

Organized Citizen Groups

Following are some of the various steps that may be needed to form an Organized Citizen Group:

Step One: Contact the County To get started, you should first contact Adams County Community Development, 720.523.6200, or Planning staff, 720.523.6800. They are there to assist you throughout the process.

Step Two: Develop the Core Group You will need a small group of committed neighbors to form the Group. The number of people needed will depend on the size of the area you want to organize. Examples of groups to be represented are:

- Homeowners selected to represent each block or street
- Business owners
- Apartment residents, managers and owners
- Church leaders
- School staff members
- Long time residents of the neighborhood

When you have a commitment from five to ten people, set up a meeting at a comfortable place, such as someone's house. Do this quickly, before your contacts lose interest. Explain to the potential committee members what you have in mind and what you want them to do. You may want to invite a county staff member to be present to help answer questions.

Keep the neighborhood advised of the activities of the newly forming group through one of the communication tools discussed below. At this point, do not be concerned about having a general meeting of all the people in the area.

Step Three: Establish Boundaries

An important step to create an Organized Citizen Group is to determine its boundaries. Typical boundaries may be determined by roads or natural features along the border of the neighborhood. A review of the county map and a tour around the area may suggest logical boundaries for a manageable sized area.

Once boundaries have been determined, a complete list of residents and property owners should be obtained. The list should be kept current throughout the process to allow every neighbor the opportunity to become involved. You may contact the Planning Department for assistance with this information, but you may need to go door-to-door in order to get a complete list.

Step Four: Develop the Core Group

The importance of qualified leadership is often overlooked as a neighborhood group develops. Strong leadership gives an organization:

- Guidance
- Stability
- Continuity from year to year

- Motivation to take action
- Unity of purpose

A part of your job as a neighborhood organizer is to identify and develop leaders. The task of recruiting and developing leaders has to be an ongoing activity through the lifetime of your Organized Citizen Group. Leadership training sessions are available through the county and the Community Resource Center.

Some general points to keep in mind are:

- Your contributions to the neighborhood are your abilities and skills to organize. Therefore, try to delegate other responsibilities like event planning.
- Search continually for many "potential" leaders, not just one or two.
- Leaders can become burned out. Have new leaders ready to step in when necessary.
- Identify people who have the time to devote to the work of the group.
- New leaders may develop as the concerns of the group change. Keep your organization open and flexible enough to bring new members and leaders into your Organized Citizen Group.

Look for individuals who have shown that they:

- Want to succeed and want their group to succeed
- Communicate well with people
- Can motivate people to take collective action
- Are knowledgeable about the neighborhood, its people and their interests
- Have an allegiance to the neighborhood and the group
- Know how to share power