

The **New Neighborhood**
Block Club Manual for
Constituents and Organizers

A Guide Book written and prepared by Dan Kleinman

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This belongs to



Block Club Organizer

What is: a Block Club

A block club is a group of people who live on certain blocks, or within a specific neighborhood area, who have organized to achieve shared goals for the betterment of their community.

They connect with each other to strengthen their neighborhood, sharing their ideas of what can be done and combining their talents to make it happen.

Block clubs can organize to save parks, plant gardens, and plan local greening efforts; they can organize to help their

local school, their local senior center, or local youth program; they can work with others to promote local businesses, help bring in new businesses, and keep their neighborhood vibrant.

Block clubs can organize to ensure accountable and transparent local government and create a powerful voice for the community.

A block club is the backbone of an organized neighborhood.

Why to start: different strokes

Block Clubs can be established

reactively: they can be formed in response to a cause or an event. This type of planning effectively addresses specific concerns in the community and can prioritize urgent matters that need immediate attention.

Block clubs can be formed **proactively.** They can be formed to further develop the community's strengths, building upon what the community has in an effort to address future needs.

“Different Strokes, Different Folks”

Neighborhoods may have different needs, and may find one type more useful than the other. Sometimes, a combination of both types may be better in organizing your block club.

It is useful to list all of your reasons to form a Block Club, as it will be helpful as you organize. You can use the next page as a guide.

Why to start: worksheet

Top 5 Reactive Reasons

Top 5 Proactive Reasons

How to start: the ABC's

It is key to remember that you cannot create a block club alone. A block club's constituents and members must have buy-in, stake, or interest in order for the block club to be effective and sustainable. Stakeholders must be activated, and built into a coalition.

A coalition is like an alliance: it should have mutual benefits for all partners involved.

To start, **activate** neighbors by engaging them in this same discussion. Share one or two of your ideas from the previous worksheet, and ask for their own ideas in return. Together, you can **build** partnerships that function as alliances to achieve shared goals in the neighborhood. Maintaining a network of these partnerships establishes an effective **coalition**.

“Activate by Building a Coalition.”

How to start: worksheet 1

List all stakeholders

Stakeholders

Who to start: anyone

Phone calls, door knocking, flyers, email lists, blogs, organization announcements, community meetings, church bulletin boards— use every tool possible to reach out to participants.

Introduce yourself and briefly explain what you would like to do. Ask for help and work with those who offer to work with you.

Example Outreach Phone Script

“Hello, my name is Dan Kleinman and I’m a local resident who would like to create a Block Club in our neighborhood. Would you be willing to meet with me to discuss organizing a block club?”

After the meeting....

“Thank you so much for meeting with me. Can you think of anyone else to include in our future meetings?”

Who to start: worksheet

Neighbor: _____	Neighbor: _____	Neighbor: _____	Neighbor: _____
Phone: _____	Phone: _____	Phone: _____	Phone: _____
Email: _____	Email: _____	Email: _____	Email: _____
Address: _____	Address: _____	Address: _____	Address: _____
Notes: _____	Notes: _____	Notes: _____	Notes: _____
_____	_____	_____	_____

Neighbor: _____	Neighbor: _____	Neighbor: _____	Neighbor: _____
Phone: _____	Phone: _____	Phone: _____	Phone: _____
Email: _____	Email: _____	Email: _____	Email: _____
Address: _____	Address: _____	Address: _____	Address: _____
Notes: _____	Notes: _____	Notes: _____	Notes: _____
_____	_____	_____	_____

Neighbor: _____	Neighbor: _____	Neighbor: _____	Neighbor: _____
Phone: _____	Phone: _____	Phone: _____	Phone: _____
Email: _____	Email: _____	Email: _____	Email: _____
Address: _____	Address: _____	Address: _____	Address: _____
Notes: _____	Notes: _____	Notes: _____	Notes: _____
_____	_____	_____	_____

Where to start: accessibility

Open to all

A block club should represent all of its members. In these beginning stages of forming a block club, it is important to bring everyone to the table, to begin with the precedence of inclusiveness.

This may start with one on one meetings, held independently, as a coalition grows and develops.

It is important to meet with all of the stakeholders to help promote engagement and participation.

Location, Location, Location

Locations of meetings should be at places easily accessed by those attending. More importantly, locations of meetings should be agreed upon by those attending in advance of the meeting. If someone agrees to where they will meet, they will be more likely to attend.

