

Neighborhood Toolkit

Your guide to forming a neighborhood organization in Olathe, Kansas



TABLE OF CONTENTS

2 WHY ORGANIZE

3 HOW TO START

4 HOW THE CITY OF OLATHE CAN HELP

5 LEADERSHIP

6 COMMITTEES

7 COMMUNICATION
FINANCES

8 STUMBLING BLOCKS

9 CONDUCTING MEETINGS
COMMUNITY RESOURCES

10 APPENDIX
Example Agenda, Robert's Rules of Order (Simplified), Example Neighborhood Action Plan, Example Bylaws



Downtown Olathe Connect (DOC) neighborhood group



Planning Division's
planning education for
Olathe 3rd graders

Why Organize

Before asking your neighbors to organize, first show them the benefits of a neighborhood organization and why organizing is worth their time. Some of the benefits are...

You can establish neighborhood bonds

A neighborhood organization introduces neighbors to each other, which creates improvements in countless ways. Neighbors can find shared interests and help for each other. A connected neighborhood is not only safer, but also gives people a voice and chance to improve their neighborhood.

You can create neighborhood social activities

We know that social connections make us all happier and healthier, and neighborhood social activities are a great way to connect with neighbors while having a good time. There are countless examples of what you could do: a block party with catering or food trucks, a music night featuring local musicians, setting up a projector for a popcorn and movie night, a summer youth arts and career education program, or educational workshops on health or digital skills.

You can better communicate with your neighbors

Our neighbors often have great answers to our questions. Maybe you are looking for a contractor for home improvements or a daycare for your kids. You can ask friends and family but asking a neighborhood organization can bring even more great suggestions. Or maybe you want to share information, like advertising a yard sale or (fingers-crossed this never happens) post about a lost pet. A neighborhood organization helps with this communication too.

You can improve your neighborhood together

A neighborhood organization allows you to address issues you wouldn't be able to fix on your own. Is property maintenance a challenge? A neighborhood organization can tell an entire neighborhood about city resources for home improvements and help people with applications. Is safety a concern? A neighborhood organization can partner with police to make improvements that prevent crime. Perhaps you want improved sidewalks, streetlighting, a neighborhood cleanup or a community garden. All of these are easier to accomplish as a team than as individuals.

You can work more effectively with City services

A neighborhood organization improves two-way communication between the city and its residents. The neighborhood organization can voice concerns to city government and help solve problems. A neighborhood organization can share information with residents, helping everyone stay informed about developments, service changes, and opportunities for public input. Neighborhood organizations allow more people to know their government and improve their city. Imagine if every neighborhood had an organization!



How to Start

PART 1: CONNECTING WITH EACHOTHER

Connect with the City of Olathe Planning Division

We can help in several ways: providing a list of addresses so you can mail flyers, finding a free meeting space at City Hall or a neighborhood school, or connecting you with leaders of other neighborhood organizations.

Organize the Core Group

Organize a small group of committed neighbors who want to form a neighborhood group and address neighborhood issues. A small group, 5-10 people, is efficient and still enough people to share tasks. Once you have a commitment from 5-10 people, set up a meeting at a comfortable place. Do this quickly before people lose interest. Talk with the core group about what your hopes for the neighborhood group and develop a loose outline of what you want for the neighborhood group.

Inform the Neighborhood

Let the neighborhood know about the newly forming neighborhood organization. Flyers can be passed out door-to-door, mailed, or placed at local schools, churches, and businesses. You can post to social media (Nextdoor, Facebook, etc.). Use several methods to reach as many people as possible. Briefly communicate the benefits of a neighborhood organization and share contact information so interested neighbors can reach someone in the core group. If you have a plan for a larger group meeting, share details on where and when.

Organize a Larger Group Meeting

A larger group meeting is important to share the core group's ideas, get input from more neighbors, and gain support moving forward. Discuss what the neighborhood wants to accomplish together and what each person's talents are. Big goals are great, but be sure to have small, achievable goals too. Decide what can be done by the next meeting and involve everyone if possible – if they care enough to come to a meeting, they should be invited to help achieve your goals. Establish a regular meeting time and location, and thank everyone for coming. For more tips on conducting meetings, see page 9.

