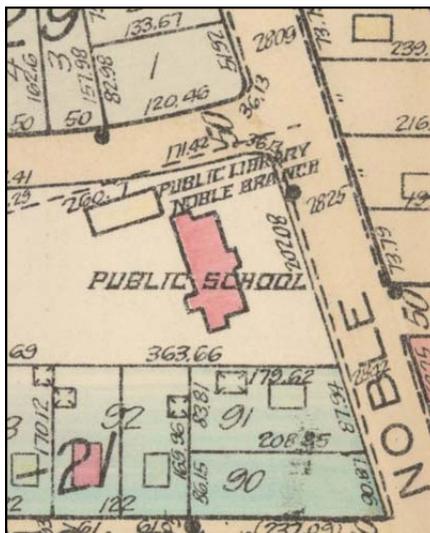


Future Heights



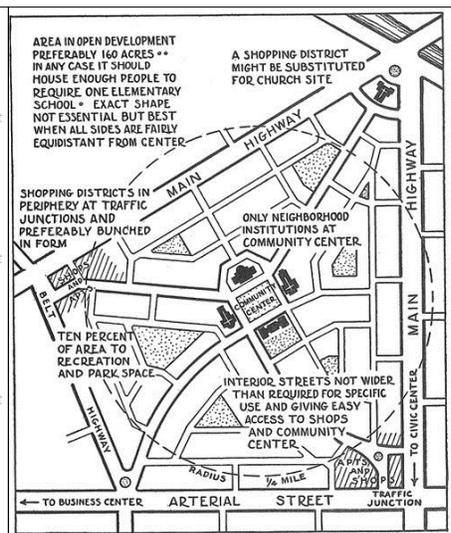
Neighborhood Organizing Training Manual

A practical guide for effective neighborhood organizing



Ordinary Complacent Everyday Bored Monotonous
Routine Stuck Lacking Ordinary Complacent Everyday
Bored Monotonous Routine Stuck Lacking Ordinary
Complacent Everyday Bored Monotonous Routine Stuck
Lacking Ordinary Complacent Everyday Bored
Monotonous Routine Stuck Lacking Ordinary Complacent
Everyday Bored Monotonous Routine Stuck Lacking
Ordinary Complacent Everyday Bored Monotonous
Routine Stuck Lacking Ordinary Complacent Everyday
Bored Monotonous Routine Stuck Lacking Ordinary
Complacent Everyday Bored Monotonous Routine Stuck
Lacking Ordinary Complacent Everyday Bored
Monotonous Routine Stuck Lacking Ordinary Complacent
Everyday Bored Monotonous Routine Stuck Lacking
Ordinary Complacent Everyday Bored Monotonous
Routine Stuck Lacking Ordinary Complacent Everyday
Bored Monotonous Routine Stuck Lacking Ordinary
Complacent Everyday Bored Monotonous Routine Stuck
Lacking Ordinary Complacent Everyday Bored

*Leaders
aren't
Born,
They are
Made.*



I. Getting Started

NEIGHBORHOOD ENGAGEMENT

Before you engage your neighborhood, it is important to remember that authentic neighborhood engagement means involving as many members of your community as possible—from the beginning of every plan, project and decision. It allows neighborhoods to have a strong influence on:

- **Decision making** which means giving an option of things such as meeting times, agenda formats, projects and how to address various issues.
- **Educating community members** on community matters whether it be through group research, speakers or direct participation.
- **Providing valid opportunities** for participation to all members.



Community Stakeholder Checklist:

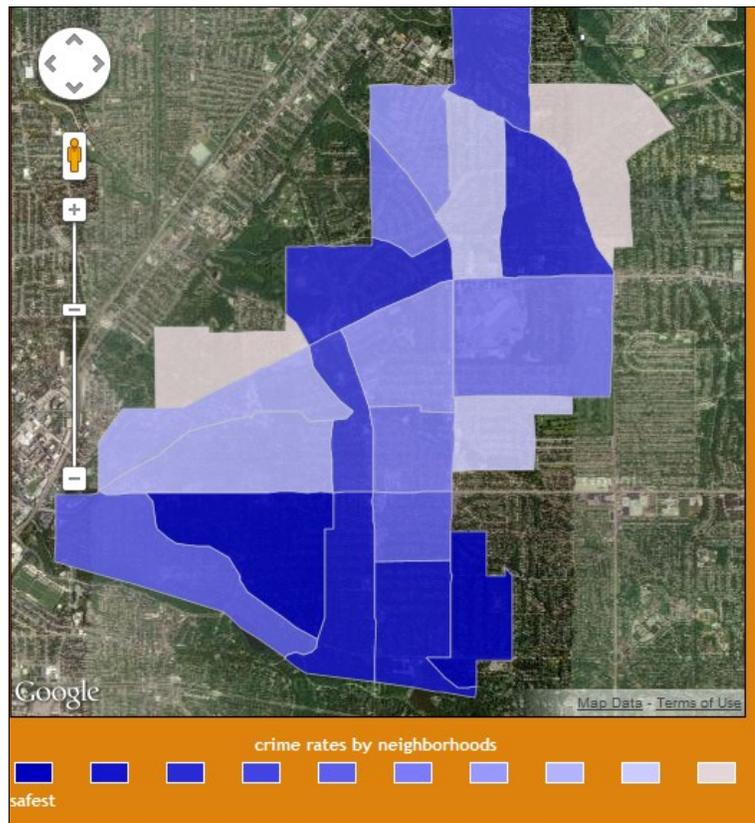
GROUP	CHECKBOX
Neighborhood Residents (Both Homeowners and Renters)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Schools (PTA, Students, Teachers, Administrators)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Restaurants and Businesses (Owners, Managers)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Community-Based Organizations	<input type="checkbox"/>
Churches and Religious Organizations	<input type="checkbox"/>
City Departments and Elected Officials	<input type="checkbox"/>

PREPARING FOR YOUR FIRST MEETING

The purpose of a neighborhood group is to build relationships and organize around issues or projects as a collection of residents. Developing strong social fabric in a neighborhood through such an effort is invaluable.

INITIAL STEPS

1. Define your block or neighborhood using *social* boundaries not *physical* boundaries.
2. Determine a meeting place that is familiar to the people in your neighborhood. Homes, churches and libraries are common. Avoid restaurants or other public spaces with excessive noise if possible, and choose a place that is a proper size for the group you are expecting.
3. Make fliers to provide to every house in the neighborhood. They should include: date, time, meeting location, and contact information (see Attachment 1). Pass them out as you canvass the neighborhood.



