



# HOW TO ORGANIZE A NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION





Our City strives to meet the needs of all residents who choose to call Orlando home. To do this, I have made it a priority for the Neighborhood Relations team to organize, support, mentor and guide residents and neighborhood organizations in their effort to keep Orlando a great place to live, work and play. In 2014, we launched iLead, a comprehensive neighborhood-training program that informs, connects and involves our neighborhood leaders through a series of interactive guides, videos, webinars and workshops. I encourage you to use the iLead program to build and sustain your successful neighborhood organization.

Orlando Mayor Buddy Dyer

## Guides



- Board Orientation and Operations
- Communication Tools
- Effective Meetings
- Engaging the Next Generation of Leaders
- Event Planning
- Ice Breakers
- Leadership Skills
- Neighborhood Grants
- Parliamentary Procedures made Simple
- Writing Your Neighborhood History

iLead is a comprehensive program that provides you with the tools to inform, connect and involve your neighbors through a variety of trainings, such as the iLead Leadership Series, Lunch and Learn and Community Connection Workshops. These tools cover topics such as how to effectively hold meetings, how to utilize a variety of communication tools and how to engage the next generation of leaders. iLead is your one stop shop for online leadership training.



One of the best ways to make and keep your neighborhood strong and build community is having an active neighborhood association.



### WHAT IS A NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION?

A neighborhood association is a group of neighbors working together to make their neighborhood a great place to live. It makes decisions on common problems by bringing neighbors together to share ideas and find solutions to address neighborhood concerns and interests.

There are two types of neighborhood associations; voluntary and mandatory

#### **Voluntary Associations**

- Formed by neighbors to address neighborhood issues, build a sense of community, advocate for the neighborhood and to ensure a solid quality of life in the neighborhood.
- Membership is voluntary and there are no rules or deed restrictions associated with this type of association. These associations are most commonly referred to as neighborhood associations.
- Members are homeowners, renters, businesses, and/or other identified stakeholders within the defined neighborhood boundaries.
- Neighborhood associations are managed by a volunteer board of directors consisting of association members.
- A neighborhood association does not have to be incorporated in the State of Florida, but it is recommended as a best practice. By incorporating the association, it becomes an entity recognized by the State of Florida and can conduct business in its name, such as enter into contracts or open up a checking account.
- A voluntary association may choose a name that includes civic, homeowner or neighborhood.







## Mandatory Associations

Mandatory associations exist when:

- Deed restrictions are tied to the properties within the boundaries of an association. These deed restrictions or Covenants, Conditions & Restrictions (CC&Rs) are limits and rules placed on a group of homes or condominium complex by a builder or developer who also establishes an association to manage the CC&R and common property and amenities within its boundaries.
- Owners in a community are required to be members of the association.
- Owners are required to pay dues or assessments to the association to fund the operation of the community, including, but not limited to, the cost of maintaining common areas and enforcing deed restrictions.
- The association has the authority to place liens and eventually foreclose on properties within their boundaries if owners don't pay the dues or assessments.
- Owners must agree to comply with various deed and use restrictions.
- Managed by a volunteer board of directors as outlined in their documents.
- Most homeowners' associations (HOA) and all condominium associations (COA) are mandatory associations.
- Mandatory associations must be Florida corporations and are governed by Florida Statutes (FS), including, but not limited to FS 617-Corporations Not for Profit, and either FS 718-Condominiums or FS 720 - Homeowner Associations.
- To create a mandatory association under Florida law, all owners listed on the property titles must be in full agreement because they are restricting the use of their property. Almost all mandatory associations are established by the developer or builder who owns all the property within the designated boundaries. It is extremely difficult to create a mandatory association when there are more than a few property owners involved because of the voting requirements. See Florida Statutes 720 for further details.





