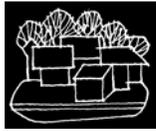
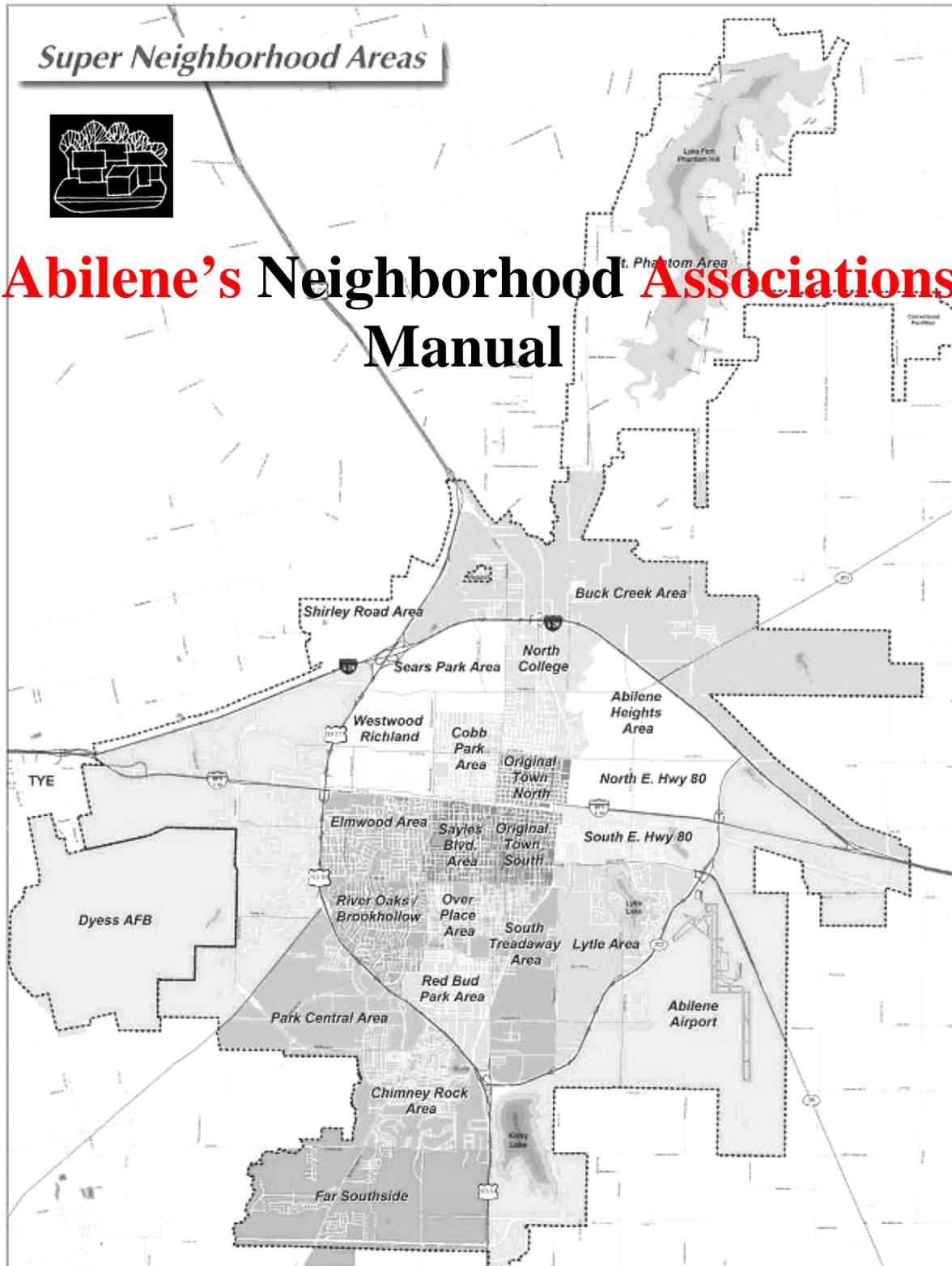


Super Neighborhood Areas



Abilene's Neighborhood Associations Manual



A promising future for the City of Abilene depends to a large extent on healthy, vibrant neighborhoods. **Abilene's Neighborhood Associations** help people work together in an organized way to improve the livability of their neighborhoods.

A Special thanks to the Cities of Arlington, Fort Worth, Bryan and Houston. Their pioneering efforts in this area have helped us tremendously in the preparation of this workbook. September 2003

NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATIONS play a vital role in representing the interests of residents and enhancing the local community. A well-organized association can have a significant impact on the quality of life in a neighborhood. The residents of Abilene have demonstrated a great willingness to dedicate time and energy to make a difference in the community. This manual was designed to help residents focus their efforts and organize their neighborhoods for action. The City believes that increasing citizen participation benefits the whole community by creating a positive environment of shared responsibility and collaboration.

Why Organize?

There are many different reasons why neighborhoods organize. Some of the most common reasons include:

- To address a particular concern.
Many neighborhoods become organized when a particular concern emerges around which they can rally. Residents of the neighborhood will get together to discuss problems and come up with solutions. As an association, members can work together to resolve the issue and use the many people resources already available within their neighborhood.
- To empower residents.
Some organizers believe the only reason to organize is for power. Power is the ability to act and with it comes a responsibility to the community. When neighborhoods organize, they acquire power by joining together to accomplish a goal.
- To build community.
Organizing to build community means improving your neighborhood's ability to act and organize the diverse skills of its residents. Residents want to become better neighbors by getting to know and helping each other. Whether it is exchanging skills, such as cooking dinner for a neighbor one night in exchange for having him/her run some errands, activities such as these enhance the sense of community.