CANVASSING AND FOLLOW-UP

- **Canvass the neighborhood.** Go door to door (with a partner) at every home in the block or neighborhood to find out what issues concern your neighbors and get the word out about your meeting.
 - ⇒ **Recruit neighbors that you know to help you** with this task (and community organizers).
 - ⇒ **Canvass about one week prior to the meeting** to give everyone enough notice.
 - ⇒ **Be sure to record names & contact information of those interested in getting involved** so that you can remind them of the meeting time (or of future meetings in the event they can't attend your first meeting). Give the resident your flier
- **Make reminder phone calls** *one to three days* prior to your first meeting to follow up.
- **Send a press release** to the Heights Observer (www.heightsobserver.org) by signing up as a member. Send press release no less than a week before the meeting (see Attachment 3).

I. Getting Started

CANVASSING 101

Never canvass alone!

If a person is not home...

Place literature on doorknob, or along seam of door

DO NOT leave anything in mailbox (Federal Offense)

DO NOT leave literature in plain sight from road

- Indicates to others that a householder is not home
- May lead to home invasion, robbery, etc.

It's best to be identifiable.

T-shirts, hats or badges with you logo on it is best (if possible).



Image from afleio on flickr.com

City of Cleveland Heights Codified Ordinance states:

- If a house has a sign that says, “No Peddlers or Solicitors,” do not contact
- Do not canvass before 9am or after 5pm
- Do not canvass on Sundays or on Federal Holidays

Be sure to identify yourself to the resident

And explain you purpose (ex. “Hi. My name is Bob and I’m with the local neighborhood group (or I live on xxx street and I’m trying to organize a neighborhood group”).

Ask her about the neighborhood

“How long have you lived here? Do you know anyone else on the street? What are some of your concerns?” Listen.

Spend no more than 5 minutes at each door.

If she wants to talk longer, encourage her to come to the neighborhood meeting to pick things up more then.

Avoid going inside a home.

Make sure you invite the individual to the event and let her know it’s important for her to attend to give her input and support.

Ask for permission to write down her name, phone number and address.

Assure her the information will only be used for contacting her for neighborhood group purposes, such as a reminder phone call 1-3 days before the meeting. Give her your information if it helps create assurance.

Don’t forget to thank the individual for her cooperation and let her know that you look forward to seeing her at the meeting.

Have fun! Canvassing is a very rewarding experience. Enjoy it!

TOOLS AND TRICKS

Bringing handouts or flyers to give to residents helps with the legitimacy of your organization. Handouts also serve as reminders for upcoming events.

Print flyers at no cost—call the City of Cleveland Heights at 216-291-2323; allow 4-5 days for printing.

II. The First Meeting

PLANNING FOR YOUR FIRST MEETING

Running an effective meeting is all about good preparation. Starting and ending meetings on time is essential, as well as making sure you have a balanced agenda.

PRE-MEETING & PLANNING

If possible, invite several recruits from your canvassing to help plan the first meeting. Work together to plan the agenda and decide who will do what tasks (order food, sign-in sheets, who will run the meeting, record minutes).

NEEDS

- **Create a sign-in sheet.** Make sure it allows for as much information as possible (minimum: name, address, phone, and email). Some groups leave an additional space so that the sheet can be distributed for signing up folks for various tasks.
- **Issue reminder or confirmation to the venue** where you will be holding the meeting to ensure that they have the space prepared and accessible.
- **Bring an easel or a self-stick wall pad to record notes.** Writing notes publically shows acknowledgment and helps to bring clarity to the conversation.
- **Assign someone to record meeting minutes.** Use a laptop or a pen and paper for this task, whichever is preferred. This will help you to keep accurate record of all happenings at your meetings.
- **Prepare food and refreshments** (if possible). Remember: Folks are giving up a portion of their evening to participate which might include their dinner time. Food or refreshments is appropriate. After the first meeting, ask if folks are willing to donate a few dollars or to make food for the next meeting.



Image from [vastateparksstaff](https://www.flickr.com/photos/vastateparksstaff/) on flickr.com

TOOLS AND TRICKS

Use www.eventbrite.com, which allows people to RSVP to events, creates sign in sheets or uses a sign in application, and integration with social networking sites, such as [Facebook.com](https://www.facebook.com).

II. The First Meeting

PLANNING FOR YOUR FIRST MEETING

CREATING AN AGENDA

A good agenda is balanced.

It includes old and new business as well as space for announcements (at the end of the meeting). Consider organizing your agenda by issues, projects / events and fundraising (see Attachment 5)

Put guest speakers towards the beginning.

If you have a speaker, respect their time by putting them towards the beginning of the agenda.



Image courtesy of Mahoning Valley Organizing Collaborative

ALWAYS start and end a meeting on time.

Respecting people's time will keep them coming back. Also, a meeting should never run longer than **90 minutes** (unless there are special circumstances). If a meeting needs to run longer than usual, explain this to the group at the beginning of the meeting and come to an agreement up front.

One of the biggest reasons residents *don't* attend community meetings is the perceived time cost. Limiting the meeting time, and respecting an individual's personal time will keep the momentum of community involvement going longer.

TOOLS AND TRICKS

When items not on the agenda come up or a topic runs over, use the "parking lot" technique. Simply list these ideas on a separate sheet of paper and explain that you will address them later (under new business or after the meeting). This way, you acknowledge the comments while respecting everyone's time.

II. The First Meeting

FIRST MEETING OBJECTIVES: A FEW SUGGESTIONS

INTRODUCTIONS

Begin your first meeting by having each person introduce himself, state where he lives and for how long and what he would like to see the group accomplish. Each individual should also list at least one strength and one weaknesses of the neighborhood. NOTE: Give each person a time limit for his comments (ex. one minute). If you don't set a time limit, some folks may go on for a long time and eat into the time for other agenda items.

CREATE A GROUP NAME

Create a name that is simple, clear, easy to remember, and makes sense for the type of group you are creating. For example, if you are creating a block club on Noble Road, you might want to call it something as simple as "Noble Neighborhood Association."

ESTABLISH A MISSION STATEMENT

A mission statement is a sentence or two that describes your neighborhood group's reason for existing. Mission statements allow members to clearly understand the group's purpose. Take time to reflect the purpose of your organization and ask, "What type of group do we want to be?" Ex. social, educational (speakers), political, issue and project oriented, crime watch (or combinations of several of these items).