Neighborhood Registration

You can register your neighborhood at any time, but certainly after a larger group meeting. Registration gives you access to grants and a quarterly email newsletter with City information and advice for neighborhoods.



Olathe's Lone Elm Park

PART 2: WORKING TOGETHER

Elect Officers

The core group can present a list of potential officers to the larger group meeting. These positions can include a president, vice-president, secretary, and treasurer, but you are not limited to these options. It's helpful to elect officers at the first larger group meeting to create some ongoing structure.

Establish Boundaries

Establishing boundaries helps the neighborhood organization settle into a manageable size – a large, diverse group of people but not so big of an area that coordination and communication is difficult. It's alright for boundaries to change over time as you connect with more neighbors and gain leaders to the group. Typical boundaries can be roads or landmarks like a park, school, or lake. Please note that the boundaries you chose should not overlap with another existing neighborhood group.

Apply for Grants

The City of Olathe's Healthy Neighborhoods Initiative provides neighborhood grants for residents to improve, connect, and revitalize their neighborhood. Talk with your neighborhood organization about how you want to use the neighborhood grants, then apply online at www.olatheks.org/healthyneighborhoods.

Develop a Neighborhood Plan

A neighborhood plan has broad statements about what the residents would like to have happen (goals) and strategies on how to reach goals (action plan). A neighborhood plan should be rather broad. Organizations that form for a single reason tend to lack longevity, wide participation, and overall success. For advice on forming a neighborhood action plan, see page 12.

How the City of Olathe Can Help

- » Providing a list of addresses in your neighborhood so you can mail flyers
- » Printing your flyers
- » Free meeting spaces in City of Olathe and Olathe Public Schools buildings
- » Help with planning your first neighborhood-wide meeting
- » Neighborhood grants and a quarterly newsletter for neighborhoods registered with the City's of Olathe's Healthy Neighborhoods Initiative

Contact the City of Olathe Planning Division for any of these services.





Leadership

Cultivating Leadership

The importance of great leadership is often overlooked as a neighborhood organization develops. Good leadership gives an organization:

- » Guidance
- » Stability
- » Motivation to take action
- » Unity of purpose
- » Continuity from year to year

The task of recruiting and developing leaders has to be an ongoing activity through the lifetime of your neighborhood organization.

Advice on finding leaders

- » Your contributions to the neighborhood are your abilities and skills to organize. Therefore, try to delegate other responsibilities like event planning and communication.
- » Your group of leaders should be a diverse mix of people, experiences (families, teachers, businesses, etc.) and areas of the neighborhood
- » Search for several potential leaders, not just one or two.
- » Leaders can become burned out so have new leaders ready to step in when necessary
- » New leaders may develop as the concerns of the neighborhood organization change. Keep your organization open and flexible enough to bring new members and leaders into your neighborhood organization.

Look for individuals who...

- » Want to succeed and want their group to succeed
- » Are knowledgeable about the neighborhood, its people and their interests
- » Communicate well with people
- » Can motivate people to take collective action
- » Know how to share power
- » Have time to give to the work of the neighborhood organization

Committees

Working with Committees

Organizations accomplish their goals through the dedicated work of committees, a group of people dedicated to one task. The tasks of the committees vary by neighborhood organization, but some committees to consider would be:

- » Communication
- » Social Events
- » Finance & Fundraising
- » Meeting Agenda
- » Safety Issues
- » Housing / Street Conditions
- » Community Resources

Advice on maintaining active, productive, motivated committees:

- » Encourage all members to participate in the organization deciding its committees.
- » Keep committees small (3 to 10 members)
- » Appoint or elect a leader for each committee
- » Let the entire committee talk about and define the goals and objectives of their committee.
- » Help members develop communication skills.
- » Give recognition to members and committees who have given time and effort.



Communication

Getting the Word Out

You'll be planning a lot of great programs in your neighborhood. Don't keep them a secret. Spread the word. This will help others in the neighborhood join the efforts and take part in making a difference. Here are a few ways to get the word out:

- » Nextdoor
- » Neighborhood Facebook Group
- » Door-to-door flyer handouts
- » Welcome letters for people new to the neighborhood
- » Flyers posted (with permission) in schools, churches, grocery stores, restaurants and businesses, libraries, parks, laundromats, etc.
- » Booths at local events like First Fridays, Farmer's Markets, Old Settler's Day, Olathe Live music events
- » Regular neighborhood organization updates through email, newsletter, social media
- » Lawn signs
- » Cooperative efforts with nearby neighborhoods for any of these steps



Finances

Bank Account

Over time, every neighborhood organization gathers money for one reason or another. You need a management system in place to deal with these funds. Either a person or a neighborhood organization can open a bank account.

