

Tip Sheet

COMMUNICATIONS

What differentiates an effective and responsive neighborhood group from less effective ones are the ways that the organization communicates.

Here are some ideas you can use. Choose what will work best for your group—and select a variety to reach more people in your neighborhood.

FLIERS

- Fliers are an inexpensive way to distribute timely information. You can include more information than on a postcard for less.
- When tri-folded, fliers can be mailed without envelopes.
- Hand-delivery can be done by volunteers or by a messenger delivery system. Be mindful that fliers left too long in doorways signals that the home is either vacant or the resident is away.
- Don't use mailboxes; it's against federal law.

DIRECT MAIL

- Mail houses can send your document to your mailing list by printing labels directly on material to be mailed.
- Direct mailings get information out quickly to your members. Mail house will work with you to coordinate deadlines so the information is delivered on time.
- Using a postcard format can save money both for printing and postage. Getting a bulk mail permit from the post office can reduce costs even more.
- You can buy pre-perforated postcard sheets and make your own (at home or at a copy shop); be sure to check with the Postal Service for size and weight requirements.

LOCAL NEWSPAPERS

- Contribute a regular column in a local newspaper. The column attracts a larger audience for issues that may concern other local residents beyond your own neighborhood.

NEWSLETTERS

- Newsletters are often the glue that binds communities. Try to make them informative, inclusive, balanced, consistent, timely, and on schedule.
- Ask others in your neighborhood to write small articles to make it a cooperative neighborhood effort.
- Try using small amounts of advertising to offset printing costs. Local restaurants, theaters and shops may want to run coupons to jumpstart business in the area.

MEMBERSHIP PACKETS

- Create a brochure that includes a list of board members, committees, local issues and a schedule of upcoming meetings. Include a membership directory (if available) and a recent newsletter.
- Consider including a neighborhood history, listings for neighborhood businesses, schools, libraries or public transit information.



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- Local businesses can support your efforts in exchange for including coupons, menus or other promotions included in your brochure.

TELEPHONE TREE

- Use this communication method to spread information quickly by having one person on the tree call 4 - 6 people who, in turn, agree to call 4 -6 more. For example, if 10 people call 10 others who each call 10 more people, you've reached 1,000 folks and no one person is overburdened.
- Automatic dialing systems send recorded messages for you to large groups.

WELCOME PACKAGES

- Take the time to welcome each resident.
- Hand deliver a welcome basket that includes a membership packet. (See previous page for details on membership packets.)
- Add the new residents to your mailing list. Ask a local realtor to provide their list of new residents once or twice a year.

INFORMATION KIOSKS

- Information kiosks, neighborhood bulletin boards, or an online blog or website can be great ways to share information.
- Ask volunteers to design, build and install it.
- Check the grant section of www.nrc-neighbor.org for a microgrant for this type of effort.
- Select a site with high-volume pedestrian traffic such as near mailboxes. Larger neighborhoods might consider installing more than one Kiosk.

RESOURCE GUIDES

- Resource Guides typically contain contact information for city/county agencies that address issues affecting neighborhoods, associations, or residents. Your local League of Women Voters may already produce one.
- Consider creating one that includes business and nonprofit listings, schools, library or post office information. Other useful information might be to include how to contact city planning or public works officials, a graffiti help line or describe how to obtain a permit to build a fence or shed.

NETWORKING

- Most of us network more than we realize and it can lead to valuable information and ideas. Ask your members about other local organizations to which they belong and set up information exchanges.

COMMITTEES

- Can broaden the channels of communication within a community and spread out your group's workload.
- Form committees to address general issues such as transportation or safety. Ask non-board members to serve with you.
- Have someone take minutes during committee meetings and submit them to your Board and include in your newsletters or on your website.
- Occasionally an ad hoc or grassroots committee forms around one critical issue.

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