



The City of New York
Community Board No. 3
Bedford Stuyvesant Restoration Plaza
1360 Fulton Street, 2nd Floor ■ Brooklyn, New York 11216

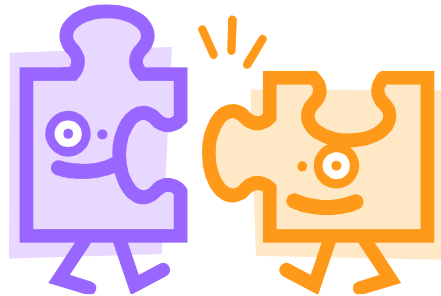
718/622-6601 Phone ■ 718/857-5774 Fax ■ www.nyc.gov/bkcb3 Website ■ bk03@cb.nyc.gov Email

ANTONIO REYNOSO
BOROUGH PRESIDENT

ANTHONY BUISSERETH
CHAIRPERSON

HENRY L. BUTLER
DISTRICT MANAGER

LET'S GET STARTED



(Putting it all Together)

BLOCK/TENANT ASSOCIATION START-UP PACKAGE

Getting Organized



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TO: All Block/Tenant Associations
 FROM: Community Board 3
 SUBJECT: Block/Tenant Association Officers

Block Association Officer Information Form

PLEASE COMPLETE THIS FORM AND RETURN IT TO THE COMMUNITY BOARD OFFICE (KEEP A COPY FOR ASSOCIATION RECORDS)

NAME OF BLOCK ASSOCIATION: _____

PLEASE INDICATE CROSS STREETS: _____

PRESIDENT'S NAME & ADDRESS: [Please Print]

Name: _____

Street Address/City/State/Zip: _____

Telephone Number: _____

Email: _____

VICE PRESIDENT'S NAME & ADDRESS: [Please Print]

Name: _____

Street Address/City/State/Zip: _____

Telephone Number: _____

SECRETARY'S NAME & ADDRESS: [Please Print]

Name: _____

Street Address/City/State/Zip: _____

Telephone Number: _____

01/2020



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LEND A HAND AND IMPROVE YOUR BLOCK

These days when everyone seems to be questioning New York City's ability to survive the financial crisis, the people of New York are answering back in their neighborhoods. In thousands of blocks throughout the city, New Yorkers have joined hands to form block associations to help improve the quality of life in their community. These block associations are at the center of a "Lend a Hand" movement which is spreading to every part of the city.

This is to help you and your neighbors join the block association movement. It contains the most frequently asked questions and answers about block associations and what they can do to help the city.

QUESTION: What is a block association?

ANSWER: A block association is people coming together where they live and work rich, poor, black, white, tenant, landlord, merchant, consumer, young and old; everyone who wants to make his or her neighborhood a better place to live.

QUESTION: What are the major benefits of a block association?

ANSWER: Residents on your block will develop a new pride in the block. You will realize a sense of community. Also, your association can contribute to improve services on your block and to the quality of community life.

QUESTION: How do you organize a block association?

ANSWER: The easiest way to begin is for a few residents on the block to get together and arrange a meeting in someone's home. Notices can be placed in the lobbies of the buildings in the block. Individuals attending the organizing meeting can serve as an interim steering committee. A knowledgeable speaker – to help with initial planning – can be provided by the citizens committee of New York City. At the first meeting, discuss your block's needs and problems and why you want a block association. Choose a temporary Chairperson of the group and House Captains for each building. Chairperson, steering committee, and House Captains in place, schedule the formal kick-off meeting to announce the formation of your block association to everyone on your block.

House Captains are the lifeblood of the organization. They are the link between the block residents and the steering committee. The House Captain is responsible for association membership, greeting new residents, delivering newsletters and notices, and serving as the eyes and ears of the association. Careful attention should be given to selecting persons to serve as House Captain who will actively participate in the association.

QUESTION: Where should the kick-off meeting be held?