If a neighborhood organization follows the steps below, you may be eligible to receive free banking privileges at some banks. Contact the City of Olathe's Planning Division for help with any of these steps.

- » Obtain a Kansas Not-for-Profit Articles of Incorporation at www.kssos.org
- » Research the fees and charges assessed at different banks and credit unions. Some may waive service charges to organizations that provide a necessary public service
- » Obtain an Employer Identification Number (EIN). Recently, the banking industry has had to tighten security measures regarding the tracing of funds. All neighborhood organizations are now required to obtain an EIN number to set up an account. An EIN number can be obtained by going to www.irs.gov. Someone from your organization will need to provide a valid social security number to apply.
- » Obtain Important Documentation. If you are a nonprofit corporation, you must bring a copy of the Articles of Incorporation to the bank or credit union. You may also be asked to bring a copy of your bylaws and/or the minutes of your first meeting. You must also state the names and titles of people who are authorized to conduct business for the organization. Personal identification, such as a driver's license, credit cards or passport, is required to open any type of account.
- » Choose what type of account – checking or savings - is best for the organization. Two things to consider are how often you will need to withdraw money and if you have enough money to avoid any minimum account balance requirements.

Stumbling Blocks

Unproductive Organization or Committee

Look for the following conditions:

- » Fear of possible results
- » Conflicting opinions on issues
- » Interpersonal conflict
- » Poor leadership
- » Ridged decision-making methods, not allowing for discussion

When these problems occur, encourage open, respectful discussion. Let the members try to identify the obstacles in their way. If you need assistance with facilitation of conversations, the City's Planning Division can assist.

Understanding and Managing Conflict

One of the main benefits of forming a neighborhood organization is the improvement in communication between neighbors. There will be times however, despite our best efforts, when communication will break down and a conflict will develop. A simple unresolved conflict can escalate and cause serious damage to relationships and to a neighborhood organization, so it is very important that neighbors do their best to handle these situations proactively and constructively.

Conflict can identify an unresolved issue that needs to be addressed before change can occur. It is important to acknowledge that issue and try to build consensus to resolve it. Remember, you don't all have to like each other but you do need to find a constructive way to work together.

Neighborhood Conflict Resolution

Consider using the following tips when you are faced with a neighborhood conflict:

- » Direct conversation is much more effective than passive confrontation.
- » Talk in a quiet place where everyone is comfortable.
- » Plan ahead what you are going to say.
- » State clearly what the problem is and how it affects you. Don't blame or call names.
- » Listen. Give the other person a chance to give their side of the situation.
- » Show that you are listening. Even if you don't agree, let them know you hear them and that you are glad things are being discussed.
- » Work on a joint solution.
- » Follow through. Agree to check in with each other to make sure the agreement is still working.

Remember, living side-by-side with people who think differently is a sign of a confident and healthy community. You represent the diversity of an area - a strength in itself.

"Disagreement helps us innovate, improve, and find the truth. What we need is not to disagree less, but to disagree better."

– Arthur Brooks



Conducting Meetings

Nobody likes to attend meetings that are a waste of time. As the neighborhood organizer, you have the opportunity and responsibility to make meetings productive and perhaps even enjoyable.

Meeting Preparation Check List

- » Choose a convenient time and date to meet by talking with your core group and neighbors.
- » Develop a well-planned agenda.
- » Determine a method of reminding the neighborhood about the meeting by letters, flyers, or phone calls.
- » Find a place that is centrally located, familiar, safe for all residents, and has enough space for people to be comfortable.
- » Set up the room in advance – setting up tables and chairs, testing any special equipment, and setting a comfortable room temperature.
- » Serve refreshments if it will enhance the friendliness of the meeting and not interrupt it.
- » Display any handouts and a sign-in sheet near the entrance. It's important to get contact information from everyone who attends.