Sample Mission Statement

The Noble Neighborhood Association (NNA) is a neighborhood group on the north side of Cleveland Heights, Ohio devoted to organizing residents for community-based action that yields a greater quality of life for all.

NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION

ESTABLISH A REGULAR MEETING SCHEDULE

Decide as a group how often the group should meet (bi-weekly, monthly, etc.) and which days of the week and times work best. It is generally advisable to establish a regular day and time once every month to meet as a group (Ex. every second Monday or every third Tuesday at 7 pm) .

II. The First Meeting

FIRST MEETING OBJECTIVES: A FEW SUGGESTIONS

ESTABLISHING GROUP GOALS:

The organization's mission statement should determine the group's goals. Groups will have short-term, intermediate and long-term goals, each with their own set of objectives.

1. **SHORT-TERM GOALS:** Groups should always have several short-term goals. Example: Get three abandoned houses re-inhabited; Get one street repaved; write a grant for a neighborhood project; organize a neighborhood party for 100 residents to attend. Short term goals serve as "low hanging fruit" that help keep the group motivated.
2. **INTERMEDIATE GOALS:** Intermediate goals are larger steps on the way to a long-term goal, and may be a little more difficult to evaluate. Example: Improve housing stock in the area; reduce crime; revitalize the neighborhood park.
3. **LONG-TERM GOALS:** An organization's long-term goal is usually their defining mission and vision. Example: *"Improve the quality of life of the Newport Neighborhood"*.



POSITIVE GROUP PARTICIPATION:



It is important to get as many people in the group involved as possible. The more involved people are, the more likely they are to come back and volunteer or participate again. There are many ways in which people can participate in an organization or a meeting: ask a person for her opinion on a topic even if she doesn't raise his hand; assign someone to research an issue or to draft a letter, pass out fliers on her street for the next meeting, serve as a street captain or record minutes. Record the meeting and who is assigned to do what tasks. Send it to the group as soon as possible.

TOOLS AND TRICKS

Use social media sites such as *facebook.com*, *twitter.com*, *nextdoor.com*, and others to keep members involved in the ongoing conversation about your neighborhood.

Wordpress.com or *Weebly.com* allows the creation of a free Web blog which can be updated very easily.

II. The First Meeting

SELECTING LEADERSHIP

Leadership of a neighborhood group can take many forms depending on the needs and dynamics of the group.

STRUCTURE OPTIONS

There are many different structures that neighborhood groups can use to guide their organizations. Leadership structure is dependent upon the size, character, and mission of the group.

Chair (1 Person)

- *Ideal for small groups such as Block Watches*
- The Chair can assign volunteers to assist with various issues or projects on an as-needed basis
- Typically used if the group does not seek raise money or move beyond issue-based matters



Traditional

- *Best for groups who plan to make decisions on a variety of issues, raise money and/or seek nonprofit status*
- Ex. President, Vice President, Secretary, Treasure, Committee Chair

Leadership Council

- *Best for larger associations such as Ward or Coalition groups*
- Ex. North Side Neighbors (Members: X Neighborhood Group, Y Neighborhood Group, Z Church, etc.)
- A collection of various representatives from different geographical areas or organizations.

II. The First Meeting

SELECTING LEADERSHIP

Leadership can take place formally through leadership training, or informally through modeling and mentoring. Two of the most important jobs for any leader are running effective meetings and building trust in the group.

LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

- **Formal:** Formal leadership development may consist of a leadership training program or individual training sessions on specific topics.
- **Informal:** Informal leadership development typically comes from experience. For example: organizing a canvassing or project, running meetings, speaking on behalf of the group at a City Council meeting or recruiting new members.



FORMAL LEADERSHIP TRAINING

Leadership training requires several capable teachers, developing a curriculum, and nurturing a committed group of potential new leaders. Examples of formal community organizer and leadership training may include:

- Problem vs. Issue Identification
- Organizing Around An Issue (Campaigns)
- Organizing and Running Effective Meetings
- How Power Works
- Recruitment
- One-On-Ones / Identifying Self-Interest
- Managing Conflict
- Working Within A Diverse Group Setting
- Effective Communication Strategies

III. Taking Action

ACTION STEPS

Action steps are definable, measurable and attainable steps that become clear to the whole group when they are accomplished. Following each objective leads to the achievement of the goal.

EXAMPLES OF ACTION STEPS Addressing A Nuisance Property



1. **Document the address of the house** and any complaints about the property.
2. **Research the owner of the property** at the County Auditor’s website.
3. **Invite a local housing inspector or city councilmember** to the next meeting and explain the problem OR contact the official by phone. If the house has open windows or doors, the officials should agree to board it.
4. **Write and send a letter to the owner** from the neighborhood group explaining your complaints and asking him/her to meet with the group to demand that s/he make improvements (see Attachment 4).
5. **Follow up with a phone call.**
6. **If unsuccessful, consider direct action** (i.e. taking the group to the owner’s house).

TOOLS AND TRICKS

Cuyahoga County Fiscal Officer’s (formerly auditor) website— fiscalofficer.cuyahogacounty.us

Housing Inspector of Cleveland Heights— www.clevelandheights.com/index.aspx?page=433

Housing Inspector of University Heights—<http://www.universityheights.com/departments/building/>

Cleveland Heights City Council—<http://www.clevelandheights.com/index.aspx?page=1491>

University Heights City Council—<http://www.universityheights.com/departments/city-council/>

Cleveland Heights Community Relations—comrel@clvhts.com or 216.-291-2323

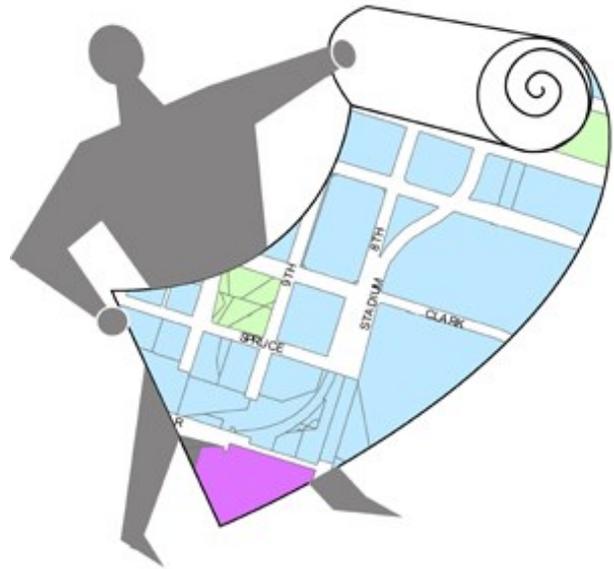
III. Taking Action

ESTABLISHING A WORK PLAN

Establishing a work plan is an important process when dealing with neighborhood issues. A work plan also serves as a reference, which keeps the group focused.

