

# THE NEW NEIGHBORHOOD BLOCK CLUB MANUAL

Prepared by Dan Kleinman, Organizer

[TheNeighborhoodFirst.org](http://TheNeighborhoodFirst.org)

~First Edition~

August 2011

# THIS BELONGS TO:

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**Block Club Organizer**

# ABOUT THIS MANUAL

Many committed individuals have been working on this manual for over a year. We all share the same goal: we want to help facilitate greater participation in our neighborhoods and communities.

This first edition is meant to be a starting point for us to perfect together.

Many of us have great ideas, and the best people to talk to about our neighborhood is us, our neighbors.

Please share your block club organizing experience with us and offer any feedback you may have regarding this organizing manual. You can visit [www.TheNeighborhoodFirst.org](http://www.TheNeighborhoodFirst.org) or find TheNeighborhoodFirst on Facebook.

Together, we will make this even better. Let's keep this going.

-Dan Kleinman, Organizer

# WHAT IS A BLOCK CLUB?

A block club is a group of people who live on specific blocks, or within a neighborhood area, and have organized to improve the quality of life in 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 business, 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.

# TWO DIFFERENT TYPES

## **Type (A)**

Block clubs can be established retroactively: they can be formed in response to something. This type of planning effectively addresses specific concerns in the community and can prioritize urgent matters that need immediate attention.

## **Type (B)**

Block clubs can be formed proactively. They can be formed to further develop the community's strengths, building upon what the community already has and addressing needs before they become an urgent matter.

**Different Folks - Different Strokes:** Neighborhoods may have different needs, and may find one type more useful than the other. Sometimes, a combination of both types may be helpful.



# HOW TO: A CHECK LIST

## **Initial Outreach**

- Identify neighbors.
- Invite everyone.
- Use every tool.

## **First Meeting**

- Follow an agenda.
- Delegate roles.
- Don't give up.

## **Bylaws**

- Organize a structure.
- Build a strong foundation.
- Allow flexibility.

## **Regular meetings**

- Set an agenda.
- Set a time and place.
- Repeat!

# INITIAL OUTREACH

## **A. Identify Neighbors**

The best place to start is with your fellow neighbors. Identify stakeholders such as elected officials, local faith-leaders, local school principals, and neighbors. Share your ideas and listen to theirs. Together, you can build partnerships.

## **B. Invite Everyone**

After meeting with key partners, find a time and place to hold your first meeting. Block clubs are supposed to represent their whole area. Be inclusive and open, and invite everyone to attend.

## **C. Use Every Tool**

Everyone is invited, so everyone needs to know! Hang flyers, knock on doors, make phone calls, and post on blogs. Ask your neighborhood partners to help.

# INITIAL OUTREACH

## **Example Outreach Email or Letter**

Dear Neighbor,

My name is Dan Kleinman and I'm a community member who would like to create a Block Club in our neighborhood. Would you be willing to meet with me to discuss the potential of organizing a block club? Please let me know.

Sincerely,

Dan Kleinman

773-555-5449

[dan.kleinman@me.com](mailto:dan.kleinman@me.com)



# INITIAL OUTREACH

## **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 to discuss the potential of organizing a block club?”

## **After the meeting....**

“Thank you so much for meeting with me. Can you think of anyone else that I should meet with?”

# INITIAL OUTREACH

**This page can help keep track of your contacts.**

Neighbor's Name or Organization:

\_\_\_\_\_

Phone #: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Notes: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Neighbor's Name or Organization:

\_\_\_\_\_

Phone #: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Notes: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Neighbor's Name or Organization:

\_\_\_\_\_

Phone #: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Notes: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Neighbor's Name or Organization:

\_\_\_\_\_

Phone #: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Notes: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

# HOLD FIRST MEETING

## **A. Where**

Because your block club is open to everyone, your meeting should be located somewhere that is accessible to everyone. Your local library might be a good location, or a local business may let you use their space, too. Don't be afraid to ask.