Friendly Incentives

A small budget or a local business donation can provide a few snacks and refreshments, such as coffee and donuts. These items can go a long way in letting your attendees know that they are appreciated.

Where to start: worksheet

Suggested guidelines

- Accessible location to accommodate distance for attendees
- Accessible location to accommodate transportation methods for attendees, such as parking and public transit
- Accessible time to accommodate the different schedules that the attendees may have be, and finding a time that can be agreed upon
- Accessible entrances and spaces

Location: _____	Location: _____
Phone: _____	Phone: _____
Email: _____	Email: _____
Address: _____	Address: _____
Times: _____	Times: _____
_____	_____

Location: _____	Location: _____
Phone: _____	Phone: _____
Email: _____	Email: _____
Address: _____	Address: _____
Times: _____	Times: _____
_____	_____

Location: _____	Location: _____
Phone: _____	Phone: _____
Email: _____	Email: _____
Address: _____	Address: _____
Times: _____	Times: _____
_____	_____

What's next: agendas

Once meetings grow to small gatherings of more than three or four people, it becomes important to structure the meetings with an agenda. **Agendas are tools for productivity.** They are like a meeting's to-do list. They help meetings stay on topic, accomplish goals, and value all participants time.

If the agenda is the to-do list of the group, then the group members need to be able to have their items added to it. It is best to agree upon agendas ahead of

time to promote participation and to promote equal opportunity to have an individual matter brought before the group.

An agenda is like a map for a meeting. It explains where the meeting will go and how it will get there. Without a map, it is easy to get lost. It also helps define a meeting's purpose. Agendas should be structured, but also flexible enough to encourage participation.

What's next: first agenda sample

The New Block Club
August 24, 7:00 PM
121 N. La Salle St.

AGENDA

1. Introductions
 - A. Name
 - B. Reason for joining
2. Discuss meeting rules
3. Discuss roles and action groups
 - A. Accountability Reports
4. Discuss mission statement
5. Schedule next meeting
 - A. Time
 - B. Location
6. Adjourn

What's next: sign in sheet

Neighbor: _____	Neighbor: _____	Neighbor: _____	Neighbor: _____
Phone: _____	Phone: _____	Phone: _____	Phone: _____
Email: _____	Email: _____	Email: _____	Email: _____
Address: _____	Address: _____	Address: _____	Address: _____
Notes: _____	Notes: _____	Notes: _____	Notes: _____
_____	_____	_____	_____

Neighbor: _____	Neighbor: _____	Neighbor: _____	Neighbor: _____
Phone: _____	Phone: _____	Phone: _____	Phone: _____
Email: _____	Email: _____	Email: _____	Email: _____
Address: _____	Address: _____	Address: _____	Address: _____
Notes: _____	Notes: _____	Notes: _____	Notes: _____
_____	_____	_____	_____

Neighbor: _____	Neighbor: _____	Neighbor: _____	Neighbor: _____
Phone: _____	Phone: _____	Phone: _____	Phone: _____
Email: _____	Email: _____	Email: _____	Email: _____
Address: _____	Address: _____	Address: _____	Address: _____
Notes: _____	Notes: _____	Notes: _____	Notes: _____
_____	_____	_____	_____

What's next: meeting guidelines

- One person speaks at a time.
- If many people are talking at once, the Facilitator can call on people in an order to speak one at a time.
- Everything needs to be said in a courteous and respectful manner.
- The Facilitator will try to keep one person (or one opinion) from dominating the discussion, making sure everyone gets a chance to speak.
- Group decisions are made by a vote, counted by the Facilitator.
- If one of these rules is broken, a member can ask for a correction or clarification by saying, "Point of Order!"
- *These rules are based of of Robert's Rules Of Order, Newly Revised

What's next: roles

Once meetings grow to small gatherings of more than three or four people, it becomes important to structure the meetings with specific roles.

Roles help promote accountability during the meeting. Having agreed upon, assigned roles during each meeting promotes engagement in a way that also promotes buy-in and shared responsibility.

While some groups may prefer to have set assigned roles for each person to keep for a certain duration, other groups may prefer to alternate or rotate the responsibilities.

Each block club should practice what works best for them. The best practices for meetings are the ones that promote both engagement and efficiency in the best way for that specific block club. It may take some experimenting to find what works best.

What's next: roles examples

Facilitator (Chair)

This person prepares the meeting agendas and runs the meetings according to agreed upon rules.

Assistant Facilitator (Secretary)

This person helps run the meeting by taking notes and assisting the facilitator with the agenda.

