

Block Club Starter Kit



For Block Captains

Lighthouse Communities, Inc

1422 Madison AVE; Grand Rapids, MI 49507 Phone: 616.451.9140 Fax: 616.451.0615~www.lcgr.net

**Southtown Matching Fund
BLOCK CLUB INCENTIVE PROGRAM**

Southtown residents are encouraged to participate in new and existing block clubs through an incentive program established under the Southtown Matching Fund (SMF). While recognizing that neighborhoods have their own distinct characteristics and needs, the Block Club Incentive program seeks to increase social ties among resident-led groups and enhance the sense of neighborliness throughout our community.

Applications are received from April 1 thru October 1. You must allow at least thirty (30) days notice prior to your block party.

Lighthouse staff will review and approve all applications submitted to the Block Club Incentive Program.

Procedure:

Contact Lighthouse Communities, Inc Neighborhood Services to schedule a meeting. Program participants will be required to have a minimum of ten (10) members of your block interested in the proposed block party before any project is approved. You must host at least three (3) planning meetings with at least ten (10) members of your block in attendance throughout the planning of your block party with the attendance of a Lighthouse staff person. During the meetings, you will plan your block party and determine what roles each resident will play in the coordination of the party.

Once completed, a letter of understanding will be signed between Lighthouse Communities and the block club to carry out the block party.

The Block Club is responsible for documenting the planning, implementation, coordination and facilitation of activities leading up to the block party. The Block Club will be required to submit to Lighthouse a written report on the completed project no later than 15 days after the project has concluded along with supporting documentation.

All block parties should comply with the Southtown Matching Fund Program Guidelines.

Please see the attached documentation for help with planning your block party.

For more information contact Takara@ (616) 451-9140 or at takara@lcgr.net

Block Captain Duties

The key person in any Neighborhood Watch group is the Block Captain. This person is an integral component to keeping the block actively involved in crime prevention efforts as well as the important process of information exchange between neighbors. Many Block Club groups flourish, but some dwindle while others disappear totally. How successful they are depends on the Block Captain and the support he or she receives from neighbors.

The following is a list of recommended activities for you as a Block Captain. It is not meant to be all-inclusive, because many Block Captains are creative in their approach. Periodically monitor the membership of your group. Contact new residents to get them involved and to obtain their support and participation. Update your membership list as needed. Contact your neighborhood association Crime Prevention Officer if you have changes to the roster.

1. Develop a neighborhood communication system to distribute vital information to neighbors pertaining to criminal activity and other concerns that develop in the area. This can be a periodic newsletter, telephone tree, and/or a one-page notice that can be quickly distributed.
2. You are encouraged to arrange for your group to meet socially at least 4 times per year to exchange information and renew relationships as well as to get acquainted with new neighbors. People who communicate regularly will care more about each other and be more willing to keep an eye out for suspicious behavior. The annual National Night Out (NNO) celebration is one example that will bring your neighbors together.
3. A follow up Block Club program should be conducted every few years or sooner if specific problems are occurring in your neighborhood. This should also be the case if you have several new neighbors. Call the Crime Prevention office to arrange for a presentation.
4. Encourage neighbors to advise you concerning criminal activity. It is the victim's responsibility to contact the police. However, you can keep a record of break-ins, vandalism, graffiti, and/or any activity that becomes a concern for you and your neighbors. Provide this type of information to neighbors at your next block meeting.
5. Your position as a Block Captain does not give you any law enforcement authority. You are simply the person who facilitates the unity of the group, distributes information, and coordinates activities. The job you are doing is important and appreciated by your neighbors, but it carries no authority.
6. Remember: Our recommendation to all citizens who see a crime in progress or notice suspicious activity is to observe and report from a place of safety. We strongly suggest that you not confront an offender unless you are in immediate danger. This applies to you and your neighbors. We do not want anyone to get hurt or injured trying to apprehend an offender or interfering with an incident other than to report the activity to the police.

If you or your neighbors witness a crime in progress or observe suspicious behavior, call 911 (emergency) or 456-3400(non-emergency).

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How to get started:

1. Find 10 people on your block who share your concerns in regards to your street.
 - A. You need to have at least 3 block club meetings prior to your first block party.

Tip: Try to include everyone. It's important to invite even those who you would consider to be problematic such as those who don't cut the grass, put the garbage in the can, keep up the exterior of their property, etc. Gaining their membership might influence them to keep the wishes of the rest of their neighbors in mind. *(Remember: people should never be invited to the meeting to be lectured about their undesirable behavior; it is by including them in the decision-making about what will be good for the whole block that they may come to live by better standards.)*

- B. During your first couple of meetings with your neighbors, consider discussing the following:
 - Housing conditions/ such as housing code violations.
 - Any issues regarding crime or public safety.
 - Youth activities.
 - Leadership training.
 - Neighborhood activities (i.e. block parties, gardening, garage sales, holiday activities, etc.)
 - Street boundaries. (How big do you want your block club to be?)
 - Set a consistent meeting time and place, inviting all interested residents to possibly meet at a school, church, someone's house or non-profit organization.
 - Overall goals of your block club/mission statement.
 - Start a telephone tree.

2. Get more people involved.

- A. **Create flyers.** Give the flyers five to seven days before the meeting to the neighborhood. You may also attempt to mail flyers to city officials, local organizations, or other individuals who may have an interest in your meeting. If you need assistance with the design and printing of your flyers, please contact someone from the Neighborhood Services Department at Lighthouse Communities. Always continue to give flyers to neighbors who currently don't attend your meetings. They may do so in the future.
 - B. **Door-to-Door contacts:** While passing out flyers to the neighbors, try to speak to the neighbor as well. When friendly personal contact is made, meeting attendance tends to be very good.
 - C. **Get commitments:** When inviting neighbors, try to get them to commit to attending your neighborhood block club meeting. They may be more likely to attend so as not to disappoint you!
 - D. **Arrange for refreshments:** Light snacks or a small potluck always seems to be a good way to increase block member participation.
 - E. **Gather Resources:** Try to partner up with other neighborhood organizations, schools, and churches that are willing to help enhance your mission.