## **B. When**

Not everyone has the same work, school, or family schedule, so it's important to consider a time that is most fair to your neighbors. Ask your neighbors for advice about when would be the best time to meet.

## **C. Why**

Not everyone lives in the neighborhood for the same reason. Talk to your neighborhood partners to structure your first meeting so that everyone can contribute and receive something of value, too.

# HOLD FIRST MEETING

**You can use a letter like this one to help publicize your first meeting.**

Dear Neighbor,

Throughout our city, neighbors are coming together and organizing groups called Block Clubs. We can work together to make our neighborhood even better by forming our own block club to represent us. Please meet with me and other neighbors on Tuesday, August 24, 7:00 PM at 121 N LaSalle so we can discuss how to form our own block club. Feel free to contact me if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Dan Kleinman

773-555-5449

[dan.kleinman@me.com](mailto:dan.kleinman@me.com)

# HOLD FIRST MEETING

**Here is what your flyer may look like.**

## JOIN OUR BLOCK CLUB!

*Let's Work Together  
to Make Our Neighborhood  
Even Better.*

Tuesday, August 24, 7:00 PM  
121 N Lasalle

Contact Dan Kleinman  
773-555-5449  
[dan.kleinman@me.com](mailto:dan.kleinman@me.com)



# HOLD FIRST MEETING

## **1. Follow an Agenda**

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.

## **2. Delegate Roles**

At the first meeting, it is good to start discussing roles. Some block clubs may want to have clear roles, like a President and a Secretary, to help facilitate progress. Other groups may find a more casual approach better. It is important to find what is right for your group.

## **3. Don't Give Up**

Some groups may grow slowly while others may grow faster than planned. Don't get frustrated, and don't give up.

# HOLD FIRST MEETING

**Here is what your first agenda may look like.**

The New Block Club  
August 24, 7:00 PM  
121 N Lasalle

## Agenda

1. Introductions  
-(name, reason for joining)
2. Discuss Roles and Action Groups
4. Discuss Meeting Rules
3. Discuss Mission Statement
5. Schedule Next Meeting Time

# HOLD FIRST MEETING

**You can use a sign in sheet at the meetings.**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone #: \_\_\_\_\_

Email # \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone #: \_\_\_\_\_

Email # \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone #: \_\_\_\_\_

Email # \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

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Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone #: \_\_\_\_\_

Email # \_\_\_\_\_

# HOLD FIRST MEETING

**Discussing expectations of participants and delegating roles might be a good place to start. Here's a few 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 moderator.

## **Fundraiser (Treasurer)**

This person keeps track of the budget and fundraising efforts.

## **Activities Coordinator**

This person plans the organization activities, like block parties.

# HOLD FIRST MEETING

**It might be a good idea to start to discuss Action Groups. 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

Gardening and Greening  
Coordinator

Senior Initiatives Coordinator

Youth Initiatives Coordinator

Annual Block Party  
Coordinator

Community Education  
Coordinator

Local Business Outreach  
Coordinator



# HOLD FIRST MEETING

**It is helpful to set a few guidelines to help keep discussion fair.**

- 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

# HOLD FIRST MEETING

## **Your mission, if you choose to accept...**

A mission statement is the guide of the entire organization. It says why the organization has been formed, and what the organization will do. It 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 at least start brainstorming the mission statement at the very first meeting.

*“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.”*

# HOLD FIRST MEETING

## **Schedule Your Next Meeting!**

Now that you have brought a group of neighbors together, be sure to find out when they can meet again. Schedule the next meeting. This way 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.

Once again, use every tool.

# 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 a smaller group, or a specific bylaws committee, to write the bylaws and propose them to the whole group.

To begin, it is best to keep it simple.

# BYLAWS

## **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 necessary to adjust directions. Bylaws provide for a process to change directions.



# BYLAWS

**While this draft may be incomplete, it may offer some ideas about what your bylaws can include.**

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 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 FINAL 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're reading this, you've already completed one of the hardest steps: you've begun.

- Dan Kleinman, Organizer

[www.TheNeighborhoodFirst.org](http://www.TheNeighborhoodFirst.org)