WHAT GOES INTO A WORK PLAN?

- **IDENTIFYING THE ISSUE:** Write these out publically in a group setting. Do not address an issue (or project or event) that is too complex or that no one is willing to commit to helping with. Don't take on too many issues at any one time; 1-3 is normal.
- **OBJECTIVES:** List the specific tasks or action steps the group identifies as necessary in tackling the issue. At first you may not know so researching the issue might be your first task.
- **TIMELINE:** Make realistic decisions about when objectives can be accomplished. Try to choose issues and projects that can be completed in a relatively timely manner (ex. perhaps one issue or project by next month's meeting and perhaps another within 6 months).
- **ASSIGNMENTS:** Identify an individual or a committee to work on the issue. As a group leader, your job is to divide up the work, manage progress, hold those who have committed to an assignment accountable (in a courteous way, of course) and assist when needed.



WHY MAKE A WORK PLAN?

1. **SAVES TIME:** Although it may seem a bit formal, a work plan saves time and ensures you don't miss anything along the way.
2. **ORGANIZATION:** Work plans create instant organization within your group. You can glance at the plan at any time and know who needs to be doing what and when.
3. **FUNDING:** If a project is funded, foundations and other funders will usually insist upon seeing your progress. Your work plan can be the perfect source.

IV. Prioritizing Issues

Is it IMMEDIATE? Is it SPECIFIC? Is it WINNABLE?

Choosing the right issues is important for building the momentum and power of the group. It's important to select the right types of issues.

GATHERING INFORMATION

- Real organizing and community engagement involves the voices of the entire community, which is why hearing others' stories and experiences is so important.

PERFORMING ACTION RESEARCH

- Participatory Action Research is a type of research that involves community members in investigating specific problems and taking systematic action to resolve them. Unlike traditional research done by an "expert" and filled with technical language and procedures, action research is user-friendly and based in real life. Examples may include:
 - Researching ownership of a problem property
 - Taking photos of the issue or activity
 - Recording what neighbors know about the issue.

FORMULATING AN EFFECTIVE SOLUTION

- Strategy is the overall plan for how we're going to get where we're going.
- Tactics are the specific things that we do to help us get there:
 - Letters
 - Petitions
 - Public Meetings
 - Media (Letters to the Editor)
 - Speaking at a City Meeting
- An organization's strategy needs to include activities that are "doable" and that keep people interested and involved along the way.
- It's important that leaders AND members of an organization be involved in developing and executing a strategy.



IV. Prioritizing Issues

CREATING A STRATEGY CHART

GOALS

- List the long-term objectives of your campaign.
- State the intermediate goals for the issue campaign.
- Ask: What short-term or partial victories can you win as steps toward your long-term goal?



ORGANIZATIONAL CONSIDERATIONS

- List the resources that your organization brings to the campaign.
- List the ways in which you want your organization to be strengthened by the campaign.
- List internal problems that have to be considered if the campaign is to be successful.

ALLIES vs. OPPONENTS

- Who cares about the issues enough to join in or help the organization? What risks are they taking? What power do they have over the target? Into what groups are they organized?
- Who are your opponents? What will they do/spend to oppose you? How strong are they?

TARGETS

- **PRIMARY TARGETS.** A primary target is always a person. It is never an institution or elected body. Who has the power to give you what you want? What power do you have over them? Examples: problem property owner, city councilmember, business owner
- **SECONDARY TARGETS.** Who has the power over the people with the power to give you what you want? What power do you have over them? Examples: city council, mayor

TACTICS

For each target, list the tactics your group can best use to make its power felt:

- Letter From Group
- Letter to Editor
- Fliers
- Direct Action
- Public Meeting
- Voter Education
- Lawsuits
- Election

EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES

The key to effective communication is knowing your neighborhood typology, conveying important information, and keeping in constant contact.

CANVASSING: As discussed previously under ‘Getting Started’, canvassing (or door knocking) is the most labor intensive but meaningful form of effective communication. Through canvassing, you can meet potential leaders who you could recruit into your organization. Spending time talking with a neighborhood resident one-on-one about issues important to him personalizes outreach and creates greater likelihood of future participation. It also gives the individual doing the canvassing a broad and deep sense of the dynamics taking place in the neighborhood or block. A great leadership development tool, a group should strive to conduct at least one neighborhood canvassing a year, if for no other reason than to get a sense what’s going on in the neighborhood.

ONE-ON-ONES: One-on-ones are conversations that intentionally seek to uncover the goals, ambitions, talents, concerns and motivations of the individual you are speaking to. They are not small-

talk sessions.

TRY AND TRY AGAIN: Door knocking is a skill that can only be learned through practice. Although it can sometimes be intimidating and discouraging, door knocking is ultimately gratifying, humbling, and will pay off greatly in the end.

LITERATURE DROPS: Literature drops are just that: dropping off literature (ex. fliers) at a particular residence to provide notification of specific information (ex. the next neighborhood meeting, neighborhood project, block party). Many groups conduct literature drops as their primary communication strategy (certainly early on).

CREATING FLIERS

CONTENT: Fliers are an important tool for communication. They are easy to make, easy to read, and allow you to be creative. Fliers can be mailed, posted, distributed or left in stacks at key locations.

AUDIENCE: Fliers are best suited for your regular contacts and possibly as an outreach tool, but should not be used for an audience or event that requires a lot of information.

INFORMATION: A flyer should clearly state the Who, What, When, Where and Why of the event.

DISTRIBUTION: Fliers work well when they are handed out face-to-face. Fliers are NOT allowed to be placed directly in mailboxes, but may be tucked in doors or handed to people on the street. Ask the owners of popular restaurants and stores in the neighborhood for permission to leave fliers on countertops or bulletin boards.

TIMING: Think about timing when putting out fliers, they are most effective a few days before the event (1-3 days).

EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES

Most successful groups use multiple communication tools.

MAILINGS: Mass mailings are a great way to get a lot of information to many people at once, but they can be costly. As with fliers, mailings must be interesting, informative and clear. A semi-regular newsletter is one of the more common uses of mailings.