Community Resources

Neighborhood Grants

Any Olathe neighborhood group that is registered with the City can apply for the Community Engagement Grant up to \$2,000 or the Beautification and Improvement Grant up to \$4,000. Visit olatheks.org/healthyneighborhoods.

Neighborhood Revitalization Tax Rebate

To encourage reinvestment in the City's Original Town, eligible residential and commercial property owners can improve their property and receive a rebate on the increase in property taxes. Visit olatheks.org/neighborhoodrevitalization.

Housing Rehabilitation Program

The City's Housing and Transportation Services provides grants and interest-free deferred loans for income-qualified residents for emergency repairs, accessibility improvements, and major repairs. Visit olatheks.org/housingrehabilitation.

Neighborhood Traffic Safety Program

Traffic problems such as speeding or parking can be studied and resolved through community education, enforcement, or engineering. Visit olatheks.org/government/police/traffic/neighborhood-traffic-safety

Room Reservation

Rooms can be reserved for free in Olathe City Hall and for a low fee in Olathe Public Schools. Contact City of Olathe Planning Division for assistance reserving rooms.

Neighborhoods Rising Fund

Administered by Community Capital Fund, a community development corporation, the Neighborhoods Rising Fund is a grant program for neighborhood organizations in low- to moderate-income areas throughout the Greater Kansas City region. To apply or see hundreds of innovative past grant projects, visit ccfkansascity.org/nrf



Sample Agenda

Neighborhood Organization Name
Meeting Date and Time

1. Welcome
 2. Officer Reports
 3. Guest Speaker
 4. Old Business
 5. New Business
 6. Open Floor to Members
 7. Adjourn
- Reminder of next meeting time

Meeting Minutes

When taking minutes, just use your agenda as a template. Make notes of main points discussed, the number of votes on any issues, and any questions or concerns that can be reported on next meeting.

Robert's Rules of Order (Simplified)

Robert's Rules of Order is a way to conduct meetings that allows everyone to be heard and for decisions to be made without confusion. Sometimes Robert's Rules of Order feel natural and everyone learns it quickly, but if not, a person can ask at anytime to clarify the process or situation.

A signature part of Robert's Rules of Order is the "motion," which is a method for members to express themselves and propose the entire organization act on an issue.

To introduce a motion

- » Wait until the last person has finished speaking
- » Address the President / Chair / person in charge of the organization.
- » When the President recognizes you, you "have the floor"
- » Now you can introduce your motion by saying "I move that we...,"
- » Another person may "second" your motion. A second simply means the person agrees that the group should discuss the motion (not that the person is in favor of the motion)
 - » If there is a second, the Chair/President states the question by saying "It has been moved and seconded that ... (state the motion) . . ., is there any discussion?" This makes sure everyone heard and understands the motion.
 - » If there is not a second, the Chair/President says, "The motion is not before you at this time." The motion is not lost, as there has been no vote taken.

Discussing a motion

- » The person who made the motion has the chance to speak first.
- » Every person has the right to speak in debate, trying their best to keep conversation to the motion itself.
- » The President should alternate between those "for" the motion and those "against" the motion.
- » All questions are directed to the President, who can then ask the group. This prevents a back-and-forth between two people.
- » A member is typically limited to speak once to a motion. This allows everyone to participate before any one person speaks a second time. Asking a question or a brief suggestion is not counted in debate.
- » A person may speak a second time in debate with the group's permission, or the group can decide to change the one-time speaking rule.

Voting on a motion

- » The President says, "Are we ready to vote on the motion?" If there is no more discussion, a vote is taken.
- » How you vote depends on the situation and your neighborhood organization's bylaws. There are five ways you might vote:
 - » By Voice: the President asks those in favor to say, "aye", those opposed to say "no". If any person is in doubt about the vote, they may call for a "division" vote.
 - » By Division -- This is a slight verification of a voice vote. Members raise their hands or stand and the President counts.
 - » By Roll Call -- Each member answers "yes" or "no" as their name is called. This method is used when a record of each person's vote is required.
 - » By General Consent -- When a motion is not likely to be opposed, the President says, "if there is no objection ..." The membership shows agreement by their silence, however if one member says, "I object," the item must be put to a vote.
 - » By Ballot -- Members write their vote on a slip of paper. This method is used when secrecy is wanted or needed.
- » In order to be passed (approved), a motion typically requires a majority vote, which means more than half of people are in favor. This is the case for a general motion for a group decision or adapting a motion being discussed.
- » Some motions require a 2/3rds vote to be passed. This is the case for ending or setting a time limit on discussion, postponing a discussion to a later meeting, or changing an action voted on at an earlier meeting.

