

## GOOD NEIGHBORS PROGRAM

A Resource Guide



Live! Invest! Participate!

Have a question, concern or complaint?  
Call the Norfolk Cares Assistance Center.



## Norfolk is a “city of neighborhoods”

where the diversity of over 120 neighborhoods provides opportunities for families, singles, young people, and seniors, individuals with special needs, and citizens of all races to live together in one community. If you can visualize a community where neighbors know each other by sight



and name, check in on the seniors during extreme weather conditions, shovel the walkway of the disabled veteran next door, maintain their yards, and are friendly and kind to the other residents, then you know why good neighbors are important to the health and safety of our neighborhoods.



Good neighbors are about relationships and neighborhood standards that can work effectively in unison to manage neighborhood



problems and improve the quality of life in all communities.



## Building Neighborly Relationships

Getting to know your neighbors can be very rewarding and beneficial to you and your community. It is well documented that the healthier, more livable and safer neighborhoods are those where neighbors know, care, and support each other as well as overall community objectives. This is defined as a sense of community. In other words, a community is more than the sum of its buildings, roads and parks; it’s about people.

Do you know your neighbor? How many people in your neighborhood have you met this year? How many people do you recognize by name in your neighborhood? In case of emergency, do you know who in the neighborhood has CPR training? Who takes your newspaper in and watches your house when you are on vacation?

Get to know your neighbor. Introduce yourself. Create a phone, email and address directory of all residents on your block. Welcome new neighbors and share the directory. Note any information about neighbors who might need special attention during emergencies (seniors, those with disabilities, children home alone, etc.). If your civic league does not have a “welcome neighbor” basket or information for new residents, volunteer to chair or serve on a committee to develop a packet.

Social events involving neighbors on your block and community wide events are great strategies for meeting people. So get started and plan annual or semi-annual events, neighborhood improvement projects or other activities that provide opportunities for positive interactions.

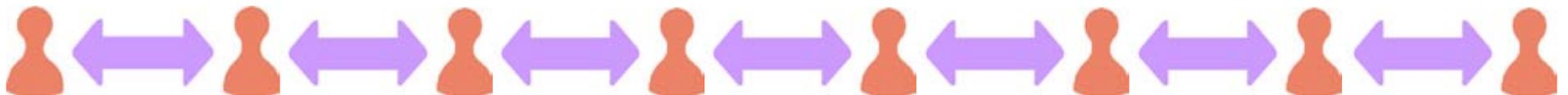
***A focus on knowing our neighbors shifts social interactions from an inward focus on our backyards to a more outward focus on the community's quality of life.***

Undertaking neighborhood projects is an extremely effective approach to building community relationships. To get started, have the community select one or two projects similar to those listed below. It does not matter how small the project may seem if it gets residents talking and socializing. It is effective.

How does your neighborhood rank? Use values 1-5 with 5 being the highest rating.

1. My neighbors successfully resolve disputes amongst themselves.
2. My neighborhood welcomes new people into the neighborhood.
3. I know my neighbors and we are sociable with one another.
4. My neighbors lend a hand when doing home improvements.
5. My neighbors and I strive to embrace diversity.
6. We have planned activities on my block.
7. In my community, people get together for discussion groups and different neighborhood improvement projects.
8. In my neighborhood, people offer a helping hand when needed.

*The exercise above was taken from, "The Livable Neighborhood Workbook" published by Empowerment Institute (New York, 2000)*



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## Why Do Neighborhood Projects?

### PROMOTE YOUR ASSOCIATION

A neighborhood project or special event is an excellent opportunity to promote your association to local businesses, interest groups and even the residents in your own neighborhood.

### RAISE FUNDS

Garage sales, barbecues and bake sales are just a few examples of effective fundraisers.

### IMPROVE NEIGHBORHOOD IMAGE

Whether a project addresses litter control, peeling paint, park clean-up, weatherization, or crime prevention, improvements made to a community symbolize to residents and visitors alike that people care about their neighborhood.

### MEET YOUR NEIGHBORS

The social aspects of a neighborhood project can serve as the catalyst for a strong community group. Block parties, activity clubs, festivals and parades are just a few ways to meet the neighbors you have waved hello to for years but never actually met. It is also an excellent opportunity to welcome new neighbors into the community.

### A GOOD WAY TO HAVE FUN

Neighborhood block parties, festivals and cookouts are a source of entertainment and a fun way to bring people back to the association and the neighborhood. The more often a neighborhood gets together for fun, the more unified they will be when an issue arises.

### PROMOTE A SENSE OF COMMUNITY

Residents develop a sense of community when they come together by working on neighborhood projects. Through the process of planning, implementing, and maintaining the project's goals, a sense of belonging is developed and strengthened.

