

Neighborhood groups can make your neighborhood a better place to live. A neighborhood group unites community members and gives them the ability to work with each other and the City to build relationships and address issues. If your neighborhood does not have an existing neighborhood group and you want to create one, use the following 6-step process as a guide to form a new group.

Step 1: Make Sure There is a Need for a New Group

Will your neighborhood benefit from having another new group or could you team up with a pre-existing group? Before making a new group, make sure that a neighborhood group with the same purpose doesn't already exist in your neighborhood. Find out by checking the Neighborhood Group page, contacting the DoNE office 717-291-4711 neighborhoods@cityoflancasterpa.gov or asking your neighbors.

Step 2: Find a Small Group of Invested Neighbors

If a neighborhood group with the same planned purpose doesn't already exist in your area, you can develop one. Start by talking with your neighbors to find a dedicated group of individuals who are also interested. Invite everyone you contact to an open meeting to discuss the idea of a neighborhood group.

- Hold your meeting in a public and welcoming space. Have a picnic in a park, meet at a library or school, or share conversation over a cup at a local coffee shop.
- Find 2-4 people at this meet-up who would be willing to commit to forming a planning committee.

Step 3: Hold a Planning Meeting to Define Group's Purpose

Ask the planning committee to meet to discuss ideas and expectations for the new group; spend time getting to know each other and share why you want to form a neighborhood group.

- There should be an open discussion regarding the goals; this could range from solving a specific issue to strengthening a sense of community in your neighborhood.
- Talk about how to get other neighbors involved in the organization, when general meetings should be, possible boundaries and bylaws, and when the planning group should meet next.
- Define the mission and vision of your organization (ie. why your group exists and what you hope to achieve in your community)

Step 4: Hold a Neighborhood Meeting

Once the planning group has decided on the structure and boundaries of the group and created draft bylaws, you are ready to start planning your first neighborhood meeting. This meeting will provide an opportunity to: 1) Introduce the idea of a neighborhood group; 2) Get community members involved; 3) Get feedback on the proposed boundaries and bylaws.

- Find a large common place for the meeting such as a community center or a school. When choosing a space, consider the American with Disabilities Act (ADA). Try finding a space that would allow for anyone in your neighborhood to be able to attend.

- Do broad outreach and promotion to ensure you are reaching a diverse cross-section of your community.
- Have an agenda with suggested time spent on each topic ready for all attendants.
- Bring a sign-in sheet, any relevant handouts, and contact information for members of the planning committee.
- Check out the Community Resource Hub Get Organized Toolbox for tips on planning and leading meetings, sample bylaws and agenda, sign-in sheet, and more.

Step 5: Hold a Second Neighborhood Meeting and Research Neighborhood Demographics

When there is consensus on the boundaries and bylaws of the new group (which may take multiple meetings), plan a meeting to adopt bylaws and elect officers. The goal should be to include as many of your neighbors as possible. Check out the Community Resource Hub Get Organized Toolbox for tips on publicizing your organization.

What next? A committee can be formed to conduct a neighborhood inventory to learn more about your neighborhood. A neighborhood inventory involves forming a report of facts about the neighborhood including (but not limited to) information about the types of housing (single family, multi-family, rentals, student housing), schools in the area, and community history. Find information of this kind at:

- The City of Lancaster Building Block Pages
 - <https://lancaster-pa.tolemi.com>

The new neighborhood group now exists! Now the real work, and fun, can begin.

Step 6: Promote Your Organization

When your group is established and has a solid mission based on community input, we encourage you to promote your group and your group's events using our online tools.

- **Contact the DoNE office and share your neighborhood contact information and profile. The DoNE office will post your neighborhood group information on our site.**
- **Post your events on the Neighborhood Engagement Lancaster Facebook Page.**