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Sample Block Club Meeting Agenda

I. Introductions

Each attendee stands and gives name and brief background information. Organizer and/or Community Officer will do the same.

II. Reason for Meeting

Give a brief explanation of why the meeting is called. This is usually explained by either a Block Captain/ and or Community Organizer.

III. Plan of Action

A) **Overview:** Talk about/and write down some of the goals you would like to accomplish as a block club as well as the steps you will need to take (youth activities block parties, movie night, clean-up, crime prevention, reporting issues involving abandoned houses, etc).

B) **Meetings:** Establish regular meeting dates, times and location. Suggest that they meet regularly (1-2 times a month depending on your goals). You will need to have at least 2 meetings before you qualify to have a block party.

C) **Size of Group:** An organization can comprise one block (both sides of street)/ or a few blocks with shared concerns.

D) **Skill/Task:** Everyone should talk about their skills and talents that may be helpful for the group. This is also the time to discuss who should be responsible for certain tasks within the group.

E) **Records:** Make sure that at least one person documents any type of meeting or activity involving the block club. Take good notes and try to take pictures at your block club events. Maintain all records within a designated file.

F) **Issues:** Ask each attendee to write down the most important issues that they feel should be addressed in the neighborhood.

Block Club

Suspicious Activity List

If you live in a community that has a Neighborhood Crime Watch Program, it is a good idea to join the program and attend its conferences so that you can share crime prevention ideas with your fellow neighbors. Your local law enforcement office can give you lots of tips on what and who to keep an eye on as part of your Neighborhood Crime Watch Program.

Here is a list of things that you should be watchful for:

- People traveling door-to-door especially if one person stays out front while the other goes to the back side of the house
- Nonresidents carrying belongings down the street to an awaiting car
- Lots of people coming from and going to a particular residence at all hours of the day and night
- Vehicles driving down the neighborhood streets at night time with no headlights
- Unknown people loading items into a car or truck
- Abandoned cars or trucks
- Nonresidents going into the sides or backs of peoples' homes
- Unknown people standing around in front of businesses or houses or running through the neighborhood without proper running or jogging attire
- Unknown people playing around with doors or windows of houses or with any part of a vehicle
- Nonresidents sitting in parked vehicles for extended periods of time
- People conducting business from a parked vehicle
- Any signs of forced entry such as open doors and broken windows
- Hoarding of items and goods in and around property (people may be storing stolen property in plain sight in your neighborhood).
- Excessive and unusual noises coming from residences such as screams, gunshots, dogs barking, or fighting

If you perceive any of these situations as suspicious activity, they could indicate a crime in progress or other serious problem in your neighborhood. Your crime watch group should keep an eye out for such things and report them right away to police.

TIPS FOR HANDLING NEGATIVE ATTITUDES

In the process of inviting your neighbors to your first neighborhood block club meeting, it might be possible that one or two of your neighbors will respond negatively to the idea. Don't be discouraged and don't take it personally! They just need a little more convincing about the benefits of neighbors coming together as a group. Here are some responses you can use to deal with some of the reactions.

Their comment: "Organizing a neighborhood block club? That's a great idea, but it'll never work in this neighborhood. The neighbors don't even know each other."

Your response: "That's the problem and a neighborhood block club is the solution! How can you solve problems if you don't know your neighbors well enough to work together on issues that affect all of us in the neighborhood?"

Their comment: "I don't want to be forced to become buddies with my neighbors. I've got my own set of friends outside the neighborhood."

Your response: "Getting involved in a neighborhood block club doesn't mean you have to become best friends with your neighbors. It means that you agree to cooperate to make your neighborhood a better place to live."

Their comment: "I don't want to get involved and be a nosy neighbor."

Your response: "Many people have discovered that getting involved doesn't mean being nosy; it means being concerned for your neighbor and your neighborhood."

Their comment: "I don't want all of my contact information to be included in the phone tree and I don't want to put any of my information on sign a sign in sheet."

Your response: "Well, you can have the option of just signing your initials and only give out an email address as a way to contact you."

Block Club Phone Tree Form

I agree to participate in the local Block Club Program. I further agree that I will make a conscious effort to better protect my neighborhood by becoming aware and involved in this program designed to reduce criminal activity.

Name	Address	Telephone	Email
1.	_____	_____	_____
2.	_____	_____	_____
3.	_____	_____	_____
4.	_____	_____	_____
5.	_____	_____	_____
6.	_____	_____	_____
7.	_____	_____	_____
8.	_____	_____	_____
9.	_____	_____	_____
10.	_____	_____	_____
11.	_____	_____	_____
12.	_____	_____	_____
13.	_____	_____	_____
14.	_____	_____	_____
15.	_____	_____	_____
16.	_____	_____	_____
17.	_____	_____	_____
18.	_____	_____	_____
19.	_____	_____	_____
20.	_____	_____	_____



BLOCK CLUB PARTY KIT

Bouncer
All Necessary Permits
1 Tent
3 tables/8 feet
5 Games
20 Chairs
50 Paper Plates
Cups & Napkins
Bags of Ice
Trash Can/Bags
Fire Truck or Police Car
Photographer
Flyers/Invitations
Face Painting OR Caricature Artist*
50 Hot Dogs*
4 Liters of Pop*

***The Community Development Block Grant does not cover food or entertainment. Lighthouse Communities will attempt to secure private donations from other sources to offset these cost.**

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