### TAKE OWNERSHIP OF YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD

By taking responsibility for planning, implementing, and maintaining projects in your neighborhood, you will take more initiative not only in preserving the integrity and quality of that project but of the entire neighborhood as well. If residents feel that they have something at stake, have some control over the outcome, and take some responsibility for the outcome of projects and issues in your neighborhood, you will have established a powerful base from which positive changes can be made.



## Planning Neighborhood Projects

Neighborhood projects are a good idea, but how do you start?

-  Check with your neighbors and active members of your neighborhood group to find out what kind of projects they would support.
-  If your neighborhood has established goals, make sure the project is consistent with those goals. If your neighborhood has not established goals, this might be a good first step.
-  Ask the members of your association what type of activities they would like to have.
-  Consult the Neighborhood Development Specialist or members of the Bureau of Community Enrichment for suggested projects and information on relevant programs and services available through the City.
-  Identify the types of skills and resources that are available through your association -- gardeners, good cooks, carpenters, sales people, and artists are some examples.
-  Identify resources available through area businesses, including contributions of products, volunteers, services, technical assistance and discounts.



Identify who will be able to work at an event and the times they will be available.



Involve the entire community in your projects. Reach out to youth, seniors, or other members of your neighborhood that may not be involved and get their input. A project that meets the needs of all of your neighbors will help everyone feel a part of the project, and it will encourage future involvement.



Determine what resources the neighborhood can contribute to the project. A neighborhood's greatest resource is its residents and the commitment and enthusiasm that they can bring to a project. A project that includes "sweat-equity" is a value-added project.



Plan ahead for your neighborhood projects. If grant money is available, don't wait until the last minute to plan and submit your project. Prepare and carefully plan today for next year's project, and it will be apparent in your proposal.



Identify others that may be of assistance in implementing your project. Boy or Girl Scout troops may be looking for community service projects. There may be an opportunity to utilize youth that are required to provide community service for legal reasons. By including these youth in your project you may get the manpower that you need, and provide them with a productive and positive experience in giving back to the community.

## Neighborhood Standards - Common Examples

Neighborhood standards are determined by the expectations and behaviors of residents living in a community. In other words, what is acceptable and reinforced (the do's) and unacceptable and discouraged (the don'ts). Neighborhood standards generally focus on the physical image of the neighborhood and how it is perceived from an aesthetic as well as a market standpoint. Neighborhood standards are tied directly to community pride. The presence or absence of community pride can be evident by the appearance of an entire neighborhood, a block, or random properties throughout a neighborhood. Attracting new residents and investment to your neighborhood will be determined by the messages you send.



The following are just examples of standards that have been adopted by communities around the United States. You and your neighbors may determine others are needed or not needed.

### DO's

- Cut grass once a week, edge sidewalks, trim and mulch landscaping.
- Empty excess water collecting in pots, buckets and containers that can attract and breed mosquitoes.
- Display house numbers properly.
- Use only outdoor furniture for porches and other outdoor seating areas.
- Clean-up after your pets.
- Schedule bulky items for pick-up.
- Plant flowers.
- Maintain the exterior of the house and clean the gutters.
- Light the porch properly.



### DON'Ts

- Park your car on the front lawn.
- Store excess trash and debris around your home.
- Play loud music after 10:00 p.m.
- Park inoperable vehicles on your property.
- Forget to retrieve trash containers by midnight on your collection date.
- Allow your dog to bark excessively.
- Pour contaminants down the storm drain.
- Let landscaping become overgrown.



## How do you establish neighborhood standards?

Neighborhood standards are driven by community values, which first need to be defined. A community engagement process is recommended if you are to be effective. To make the optimal impact on your community, neighborhood standards should exceed the basic or minimum environmental and building maintenance codes.

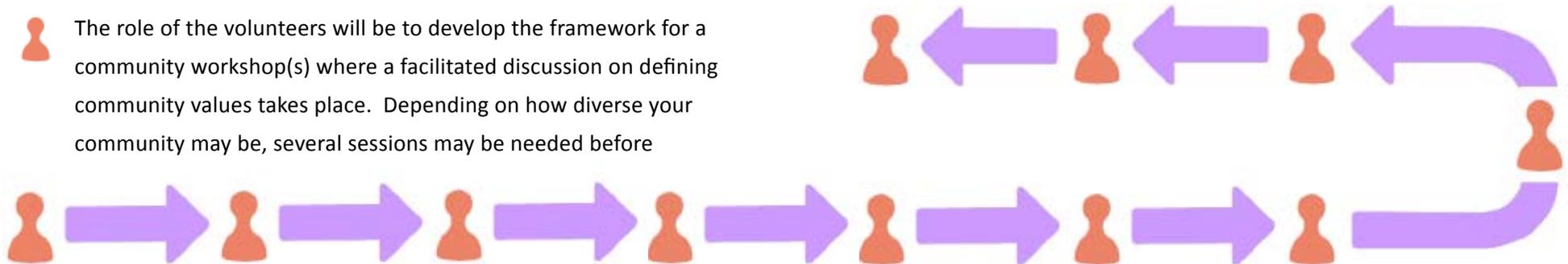


You should approach this issue like you would any other neighborhood project.