## BENEFITS OF ORGANIZING

### WHY ORGANIZE?

Where we choose to live is one of the most important decisions we make. It impacts where our children will go to school, how long it will take us to get to work, the kinds of food we have access to, and the neighbors we'll depend on. When purchasing or renting a home, we expect a living environment that makes us feel safe, comfortable, and at peace. When you know your neighbors and look out for each other, you are enhancing your quality of life and that of your family, your neighbors, and the neighborhood.

**Establishing a voluntary neighborhood association is an effective way to bring neighbors together to:**

- Address common concerns and needs.
- Create a sense of community.
- Celebrate why they have chosen to live there in the first place.





## **When considering establishing a neighborhood association, think about:**

- What's in it for me/you (WIIFM) and your neighbors?
- Why should you take your time to be involved with a neighborhood association?
- An association as making an investment in yourself, your family and your home.

## **The benefits to having a voluntary neighborhood association are:**

- Getting to know your neighbors and looking out for each other.
- Creating a sense of community where neighbors know each other and feel safe.
- Protecting two of your largest investments – your family and your home.
- Making the neighborhood safer.
- Creating a unified voice and serving as an advocate for the neighborhood.
- Ensuring stronger and consistent two-way communication among neighbors and between the city and neighborhood.
- Establishing a partnership and neighborhood influence with the City of Orlando.
- Recognizing common ground and interests and deciding what needs to be done.
- Working together to address neighborhood needs and wants, including neighbors participating in decision making that guides neighborhood actions.
- Enhancing resiliency to natural disasters or emergencies impacting the neighborhood.
- Utilizing neighbors' experience, skills, abilities and talents to enhance the neighborhood.
- Hosting social activities for the neighborhood that build neighborhood unity.



**Neighborhood associations offer a place to meet neighbors, create friendships, exchange information, identify issues and propose solutions, sponsor projects and events and to have fun.**



### STEPS TO ORGANIZING A VOLUNTARY NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION

1. Set up an organizing committee by recruiting three to four neighbors who are interested and can devote the time to help organize the association. This committee will work with the Neighborhood Relations team in organizing the association.
2. Contact the city's Neighborhood Relations team at 407.246.2169 or email [neighborhoods@orlando.gov](mailto:neighborhoods@orlando.gov).
3. The Neighborhood Relations team will help the organizing committee to:
  - a. create a written statement on the need and purpose of the neighborhood association
  - b. define the proposed boundaries of the association
  - c. host 3 meetings to establish the association:

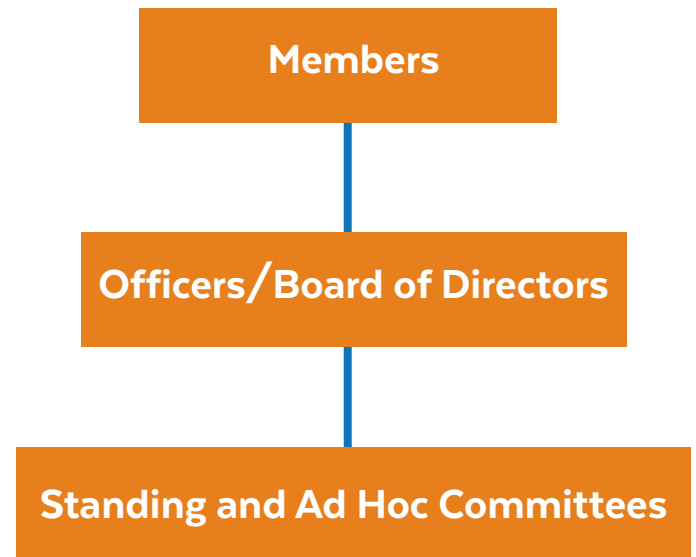
Meeting 1 - an introductory meeting where the neighborhood votes on whether to have an association. It is important that this meeting be structured to help neighbors get to know each other and addresses a specific concern that will encourage neighbors to attend the meeting.

Meeting 2 - focuses on establishing bylaws, officer positions and committees, voting on the association name, mission or purpose and the boundaries of the association, when and how often to meet and other associational items.