Courtesy of Jon Slone

LETTERS: Letters are best used when you need to inform residents about something very specific. Examples may include: a dry precinct campaign letter or a public meeting notice regarding an important issue in which a detailed explanation of the situation is needed. Letters should not exceed one page unless absolutely necessary. Within the first paragraph, the reader should understand who the letter is from and why he has received it. Letters from groups or organizations should be signed by a recognized leader of that group or organization, and if possible should be on letterhead that identifies the group.

MEDIA: Sending a short press release regarding your event is free and is a good way to reach a broad base of informed residents. You may even get some press coverage (*see next page for more*).

GROUP TEXT MESSAGING: An effective (and free) website for group texting is called Group Me (www.GroupMe.com). GroupMe enables mass text messages for groups for things such as neighborhood alerts, meeting reminders, updates, and more.

E-MAIL: E-mail is a very effective way to communicate among neighborhood residents. It's fast, free and can include every person in your group who has a personal e-mail address. If you don't have a computer, every public library in the Heights offers free Internet service. E-mail is a good way to communicate while keeping an electronic record of communication and information on file permanently (stored "in the cloud," or online). Use Mailchimp.com for sending free e-mail newsletters (with less than 2000 subscribers). Mailchimp also integrates well with social media sites, such as Facebook, so users can easily sign onto a mailing list without any effort.

WEBSITES & FACEBOOK: Establishing a website or Facebook Group is a cost effective way to get the word out about your neighborhood and your group. You can make the group private or by invitation only. Blogs are free, easy to use and dynamic enough to organize different types of information, such as news, contact information, announcements, photos and meeting minutes. Use wordpress.com or weebly.com to create effective sites on your own. You might also consider setting up a Nextdoor.com group for your neighborhood. FutureHeights can help you set up a blog, Facebook Group, or Nextdoor.com group, if you desire.

PRESS RELEASES

Press releases are a communication tool to use when you want to notify the media of an upcoming event or past success. Press releases provide the essential information to allow newspapers, television news, and radio news to write a story or attend the event.

CONTACT LIST

Most news outlets in the Cleveland area require 7-10 days notice. If you are hosting an event, consider sending it to all local newspapers, radio stations and TV news stations. Send out the press release by fax or e-mail, and call to follow-up. Many have websites where you can post an event to an online calendar.



CONTENT

Press releases should be clear and concise, no longer than one page in length. Include Who, What, When, Where, Why, How and also a contact person (see Attachment 3). Keep sentences short and clear. Type the NAME and DATE of the event in capital letters so they stand out. If your message is buried in a long, rambling letter, it is likely to be missed.

HEIGHTS OBSERVER

If you want your event to be considered for the monthly print issue of the Heights Observer, submit it online at www.heightsobserver.org and select Member Center from the left-hand menu. Send it in the form of a news story, not a press release. Do not quote yourself. Stick to the facts; don't embellish. Avoid inserting an opinion without embellishing it.

CONTACTING LOCAL MEDIA

Newspapers	Other
<p>Heights Observer: Kim Sergio Inglis, Editor www.heightsobserver.org Phone: 216-320-1423 E-mail: observerhts@gmail.com</p>	<p>WJCU 88.7 FM: Mark Krieger, Faculty Manager www.wjcu.org Phone: 216-397-4437 E-mail: wjcu.info@gmail.com</p>
<p>Plain Dealer: George Rodrigue, Editor www.plaindealer.com and www.cleveland.com Phone: 216-999-4373 Fax: 216.999.6374 E-mail: grodrigue@plaind.com</p>	<p>Cleveland Heights Focus Magazine: Ksenia Roshchakovsky, Public Relations Specialist www.clevelandheights.com Phone: 216-291-5792 E-mail: ksenia@clvhts.com</p>
<p>Sun Press: Mark Vosburgh, News Manager www.cleveland.com/sunpress 216-999-5519 mvosburgh@cleveland.com Letter to the editor: cleveland.com/letter-to-editor</p>	<p>University Heights newsletter Jen Waxman, Admin. Asst. to the Mayor www.universityheights.com Phone: 216-932-7800 x205 E-mail: jwaxman@universityheights.com</p>

V. Communication

NEWSLETTERS

Newsletters can be great tools for sharing information, successes and upcoming events. They can also be used to recruit new people, build community pride and recognize worthy volunteers. Newsletters require careful planning for the writing, editing, layout, printing and distribution to the community.

FORMING A COMMITTEE

Dividing up the project can be a way for new people to get involved in your group, and can give your newsletter the voice of the whole community. A newsletter committee can have a writing editor, a layout editor, a printing coordinator and a distribution coordinator—remember to give as many people an opportunity to get involved!

LAYOUT

Having a visually appealing newsletter increases the chances that people will pick it up to read. Using a program such as Publisher or PageMaker allows for greater creativity in your design. Think about creating a logo, a catchy title, and neatly typed columns in order to make a simple, easy-to-read newsletter.

PRINTING

Your newsletter will look more professional if you take it somewhere to be printed, rather than using a personal printer. It will also save time and possibly money. Try a print center like FedEx. The City of Cleveland Heights may be able to print them for you, for little or no cost.

DISTRIBUTION

When you design your layout, leave room to put the return address, a stamp and a label on one section. Then fold your newsletter, tape it closed, and it is ready to mail (or distribute via literature drop).

TOOLS AND TRICKS

Bypass the whole print-edition-only route and use online services like ConstantContact.com, MailChimp.com, or benchmail.com for creating electronic newsletters. These services enable the newsletters to be sent via e-mail. They also cut down on time required to create newsletters, and are intuitively easy to use.



The Heights Observer E-News publishes each Tuesday

VI. Group Dynamics



GROUP ROLES

Understanding the different group roles and dynamics will help you work better within a team. While groups may have any variety of personalities, community groups will usually have organizers, leaders, community members, contacts and opportunities.



COMMUNITY ORGANIZERS - TASKS:

- Develops leadership through direct training and connection to other leaders and groups.
- Works with community groups and assists leadership as needed.
- Supports leaders in preparing for and running meetings, identifying issues and developing strategies as needed.

CONTACTS: Contacts are those individuals whom you have met and spoken with before. They are potential volunteers or members—those people you connected with while door knocking, conducting one-on-ones, or at meeting and events.

CONFLICT RESOLUTION: As a group, work on embracing and learning from conflict, rather than letting it tear the group apart. Conflict, when dealt with properly, can be a healthy way of viewing an issue from a new perspective and giving members an opportunity to voice their opinions.