Benefits to Organizing Neighborhood Associations

Through neighborhood organizing, residents get to know each other better while working to improve their community. Some of the benefits of having an organized association include:

- Facilitate achieving common neighborhood goals.
- Provide the neighborhood with a common voice and an effective means of communicating with government officials and other instrumental groups.
- Empowered neighborhoods can have input in events happening in their areas allowing members to take part in the decision making that affects their neighborhood.
- Organize and help members work for preservation and improvements in their neighborhood.
- Planning and holding social activities for the neighborhood.
- Organizing neighborhood improvement projects.

Role of the Citizen

Citizens have a very important role in the health and spirit of a community. Their active participation in the process is fulfilled. Citizen involvement can range from voting on a regular basis to being elected to serve in a public capacity. Both examples are equally as important to the process. Citizens also contribute greatly when they participate in or organize neighborhood projects or activities. Their involvement is crucial to improving the quality of life in their neighborhoods and the city. The Declaration on the following page describes the roles that residents have adopted in many communities.

Role of Local Government

The preservation and maintenance of an area's quality of life is a shared responsibility. Local government is responsible for ensuring that the common good is protected and public services are carried out in an orderly and efficient manner. The Office of Neighborhood Services (ONS) in City Hall provides a link between citizens and government. Registering your association will improve communication between citizens and government and other useful groups. Neighborhood associations will be notified by city agencies when they will be affected by planning efforts or other actions that will affect the livability of a neighborhood. Through the registering process, the City will be able to provide timely notification of public meetings when an issue will be presented that may affect the neighborhood.

How to Get Involved in a Neighborhood Association

Let's say you have just moved into a new neighborhood. You would like to make new friends and have found out your neighborhood has an association. How do you become involved? What if you have been a resident in your neighborhood for quite some time, but have always been too busy to attend neighborhood meetings or events. Now your new schedule or job allows you to have a little extra time and you would like to help out in the neighborhood. Who do you contact? Becoming involved is very simple. If you know how to reach an officer of the neighborhood association where you live, contact them and tell them you are interested in getting involved. If you don't know how to reach an officer, begin talking with neighbors to find out when regular meetings are held or to get a phone number of an association officer. Becoming involved will be a great opportunity to meet your neighbors and have a great time. You will also be a part of making your neighborhood a better place to live.

There are several opportunities for people to become involved. Some of these are:

- Attend regular meetings.
- Volunteer for activities.
- Become a registered member of the association.
- Attend regular association events and programs.
- Become a block captain.
- Represent your association in the community, at large, or on a committee.



STARTING A NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION

Six Steps To Forming A New Association

If your neighborhood does not have an existing neighborhood association, you may want to create one. The following outlines a step-by-step process for forming a new neighborhood association.

Step 1 – The Idea

The first step is to make sure that a neighborhood association doesn't already exist in your area and recognize that a neighborhood association can help you make your neighborhood a better place to live. A neighborhood association unites residents and gives them the ability to work with the City to identify concerns and address issues.

Step 2 – Form a Neighborhood Organizing Team

Once you talk with your neighbors and decide that there is interest and need for a neighborhood association, a group of 2-4 residents should be responsible for getting the association started and working with the City's Office of Neighborhood Services.

Step 3 – Meet with Neighborhood Services Staff

The Neighborhood team will need to establish proposed boundaries and bylaws before the first neighborhood meeting is held. The Office of Neighborhood Services is here to help you and can provide information and assistance as necessary.

Step 4 – Hold 1st Neighborhood Meeting

Once you have decided on the structure and boundaries of the association and created draft bylaws, you are ready for your first neighborhood meeting. The ONS staff will help you conduct your first meeting. The purpose of the meeting is to introduce the idea of a neighborhood association, get residents involved, and get feedback on the proposed boundaries and bylaws. The discussion may bring up new ideas or concerns and changes to the proposal may be needed.

Step 5 – Hold 2nd Neighborhood Meeting

When there is consensus on the boundaries and bylaws of the new association, a meeting is held to adopt bylaws and elect officers. The new neighborhood association now exists. Now the real work and fun can begin.

Step 6 – Register with the Office of Neighborhood Services

Neighborhood associations are encouraged to register with the City. Applications may be found on the ONS web site. Registration places your association in the City’s database and lists you as the official representatives of your neighborhood. Your association will be kept informed of events in your area.



Creating a Formal Structure

Once you have decided to form a new neighborhood association, there are many tasks to be done and decisions to be made. First, you must decide how to structure your organization to meet the needs of your neighborhood and be most effective.

Neighborhood Associations and Homeowners Associations

Neighborhood Associations

Neighborhood Associations are generally a group of residents and other interested stakeholders that devote their time and energy to improve and enhance the well-defined, geographic area where they live. The neighborhood association meeting is a time to exchange ideas, decide on projects and priorities, propose solutions, and make plans affecting the neighborhood. Associations usually meet monthly to discuss a variety of issues. Some issues could be: sponsoring neighborhood events, economic well-being of residents, improving city services, implementing projects to build neighborhood pride, and publishing a neighborhood newsletter. True neighborhood associations have an elected board of directors and bylaws.

Homeowners Associations

Homeowners associations are groups of homeowners who live in an area developed by the same developer, usually referred to as a subdivision. Homeowners associations usually have a formally elected body and are governed by deed restrictions – a set of rules that homeowners agree to when they purchase their house. These rules, or covenants, often govern construction regulations, membership/dues requirements, as well as a wide variety of other issues. Some homeowners associations also focus on items that affect their neighborhood such as beautification/clean up, crime, street lighting, building issues/concerns, and social events. These issues are similar to those addressed by neighborhood associations.