Meeting 3 - focuses on the election of officers, voting on bylaws, goal setting and establishing standing committees.
4. Now your association is off and running. Remember the Neighborhood Relations team will continue to assist the association with your needs and requests.

### How is a Voluntary Neighborhood Association Structured?

Your association board structure can be determined by the members to fit the needs of the neighborhood. Here is a pretty typical voluntary association structure:







## Officers/Board of Directors

Voluntary associations are managed by a volunteer board of directors consisting of officers and at-large board members elected by the general membership. The most common officer positions are president, vice president, secretary and treasurer and a few at-large board members. The city suggests keeping the board of directors between five to seven members, including the officer positions.

The purpose of the board is to provide leadership, vision and management of the association. The board directs the work of committees at the direction of the association membership. It is the members that give the board its authority to manage the association.

## Committees

Association standing committees are established to do the work of the association at the direction of the board of directors and membership. A standing committee is a permanent ongoing working committee that may be outlined in the association's bylaws. Here are some examples of standing committees:

1. Welcome Committee – handles membership recruitment, greeting at association meetings/ events, etc.
2. Communication Committee – internal and external communication, web site, social media, etc.
3. Social Committee – plans and organizes social events
4. Projects Committee – research, plans, develops projects to address association goals or concerns
5. Safety Committee – implements and hosts Neighborhood Watch and safety activities



The association may form ad hoc committees to tackle a specific issue, task or project. An ad hoc committee is dissolved after it has completed its objective or purpose.

Serving as a committee chair or a member is a great way to ease into an association leadership role. Committees help share the workload for the association and enable members to get involved in issues and projects that they are passionate about. It is not the role of the association officers and board members to do all the work of the association; the committees are the workhorse of the association.



### Bylaws - To Have or To Have Not

The city encourages associations to adopt and adhere to bylaws. Bylaws function as an agreement between the association and its membership and outline how the association operates. Following bylaws will provide continuity and consistency in the operation of the association. The Neighborhood Relations team can provide samples of other association bylaws or you can go to Robert's Rules of Order, Newly Revised, Chapter on Bylaws. Be sure to purchase the most current edition of Robert's Rules. A new edition is published every ten years in the following year of the U.S. Census.



### Show Me the Money

So, what about dues? It's up to the association to decide what financial resources it will need to manage the association. Bottom line, it will cost money to operate your association. Your association expenses will be based on the mission, goals and projects of the association. Examples of new association expenses are:

- Incorporating the association with the State of Florida.
- Setting up and managing an association website.
- Copying of marketing and meeting flyers, agendas and other materials.
- Yard signs for meetings and events.
- Office supplies, such as name tags, notepaper, binders, and folders.
- Event supplies, such as food, paper products and decorations.
- Other expenses based on goals and projects.

There's a need to charge enough to maintain the association, but you don't want to charge dues that neighbors find are too expensive. Some associations chose to rely on the donations instead of charging annual dues; this works if your association members have the financial resources and are generous. The pitfall to relying on contributions is that the association may struggle to have enough operating funds and the cost of funding the association activities falling upon a few.

If you chose to have dues, the easiest way to determine what the membership dues should be is to create your budget first, and then divide the total expense budget by a realistic number of members you think will join the association.

For example, the association creates an annual budget of \$500 and there are 300 homes/properties within the association boundaries, so your membership goal may be 15 percent of all the homes, which is 45 dues paying members. To determine the annual dues, divide \$500 annual budget by the 45 membership goal, which equals \$11.11 per household. We suggest rounding up this amount to \$12.00 per household or member. Ask yourself if the annual association dues will be perceived by your members as worth the value of the amount they pay in dues. We certainly hope they would come to the conclusion of yes...\$12 is a great value and investment in keeping your neighborhood strong.