VI. Group Dynamics

CONFRONTATION

Not every issue on which you disagree with someone else merits confrontation, but some do. Nor does every relationship matter enough to justify the emotional energy of confrontation, but some do. A good rule of thumb: When you care a lot about both the issue and the person, it may merit confrontation.



DECISION MAKING

Decision making is a realistic process that all groups must go through. Groups must work through each individual’s self-interest to find the greater good by consensus. Knowing some techniques for healthy decision-making can assist your group in becoming stronger with each decision made. There are two methods widely used by groups to democratically make decisions—consensus and voting.

POWER DISTRIBUTION

Conflict is deeply rooted in power, and understanding. This can help you understand conflict, where it is coming from and how to overcome it. An important part of neighborhood organizing is redistributing power and balancing the system to give all members of the community an equal vote.

WAYS TO REDISTRIBUTE POWER:

- **Educate:** Allow everyone to know as much as the “leadership.”
- **Give Opportunities:** to attend important meetings, to ask questions, to become involved.
- **Communicate:** Keep everyone informed and up to date on the newest information as often as possible.
- **Train:** Give opportunities to practice and feel competent in asking questions, taking on a project, talking to the media and recruiting new members.

SEVEN STEPS TO DIFFUSING THE ANGER OF OTHERS

1. Allow the person to vent without getting defensive yourself.
2. Stay emotionally connected and express your desire to work on the problem.
3. Acknowledge the intensity of the anger the other person is feeling.
4. Paraphrase the feelings and concerns that are making the person angry.
5. Clarify and explore their needs and primary feelings.
6. Express your feelings and needs.
7. Move on to other parts of the problem-solving process.

VII. Events and Activities

NEIGHBORHOOD CLEAN-UP

A neighborhood clean-up creates a sense of pride and community. It also is a proactive activity which breaks up the monotony of meetings and issues.

PLANNING

To be effective, a specific area should be chosen for the clean-up. Before the event, tour the area, noting problem areas, what tools and equipment you may need, and take pictures.

PUBLICIZING

It is important to publicize the event well in advance, using fliers, phone calls and visits to the block clubs. A door-to-door visit to homes in the area that will be targeted for the clean-up may help gain cooperation from residents. Be sure to involve people of all ages—kids, adults and seniors!



COMMUNITY GARDENS

It is important to list the resources required to start a garden—land, topsoil, fences, seeds, tools, water—and how they can be obtained.

SITE SELECTION: The site should be in full sun at least 8 hours per day. Note the drainage. Areas of standing water won't support plant growth. There should be a close source of water. Test the soil. Besides a basic vegetable gardening test, have the soil lead tested.

THE GARDEN ORGANIZATION: As the number of people involved in the garden increases and as the core group expands, there will be a need to develop the structure of the garden and the rules for setting it up. Each garden group should discuss and choose its own design.

Do things at the community garden that will improve your neighborhood. Plant flowers and trees, or keep the street clean. Work with residents on your street. If you have children gardening on the site, you are less likely to have problems with vandalism from other kids. Get the neighbors around the site involved. They'll keep an eye on the site if they feel it is their site as well. Send notices to the libraries, churches and neighborhood centers whenever you have an event scheduled or could use a helping hand. Do things with the gardeners that will encourage others to want to join. Have potluck lunches, dinners, harvest festivals and planting parties.



RESOURCES: Both the cities of Cleveland Heights and University Heights are interested in encouraging new community gardens. The Sustainable Heights Network and Heights Community Garden Network serve both communities and may be able to help. Contact SHN at sustainableheights@gmail.com, contact HCGN at www.growingheights.com, or call the FutureHeights office at 216-320-1423.

VII. Events and Activities

BLOCK PARTY

A block party can serve many purposes—an opportunity to get to know new neighbors, a time to celebrate neighborhood campaign victories, or a chance to gather neighbors over food and company to build community.

Block Parties are a long-standing tradition in the Heights. Any given weekend during the summer months, you find neighbors getting together to have a good time.

The city will provide barricades to keep your street free from traffic during party hours. To reserve street barricades, contact the city's community relations department at least two weeks before the party.



From *ClevelandHeights.com*

CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING

- Where will the block party take place?
- How many people do you expect to attend?
- Will there be food? Entertainment? Games?
- Who will help clean up?

PERMITS

You will need a street closing permit to block off the area where the block party will take place. Contact the city with plenty of time ahead. Both Cleveland Heights and University Heights provide barricades that will be delivered to a street address. It is the organizer's responsibility to place the cones on the street.

PUBLICIZE

Be sure to notify everyone living in the area where the block party will take place, especially if the street will be closed. You also need to send out invitations, which can be done through fliers and face-to-face invites. You can also send out e-mails, press releases and more. Be sure to notify the Heights Observer.

FOOD

An effective, inexpensive way of providing lots of good food is to make the block party a potluck. Guests can bring their favorite dish, with a recipe card, which also encourages people to get to know one another. Be sure to have plenty of garbage cans.

TOOLS AND TRICKS

University Heights Block Party Application—www.universityheights.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/Block_Party_Form.pdf or call 216-932-7800

Cleveland Heights Block Party information—www.clevelandheights.com/index.aspx?page=332 or call 216-291-2323

VIII. Community Resources

RESOURCES FOR GREAT NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATIONS

Help from Cities

Both Cleveland Heights and University Heights want to be as helpful as possible when it comes to supporting stronger community ties, neighborhood associations, block clubs, and so on. Both cities have dedicated websites to help organizations achieve this. Be sure to thoroughly peruse the “Residents” section on both websites, or call the cities community relations department (Cleveland Heights) or City Hall (University Heights) for help planning the events.

www.clevelandheights.com or www.universityheights.com

Cleveland Heights Community Relations 216-291-2323

University Heights City Hall (216) 932-7800



Community Development Block Grant and Community Development

The City of Cleveland Heights is an Entitlement community. Entitlement communities are either principal cities of Metropolitan Statistical Areas (MSAs), metropolitan cities with populations of at least 50,000 or qualified urban counties with populations of at least 200,000 (excluding the population of entitled cities). Although Cleveland Heights population dipped just below 50,000, it still qualifies for this program. University Heights participates in this program through Cuyahoga County.

This program allocates annual grants to larger cities and urban counties to develop viable communities by providing decent housing, a suitable living environment, and opportunities to expand economic opportunities, principally for low- and moderate-income persons. As such, citizens may have some say over how the money is spent. Cleveland Heights has a citizens’ participatory plan, which is located online.

