







West Allis

NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION HANDBOOK



GETTING STARTED

Rainbow Gardens Neighborhood Association Mural

Do you want to meet your neighbors? Impact your community? Build stronger relationships and safer neighborhoods? If you said yes to any of these questions, a neighborhood association might be right for you!

Neighbors working together are important to the health and spirit of a community and shape the quality of life in a neighborhood. Neighborhood associations bring neighbors together to share focus and organize to make their neighborhoods great places to be. As a resident, homeowner or business partner, your love for your neighborhood can significantly impact and enhance quality of life for your neighbors and West Allis as a community.



WHAT IS A NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION?

A neighborhood association is a group of residents who identify with a particular neighborhood and share common goals and concerns for the area. Neighborhood associations are member-based groups that are open to everybody within the neighborhood. Members collaborate on issues and identify creative solutions to address concerns. They also have fun! Neighborhood associations can work together to problem-solve challenges like reducing speeding on residential streets, or they can collaborate to host family-friendly events like block parties.

By sharing your time, energy, talents, and passion for your neighborhood, neighborhood associations empower resident to make real, positive impacts in our community.

NEIGHBORHOOD FACTS

- 26 unique neighborhoods in West Allis' 11 square miles
- As of 2021, six recognized neighborhood associations:
  - Rose Hill
  - East Allis
  - Liberty Heights Park
  - Orchard Hills
  - Rainbow Gardens
  - Wood Dale



I have been able to meet a lot of people that I wouldn't have known otherwise. I am always amazed at the difference a group of people can make.

- Tanya Gross
Wood Dale Neighborhood Association



WHY START OR JOIN A NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION?

Neighborhood associations are powerful forces for good in West Allis! By starting or joining a neighborhood association, you can:

- Build and strengthen relationships between neighbors
- Create a safe space for discussion about local opportunities and challenges
- Provide an opportunity for people to work together and make a difference in our community
- Enhance neighborhoods by working together to build or improve amenities
- Make your neighborhood safer and more connected
- Engage residents and business owners, increasing the value of the neighborhood
- Work together to achieve common neighborhood goals
- Increase awareness of City policies and programs impacting the neighborhood
- Host fun, community-building events, like picnics or block parties

My involvement has helped to foster a deeper sense of ownership in the neighborhood. The ideas for enrichment are endless. I would encourage other neighborhoods to begin an association, simply as a means to meet your neighbors and get a pulse for the wants and needs throughout your immediate community. If your neighborhood already has an association, get involved and share your time and talents. I've learned that a handful of dedicated people can make a difference: that a seed, properly cultivated, will grow!

- Dan Schmidt
Rosehill Neighborhood Association



East Allis Neighborhood Association





National Night Out Block Partyt

WHAT DO NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATIONS DO?

Neighborhood associations bring neighbors together for the betterment of our neighborhoods. The activities and goals of each neighborhood association in West Allis may vary based on the needs of that particular neighborhood. Past projects our neighborhood associations have worked on together to accomplish include:

- Creating a pollinator/butterfly garden in a previously empty public space
- Establishing a community garden
- Staffing a booth at City-sponsored events to recruit new association members
- Designing and producing unique neighborhood signage to create a sense of identity within the neighborhood
- Coordinating and promoting neighborhood rummage sales
- Hosting litter clean-up days at parks within the neighborhood
- Coordinating Easter Egg Hunts, chili cook-offs, pancake breakfasts, block parties, or other family-friendly events
- Organizing rock painting parties and spreading rocks around the neighborhood for others to find
- Installing murals in park pavilions or in shared public spaces
- Building Little Free Libraries® throughout the neighborhood and ensuring they are stocked with books
- Helping neighbors in need with snow removal or lawn care
- Organizing food or clothing drives
- Volunteering at City of West Allis events

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATIONS?

Neighborhood associations get things done! The combined skills, passion, and creativity of the members of neighborhood associations come together to build new features in the neighborhood, like public gardens; they help neighbors in need; and they support the community at large. In addition, other benefits of neighborhood associations include:

- Creating a welcoming, supportive community
- Improving property values and attracting new residents
- Establishing effective communication with City Departments and elected officials
- Acquiring funding for neighborhood projects



Liberty Heights Neighborhood Association Chalk Your Walk



East Allis Neighborhood Association Butterfly Gardenk

By promoting the positives and working with each other, we can make our neighborhood safer, cleaner, and promote our thriving business community.

- Jon Cervantes, East Allis Neighborhood Association

HOW TO START A NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION

Ever chatted with your neighbors while out in your yard or shared a laugh over the fence? You're on your way towards starting a neighborhood association. Casual connections between neighbors are the first steps toward building a more formal, organized neighborhood association. From there, you can expand your outreach to include more neighbors in the conversation. Leverage social media, door-to-door conversations, or host small, informal gatherings to start to get your neighbors together and get them talking. In these early stages, there's no formal process, and the only way to go wrong is to stop trying!