ANSWER: You will need to obtain the use of a large facility on the block if possible. Most blocks have a church, school, temple, or some kind of community center. If there is not large meeting place on your block, use someone's apartment, building lobby or a large basement.

QUESTION: On what day should the kick-off meeting be held?

ANSWER: Whenever the majority of the steering committee can make it.

QUESTION: What time should the meeting be held?

ANSWER: Most meetings begin about 7:30 PM and 8:00 PM and end about 9:30 PM.

QUESTION: How do you let people know about the meeting?

ANSWER: Prepare a flyer for the kick-off meeting. Make sure it has the date, time, place, and purpose.

QUESTION: Should you have an outside speaker?



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ANSWER: Knowledgeable people are an asset. People like to hear from those who have experience with block associations.

QUESTION: What areas should a block association cover?

ANSWER: There is no magic size. A block association can cover from one block to four along the same street or may be organized to cover several adjoining blocks. (The more people involved in your block association, the more effective it will be.)

QUESTION: So, do we need a constitution or by-laws.

ANSWER: Most block associations have a simple set of by-laws to enable them to function in a democratic way without red tape.

e.g.:

NAME – The name of the Association shall be

PURPOSE – The purpose of the association shall be to promote a better block and community through group action.

MEMBERSHIP – Any person residing on _____ between _____ and _____ is eligible for membership.

DUES – Dues shall be \$1.00 per year or \$2.00 per family.

OFFICERS – The officers shall be President, Vice President, Secretary, and Treasurer who shall be elected at the annual membership meeting in _____.

The term of office shall be for one year.

COMMITTEES – The membership may establish necessary committees at any meeting. The president may also establish such committees. The President shall appoint committee chairpersons.

STEERING COMMITTEE – The officers and committee chairpersons shall constitute the steering committee and may act for the block association between meetings.

MEETINGS – There shall be at least two general membership meetings a year. The steering committee may call other meetings as required provided members have at least one week’s notice.

QUORUM – At least 10% of the membership must be present to conduct official business.

AMENDMENTS – The by-laws may be amended at any regular meeting. Members must be notified at least one week in advance of the proposed amendment and 2/3 of those present and voting must approve the change. (Dues are important because they give the treasury immediate money and people who pay tend to have more of a stake in the association.)

QUESTION: What constitutes a good meeting?

ANSWER: Have a written agenda which includes the following:

- Heading**
- Minutes of last meeting**
- Old business,**
- Reports of committees,**



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**New business,
Treasurer's report
Announcements
Adjournment**

- Let there be full discussion of issues without letting the meeting lag.
- Give all sides of an issue the chance to be heard
- Keep order at meetings – let one person speak at a time
- If possible, try to arrive at a consensus on an issue; a 21-20 vote is not a victory
- Take definite action after a meeting. People hate to go to meetings, discuss issues and then do nothing about them.
- Encourage strong leadership – people who have both the time and ability to keep on top of all of the problems.
- Set clear goals for your association. Decide what you want to do – then do it.

WARNING:

Do not let your block association get involved in politics. Do not support to endorse candidates the quickest way to divide your block is by getting political.

QUESTION: Should the association have committees?

ANSWER: Yes, most blocks have committees that deal with particular problems. This allows residents to work in the areas that interest them.

QUESTION: What are the most common committees that block associations have?

ANSWER: The seven most common committees are: Safety, Sanitation, Beautification, Newsletter, Membership, block party and Social. Many blocks also have committees dealing with consumer Affairs, Recreation, Senior Citizens, Housing and Youth.

QUESTION: How can a Block Association help to make its block safe and secure?