Cleveland Heights CDBG site—www.clevelandheights.com/index.aspx?page=478

Other Cleveland Heights Community Development Programs—www.clevelandheights.com/index.aspx?page=477

VIII. Community Resources

RESOURCES FOR GREAT NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATIONS

Creating a “No Plea Deal Zone”

To help reduce crime, neighborhood organizations can partner with local Prosecutor’s Office to increase the consequences of serious crimes within the community. In order to increase the consequences of being arrested for serious crimes, such as dealing drugs, violent crimes, burglaries, etc., organizations must FIRST have a long list of collaborative partners and at least a 5 year plan. ONLY THEN should a neighborhood organization reach out towards a partnership with prosecutors.

In Buffalo, the **West Side Community Collaborative (WSCC)** was able to expel drug dealers from their area by increasing the severity of punishments related to 19th street, per a partnership with the County District Attorney's Office. After just two arrests, dealers caught wind of the increased penalties, and most left immediately. With the dealers gone, police temporarily increased their presence on 19th street. The combination of increased presence and the DA’s involvement made the 19th street area a very unappealing place to deal. By 2004, the “no plea deal zone” policy had been adopted in other areas of the city and is currently being looked at as an example by neighboring cities of Buffalo. Together we can set up a similar program in our communities.

Also, work with Family Court to enact tougher penalties for youth. Adult Dealers often use youth as runners, so working with juvenile court can help decrease the appeal for youth to participate in drug trade. They are often told by older dealers that they won’t be arrested, and if they are, they won’t develop a record.

Cleveland Heights Law Department—www.clevelandheights.com/index.aspx?page=457 or call 216-291-3810

Cleveland Heights Municipal Court—www.clevelandheightscourt.com

Shaker Municipal Court (+ University Heights) - www.shakerheightscourt.org Or call 216-491-1300

Cuyahoga County Prosecutor’s Office—<http://prosecutor.cuyahogacounty.us/>

or call 216-443-7800

City Hall » Law
LAW

[Share & Bookmark](#) Font Size: [+](#) [-](#) [Print](#) [\[+\] Feedback](#)

Law Department
[John Gibbon, Law Director](#)
216-291-5775
Fax: 216-291-3731

The Cleveland Heights Law Department represents the City in all criminal prosecutions and civil litigation; acts as legal advisor and counsel to the City Manager, City Council and all City offices, employees, departments, boards and commissions; and prepares legislation at Council's request.

VIII. Community Resources

RESOURCES FOR GREAT NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATIONS

Working with the Police

The police are our first line of defence to protect and serve our community.

However, you can't "hide behind the curtains and be [angry with] the police for not doing their job," (- Harvey Garrett) if you don't work with them to let them know about crime.

Here are some great resources for working with The Heights's finest:

Cleveland Heights Police Facebook

<http://www.facebook.com/pages/Cleveland-Heights-Police/270250279686631>

Cleveland Heights Police Twitter

<https://twitter.com/clvhtspolice>

Cleveland Heights Police website

<http://www.clevelandheights.com/index.aspx?page=9>

Univeristy Heights Police website

<http://www.universityheights.com/departments/police/>

University Heights Auxillary Police

Contact Lieutenant Scott Tyler at (216) 932-1800

University Heights Neighborhood Watch

Contact Lieutenant Scott Tyler at (216) 932-1800 or e-mail at UHWATCH@yahoo.com



From bikesintheheights.org

VIII. Community Resources

RESOURCES FOR GREAT NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATIONS

Housing Court

There is an increasing amount of blight and disrepair that have been occurring in the Heights. To remedy this, Cleveland Heights has applied for grants to help repair or tear down structures. But sometimes tearing down buildings isn't the right thing to do.

“Tearing down a building is the ultimate disinvestment.”

Harvey Garrett, West Side Community Collaborative (WSCC)

In Buffalo, NY, WSCC noticed that many homeowners were already in housing court for serious code violations. The owners had stopped investing in their properties when there was no hope of a return on that investment. We've seen similar occurrences happen here in the Heights since the collapse of real estate in the mid-2000s. We have yet to recover.

WSCC began attending housing court on a regular basis, and worked with the Housing Court Judge to develop a community liaison position to assist the court in fighting the blight that was at the core of many neighborhood quality of life issues. This community liaison, a neighborhood resident, identified neighborhood issues and worked with the property owner to resolve the blight issues, or with housing inspectors to get the owner into court.

The police quickly learned that the Housing Court was an important partner because it could reduce the number of absentee landlords renting to dealers. After a drug-related arrest, the police began to bring the Community Housing Court Liaison into a property so the WSCC could then work with a housing or health inspector to start the process of resolving serious blight issues, employing large fines to encourage better tenant screening, or simply taking away the property through housing court.

Cleveland Heights Housing Court

<http://www.clevelandheightscourt.com/departments/housing.html> or call 216) 291-4901 EXT. 3

Cleveland Heights Building Department

www.clevelandheights.com/index.aspx?page=313 or call 216-291-4900, EXT. 1

University Heights Building Department

<http://www.universityheights.com/departments/building/>

Shaker Heights Housing Court

<http://www.shakerheightscourt.org/home> or call 216-491-1300

Home Repair Resource Center

www.hrrc-ch.org or call 216-381-6100

NEIGHBORHOOD MEETING
BLOCK WATCH START-UP

Are you concerned about the neighborhood? Are you interested in connecting with your fellow neighbors, officials and other community leaders? Do you want to get involved and help make a difference?

JOIN YOUR FELLOW NEIGHBORS:

THIS MONDAY

March 7, 2012 / 6 PM

@

Forest Hill Church, Presbyterian

3031 Monticello Blvd. The Heights, Ohio 44118

In Attendance Will Be:

Neighbors, Officials, Other Block Watch & Community Leaders

GET INVOLVED - TAKE ACTION - MAKE A DIFFERENCE!

For more info contact Joe Heights @ (216) 555-5555

PRESS RELEASE EXAMPLES

Monthly Neighborhood Meeting Press Release

CONTACT: Joe Heights / 216-555-5555 / southsideneighbors@gmail.com

South Side Neighbors April Meeting Notice

The South Side Neighbors (SSN) monthly meeting will take place _____, _____ :__pm at _____. Meetings are open for the public. For more information about the SSNA, please visit: www.SouthSideNeighbors.com

Event Press Release

CONTACT: Jane Heights / 216-555-5555 / southsideneighbors@gmail.com

South Side Neighbors to advocate on behalf of Land Bank at County Commissioner's Meeting

Representatives of the South Side Neighbors community organization will gather (date / time) at the Mahoning County Commissioner's meeting to advocate for the authorization and establishment of a county land bank (formally known as a County Land Reutilization Corporation or CLRC).