Getting neighbors together doesn't need to be difficult. Keep in mind some important tips as you begin to organize.

- Building an association is a process – it won't get done overnight. Be patient! Set small goals and meet them step by step. Maybe your first goal is reaching five new neighbors, then ten, and so on. Start small and work up.



- For your neighborhood association to succeed, everyone must be welcome. This is not the time to talk politics – make sure your group is inclusive and welcoming to everyone in the neighborhood.
- How you treat people is crucial to your success. By treating people with respect and integrity, people will be more likely to get and stay involved.
- Share the work. While a leader may start to emerge, don't hesitate to ask neighbors for help with communication or scheduling events.
- Communicate often. Social media is a great way to keep in touch.
- Have fun! Your association may want to tackle serious neighborhood issues, but an important part of neighborhood associations is creating casual, inviting opportunities for neighbors to get together and enjoy one another's company.

After a core group of people is ready to move into the more formalized stage of establishing an organized neighborhood association, the group should work to develop the following:

- Create an agreed upon name for the organization
- Compose an agreed upon mission and statement of purpose
- Identify your clearly defined geographical neighborhood boundaries
- Identify your association's contact person(s)



National Night Out Block Party

FORMAL RECOGNITION

You've done a lot of work to meet and engage your neighbors. You've identified challenges and opportunities your neighbors share. You've named your organization and documented your mission and purpose. Now it's time to formally recognize your association with the City of West Allis!

You don't have to formally recognize your association with the City of West Allis, but there are many benefits to doing so, including:

- Opportunities to apply for grants and project funding
- Direct connections to City staff for assistance and information
- Three free block parties per year (if approved by West Allis Police Department) - no Special Permit fees required
- Stronger influence in local decision making
- Opportunities for promotion of your neighborhood association through City communication channels, such as the City newsletter, e-newsletter, and social media
- Print materials assistance at reduced costs through the City's Creative Services Department and access to other City services to assist your organization

I think that neighborhoods are better when there is representation. This gives everyone a voice and connection to the city we live in. Change can happen when there is a strong voice. You have to be an advocate not only for yourself, but for the people you share your community with.

- Julie Barkow-Peck, Rainbow Gardens Neighborhood Association


Rainbow Garndes Mural

The City's Community Engagement Coordinator will work with you to formally recognize your association and help you leverage the benefits of formal recognition. When you're ready to pursue formal recognition, the CEC will help you with:

- Contacting the alderpersons of your area to share your intent of formal recognition.
- Completing the West Allis Neighborhood Association Application Form.
- Scheduling a public meeting to discuss the proposed neighborhood association and helping the association promote this event.
- Leading the public meeting to solicit feedback regarding proposed neighborhood association, including discussion of adopting organizational structure and policies, and electing association leadership.
- Compiling supporting documentation, to include the following:
  - Association by-laws
  - Leadership structure and description (e.g. Board of Directors, Committees)
  - Membership Policy - State the requirements for membership in the organization, including any fees. Membership should be available to all residents, landowners, and business people who represent the social, economic and ethnic make-up of the neighborhood.
  - Membership listing (Names, addresses, emails, phone numbers)
  - Meeting Policy - State the location, time and number of neighborhood meetings held during each year. The suggested minimum standard is four meetings per year.
  - Submit application and final supporting documentation to the Department of Planning & Zoning for the purpose of adopting the Neighborhood Association via Common Council resolution.

Once formally recognized, the Mayor will present the neighborhood with a Proclamation of Recognition, and the City will share an announcement in its bi-annual print newsletter and on social media to help promote your association.

MAINTAINING YOUR ASSOCIATION

Now it's time to keep the momentum going. The City of West Allis is here to help! Your organization's leadership will continue to schedule meetings, recruit new members, and communicate any needs your association may have with the City. Remember, neighborhood associations are resident-driven, so your association will continue to be the driving force of change in your neighborhoods. The City will connect with your neighborhood association's leadership regularly to provide support and make sure projects and goals are moving forward.
Your neighborhood association can continue building membership by holding regular meetings, remaining active on social media, and working to recruit new members. Work with your neighborhood's schools, faith-based organizations, and businesses to spread the word about your association. Host a block party in summertime or a winter walk in your neighborhood park.

To maintain formal recognition by the City, recognized neighborhoods will be asked to submit the following information each year:

- Any changes in neighborhood association boundaries
- Names, telephone numbers, emails, and addresses of officers
- Social media information for the neighborhood association, if applicable (Twitter handles, Facebook groups, etc)
- Sign-in sheets and minutes of neighborhood meetings held during the previous calendar year
- Any changes to the approved by-laws



City of West Allis
Department of Planning & Zoning
7525 W. Greenfield Ave.
West Allis, WI 53214

West Allis NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATIONS

LEARN MORE

View sample by-laws, maps of existing neighborhood associations, and grant applications at **www.westalliswi.gov/neighborhoods**

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