ANSWER: A block association can combat crime in at three areas:

- Personal Safety – The Police Department will send security officers to block association meetings to educated residents in crime prevention programs. They also discuss techniques for identifying trouble and possibly eliminating it, in advance, for example, ways to carry a purse or walk alone done a dark street, etc.
- House Safety – The Police department will send a police officer to examine each house on the block for safety defects. The block association can help buildings on the block organize Tenant Safety Committee. These committees can work closely with their respective landlords to maintain a secure building.
- Here are some things a Tenants Safety Committee can do:
 - Establish a lobby patrol during evening hours. If tenants donate a few hours a month, burglaries, and muggings in your building reduced.
 - Make sure that the intercom is working and that tenants do not buzz anyone into the building without determining who is at the door.
 - Make sure buildings are well lit both inside and out.
 - Make sure doors are properly locked.



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- Have periodic checks by local police and fire departments.

Street Safety – There are a number of ways in which a block association can help make the block safer:

- Conduct a survey of the block to identify safety problems and their locations.
- Consider the purchase of sodium lighting to brighten the streets.
- Institute a whistle program. Whistles can be purchased at low cost and sold or given free to each resident on the block.
- Get emergency telephones installed on the block.
- Hire uniformed security guards to patrol the neighborhood.
- Organize a civilian volunteer mobile patrol.
- Organize a street foot patrol where neighbors patrol their block for a few hours every evening on a rotating schedule.

Many block associations work with their local police precincts and help to enlist members in projects sponsored by the department such as the block watchers' program, the civilian radio patrol, and the auxiliary police. A member of the block association should attend the Police Precinct Council meetings. For Bed-Stuy: the 79th Pct. Council meetings the 4th Wednesday at 7:00 PM and the 81st Precinct Council meeting is the 2nd Tuesday at 7:00 PM

QUESTION: How can your block association help to keep the block clean?

ANSWER: Block associations throughout the city have been most active and most helpful in keeping their block clean.

Here are a few things you can do:

1. Buy a litter basket. Block associations can purchase litter baskets to keep their block clean.
2. Let residents know when garbage collection takes place, especially bulk collections.
3. Organize a street clean up. The Department of Sanitation directly or through your Community Board will supply you with brooms, bags, litter baskets and shovels.
4. Clean up vacant lots. The Department of Sanitation can help by providing the necessary equipment.
5. Organize resident's patrols to talk to block residents who litter, dog owners who allow dogs to soil the sidewalks and homeowners who fail to clean up in front of their homes or properly bag their garbage.

QUESTION: What can block associations do to beautify the block?

ANSWER: One association got the city to donate a parcel of land upon which they built a vest-pocket park; other plants shrubs and flowers in Riverside Park; hundreds of others all around the city have purchased trees, planters, or shrub tubs for their blocks. Some groups have painted the surrounding walls, several have turned vacant lots into vegetable gardens, hundreds of associations have installed tree guards and embellished them with ivy and other plants and/or plants and flowers. Other associations have bought benches, installed window boxes, painted benches and even buildings.

QUESTION: What can block associations do for the young people on the block?

ANSWER: Several block associations have active day care and after school programs on their block.

These are staffed by mothers and senior citizens and meet in such places as community centers and churches on the block. Associations sponsor regular trips to different places in the city, including museums, zoos, and botanical garden. Teenagers run their own committees and activities in many block associations. Dances, game nights and their own booths at block parties are just a few activities.

QUESTION: What recreation programs can a block association sponsor?



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ANSWER: Some blocks have regular athletic programs for kids on the block, such as judo courses or basketball, baseball teams which can challenge teams of other block association. The association is not limited to street activities and may want to contact local schools or churches to use their facilities for after school or summertime activities.

QUESTION: What can your block association do for the consumer?

ANSWER: Establish good ties with the local merchants. Many will give discounts to your block association members if you arrange a membership card system with the store.

QUESTION: What can a block association do for its senior citizens?

ANSWER: The most important thing you can do is to make the elderly on your block feel that they belong. The senior citizen has what association's need most-time to devote to association activities. Your block association can also provide services to its senior citizens in many ways: escort them to and from meetings late at night or in inclement weather, visit or call homebound seniors to ease their loneliness and check on their well-being. A good project for teenagers is to shop for seniors who are not able to shop for themselves. Have your association secure discounts for seniors from local merchants.