Bylaws

Neighborhood associations need to have bylaws describing how they will do business. Bylaws simply establish the rules governing a group. They serve as a constitution that establishes the legal requirements for the association. They also govern the way the association functions as well as the roles and responsibilities of its officers. They should be taken seriously because they are important to the maintenance of order and credibility in the organization.

Writing bylaws can be a tedious procedure for new organizations, but they are very important to the success of the organization. They help members clearly define and understand the purpose, procedures, and role of their neighborhood association.

A sample set of bylaws can be found in the appendix. It contains information that you may consider including in writing your own bylaws. The ONS staff is also available to help you create your bylaws. The sample is very detailed and inclusive, so do not feel your association must have every article or section. When designing your bylaws, use only those areas you are going to need. It is important to customize your bylaws to meet the needs of your group. Be specific, but still allow flexibility within your association. The bylaws will be part of your neighborhood association for a long time.

Once bylaws are written, they should be reviewed periodically to assure that the association's purpose has not changed. Reviewing bylaws on a regular basis ensures the rules are continuing to meet the needs of the group. Whenever bylaws are updated, they should be filed with the Office of Neighborhood Services.

Many neighborhood associations also find it helpful to adopt "operating procedures" separate from the bylaws. These rules generally are easier to amend than bylaws. The purpose of such rules is to record agreements of a particular board or set of members about how to conduct meetings and other activities. Such rules should never be in conflict with the bylaws. Instead, they should address more detailed procedures that are covered in the bylaws. The key concept of operating procedures is that they reflect the desires of the current board or members and are changed when the desires or needs of the group change.

Membership and Officers

Once an initial group of interested neighbors has been established, the group should select a short-term leader. Later when the association is formalized, elect a permanent leader. This way, the leader will be one that represents the entire association, not just the initial group. The

association will need to choose permanent leaders that are elected to official terms. Your bylaws should describe all the positions, election procedures, how often they are elected, and the major responsibilities expected from each position. The positions created typically make up the neighborhood association board members.

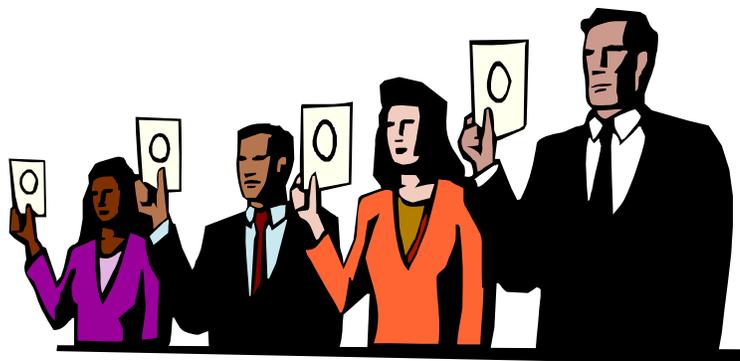
Membership

It is important for the neighborhood association to be as inclusive as possible. Any person who is a resident or property owner within the neighborhood association boundaries, or who meets the criteria outlined in your association bylaws, is a prospective member and will be able to participate in your association.

Officers and Board Representatives

Elections should be held annually for your neighborhood association to elect a Board of Directors. These officers will handle the business of the neighborhood association throughout the upcoming year. Your association bylaws should specify the positions and the general framework of your electoral process. Descriptions can outline the responsibilities of the board and other individual officer positions.

There are a number of duties and responsibilities involved in forming an organization. It is important to have enough people on the board to delegate the many tasks that need to be completed. The following positions are the minimum number needed for the governing board of your association.



Chairperson or President

This person is responsible for the overall leadership of the association board and sets the agenda and facilitates all meetings. It is important for this person to be objective and judicial. A chairperson should never dominate discussions. The chair keeps the meeting running smoothly while allowing participation and is the person who makes sure people keep to the agenda, both in content and timing.

Some duties that are usually the responsibility of the chairperson are:

- Making sure members are notified about meeting dates, time and locations.
- Represent the association in a public capacity.
- Keep the meeting focused and within the allotted time frames as outlined in the agenda.

- Mediate arguments between members as they arise.
- Clarify decisions made by the group.
- Have an organized agenda.
- Bring issues to a vote as needed and in an orderly manner.
- Review tasks and make assignments.
- Ensure that all members follow bylaws and procedures.
- Give credit and recognition for accomplishments.
- Follow up on decisions made at meetings.
- Meet with successor and transfer records, files, etc.

There are numerous things that you can do to make your job as the chairperson more manageable and enjoyable.

1. Introduce yourself at the beginning of a meeting. Don't assume everyone knows who you are. If the group is a reasonable size, have everyone introduce him/herself as well.
2. Review the agenda and establish ground rules.
3. Direct the discussion. Keep people on the topic. If irrelevant issues are being brought up, remind the group that there will be a time for new business at the end of the meeting. If people are repetitive, restate the information they have shared and move on to the next speaker. If a decision needs to be made, call for a motion and take a vote. Keep your own opinions to a minimum.
4. Facilitate voting and decision-making. Never assume there is an agreement until it is put to a vote.
5. Do not abuse the power of the Chair. Do not ignore people who want to speak and do not monopolize the floor. A chairperson should be neutral. If you want to voice your opinion, temporarily step out of your role as the Chair, and then voice your opinion. When finished, return to your role as the Chair. When your turn is finished do not continue to speak
6. Disagreement between the membership is inevitable. Mediate arguments when they arise. Remain impartial and fair. Give each person an opportunity to state his or her own point of view.
7. Publicly state in review what has to be done. Review all discussions, decisions made, and the tasks to be assigned. Make sure that people leave the meeting with a clear understanding of what decisions have been made and which tasks are to be done by whom.
8. Make every attempt to be as organized as possible. Use a watch and follow the agenda. When it is time to end a discussion, announce that time is almost complete. Select the final speakers and their order from those still indicating a desire to speak. The discussion should end when those people have had their turn.
9. Do not be afraid to delegate duties and tasks. Be aware that you cannot do everything on your own.
10. Follow-up on the assignments after the meeting. Sometimes members need to be encouraged to get things done. You may need a lot of positive reinforcement to get things accomplished. Stay on top of things to ensure completion and success of the assigned task.

