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# COMMON ACTIVITIES

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Your neighborhood organization can accomplish a lot of things, big and small. This section will provide some common organization project ideas and a few resources to get you started. Always get permission to make improvements and talk to the City Urban Services Department about projects in the public right-of-way.

You already know that your neighborhood organization can form a neighborhood watch and can volunteer for projects. These are great projects and very common in neighborhood organizations. Your organization can also simply act as a social space providing an opportunity for neighborhoods to come together. If you are looking for some more specific projects, many ideas can be found below. This is a great place to start as your organization comes up with its own ideas!

- Neighborhood cleanups
- Plan a block party or education event (fire prevention for example)
- Walking school bus (organization a walking group to schools)
- Neighborhood clean up
- Street improvements
- Park improvements
- Youth projects
- Tree planting
- Community gardens
- Tool lending libraries
- Paint swap
- Adding signage
- Neighborhood t-shirts
- Neighborhood cookouts
- Welcome neighbors packet
- Asset mapping
- Yard of the month contest
- Speakers on topics of interest to the neighborhood
- Representatives to attend City Council and School Board meetings
- Skills exchange
- Install landscaping, public art, planters and pedestrian amenities.
- Initiate building improvements, and request services or improvements for public spaces.
- Add Landscaping, rain gardens, or trees
- Add public art such as murals or painted crosswalks
- Add street furniture such as benches and bike racks
- Organize a rideshare, particularly important for residents who cannot drive

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# NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH

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If you are concerned about security and safety issues, forming a Neighborhood Watch may be the answer. Contact the Crime Prevention Office at the Police Department for material and other assistance, and visit the National Crime Prevention Council at [www.ncpc.org/topics/home-and-neighborhoodsafety/neighborhood-watch](http://www.ncpc.org/topics/home-and-neighborhoodsafety/neighborhood-watch).

A Neighborhood Watch is undoubtedly one of the oldest and most well-known crime prevention concepts. While the modern-day concept of Neighborhood Watch came into prominence in the late 1960s in response to an increasing burglary rate, its roots in America actually can be traced all the way back to the days of colonial settlements, when night watchmen patrolled the streets.

## **5 Steps to Building a Successful Neighborhood Watch in Your Area**

Neighborhood Watch has had its profile raised in recent years as it became integral to the nation's homeland security strategy. Neighborhood Watch is a crime prevention program that stresses education and common sense. It teaches citizens how to help themselves by identifying and reporting suspicious activity in their neighborhoods. It also gives citizens the opportunity to give back to their neighborhood by working together to make the neighborhood safer and improve its quality of life. It's easy to start an effective and successful Neighborhood Watch. All you need to do is gather community partners at an initial meeting. Use the guide for conducting a successful meeting found in this packet and follow these 5 steps:

### **STEP 1**

Talk with your fellow neighbors about their concerns regarding crime in the area and determine the level of interest they have in starting a Watch. While it is not necessary to have every household involved, incorporating as many of your neighbors as possible will increase your effectiveness and your likelihood for success in reducing crime.

### **STEP 2**

Contact your local law enforcement agency and invite them to meet with your group at a time and place convenient to your Watch members. It is essential for your group to work in collaboration with law enforcement. A Neighborhood Watch is a cooperative effort. Law enforcement officials need to let the citizens know what is expected of them as Watch members, and citizens need to let law enforcement know what their concerns are within the community.

### **STEP 3**

Working with a law enforcement advisor, your Watch should identify patterns of crime in the area and develop strategies to address these problems. Your group will need to appoint a block captain to coordinate these efforts and to design a phone tree for reporting crime and suspicious activities.

### **STEP 4**

Have law enforcement train your Watch members in Emergency Preparedness and Emergency Response, Terrorism Awareness, and basic crime prevention techniques such as target hardening, eyes-and-ears, and CPTED (Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design).

## **STEP 5**

Take active steps in your community. Have a kickoff event to announce your formation and to encourage others to get involved. Post signs in and around your neighborhood. Start a Neighborhood Watch newsletter and schedule times for Watch members to do citizen patrols.

It is important to keep your group active and enthusiastic. Maintaining communication between group members and your law enforcement agency is very important. Be sure to schedule regular meetings so that your group remains focused. As concerns within the community change and crime patterns evolve, make sure you tailor your efforts around the new problems.

