mean organizing volunteers at a neighborhood picnic to ensure that the event runs smoothly. The quantity and duration of time required by a leadership position will vary based on the task. Talk to Neighborhood Association leaders to determine if there is a leadership position that fits your interests and abilities.

President or Chairperson: The president is responsible for the overall leadership of the association and has many responsibilities relating to meetings, committee and chair appointment, organizational maintenance, and public image.

Vice President or Vice Chairperson: The vice president assists the president. They serve in an advisory capacity to the president, and also conduct meetings and duties of the president in their absence.

Secretary: The secretary takes minutes at meetings, manages communications, and keeps records.

Treasurer: The treasurer is responsible for the association's funds.

Leadership Position Descriptions

Meetings

Depending on the Neighborhood Association there may be more than one type of association meeting. Some neighborhood associations have a Board of Directors who meet regularly and conduct the day-to-day business of the associations and only hold general membership meetings a few times a year (often in conjunction with a social event). Other neighborhood associations meet once a month and invite everyone to attend. There are benefits and drawbacks to both styles, however, associations have typically based their meeting approach on what has worked best for members in the past. The meeting structure should be outlined in the association's bylaws.

If you have a specific neighborhood concern or issue that you would like to discuss with fellow members, meetings are a good place to do that. If there is a section on the agenda for new business or business from the floor, that would be the place to bring up the issue or concern. If your association operates in a different way, approach neighborhood association leaders and ask to have the concern or issue put on the meeting agenda.

Addressing Neighborhood Concerns

Conclusion

Being a part of a Neighborhood Association allows members to develop personally, and possibly professionally, while improving the neighborhood and community. Being a part of a Neighborhood Association requires time and effort, to varying degrees, but the effort typically results in improved neighborhood conditions and relationships.

Success will not always be quick, and the outcome of efforts might not be desirable, but perseverance is key for a Neighborhood Association to be effective. Neighborhood Associations build capacity through continued efforts and a growing membership base. These things take time but the rewards for the neighborhood and community will be worth it.

Together we will do great things.

For additional information or resources visit the
Neighborhood Association Toolbox
located on NeighborWorks Pocatello's website:
www.nwpocatello.org



POCATELLO

Serving Southeast Idaho

NeighborWorks® Pocatello is a progressive alliance between residents, business, and government that revitalizes targeted areas by promoting affordable housing and community pride through the establishment of healthy neighborhoods.

Services provided include:

Community Building

- Support Neighborhood Associations
- Facilitate special projects
- Support City and other group efforts

Education

- Homebuyer Education
- Financial Fitness
- Essentials of Homeownership

Tool Lending Library

- Rent garden and lawn tools

Housing

- Provide home repair loans
- Build and sell new homes
- Down payment closing cost assistance loans

Counseling

- Reverse Mortgage
- Credit Counseling
- Foreclosure Mitigation