

How-To-Suggestions - How to Get the Word Out

Communications is an important part of any neighborhood association. It is how you let the community know what you are doing, what you want to do, and many other messages. The following pages provide you with some ideas of what can be used. Remember the scale of the communication often restricts the choices.

A. News Releases/ Public Service Announcements

News releases are used when you want give information about an event to the public, such as a neighborhood cleanup or election of officers. Public Service Announcements (PSA) can also be used when you want to announce an event.

When writing a news release, keep the following in mind:

- News releases should be about one typewritten, double-spaced page
- Your first paragraph should include who, what, when, and where
- Following paragraphs should provide details and background
- Include information for a contact person: name and phone number
- Include a "release date" and "do not use after" date
- Send a copy of the news release at least two weeks ahead of time

When writing a PSA, follow the same format as a news release except for the following:

- PSAs are shorter than news releases, maybe only a paragraph
- When sending a PSA to a radio station, be sure it can be read in 30 seconds (7 or 8 lines) and attach the details and background on a separate sheet
- When sending a PSA to a large newspaper, find out what section would give your PSA the best exposure. Send the PSA to the editor of that section.

B. Internet Web Site

Many people have access to the Internet, so this is a great place for neighborhood associations to publicize events. You can build a homepage for the association and post current issues, an association calendar, and an e-mail address so the association can be contacted. The Internet is a great way to distribute information and associations should definitely take advantage of it.

The Neighborhood Services Office also maintains a web site that includes information about registered neighborhood associations and events.

Communication and participation are two of the biggest challenges in building a strong neighborhood association. An effective website can facilitate these two things and do a whole lot more!

Leverage the Power of the Internet

The Internet has revolutionized how neighborhood associations operate. No longer do printing and distribution costs determine how often neighbors get their news. No longer is community dialogue constricted by the ability to attend a scheduled

meeting. And, no longer is time-sensitive information limited by word-of-mouth communication.

If good communication and active participation are the two biggest challenges to building a strong neighborhood association, then an effective website might be the solution. For neighborhood associations, a good website can decrease costs, increase effectiveness, and enhance participation.

Basic Website Features You Will Need

How can a website do all these things? An effective website for a neighborhood association would include basic features such as: document storage for new and archival information, contact information and/or a more extensive directory, an online newsletter, an online calendar, a discussion forum, a map, and the ability to post links to other sites. Enhanced features might include the creation of private or password protected areas, the ability to create surveys, classified ads, and the ability to sell advertising on the site.

How would these features actually decrease costs, increase effectiveness, and enhance participation in a neighborhood association?

6 Features That Save Money and Increase Communication & Participation

1. Document storage is a feature the association can utilize to post information (and photos) regarding community events, ongoing projects, safety concerns, official documents, and anything else you believe to be relevant to the community. This can be accomplished by either uploading a PDF and/or using the website's document creating tools.
2. A significant cost savings for the association would be the ability to publish, distribute, and continuously update its newsletter – at no cost! The newsletter can be created and continuously updated by either uploading a PDF and/or using the website's document creating tools.
3. An online calendar would enable the association to post dates, times and information about meetings, events, garage sales, birthdays, road closings, etc. The calendar can be open for anyone in the community to post information, or can be restricted to selected editors.
4. A discussion forum would enable everyone in the community to voice their ideas and opinions about issues related to their community – whenever it is convenient for them! It is a place where the entire community can dialogue, share ideas, and build relationships.
5. The addition of a map on the website, with association borders clearly delineated, can help new neighbors and prospective neighbors find your neighborhood association.
6. And lastly, the ability to post links to other sites would enable other community-related groups with websites to become easily accessible to their neighbors. Groups such as local schools, the PTA, Neighborhood Watch, historic preservation, Mom's Clubs, Boy and Girl Scouts, etc.

All of these website features help to build a neighborhood association that grows stronger, more tightly knit, and more active, because everyone can access information when they need it, and participate when they have time.

The Internet has truly revolutionized how neighborhood associations communicate with their community and how the community communicates with the association and with each other. If good communication and active participation are the two biggest challenges to building and maintaining a strong neighborhood association, then the solution is an effective website.

C. Flyers

Flyers can be used for any activity, project, or goal. Some tips to keep in mind when designing a flyer are:

- Keep wording bold enough to see from a distance of ten feet
- Use colorful paper
- Design one and quick-copy the rest
- Post flyers in markets, laundromats, schools, stores, or any other place frequently visited by the people you are trying to reach

D. Posters

Making large posters can be effective when using these tips:

- Use large pieces of cardboard boxes
- Use black enamel paint to rainproof your poster
- Keep the message brief
- Keep artwork to a minimum

E. Logos

Designing logos can be fun and can bring members together when an image can be associated with the group. The logo can be simple, such as an attractive way to display the group's name. The logo should be unique to the group so it can have a maximum impact.

F. Buttons, T-shirts, and Decals

Once the group has a logo, you can transfer it to T-shirts, decals, and buttons. They can be sold for fundraising or distributed to volunteers. Using these items can also increase awareness of your group around the city.

G. List of How to Get the Word Out

- Neighborhood association newsletter
- Weekly area newspapers
- Schools, churches and club newsletters
- Door-to-door handouts

Neighborhood Association Tools
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- Neighborhood survey:
 - mail
 - phone
 - door-to-door
- Person-to-person by phone to:
 - friends
 - neighbors
- Bulletins, notices, pamphlets, posters and flyers placed with permission in:
 - schools
 - laundromats
 - libraries
 - supermarkets
 - local restaurants
 - stores & waiting rooms in dentist/doctor's offices
- The City's Web page
- Booths at local events
- Speakers at:
 - business groups
 - service clubs
 - youth groups
 - schools/churches
- Cooperative efforts with adjoining neighborhoods
- Lawn signs
- Letters
- Telephone tree
- E-mail