Leaders will deliver three minutes of testimony and will also deliver a petition holding signatures of support from neighborhood leaders from the organization.

As of July 7, 2010 Substitute House Bill 313 went into effect, allowing Ohio counties with a population of 60,000 or more to organize a county land bank. The land bank is a part of the county treasurer's department and has the ability to acquire vacant, abandoned properties quickly and efficiently as is considered a national best practice. According to the 2010 Vacant Property Survey done by MVOC, there are 26, 666 vacant properties in the city of Youngstown, an increase of 1,117 in two years.

For more information, please contact Jane Heights at (216) 555-5555 / southsideneighbors@gmail.com

ATTACHMENT 3

SAMPLE PROBLEM PROPERTY OWNER LETTER

April 1, 2011

[Company Name]

[Company Address]

[City / Zip]

Dear [Name],

The [Neighborhood Organization] is a coalition of citizens who reside in the [Name of Neighborhood] in Cleveland Heights, OH. This neighborhood group is committed to creating and maintaining a healthy neighborhood environment. For too long, the neighborhoods of Cleveland Heights have been experiencing increased blight and safety issues. The problem has reached a point where citizens from every side of town are organizing to do something about the problem.

Accordingly, residents of the [Neighborhood Organization] have been involved in surveying every parcel of land in the [Name of Neighborhood] neighborhood. The intent is to prioritize problem property and hold owners of that property accountable for remediation. This may include code enforcement citations, public meetings, media, slum property signage identifying ownership, letter writing campaigns, etc. his effort is a part of a larger, city-wide effort consisting of other neighborhood organizations, faith-based institutions, the City of Cleveland Heights and FutureHeights. All information is shared with these groups.

While performing these property surveys we came across your property at [Address]. We found this property to be in violation of the following neighborhood ordinances established by the City of Cleveland Heights.

- [Violation 1]
- [Violation 2]
- [Violation 3]

We would like to establish a relationship with you and discuss how we may be able to assist each other in reaching what we believe needs to be a shared goal of a healthy and vibrant neighborhood. However, the (Neighborhood Organization) is committed to doing whatever is necessary in order to clean up our neighborhood.

With this being said, we look forward to your support in decreasing the blight within the area we live. Please respond to the [Neighborhood Organization] at 216-***-****. We look forward to hearing from you.

Thank You,

(Neighborhood Group) Leadership Council

SAMPLE AGENDA

I. Welcome (New Members)

II. Old Business

ISSUES:

Neighborhood Property Survey:

- o Update: Survey completed; group agreed that 66 Indiana, 241 N. Elm, and 1319 Post Ave. were priorities for demolition this year. The group also discussed what top 3 roads should be paved.
- o Action Step: Give one week for final input then submit to Council Member Green; follow up with councilmember at next meeting.

107 Warren Ave:

- o Update: Property ownership was identified; Council Member Green had the structured secured; letter has not been drafted to property owner as of yet.
- o Action Step: Draft letter to owner inviting the owner to attend the next meeting; have group review letter and send out in no less than one week.

PROJECT & EVENTS:

Neighborhood Park Improvement Project:

- o Update: Group decided to improve the southeast entrance into the park with landscaping and a sign.
- o Action Step: Organize committee to research costs and draft grant for group review.

FUNDRAISING:

Fall Fundraiser:

- o Update: Ideas have included: 1. a 5K run 2. Pancake breakfast at the church 3. Garage sale.
- o Action Step: Vote on which we like to conduct and assign committee to begin organizing the event.

III. New Business

IV. Announcements

City Council Report

Other Announcements

V. Adjourn

NEIGHBORHOOD MEETING CHECKLIST

I. COMMUNICATION CHECKLIST

- Make sure that the entire neighborhood has been canvassed and has received **fliers**.
- Establish a **contact list** through canvassing that includes names, addresses, phones, and e-mail addresses (if applicable).
- Set up a **phone tree** and **text message tree** to keep people up-to-date about neighborhood happenings and meeting times.
- Establish an **E-mail list** for sending out neighborhood meeting or event information, alerts, agendas / minutes, photos, etc.
- Set up a **website**, **Nextdoor.com group** and **Facebook page** to keep residents informed.
- Send out a **press release** to any / all local print media or submit a story to the Heights Observer.

II. MEETING PREPARATION TASKS

- Have a **set agenda in advance** of the meeting. If possible, **e-mail it to the group** in advance so any questions / comments / additions can be addressed *prior* to meeting. Note: A meeting should never last more than 90 minutes.
- Prepare a detailed **Sign-in Sheet** that tracks:
 - Name of Attendees with address and contact information (address, phone, email)
 - If it is OK to Text? – Ask yes or no for group texting messages.
 - New Attendee? – Check mark for “yes” so that you can acknowledge new members.

III. NEIGHBORHOOD GROUP ASSIGNMENTS

- Meeting Chair** or **President** to run the meetings, keep order, and make sure the meeting stays on task.
- Treasurer** to keep track of funds and provide a budget statement at each meeting.
- Secretary** to operate a sign-in sheet and record minutes/notes of the meeting.
- Communications Director** to send press releases; summarize and take photographs at events and activities organized by the neighborhood group; update the website / Facebook Page / etc.
- Flier Committee** to produce, coordinate, and recruit flier distribution activities for each meeting or event.
- Project Committee** to coordinate projects that the neighborhood group decides to undertake.
- Social Events Committee** to manage social events to build community in the neighborhood.
- Fundraising Committee** to raise money for group activities, or for smaller groups, attach this responsibility to the Social Events Committee.
- Food Committee** responsible for providing food for meetings (ex. bake cookies) or possibly sell food at meetings to raise money for the group.
- Occasionally form **Ad-Hoc Issue Committees** to tackle *specific, actionable* issues that arise in the neighborhood.

FutureHeights

Address:

2843 Washington Blvd. Suite 105

(Coventry Building)

Cleveland Heights, OH 44118

Phone: 216-320-1423

Fax: 216-320-1423

E-mail: info@futureheights.org

Executive Director: Deanna Bremer Fisher

dbfisher@futureheights.org

Websites:

www.futureheights.org

www.heightsobserver.org