



## Starting a Neighborhood Association

### What Makes a Successful Neighborhood Association?

It is important to remember that all neighborhood associations are different. Some are very large and encompass several hundred residences. Others are quite small and encompass one or two neighborhood blocks. Some neighborhood associations meet monthly. Others meet when a need arises. Despite the variety of neighborhood associations in Sunnyvale, there are several factors that contribute to the success of a Sunnyvale neighborhood association.

Successful Sunnyvale neighborhood associations generally do the following:

1. Establish clear geographic boundaries.
2. Develop a formal structure for their organization which usually consists of a President, Vice President, Secretary and Treasurer.
3. Draft by-laws which govern the association's operations.
4. Communicate effectively with neighbors through meetings, an association newsletter, and/or an email listserve.
5. Stay informed about issues, activities, and events within their neighborhood.
6. Plan ahead and make a yearly calendar of neighborhood meetings and events.
7. Attend the Sunnyvale Neighborhoods Quarterly Meeting to network with other neighborhood associations and City staff, and to share any insights, questions, concerns or issues.
8. Develop clear neighborhood goals and continually strive to achieve those goals.
9. Work cooperatively with the City to address neighborhood questions or issues. Invite Sunnyvale staff to attend their meetings to discuss topics of interest or concern.

### Why Start a Neighborhood Association in Sunnyvale?

Neighborhoods are the basic building blocks of community. There are many reasons why neighborhoods may want to organize, some of which are: to get to know your neighbors, to enhance the appearance of the neighborhood, to address a common concern, or to have a stronger voice in government. Generally, organizing your neighborhood will foster communication and interaction between neighbors and will help to boost neighborhood pride.

## How do I start a Neighborhood Association in Sunnyvale?

Below are suggested steps that you may wish to follow as you begin to build your neighborhood association:

1. Check the current map and neighborhood association listings to make sure there is not already a neighborhood association in your area.
2. Develop a core group of neighbors (5-10 people) who are committed to starting a neighborhood association in your area.
3. Set up an organizational meeting of the core group at a comfortable place, such as someone's house, or a nearby park building. Try to do outreach about the meeting to as many neighbors as possible. The initial meeting of the neighbors could result in:
  - An agreement to continue meeting to build neighborhood relationships;
  - A plan for a neighborhood event, such as a block party or an ice cream social;
  - The development of a list of issues that neighborhood residents want to discuss.
3. Identify the general purpose and mission statement of your neighborhood association. A mission statement explains why a group exists and what it hopes to accomplish. A group can revise and clarify its mission statement when/if it is deemed appropriate.
4. Determine boundaries for your association.  
Typically, boundaries are determined by streets, city limits, or natural features along the border of a neighborhood.
5. Develop a structure for your association: officers and bylaws.  
It is generally a good idea to elect officers – usually a President, Vice President, Secretary, and Treasurer. The association should also create bylaws – the rules governing an organization's internal operations, purpose of organization, membership information, terms of officers, committees, voting procedures, etc.
6. Set up a meeting schedule.  
A regular meeting schedule can provide great stability to a newly emerging organization. Association officers may wish to meet more frequently to keep updated on neighborhood needs. Meetings can be held at someone's home, at a nearby school multi-purpose room, faculty lounge, or park building.
7. Establish neighborhood goals.  
These goals help to identify which elements are of a priority to the neighborhood.
8. Get in touch with the City of Sunnyvale to let them know that you are forming a new neighborhood association to be added to the neighborhood association map and listings on the City of Sunnyvale and Sunnyvale Neighborhoods websites.

9. Come up with a plan to build support for your neighborhood association. Examples include:
  - Plan a block party
  - Organize a neighborhood watch program (City staff from the Department of Public Safety can assist you)
  - Develop a neighborhood newsletter to inform residents about local issues, report on meetings, attract members, and increase community pride
  - Invite guest speakers from the City to present at your meeting
  - Develop a neighborhood emergency preparedness plan (City staff from the Department of Public Safety can assist you)

**Benefits to Starting a Neighborhood Association:**

1. Assistance in securing City and community speakers for meetings.
2. Assistance in coordinating meetings with City staff or elected officials on issues of interest or concern to specific neighborhoods.
3. As City resources allow, free use of available park facilities for meetings and special events. The neighborhood association is required to reserve the facility, pick up/return key to the Community Center, and set up/take down chairs and tables used. (To facilitate neighborhood outreach, the association is encouraged to explore all options for meeting space, including individual homes, schools, churches, and other community locations).

In exchange for the free use of park building facilities, the association must assist with the distribution of appropriate City information to neighborhood association members. This includes information about upcoming community meetings, events, and other informational items. Distribution of information is accomplished through neighborhood association newsletters, email groups, or at the neighborhood association's meetings.

4. Opportunities for connecting with organizations that support Sunnyvale neighborhood associations.
5. Opportunities for networking with other Sunnyvale neighborhood associations. A Neighborhood Associations Quarterly Meeting is held for neighborhood leaders, and interested community members, to get together, share common concerns and issues, and learn about current City activities.

**For more information or assistance with forming a neighborhood association, contact Alisha Rodrigues, Community Services Coordinator, at [arodrigues@sunnyvale.ca.gov](mailto:arodrigues@sunnyvale.ca.gov) or 408-730-7343.**