Vice Chairperson or Vice President

This person assists the chairperson and serves in an advisory capacity to the chair. In absence of the chairperson, the vice chairperson conducts the meetings and exercises all of the usual duties of the chairperson. The vice chairperson should also be a person with strong leadership qualities.

Some of the responsibilities of the vice chairperson are:

- Effectively manage and facilitate meetings in the absence of the chair.
- Step into the chair position in the event that the chair is unable to complete his or her term.
- Follow-up on tasks assigned to members of the association.

Secretary

The secretary records the minutes of the meetings and makes sure that copies of the minutes, agendas, and other records are available for the board and the public.

Some responsibilities for the Secretary are:

- Record the minutes during all association meetings.
- Maintain current and comprehensive membership records.
- Record all of the official correspondence of the association.
- Pass along important information to be included in association newsletters.

Treasurer

The treasurer is responsible for the funds of the neighborhood association. Most boards do not require anything but an occasional status report from the treasurer. Someone should be selected that will take the duties of the position very seriously since the fiscal condition of the association is crucial to the future well being of the group.

Typical duties of Treasurers are to:

- Pay all of the association's expenses in a timely and accurate manner.
- Collect and deposit all funds received by the association.
- Maintain a financial accounting system that is adequate and thorough for the association
- Collect voluntary dues from members of the association.

Tax Identification Number

Neighborhood associations should have a federal tax identification number. The number acts as a Social Security number for an organization. The number can be used to open bank accounts, file IRS tax forms, apply for tax-exempt status, etc. Organizations do not need to be incorporated to receive a tax identification number.

The form needed for a tax identification number is short and takes a small amount of time to complete. Contact the IRS in Austin to obtain a SS-4 Tax ID Form or one may be obtained from their website at www.irs.gov/formspubs/ and select forms and publications by number. You should receive your tax ID number in six to eight weeks.

Incorporation

Incorporation is optional to all organizations and may be beneficial to your neighborhood association. When a non-profit organization incorporates, it helps define the group and the organization is deemed trustworthy. Incorporation also protects the personal liability of group members. In Texas, non-profit incorporation has a one time cost with no renewal fee. If you decide to incorporate contact the following:

**Secretary of State Corporation Office
P.O. Box 13697
Austin, Texas 78711**

Or call:

512-463-5555

You will be sent a copy of the law pertaining to nonprofit organizations, which includes a sample copy of articles of incorporation that can be used as a model.

Tax Exempt Status

In order to apply for tax exemption, a group must first be incorporated. The federal government gives tax-exempt status upon application to the Internal Revenue Service. This status permits large contributors to your group to deduct contributions from their income tax. Call the Central Appraisal District office at 676-9381 for information and an application. Tax-exempt status is almost mandatory if your group plans to apply for foundation monies or solicit large donations.

Liability

A fear many board members have is being held liable for board actions. When organizations incorporate, individual board members can be protected from becoming financially liable as a result of board service. Incorporation protects against individual liability.

A provision in the bylaws may be placed in order to indemnify board members in the event they are sued as a result of board service. Indemnification promises that the corporation will repay the board members for costs of defending themselves in lawsuits and/or for costs of judgment against board members. However, such indemnification is pointless if the organization does not have funds available to cover the board members' legal costs. Therefore, larger organizations usually carry directors' and officers' liability insurance.

Several procedures should be followed in order to protect board members from potential personal liability:

- Conduct regular board meetings and keep members well informed.
- Utilize a dependable system for keeping detailed minutes of all board meetings, recording which members attended, and the nature and seriousness of all board discussions.
- Obtain adequate insurance coverage for all activities that are sponsored by your organization.
- If your association has employees, you should be absolutely certain that the association has met all tax and reporting requirements under the law.

For a low additional annual fee, several individual homeowners' policies provide coverage for policyholder's volunteer activities. Check with your insurance agent to see what volunteer coverage is available if you are interested in this feature.

Running A Successful Organization

Once you have your neighborhood association established, you must keep members interested and involved. This section is designed to provide helpful suggestions for running a successful organization.

Build and Maintain Membership

Recruiting members is important for the longevity of any organization. Initially, many groups attract members through well-publicized meetings on issues that concern projects involving lots of people. Once the project is completed or a problem is solved, active members may dwindle away. Many organizations experience this problem, so you need to be creative to avoid this dilemma.

Here are some actions your group can undergo to build membership:

1. Have association members go door-to-door calling on their neighbors. This can be a weeklong effort or done in a day. You could have a membership drive and then have a party for the members that volunteered in the effort. Your members would have fun and would have an opportunity to share experiences with each other. It's also a great way to meet your neighbors.
2. Pass out printed materials to encourage residents to get involved. It could be as simple as a letter from the president or a brochure with details on upcoming events or issues. Members should also carry membership forms with them and offer both immediate and mail-in membership opportunities.
3. Designate block captains that can pass out flyers and newsletters to prospective new members, welcome new residents, serve as a sounding board for specific problems or issues on the block, and organize volunteers to help with activities they might be interested in.
4. Community gatherings or other events are also a great way to recruit new members. Sponsor a booth at a community festival or event. This is a great opportunity to talk to people in your area. Have membership sign-up sheets available. You can also have information packets about the association to hand out at events.

