



Procedures for Recognizing New Neighborhood Organizations

The Office of Neighborhoods (OON) periodically is called upon to recognize a new or revived neighborhood organization — or a group not previously registered — and provide that organization with a number of benefits, including a listing in the [Knoxville Neighborhood Directory](#), access to grant funding, technical support, training workshops, and consultation services.

To ensure that new groups are making an effort to truly represent the residents in the area they claim to represent, OON over the years has provided advice on the ideal way to get organized — but has not imposed specific requirement for new groups.

However, in recent years, it has become apparent that some minimum standards would:

- a) avoid any misunderstanding about what constitutes a neighborhood organization,
- b) ensure that the City treats all new groups equitably,
- c) help the organizers understand exactly what is required of them, and
- d) build a solid foundation for a successful organization.

OON is open to suggestions for improving these procedures. Contact Debbie Sharp, Neighborhood Coordinator, at dsharp@knoxvillekn.gov or 215-4382.

What is a Neighborhood Organization?

Neighborhood organizations are geographically based. They operate within a well-defined geographical boundary to meet the needs and collective interests of residents within that boundary.

Neighborhood organizations are led and controlled by residents who live within the organization's geographical boundaries.

Neighborhood organizations are operated democratically, as evidenced by a set of bylaws or operating rules, as well as periodic elections for leaders and representatives.

To meet residents' needs and interests, neighborhood groups work to improve and maintain the quality of life in their neighborhoods through activities such as:

- sponsoring social activities
- helping neighbors in distress
- working with law enforcement to promote public safety
- providing information about and interactions with local government
- advocating for governmental policies that benefit residential neighborhoods
- addressing issues such as commercial encroachment and blighted properties

Neighborhood organizations include neighborhood watch groups, tenant groups, neighborhood associations, and homeowners' associations (HOA's).

Forming a New Organization / Registering an Existing Organization

OON is ready, willing and able to meet with one or more individuals who are interested in starting or restarting a neighborhood organization. We can meet as many times as you need before and after your group is formed.

OON also offers several guides, including “Starting or Re-Starting a Neighborhood Organization,” to help newly forming groups cover the bases of getting organized. We recommend but do not require that a startup committee be formed to set the stage for a new organization. This startup committee should be as representative of the neighborhood as possible, geographically, racially, and otherwise.

Here are the essential steps that a new group should follow to be recognized by OON and the City. Contact Debbie Sharp with any concerns or questions.

1. Notify OON of your intention to organize, or your possible interest in organizing.
2. Provide OON with your preferred boundaries to make sure that your boundaries do not overlap with those of another group.
3. If boundaries do overlap, work with the other group(s) and OON to adjust boundaries or agree to overlap. (OON will work with the organizers to outline a path forward if agreement cannot be reached on representing the same territory with another group.)
4. Call a community-wide meeting to which all neighborhood residents within the identified boundaries are invited via a leaflet distributed door to door at least one week prior to the meeting date.
 - a) This leaflet should indicate that the meeting has been called for the purpose of deciding whether to form an association. At least one organizer’s name and contact information should be included on the leaflet.
 - b) OON recommends that organizers give OON an opportunity to provide feedback on this leaflet before it is printed and distributed. If needed, OON can design and/or print your leaflet for no charge.
5. Invite OON to attend this meeting.
6. At the meeting, more than 50 percent of those present must vote to form a neighborhood organization within the identified boundaries.

Up to \$500 may be available on a competitive basis from the Office of Neighborhoods for groups that complete Step 6. Contact OON for details.
7. At this meeting or in subsequent meetings, a majority of those present must also agree on:
 - Final boundaries,
 - Organization’s name,
 - Mission statement (may be preliminary),
 - Who can be a member, and
 - An interim leadership team to serve until bylaws are written and approved by the members, and formal elections are held.

Following the completion of Step 7, a new group will be listed in the Knoxville Neighborhood Directory and eligible for other programs offered by OON.

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