Fundraiser (Treasurer)

This person keeps track of the budget and fundraising efforts.

Member-at-large

This person represents their interests and contributes their opinions and talents to the benefit of group.

What's next: mission

A mission statement is the guide of the entire organization. It says why the organization has been formed, and what the organization sets out to do.

The mission statement should be specific so that it can provide direction, but it should be vague so that it can allow growth and development.

The mission statement is the foundation that the organization will build upon.

It may take a few tries until your organization develops a suitable mission statement. Because of its importance, it may be helpful to start brainstorming the mission statement at an early stage in your block club's development.

What's next: mission sample

“It is the mission of this organization, The New Block Club, to improve the quality of life, promote safety, and encourage community empowerment, for all who live, work, and play within our boundaries.”

It is the mission of this organization _____
to accomplish _____

_____, for all who live, work, and play within our boundaries.

What's next: action groups

Action Groups are committees. They have a clear and specific mission statement and purpose, and the members of the Action Group work as a team to achieve them.

Action Groups are the moving gears of a larger machine. Having agreed upon participation in Action Groups created to achieve specific goals not only creates a direct way for members to engage and participate in the block club's efforts, but it also promotes an efficient way to accomplish specific tasks.

By delegating specific tasks to Action Groups, the main meeting and general membership of the Block Club can stay on the topics of its own meeting agenda.

It then becomes important to expect accountability reports and updates from Action Groups during meetings.

Action Groups achieve the tasks that enable the Block Club to achieve its mission.

What's next: action group examples

Action Groups are created to affect change on specific areas of interest. To help facilitate these action groups, individuals can volunteer to be the group coordinators. Here's a few ideas:

- Public Safety Coordinator
- Senior Initiatives Coordinator
- Annual Block Party Coordinator
- Local Business Outreach Coordinator
- Gardening and Greening Coordinator
- Youth Initiatives Coordinator
- Community Education Coordinator
- Neighborhood Welcoming Committee

What's next: scheduling

Now that you have brought a group of neighbors together, be sure to find out when they can meet again.

Schedule the next meeting or gathering right away.

You and your fellow block club members will be able to start publicizing the next meeting right away.

You can use your contact list that you have already created to help reach out to

those who were not able to make the first meeting but might be able to make the next one.

Use every communication and organizing tool that is available.

What's next: bylaws

After a few successful meetings and the new group has agreed upon its mission, its use of roles, and its rules, it can be a good idea to formalize the new structure into a set of Bylaws.

The Block Club may want to form an action group, or a specific bylaws committee, to write the bylaws and propose them to the whole group.

Sustainability is the Lock

Bylaws are like the foundation for a building or the skeleton of a body. They

provide structure. That structure provides the map the Block Club will follow to achieve its mission. They provide sustainability, so if neighbors come and go, the Block Club still remains.

Flexibility is the key

Bylaws should also be flexible, allowing changes to be made. Block Clubs may need to adjust to changing community or organizational needs. Bylaws provide a route to follow, and it is sometimes it is necessary to adjust directions. Bylaws provide for a process to change directions.

What's next: bylaws sample

Article 1: The name of this group shall be *The New Block Club*.

Article 2: It is the mission of *The New Block Club* to improve the quality of life, promote safety, and encourage community empowerment for all who live, work, and play within our boundaries.

Article 3: The boundaries of this *The New Block Club* shall be First Street to the east, Fourth Street to the west, A Street to the south, and D street to the north.

Article 4: Anyone living or doing business within the boundaries may be a member of *The New Block Club*.

Article 5: *The New Block Club* shall meet every fourth Thursday of the month at 7:00PM at the local community center.

Article 6: There shall be a the following roles: Facilitator, who writes the agenda and runs the meetings according to the rules; Assistant Facilitator, who helps run the meetings by taking notes; and a Fundraiser, who keeps track of the budget and fundraising efforts. Additional roles may be created and assigned by the Facilitator. Each individual serving in a role shall serve in that role for 2 years.

Article 7: The roles mentioned in Article 6 shall be elected by the members of The New Block Club at the first meeting of the year every other year.

Article 8: These bylaws may be amended if a proposal is made in writing at a meeting and then approved of at the next meeting.

A closing thought

It may take some time before your version of *The New Block Club* takes its shape and form and finds its comfortable role in the community. However, if you are reading this, you have already completed one of the hardest steps: you've begun.

Dan Kleinman, Organizer

Do you have questions, comments, or a story to share?

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