Keeping members involved can be quite challenging. For every member that is active in the association, there are probably two who would be involved if they were properly motivated. Here are some ideas to keep in mind in order to retain active members:

- Help new members find their place in the association. Many will offer to help but will not know where to begin. Organize a list of volunteer activities and have those who want to help sign their name next to activities with which they would be interested in helping. This will be a great start for your new members.

- Always welcome new members and attempt to make them feel at ease with the group. Officers and other members should watch for new faces at each meeting and welcome them. New or potential members should be introduced to someone who lives near them. Designate an official “greeter” at every meeting.
- Avoid the appearance of cliques. New people who see the same people running every project will feel excluded and may not return. Different people should be appointed to positions of leadership. This will help create a sense of belonging.
- Encourage new ideas and input at all levels of the organization. People who are new in the organization can see things in a new light and provide new solutions to old problems. New perspectives can assist the whole group in problem solving.
- Every meeting should represent the strongest commitment to organization. Busy people will not attend meetings or involve themselves in organizations they consider to be a waste of time. Having a well-planned meeting will also display a sense of accomplishment from the beginning. Have a written agenda for every meeting and stick to it.
- Maintain current membership records. Keep a file with members’ names, addresses, phone numbers, family member names, occupations, special talents, areas of interest, etc.
- When possible each block in the neighborhood should have a block captain to keep people informed and interested.
- Being part of a neighborhood association is not all work. Have fun as well. Sponsor parties and celebrations to get to know your neighbors better. Your events should appeal to all, including children. This will foster a strong sense of community spirit among your neighbors.



Meetings

Regular meetings are important so that members are informed of current and future issues and projects, as well as the accomplishments of the group. It is also an excellent opportunity to give recognition to members and committees who have contributed a lot of their time to the association.

One thing to remember about meetings is that it isn't always necessary to call a full group meeting to make minor decisions. When minor decisions need to be made, using an executive committee or board is better. Most groups have a board meeting once a month unless something important requires an additional meeting. In order to prevent member burnout, meetings should not be longer than one hour.

If a regular meeting is scheduled, but there really isn't anything important to discuss, then create something. Inviting a guest speaker, organizing a neighborhood tour, or having a potluck dinner can help maintain interest. Don't cancel the meeting altogether because it is important for groups to have contact on a regular basis.

One important part of holding a meeting is its location. Choose a place that is centrally located and familiar to the neighbors. The location can set the mood and the friendliness of the meeting. Try to estimate the number of people that will attend. The room should be comfortable but not so large as to make the people feel lost.

The meeting room should be arranged in a way that will encourage people to participate. The chairs can be arranged in a semi-or full circle so that everyone can be seen. Avoid having all the chairs facing the speaker as in a typical classroom setting. Do not use tables unless you need them to hold drawings or literature because they can form barriers to communication. However, a large table with everyone sitting around it can be used if people need to write.

Be sure to have enough copies of the agenda available when members arrive for the meeting. Members can begin familiarizing themselves with what is to be discussed and will be aware of the order of topics while waiting for the meeting to begin. The agenda should be short and concise. A sample agenda is provided in the Appendix.

Many groups are comfortable using Robert's Rules of Order, but feel free to use whatever method works best for your group. A special effort should be made to ensure that a vote truly represents the desire of the group. Keep meetings orderly and democratic.

General Meeting Rules

Your association should set some general operating rules for meetings so that they run smoothly and without difficulty. The operating rules could be included in the association's bylaws so that all members are aware of them. Some common rules for meetings are as follows:

- One person speaks at a time.
- No derogatory remarks of yourself or others.
- Speak from your own experience.
- No cross talking (i.e., no side conversations or interrupting the speaker to dispute points).

Committees

Organizations can accomplish their objectives through the dedicated work of committees. The tasks and the types of committees depend on the overall purpose and structure of your neighborhood association.

Two types of committees can be formed:

1. Committees for Internal Projects including fund raising, meeting arrangements, communications/publicity, bylaws, and social events.
2. Committees for Neighborhood Projects including housing conditions, police/neighborhood relations, economic development, neighborhood maintenance, community services and resources, as well as traffic safety.

It can be difficult to keep members on committees active, productive, and motivated. Here are some tips to keep in mind that can help:

- Encourage members to participate in the association and the committee planning process.
- Define and discuss the goals and objectives of the committee.
- Provide reasons for the actions to be considered by the committee and the neighborhood association.
- Give recognition to members and committees who have contributed to the advancement of the neighborhood association.
- Make meeting time and committee work as productive as possible. No one wants to feel his or her time is being wasted.
- Help members develop communication skills.

Work Plans

Making work plans for each project will help members stay focused and on target. Meeting goals, planning events, recruiting volunteers, and strengthening the organization will be easier when time is taken to prepare an outline of expectations and objectives, and then make a plan for meeting those goals.

Some helpful questions to ask when preparing a work plan are:

- What is the purpose for doing this project? If this is an annual work plan, review the purpose of the organization, and then define goals for the year.
- Is there a need for it?
- What resources are available to help attain these goals?
- Have other neighborhood associations attempted this activity? Can they be contacted for help?
- What tasks are involved with this project?
- Who will do the tasks?
- How much time is needed?
- What resources are needed to accomplish this project?
- Will this cost money? Does the association have the funds? How will you raise the money needed?

- Are there enough volunteers or members available to complete the project?

The Office of Neighborhood Services can be contacted for assistance and more than happy to assist any association work toward their goals.