Developing a Neighborhood Action Plan

1. Identify a few issues that are major concerns to the neighborhood or assets you want to build upon.
2. Form a committee for each issue to spearhead solutions.
3. Identify available resources that can be used to help the committee.
4. Identify goals for each issue and strategies
5. Set a timeline for all goals, including timing of different steps and expected completion dates (when possible).
6. Work together to implement the strategies.

Asset-Based Community Development

Asset-Based Community Development is an approach to improving your own community and recognizing that all community members have assets - abilities or skills they can contribute to others in the neighborhood.

Asset-Based Community Development is as old as time, most recently becoming popular by researchers in Chicago, Illinois. They talked with 2,000 residents across 20 cities and, instead of asking what was wrong, they asked for stories of people in the neighborhood who have made things better. What they heard, they labeled as Asset-Based Community Development. This approach has led to 100,000+ articles and regular conferences in the U.S., India, Australia and elsewhere across the world.

The basic idea is to map the assets within your community, support and connect those assets, and become more powerful together.

Mapping assets

One way to learn the gifts of neighbors is to ask about their gifts of head, hands, and heart. You might ask...

- » "What do you know about?" (music, languages, sports, history, math, science, law, neighborhood history, etc.)
- » "What do you enjoy doing?" (gardening, cooking, recycling, car repair, plumbing, cutting hair, capentry, etc.)
- » "What do you care about?" (taking care of children, poetry, caring for others, the environment, etc.)

It can help to share post-it notes with everyone to write their gifts and place them on walls around the room.

Next, discuss what other assets are in your community.

- » Voluntary groups like Parent-Teacher Organizations, religious groups, book clubs, exercise groups, etc.
- » Institutions like schools, healthcare, nonprofits, businesses, government, or any group that can share resources
- » Physical space like land for a community garden, free meeting space at schools, an unused storefront that a local business could use
- » Stories and culture, often given by older residents, remind us how people did things successfully in the past

Connecting Assets

To connect assets, there must be a "connector." Connectors typically focus on gifts, well connected, and trusted by others. People like this live on every block. You don't need to train a connector, you simply need to find them.

Asset-Based Development Process

The researchers found that powerful neighborhood organizations follow three steps in doing their work:

- » As neighbors, what can we achieve by using our own assets?
- » What can we achieve with our own assets if we get some outside help?
- » What can't we do with our own assets that must be done by outsiders?

To learn more about how communities across the world use Asset-Based Community Development, visit resources.depaul.edu/abcd-institute

(Neighborhood name) Action Plan

GOAL	ACTIONS	PEOPLE INVOLVED	INSTITUTIONS, PLACES, AND OTHER ASSETS INVOLVED	TIMELINE

Sample Bylaws

Bylaws may be needed for your group to open a bank account or to apply for grants. The City of Olathe's neighborhood grants do not require bylaws, but some other grant sources do.

Regardless, bylaws help a neighborhood organization have consistency and clarity in how they operate.

Name: (Place name of the group or organization here)

Purpose: The purpose of the organization shall be to... (place mission or purpose here).

Membership: Any person with an interest in the well being of the (name of organization here) neighborhood in Olathe, Kansas is eligible for membership.

Dues: (Outline your membership dues in this area. If you choose not to have dues you can delete this from your bylaws.)

Officers: *Example* - "The officers shall be a president, vice-president, secretary, treasurer, and three members at large who shall be elected in the month of ___ each year. The officers shall serve for a term of ___ years commencing on (date officers begin their term). Elections will be held at the (month) meeting. A nominating committee made up of (outline nomination process here) and will provide at least one nominee for each position at the monthly meeting one month prior to the election.

Committees: (If your organization chooses to have committees, you will need an outline of how they are selected and will function within your organization)

Meetings: (Outline when, where and how often your organization will meet)

Quorum: (decide the percentage or number of members that need to be present in order to conduct voting business)