- Seek volunteers consisting of a core group of interested residents to lead the effort. Make sure the group is diverse and there is fair representation based on neighborhood demographics and geography.
- The role of the volunteers will be to develop the framework for a community workshop(s) where a facilitated discussion on defining community values takes place. Depending on how diverse your community may be, several sessions may be needed before

consensus is achieved. The key to success is to remain open-minded, patient and kind.

- Communicate the results of each session with the community at large. Use newsletters, websites, social media, mailings, meeting agendas and other methods for getting input, buy-in and ownership of as many residents as possible. Chances are that if they feel part of the planning process, they will participate in the implementation process.



# How do you encourage participation in neighborhood standards?

Most neighborhood standards are normally set at levels higher than minimum codes and are usually voluntary. There may or may not be a basis for legal enforcement. In most neighborhoods you will find many residents already adhering to these standards. By involving the broader community in developing the standards, there is an understanding of the need and purpose, goals and objectives and a willingness to participate.

 Identify program ambassadors that will assume active roles on their blocks by spreading the concept among their neighbors. Others may be less involved and demonstrate their commitment simply by being a good example.

 The civic association should formally adopt the community standards. Refer to them at every civic league meeting. Make public assessments of the program and its effectiveness and constantly encourage participation.

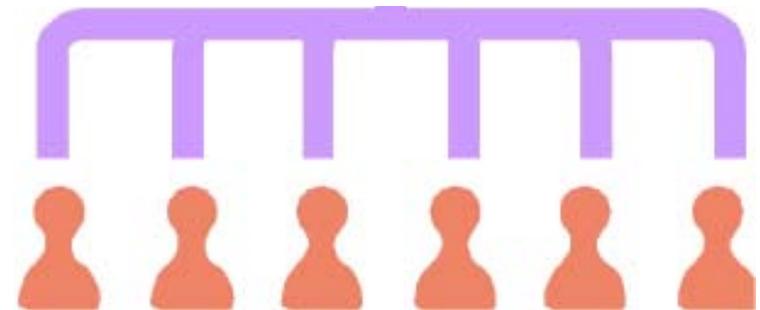
 Develop a public relations campaign to make as many existing residents and new residents aware of their existence and importance. These standards



should be communicated and publicized using communication tools used by the community and by creative and positive messaging.

 Where residents fail to cooperate, there should be gentle persuasion tactics employed to remind them of community expectations. Where residents have temporary or permanent special needs, the community's good neighbors could provide the necessary support to bring the property into compliance.

 Where there is serious and deliberate uncooperativeness resulting in code violations, then the issues should be referred to the appropriate City department for resolution.



# Ideas for Neighborhood Projects and Activities

- Create a directory of names, addresses, phone numbers and emails of neighborhood residents and provide a copy to everyone in the neighborhood.

- Organize a Friday night barbecue

- Adopt a local park, do a clean-up and plant and maintain a flower bed.

- Have a pancake breakfast fundraiser

- If there are elderly residents in your neighborhood, set up a group of volunteers to visit them around holidays or other times of the year. Include a small basket of goodies to leave as a reminder of your visit.

- Organize a holiday house decorating contest

- Establish a service exchange such as teaching a particular skill, child care, home repair, gardening, auto maintenance, etc.

- Hold an outdoor concert or performance.

- Create a “helping neighbor” committee to assist residents that are unable to keep up with some of their property maintenance. It is amazing how fast a group of volunteers can fix a fence, put up storm windows, or even paint a house.

- Have a progressive dinner.

- Organize a neighborhood garage sale.

- Have neighborhood festivals, block parties, art and craft exhibits, face painting for children, hot dog and drink sales, games, etc.

- Organize an ice cream social.

- Start a neighborhood Watch - organizes the community by groups to have neighbors get acquainted, discuss common problems, and help protect their neighborhood by being aware of unusual or suspicious activity.

- Establish a neighborhood computer lab.

- Get to know the neighborhoods around you by having a multi-neighborhood picnic.

- Establish a neighborhood tool “lending library.”

- As a neighborhood group, adopt a family for Christmas. There are many organizations that can help you find a family that needs assistance.

- Start a weekly produce exchange from neighbors’ summer gardens.

- Clean-Up, Green-Up – get involved in the annual city-wide clean-up.

- Start a neighborhood garden – be sure to involve neighborhood youth.

- Conduct home improvement demonstrations - wallpapering, stenciling, house painting, tile laying, landscaping, etc.