### Association Meetings

Hold association membership meetings or a combination of meetings and activities at least quarterly or four times a year. Many associations have enough projects and activities to meet monthly, others meet every two months/six times a year, some quarterly/four times a year or others meet twice a year.

Many mandatory condominium or homeowners' associations only host an annual membership meeting and hold board and committee meetings throughout the year to conduct association business.

Think of your membership meetings as just one way to link to your neighbors and members. Meetings are very powerful tools of communication and engagement when conducted effectively. Be careful not to fall into the trap of meeting for the sake of having a meeting; if there isn't a reason or clear purpose to meet, then don't, otherwise you run the risk of poor meeting attendance. View our iLead Effective Meetings Guide at [Orlando.gov/neighborhoods](http://Orlando.gov/neighborhoods) for details and tips on successful meetings.

### What are some Neighborhood Association Activities?

- Establishing communication among neighbors throughout the neighborhood, such as setting up Nextdoor, a neighborhood Facebook, Twitter and/or Instagram accounts.
- Clean up and beautification projects via the city's Green Up Orlando and Keep Orlando Beautiful programs.
- Establishing or enhancing Neighborhood Watch and promoting crime prevention.
- Social events, block parties, National Night Out parties, walker's club, Halloween trick or treating parties.
- Identifying and resolving neighborhood issues and concerns.







### HOW CAN THE CITY HELP ORGANIZE A VOLUNTARY NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION?

The City of Orlando is very committed to supporting our neighborhood associations. Through our Office of Communications and Neighborhood Relations (OCNR), the city provides several services to support you as a neighborhood leader and to help with the sustainability of your association. Think of OCNR's Neighborhood Relations team as the city's concierge, here to assist and guide you with your neighborhood association or individual requests and connecting you to the right city services to address your interests and needs. The Neighborhood Relations staff is a great resource for neighborhood associations.

#### **Some of the team's assistance and resources include:**

1. Organizing and maintaining neighborhood associations.
2. iLead guides which are training tools to inform, connect and involve your neighbors.
3. iLead Leadership Series – a 6 week training class with association board members throughout the City of Orlando. Upon completion leaders receive \$250 for their associations.
4. Customize training - we will come to your meetings and provide training based on your association's needs.
5. Community Connections Workshops - free monthly training for neighborhood leaders and volunteers.
6. Neighborhood & Community Summit – One day annual training conference designed to showcase best practices for managing associations.
7. Providing speakers for association meetings and events.
8. Information and referral - we connect you to all the city departments and programs that may address your association's needs.





9. Mayor's Matching Grants - we award matching grants up to \$5,000 to neighborhood associations to improve your neighborhood, such as physical improvements or enhancements, public safety projects or educational or cultural programs.
10. Meeting space - you can use city neighborhood centers to hold your association meetings free of charge
11. Resource assistance - we are a resource for your many questions and issues, if we don't have the answers, chances are we know who has the answer.
12. Networking - we can connect you to other neighborhood associations in your area or throughout the city
13. Invitations to city events and meetings with the Mayor and City Commissioners.
14. Assistance with neighborhood events.

Always remember your Neighborhood Relations team is here to help. Contact us at 407.246.2169 or [neighborhoods@orlando.gov](mailto:neighborhoods@orlando.gov).

Visit **[Orlando.gov/neighborhood](https://orlando.gov/neighborhood)** for all the services and resources our team offers.



Our neighborhood associations throughout the city play a significant role —

“The City of Orlando knows strong and livable neighborhoods mean a strong and vibrant city. A quality city is built upon the foundation of its neighborhoods and the people calling its neighborhoods home.” - Mayor Buddy Dyer

## STAY INFORMED, CONNECTED AND INVOLVED

[orlando.gov/neighborhoods](http://orlando.gov/neighborhoods)

### NEIGHBORHOOD NEWS

Events, information and helpful resources to share with your neighborhood straight to your inbox! Subscribe at [orlando.gov/neighborhoodnews](http://orlando.gov/neighborhoodnews)

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