

Welcoming and Effective Meetings

For better or worse, neighborhood associations have meetings, sometimes lots of them! As many of you know meetings can sometimes be rigid and boring. Good news! There are several easy ways that you can make your meetings more appealing to members.

Here are a few simple tips:

Provide Signage for Your Meetings

Neighborhood associations often forget to provide signs directing members to their meetings, making people feel confused and unwelcome. It's a good idea to have a sign on the door where people would be entering the building to let them know they're in the right place and a sign or two in the hallways directing people to the appropriate room. It's also a nice touch to have a sign on the door outside of the meeting room. For example, "Southeast Neighborhood Association Meeting Here! Welcome Neighbors!" This will make members feel welcome right away.

Have a Greeter

Seek volunteers from your board who will make a point of introducing themselves to new members, provide them with some brochures about your group and check in to answer any questions about the discussion at the meeting.

Provide Welcome Packets or Neighborhood Info Sheets

These are a great way to instantly make a new person feel welcome when they walk in the door. These can equip new members with all the basic information about your neighborhood association's meetings, board members, committees and upcoming events. This is especially handy at meetings when you may not have the time to spend sharing all this information. Packets can be tailored to the needs of your association to offer a combination of information and warmth to members. This will not only save a lot of time for both you and the new member but also increase the chances of helping them become an involved member for the long run!

Do Introductions at EVERY meeting

Welcome new members at the beginning of each meeting. Make introductions a standard agenda item at the beginning of the meeting so that everyone will be more comfortable.

Be Considerate of New Members

Don't assume that everyone in the room knows how the meeting will run. Go over the agenda, explain ground rules and allow time for questions to ensure that everyone understands the process. Be sure to give background information to bring members up-to-speed on pertinent issues.

Allow Social Time

Provide 10-15 minutes in the beginning of the meeting or halfway through the agenda to allow an opportunity for members to network and get to know one another. Getting

everyone to know your neighbors and board members is the key to working smoothly and with respect.

Provide Refreshments

Have board members provide potluck snacks or get donations from local coffee shops or restaurants for your meetings.

Follow-up with New Members

Use the information gathered in the sign-in sheet to call or email new members. Check in to see how their first meeting experience went, find out particular issues or interests of new members and potentially generate involvement in the board, committees or an upcoming event. Ask if they have any questions about the welcome packet they received!

Relocate Meetings

Change your meeting location permanently or during the summer to reach new members. Have meetings in coffee shops, restaurants or neighborhood parks to change up the atmosphere and make your meetings more welcoming!

Making Meetings Accessible to ALL Members

Meetings shall not be held in locations where any person attending the meetings would face discrimination on the basis of race, religion, color, sexual orientation, gender identity, age, disability, legal citizenship, national origin, income, or political affiliation. Below are suggestions to mitigate common barriers to participation.

Hold Meetings Near Public Transit

Meetings should be held in a central location, close to a bus or max line.

Provide Options for Child Care

Create a parent co-op where childcare responsibilities are rotated, have activities available for kids to play with at meetings or hire a certified babysitter. A childcare box, with a variety of games and activities, is available at SE Uplift for use at neighborhood association meetings and events.

Provide Language Translation and Interpretation Services

Neighborhood associations should make a good faith effort to provide an interpreter for hearing-impaired people and for individuals who do not speak English as their primary language. SE Uplift has radio transmitter systems available for neighborhood associations to amplify interpretation through individual headsets.

Make Sure that Meeting Locations are ADA Accessible

Meetings should be accessible to people with mobility disabilities. Make sure that your meeting location has ramps, wide doorways and accessible bathrooms for your members.