Raising Funds

Neighborhood associations need to raise funds for regular operations and special events and projects. The ways that a group raises funds are limited only by the members' imaginations. Funds can be raised by the group itself, private donations, or private and government grants.

A fund-raising committee should be selected to prepare a budget and to oversee projects. Often people who are well known and liked in the community are successful project leaders. This person should also have good contacts in your local business area. Most importantly, the person should have the time to dedicate to the fundraising. Here are some examples of fundraising that have worked well for other neighborhood associations:

Rummage / Garage Sales

This fundraiser is a simple event to have. It will have a large variety of items since several different group members can donate items.

1. Form a committee of people responsible for the event.
2. Saturdays and Sundays are the best days to hold the sale. Have the sale in the garage of someone who lives on a corner, or near a main street. If you choose to have the garage sale on Saturday only, try contacting a neighborhood church and asking to use their parking lot.
3. Decide beforehand what percentage of the profits will go to the association and to the individuals who gave items for the sale.
4. Try to have a good variety of items. Televisions, dinette sets, dressers, and beds draw great crowds. Keep junk items to a minimum. Include knickknacks, glassware, dolls, and children's clothes.
5. Advertise with cardboard yard signs. Make sure your signs are no smaller than 24" square or no one will be able to see them. Post them on main streets leading to the sale. If you can, invest in an ad in the local free paper as well as the daily. Be sure to remove all the signs right after your sale is over.



Raffle

Raffles are successful if plenty of tickets are sold and the prizes are either donated or acquired inexpensively. Good sources of donated prizes are local merchants or group members. If prizes need to be purchased, your profits will diminish greatly.

1. Keep costs down by copying tickets. Use a maximum number of people to sell tickets.
2. Keep track of persons selling tickets. Allow plenty of time for tickets to be sold. Ticket prices should not exceed \$.50 or \$1.00, unless the prizes are excellent or expensive.

Note: You do not need a permit to sell raffle tickets if you are a nonprofit. Do not pay any of the helpers and do not sell more than \$5,000 worth of tickets.

Local Merchants

Many local merchants will readily help a neighborhood group with either merchandise or a cash contribution. Assess merchants according to the size of their business. Remember these points when soliciting for contributions:

- A good customer is the best person to approach a merchant.
- Do not solicit a merchant at the beginning or the end of the business day or during peak business hours.
- Bring a letter from your organization (preferably on letterhead) introducing you as the member who is authorized to solicit contributions.

Dues

Many organizations have membership dues to help pay for some of the activities and common costs of running an organization, such as paper, copying, etc. As membership increases and becomes more involved in association events, having dues will not necessarily be a hardship for some members because they will help want to help out. However, paying mandatory dues should not be a condition for membership.

Community Development Block Grant and HOME Grant

On the local level, the Community Development Department serves as a conduit for Department of Housing and Urban Development Funds. Funds must be used for low- to moderate-income persons, but any group can apply. For a list of eligible activities, contact the ONS at 676-6366.

Bookkeeping

All neighborhood associations accumulate a sum of money for one reason or another. A management system needs to be in place for dealing with any funds handled by the association. The best thing to do is to open a bank account for the group.

With so many different types of accounts available, how do you know what kind of account to set up? Research needs to be dedicated to finding out the benefits of certain types of accounts and a decision can be made on an account that will be most beneficial for the group. Check with several banks to get the best deal for the group. Whether you are a corporation or just a designated person, either can open a bank account for the group. If you are a corporation and

also have nonprofit status, you may be eligible to receive free or reduced fee banking privileges at some banks.

Two things to consider when determining the type of bank account for your neighborhood association are:

- How often will you withdraw money?
- The amount of money your association has to deposit. Do you have enough to keep a minimum balance in your account or pay service fees, if any?
- Have two unrelated signatures required on all checks.

Even though many organizations do not have much money, it is important to keep track of whatever money does come into or go out from your organization. It is a good idea to have an accountant or bookkeeper help you set up your books from the start, then the Treasurer or someone who feels comfortable with numbers and figures can take on bookkeeping responsibilities. The sooner the system is set up, the easier it is to keep accurate financial records.

The following is one common system to help keep your group's records accurate. It provides a record of all money received and the source, and all funds expended and the purpose for which it was utilized.

Cash Receipts and Cash Disbursements

Money coming into or out of the organization should be recorded. These transactions are recorded in a format called a journal.

- Cash Receipts Journal – Record the total amount of money (cash or checks) the day it is received and the source of each amount, i.e. contributions, grants, sale of advertising, etc.
- Cash Disbursement Journal – Record each disbursement from each bank account. Disbursements made by check should be recorded with the check number, date of check, the payee (who the check is made out to), amount of the check, and the purpose of the disbursement. For savings accounts without preprinted checks, record the date of withdrawal, amount and purpose (use) of funds. Photocopy the withdrawal slip and file with the cash receipts journal to create a record of who withdrew the money.



General Ledger

Associations with many different sources of receipts or many different categories for disbursements, particularly those who receive foundation grants that restrict the use of the grant money, may need to set up a General Ledger. The General Ledger is essential for an organization that wants to use the accrual basis of accounting that records amounts owed to the organization (receivables) and amounts owed by the organization (payables). If you think your association needs a General Ledger or has significant payables or receivables, get help from a trained accountant to set up your system.

Each month, the Treasurer or another designated person should prepare a written financial report. The report should include the results of the month's activities (i.e., from March 1 to March 31). The report should include at least the following information:

- Cash available at the beginning of the month.
- Total receipts during the month.
- Total disbursement during the month (with breakdown by type – i.e. postage, supplies, printing).
- Cash available at the end of the month.

