



Royal Oak
Safe Neighborhoods

Royal Oak Crime Prevention Council

Neighborhood Associations

How To Start and Maintain A Neighborhood
Association

City of Royal Oak
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Royal Oak Crime Prevention Council



What is a Neighborhood Association?

This is a formal network organized by concerned citizens to prevent crime and improve the quality of life in their neighborhoods. Neighbors work in cooperation with police and their neighbors to safeguard each other's homes and reduce the risk of crime in their community. Neighborhood Associations asks us to be the eyes and ears of our neighborhood and be aware of the activity on our block.

Neighborhood Association programs are designed to create an alert neighborhood. Neighbors are the extra eyes and ears for reporting crimes and helping neighbors. Watch groups are not vigilantes.

What Are The Benefits Of An Association?

By getting to know our neighbors, we learn to recognize what is normal and what is not. Watchful citizens can help to keep children away from vacant houses or dangerous properties, report abandoned cars or alert neighbors and police to suspicious persons or activities in the area. This can help you in protecting your property and family as well as that of your neighbors. Forming connections through a Neighborhood Association can lead to other opportunities in the community to gather socially, share ideas, discuss concerns and learn how to make your homes and communities more secure.

A Neighborhood Association that works with active citizens in cooperation with the police can reduce crime, solve problems in the community, and improve the quality of life in your area. Members will learn how to:

- Recognize and report crimes and suspicious activities
- Protect yourself, your family and your property
- Protect your neighbor's family and property



How to Start a Neighborhood Association

A. First Steps

1. Determine if a group or part of a group already exists and if not continue on. You can call the City Clerk's office at 248-246-3050 to register a new association.
2. Define the need for forming a neighborhood group. Begin an initial list of issues that might be important to your neighborhood.
3. Define the physical boundaries that would make a well defined neighborhood zone. This could be your voting precinct, elementary school area, or just major streets that enclose the zone. It may be easier to organize and motivate a smaller group initially.
4. Discuss with several neighbors to lock down a core interest group to start with and then get everyone to invite two more neighbors and have them invite two more, and so on.

If a community already has an established neighborhood or home association, they can add a formal neighborhood watch element. You can be a neighborhood association that participates in neighborhood watch.



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B. Online Tools

Information exchange is what strong neighborhoods are all about. There are several tools available to communicate with your neighbors. The following are a few of the more well-known options.

Email is a good way to get information to those that you have already signed up, but social media can have a broader reach and can be a good tool for finding interested neighbors that you haven't signed up yet.

Creating a Yahoo Group page, a Facebook page, a Google Plus page or a Nextdoor site can not only give your neighborhood association an identity but it can be used to broadcast information and share ideas. The Nextdoor page is easy to start with and promotes sending invitations to neighbors to increase membership.

Facebook is fun but security is an issue since you don't know who is able to see the information that is posted.

Anyone can join a neighborhood group - young and old, single and married, renter and homeowner. Even the busiest of people can belong to a neighborhood group.

The Yahoo group page is the most secure and has the most functionality to it but with that come a certain degree of complexity in order to implement and manage it.

All of these social media sites are free to set-up and use and each has built in help guides to guide you along the way. Don't get frustrated, it's really pretty fun.



C. Plan your first meeting

Now that your group is defined and somewhat organized, its time to take the next step and have a meeting.

1. Determine a location for the meeting that is inviting for neighbors you have not met. Meetings in your house may deter new members from joining until they know you. Consider meeting at a local park, coffee house, library or other public space.
2. Create an agenda for the meeting. The first couple of meetings are key so keep them short and on topic. Electing officers and setting up rolls and agendas for future meetings is important.
3. Pick a day and time. It is helpful to have meetings that occur on a repeating cycle such as the second Thursday of the month. By scheduling a regular standing meeting, people are thinking about it as the calendar changes month to month.
4. Post the meeting notice on the social page with 'Hot Topics' and start spreading the news. Before you know it, you will be meeting more new people than you thought possible. A pleasant surprise is that you will find we have a lot in common no matter how different we all are.

Raise awareness among neighbors that something is happening by planning a visible activity such as ribbons on lamp posts, luminaries, balloons on porch, etc.



D. Determine how the group will be organized

The organization of your Neighborhood Association will be customized to meet the needs and size of your group. Below are some suggested roles and titles to better help you understand how to structure your group.