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If everyone involved in the Neighborhood Watch program aims for the same goal, the program will be successful. This is not an overnight process; it takes patience, planning, and enthusiasm. Studies show that once a Neighborhood Watch program deteriorates, criminals notice and quickly resume their illegal activities.

The National Sheriffs' Association invites you to check out [www.usaonwatch.org](http://www.usaonwatch.org). Check out its Resource Center and Neighborhood Watch partners. You may subscribe to its newsletter. Of special note, is the ability to register your Neighborhood Watch.

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# OTHER ACTIVITIES

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## **Host a Coffee Hour**

This can be arranged and hosted by one family or by two or three. Make a simple flyer, a friendly invitation for neighbors to stop by and meet each other and enjoy some light refreshments. Distribute it to every house on the block or the three houses closest to you on each side and across the street (or your apartment floor, building, etc.) Serve coffee and donuts or cookies and juice—keep it simple. Distribute nametags or keep it informal.

## **Organize a Block Party**

Block parties require more organization than a coffee hour, but they are effective in getting neighbors together. Determine the number of families you want to participate (about 20-30 households is a good number). Form an organizing committee (4-8 people) to help organize the party.

- Choose a location—Consider someone's yard or the middle of a street, for example. You can get permission from the Police Department to close off a street for a specific period of time for such an event. (Be sure to request the street closure at least two weeks in advance.)
- Choose a day and time—For example, a Saturday or a holiday (such as July 4 or Labor Day), 11 a.m.–4 p.m. Make either dropping by for a short time or staying the entire time acceptable options.
- Arrange for food and supplies—The host committee provides paper plates and napkins, plastic forks, trash containers, can openers, and condiments; sets up tables and chairs; and provides several barbecue grills. A potluck is a good idea.
- Arrange for entertainment—Organize croquet, volleyball, Ping-Pong, lawn

bowling, cards, bingo, races, and games for kids.

- Prepare and deliver invitations—Deliver one to each household approximately two weeks in advance of the party. The invitation should describe in detail how the event will work and what people should bring. Make it clear in the invitation that people may drop in for a short visit or stay the entire time. Include the names and phone numbers of the organizers, and invite others to help and/or call if they have questions or ideas. Even though the organizing committee is planning it, try to include others in providing assistance and ideas. The more people feel a part of the event, the more likely they will attend.
- Plan for cleanup—Towards the end of the event, start cleaning up. Those who are still around will help, but make sure you have at least four to six people you can count on to help with the cleanup.

## **Plan a Neighborhood Garage Sale**

Invite neighbors to join you in holding a garage sale. This is a good way to work closely with neighbors on a short-term project. Many sales along a block attract more customers and add to the day's success. Most residents on your street (or in your complex) will show up to see what you are selling. You will meet some new neighbors, make a little money, and have a good time!

Write and deliver a flyer announcing your plans for a neighborhood garage sale and suggest possible dates. Invite neighbors to tell you what dates are best for them. When you decide on a date, ask someone to place an ad in the local newspaper. Make signs and, in consultation with your neighbors, decide where they should be displayed and who will be responsible for

posting the signs and taking them down after the event. Usually, the participants share the cost of running a newspaper ad and making signs.

### **Volunteer to Help at your Local School or Civic Organization**

Danville schools and civic organizations may welcome your interest in volunteering to assist in the classroom. Contact the Danville Schools and similar organizations to identify volunteer opportunities.

### **Organize a Disaster Preparedness and/or Fire Prevention Group**

This is a great way to meet neighbors and learn helpful information. Depending on the amount of interest, this can involve a one-time presentation to a small group of interested neighbors, or it can consist of developing a neighborhood disaster preparedness plan over a period of several months that involves anywhere from 10-40 homes. Contact the Fire Department Office of Emergency Services for information on setting up your project.

### **Grocery program**

Work with local establishments like neighborhood centers to have fridges that sell perishable items, frozen vegetables, or sell common necessary items (ex. Paper towels). You may be able to organize food delivery service and online grocery deliver necessary products (like fresh produce) to a central location in your neighborhood or your home after examining costs and benefits. In some communities, even gas stations and hardware stores are contributing by selling some necessary grocery items to neighbors. A rideshare to a grocery store may also help many residents access healthy food.