Publicity

Publicizing your neighborhood association's activities is really important. You will be planning several great programs for your neighborhood; so don't keep them a secret. Share them with as many people as you can. This will help others in the neighborhood join your efforts and take part in making a difference. Publicity is also an easy way to increase membership in your association.

There are different sources that can be used for publicity of which groups should take advantage. A good network is important to make people aware of your activities and projects and to keep members informed.

News Releases/Public Service Announcements

News releases are used when you want to give information about an event to the public, such as a neighborhood cleanup or election of officers. Public Service Announcements (PSAs) can also be used when you want to announce an event.

When writing a news release, keep the following in mind:

- News releases should be about one typewritten, double-spaced page.
- Your first paragraph should include who, what, when, and where.
- Following paragraphs should provide details and background.
- Include information for a contact person: name and phone number.
- Include a "release date" and "do not use after" date.
- Send a copy of the news release at least two weeks ahead of time.

When writing a PSA, follow the same format as a news release except for the following:

- PSAs are shorter than news releases, maybe only a paragraph.
- When sending a PSA to a radio station, be sure it can be read in 30 seconds (7 or 8 lines) and attach the details and background on a separate sheet.
- When sending a PSA to a large newspaper, find out what section would give your PSA the best exposure. Send the PSA to the editor of that section.

Internet Web Site

Many people have access to the Internet, so this is a great place for neighborhood associations to publicize events. You can build a homepage for the association and post current issues, an association calendar and an e-mail address so the association can be contacted. The Internet is a great way to distribute information and associations should definitely take advantage of it. The Office of Neighborhood Services also maintains a web site that includes information about registered neighborhood associations and events.

Flyers

Flyers can be used for any activity, project, or goal. Some tips to keep in mind when designing a flyer are:

- Keep wording bold enough to be seen from a distance of ten feet.
- Use colorful paper.
- Design one and quick-copy the rest.
- Post flyers in markets, Laundromats, schools, stores, or any other place frequently visited by the people you are trying to reach.

Posters

Making large posters can be effective when using these tips:

- Use large pieces of cardboard boxes.
- Use black enamel paint to rainproof your poster.
- Keep the message brief.
- Keep artwork to a minimum.

Logos

Designing logos can be fun and can bring members together when an image can be associated with the group. The logo can be simple, such as an attractive way to display the group's name. The logo should be unique to the group so it can have a maximum impact.

Buttons, T-shirts, and Decals

Once the group has a logo, you can transfer it to T-shirts, decals, and buttons. They can be sold for fundraising or distributed to volunteers. Using these items can also increase awareness of your group around the city.

PROJECTS AND ACTIVITIES

Organizing neighborhood projects can provide opportunities for neighbors to work together and continue to stay active. It also builds the credibility of the group as a moving force in the community.

Neighborhood Cleanups

Neighborhood cleanups are a great way to boost pride in your area. Your group can organize to collect debris in alleys, backyards, vacant lots, and sidewalks. When most of the litter is cleared, occasional cleanups can be organized to maintain the areas cleaned. Cleanups are a great way for neighbors to feel proud of where they live and provide immediate results.

Here are some helpful tips for planning a cleanup:

- Schedule a cleanup date (and a rain date) and time. Choose a Saturday or a Sunday, since most people are free on those days of the week.
- Notify residents of the project. Inform them of the date, time, and what tools would be helpful (work gloves, rakes, garbage bags, etc.). You can pass out or post flyers or make posters.
- On the day of the cleanup, organize people into teams to get the maximum use of your manpower and tools.
- Be sure to have a break where everyone can meet up at a centralized place for refreshments and some fun. It would be great to have a local merchant donate refreshments.
- Contact the Office of Neighborhood Services and possibly coordinate the clean up with the Solid Waste Division of the City.



Crime Prevention Education

By educating your neighbors in safety techniques, you can improve the security of your neighborhood. A well-informed group with an active interest in crime prevention can significantly reduce the local crime rate. You may even consider starting a Neighborhood Watch group.

How to get started:

- Contact the Abilene Police Department's Crime Prevention Unit at 676-6520 and a crime prevention officer will meet with you and your association.
- Any information about neighborhood safety programs should be distributed to community residents. Literature can be obtained from the Crime Prevention Unit. Once established your crime prevention program should be publicized to discourage criminal activity in your neighborhood.

Fire Prevention

Plan a Fire Prevention Night by contacting the Fire Department at 676-6679. A representative of the Fire Department will be glad to meet with your association and answer any questions you may have.



Neighborhood Improvement Projects

There are a variety of enhancement projects that your group can organize to make your neighborhood a great place to live. Start by identifying what the residents' value in your neighborhood and what they think needs to be done. Consider a clean up project, landscaping, entrance signage, park improvements, or a friendly code enforcement sweep. The Office of Neighborhood Services is available to help you make your projects happen.

Appendix

Sample Agenda

**Meeting of the Park Neighborhood Association
Tuesday, January 5, 1999
At Brackenridge Baptist Church
3802 Mulberry Lane**

7:00 p.m. – 8:30 p.m

Agenda

Welcome

Minutes of the previous meeting (Actions to include reading or waiver of reading, changes or questions, vote to accept)

Old Business

- A. Bylaws committee report**
- B. Membership report**
- C. Street Light committee report**

New Business

- A. Festival plans**
- B. Hearing on rezoning**

Other Issues / Announcements

Adjournment

Sample Minutes

Minutes of the
Park Neighborhood Association
March 1, 1999

Members Present:

Members Absent:

Others Present:

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m. by Chairman _____.

Old Business

A. (Insert subject title from agenda for this meeting along with a description of the discussion)

Motion by: _____

Second by: _____

Motion passed (unanimously, 7-5) or motion denied.