1. Leader/Coordinator

- Maintain a list of names, street addresses, telephone numbers and email addresses of all members
- Act as liaison between the neighborhood members and the Royal Oak Police Department
- Schedule at least one meeting a year
- Attend quarterly Neighborhood Association meetings presented by the Royal Oak Crime Prevention Council

2. Block Captain

- Designated for every 10-15 homes
- Maintain an up-to-date contact list for block residents
- Act as liaison between the block residents and the Leader
- Visit new residents and invite them to join the group
- Touch base with neighbors to discuss crime concerns, any needs for assistance and suggestions for program improvement

3. Block Residents/Members

- Provide contact information to the Block Captain
- Attend meetings and training when possible
- Pay attention to what goes on in the neighborhood and report any suspicious activity to the police.

Your goal should be to limit the term for the Leader and other positions to a two year term so that citizens can rotate out of the position as desired.



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Maintaining a Neighborhood Association

A. Group Meetings

Neighborhood Associations should meet annually at a minimum. It is encouraged to arrange additional meetings at the discretion of the group and to poll your neighbors to determine what is of interest to your group (fire preventions, CPR, identity theft, bike safety, etc.). These meetings should be used to heighten citizen awareness and education members of proper response to suspected or actual criminal activity. The key to keeping a Neighborhood Association active is maintaining interest over time and communicating with members.

Consider topics that are of interest to many people in your neighborhood and schedule a guest speaker.

B. Neighborhood Activities

There is nothing like a shared sense of community to help ensure the safety of your home and family. Keep the group active throughout the year with activities that build relationships and benefit your neighborhood. Activities may include block parties, progressive socials, garage sales, potluck dinners, park clean-up days, coffee or ice cream socials, bike parades, etc.

Create an on-line presence for your neighborhood to allow for easy communication among the members and interaction between meetings.

C. Newsletter

By publishing an upbeat, informative newsletter, neighbors can keep up to date on current activity or concerns in their neighborhood and also learn additional steps they can take to make their neighborhood a safer place. Newsletters can be handed out door to door or emailed to members.

D. Facebook/Twitter

Consider using time-efficient methods to communicate outside of meetings such as email, phone, Facebook, Twitter, etc.



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What You Can Do To Make Your Neighborhood a Safer Place

An active neighborhood association can have a strong impact on crime reduction, but there are additional steps each household can take to make the neighborhood a safe place.

- A. Secure your home and property by installing deadbolts on all doors and auxiliary locks on windows.**
- B. Keep plants and bushes in your yard trimmed so neighbors can see your home and no one can hide under them.**
- C. Make your house number visible from the street.**
- D. Turn on porch lights in both the front and back of your property.**
- E. If you go on vacation, don't make your house look empty: leave lights on, put a hold on mail and newspapers, etc.**

When to Call the Police

Calling **911** is reserved for emergencies only. 911 should be called for life threatening emergencies, medical emergencies or crimes in progress.

When you see suspicious activity, call the Royal Oak Police Department non-emergency number, **(248) 246-3500**, to report something that is not an emergency. The police department will decide if the situation warrants a police response and dispatch officers as needed.

Members of the neighborhood association are the eyes and ears for reporting crimes and helping neighbors. Citizens should never try to take action on those observations. Trained law enforcement should be the only ones ever to take action based on observations of suspicious activities.



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Helpful Links

- City of Royal Oak – <https://www.romi.gov/>
- Royal Oak City Hall Facebook Page
<https://www.facebook.com/Royal-Oak-MI-City-Hall-157871554266952/>
- Royal Oak Crime Prevention Council Facebook Page
<https://www.facebook.com/RoyalOakSafeNeighborhoods/>
- Crime Mapping – <https://www.crimemapping.com/>
- Crime Stoppers of Michigan – <https://www.1800speakup.org/>
- McGruff – <http://www.ncpc.org/>
- Crime Prevention Association of Michigan –
<http://www.crimepreventionassociationofmichigan.org/>

Sample Flyer



Dear Neighbor,

In an effort to keep Royal Oak and specifically our neighborhood safe and crime free, we are establishing a Neighborhood Association. This network of friends and neighbors will allow concerned citizens an opportunity to communicate with each other and the Royal Oak Police Department. No police department can effectively protect life and property without the support and cooperation of the citizens it serves. By keeping our eyes and ears open and reporting any suspicious activity, we can help keep our neighborhood safe.

We invite you to attend an organizational meeting for our Neighborhood Association. The meeting will be held on:

TIME:

DATE:

LOCATION:

During this meeting we will explain the goals of our group, discuss current concerns, illustrate some simple home-protection techniques and discuss ways we can reduce the opportunity for crime to happen in our neighborhood.

Regards,