QUESTION: What can a block association do about housing on the block?

ANSWER: Educate the residents on the housing laws. Help individual buildings to form tenant councils and encourage them to work with the landlords to make their houses better in which to live. Some associations have sponsored successful programs of exterior renovation and painting of buildings on their block. Associations might even rehabilitate old or abandoned homes under "sweet equity" programs.

QUESTION: Are there other projects a new block association can undertake?

ANSWER: Yes! Among these are:

- A baby-sitting cooperative among mothers on the block
- Monthly town meetings on the block on neighborhood problems
- Adopt a park. Once a week, or monthly block volunteers spruce up the park, perform clean-up work, paint benches, etc.
- Adopt a tree. Members of your association can adopt individual trees and water them and keep them free from litter.

QUESTION: How can a block association recruit new member?

ANSWER: Sustained membership results from activity and visibility. A door-to-door canvass of block residents by building captains is the best way to get new members. In its recruitment drive, your association should also find out as much as it can about the interests and strengths of the block resident. Other ways to enlist members include setting up a membership table at block functions or on a street corner.

QUESTION: What social events can block associations sponsor?

ANSWER: A major purpose of social events is to involve the residents on the block. Block dinners have become a popular social event. Block parties are always a great success, whether large or small. Block associations may sponsor Halloween parties as well as Christmas parties.

QUESTION: Should your block association have a newsletter?



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ANSWER: Yes, because the newsletter is the only means of communication between the steering committee and members of the block association, it is of great importance. The newsletter usually can be financed either by advertisements from local merchants or by donations from your local printer.

QUESTION: Should your block association incorporate?

ANSWER: There are pros and cons of incorporation for your association to consider. Two basic arguments for incorporation are:

- 1) It will limit the liability of your officers and members
- 2) It will make it easier for firms or people to donate monies to you association. The major arguments against incorporation are that it may limit your flexibility. If your association has been in existence for several years and is thinking of undertaking major programs or raising substantial private funds projects, incorporation is probable advisable.

QUESTION: Where can a block association obtain legal assistance to incorporate?

ANSWER: Most block associations have an attorney on the block. Your membership canvass should turn up at least one lawyer who is willing to help you. If not, contact the Council of New York law Associates at 212/972-9370.

QUESTION: How can block associations raise money for its projects?

ANSWER: First determine how much money is needed for your project and prepare a budget. There are several sources of funds such as:

- 1) **Membership dues** – The average block has 1,000 residents and at \$1 per person that is \$1,000.
- 2) **Block party or Fair** – Most associations raise money by having annual events which includes the sale of food, and auction, book sale etc.
 - Raffle – ask merchant or friend to donate a nice gift or buy it at a cost and sell chances on it. Make the cost low enough for everyone can afford it and have as many people as possible selling raffles.
 - Local Merchants – most local merchants will readily aid a local block association either with merchandise or a cash contribution for a good project.
 - City Grants – in the past the city sponsored matching grant programs in the areas of trees and safety, but these have become dormant because of a shortage of funds. Some departments are prepared to make in-kind contributions or loans of equipment needed for projects.
 - Foundations – Several New York Foundations have contributed money to block associations primarily in the areas of beautification and parks.
 - Corporations – The firm you work for or the firm one of your active association members work for may be interested in making a contribution to a worthwhile project. Write a proposal and share it with them.

QUESTION: How does a block association go about setting up its books?

ANSWER: First, the Treasurer should go to a local business bank and set up a block association account. Many banks will give a block association an account at no cost. Second, buy a ledger book. Make a careful record in the book of all monies that come into the association and all monies that are paid out. Some monies should be kept by the treasurer to be given out for small items. Receipts should be kept for all expenditures. Monthly reconciliations should be made of bank statements.

IMPORTANT: Two officers of the association should sign **all** checks.

FINALLY: If you have any additional questions that need answers, or if you need any help with your association, please call the Citizens Committee for New York City (212) 975-1064.