New Business – None

Chairman’s Report (insert description of discussion)

Citizens Report – None

Staff Report – None

Adjournment – The next meeting is scheduled for June 1, 1999.

Submitted by: _____
(name of person who prepared minutes “Secretary”)

Approved by: _____
Chairperson

* Any outline minutes format may be backed up by an official tape recording of the meetings. These tapes should be kept should a question arise.

Sample Bylaws

Park Neighborhood Association

Bylaws

ARTICLE I – NAME

The name of this organization shall be the Park Neighborhood Association (PNA).

ARTICLE II – OFFICE

The association's principal office shall be the residence of the Association President. The Executive Committee may designate another location at its discretion.

ARTICLE III – BOUNDARIES

The boundaries of the Association are Cally Court on the north, Monroe Avenue on the east, Dusty Drive on the south, and Jackson on the west.

ARTICLE IV – PURPOSE

The purpose of the Park Neighborhood Association is to provide an organized framework to promote, preserve, and enhance the quality of life and values in the Park Neighborhood by:

- **Extending opportunities to residents, landowners, entrepreneurs, and other interested parties through education about neighborhood and community affairs and local topics of immediate interest,**
- **Elevating and promoting the image of the neighborhood,**
- **Encouraging the neighborhood to become involved in community affairs,**
- **Promoting a sense of pride and identity among the association members,**
- **Establishing a direct line of communication with members of the Super Neighborhood Council and participating in the Super Neighborhood Planning process,**
- **Advising on available funding, loans, and programs designated for the betterment and improvement of older neighborhoods,**
- **Providing a forum for the airing of grievances; and,**
- **Familiarizing residents, landowners, and entrepreneurs about the association and its purposes.**

ARTICLE V – POLICIES

Section 1. The Park Neighborhood Association (PNA) shall be a nonpartisan organization and shall not support candidates for public office. The Association may take positions on issues. All action appropriate to sustain an approved PNA position must be authorized by the Executive Committee before the President or the President’s representative may so act.

Section 2. The Association shall never be operated for the primary purpose of profit and no part of its net earnings or membership fees shall be used to the benefit of private individuals.

ARTICLE VI – MEMBERSHIP

Section 1. There shall be three categories of membership in the Association: regular, business, and associate.

Section 2. A regular member of the PNA shall be any person over the age of eighteen residing and/or owning property within the Association’s boundaries.

Section 3. A business member of the PNA shall be any person, firm, or corporation operating a place of business within the Association’s boundaries; provided however, that each such business shall be entitled to one membership only in the Association.

Section 4. An associate member of the PNA shall be any person, firm or corporation who neither resides, owns property, nor does business within the neighborhood, but nevertheless, maintains an interest in the Association and its purpose. Associate members shall have the privilege of the floor but no vote.

ARTICLE VII – SOURCES OF REVENUE

Section 1. Annual dues for each category of membership shall be recommended by the Executive Committee and approved by a majority vote of the members in attendance at the meeting in which a dues change is considered. Dues shall be paid by December 31 for the following calendar year. New members shall pay prorated dues for the months between their initial membership and December 31. Members shall be considered in arrears if their dues are not paid by January 31.

Section 2. PNA may engage in fundraising activities related to its purpose. The Executive Committee may accept on behalf of the Association any contribution, gift, bequest, or device for the general purposes or for any special purpose of the Association.

ARTICLE VIII – MEETINGS

Section 1. Regular meetings of the PNA shall be held at least quarterly and may be held more often as determined by the Executive Committee. Special meetings may be called by the President or any five (5) members. Written notification of meetings shall be provided to all members at least five (5) days in advance.

Section 2. The members present at a meeting shall constitute a quorum.

Section 3. The Executive Committee shall meet as required, usually on a monthly basis. These meetings shall be open to all interested members of the Association.

ARTICLE IX – EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Section 1. The six (6) elected officers and the immediate Past President shall constitute the Executive Committee of the Association.

Section 2. The Executive Committee shall supervise the affairs of the Association in accordance with its stated purpose and policies; set the agendas for the regular meetings; transact any business between meetings of the Association and report thereon at the next meeting; and make recommendations to the general membership on matters before the Association.

ARTICLE X – OFFICERS

Section 1. The officers of PNA shall be the President, Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer, and two (2) directors at large.

Section 2. Officers shall assume their duties in January and shall serve for one (1) year until their successors are duly elected. Officers shall not serve in the same office for more than (2) consecutive terms.

Section 3. Any regular or business member of PNA is eligible for election to office.

Section 4. Officers shall be elected at the November meeting by a simple majority vote of regular and business members present.

Section 5. At the October meeting, the President shall appoint a nominating committee of at least three (3) members. The nominating committee shall present a slate of one or more nominees for each office at the November meeting. Nominations from the floor shall be allowed at this time also.

Section 6. Vacancies in office shall be handled as follows:

- A. In the event the President is unable to complete his or her term, the Vice President shall become the President for the un-expired portion of the term.
- B. Vacancies in offices other than the President shall be filled for the un-expired term by the Executive Committee.
- C. Unexcused absences, as determined by the Executive Committee, from three (3) consecutive meetings shall constitute a vacancy of office.

ARTICLE XI – DUTIES OF OFFICERS

Section 1. The President shall be the principal officer of the Association and shall:

- A. Preside at all meetings of the Association.
- B. Be the sole spokesperson for PNA, except on the occasion that the Executive Committee may designate another member to serve in this capacity as necessary.
- C. Appoint committee members and chairmen with the approval of the Executive Committee.
- D. Sign with the Secretary or any other proper officer of PNA authorized by the Executive Committee, all contracts and other legal documents.
- E. Serve as the Association's primary representative to the Super Neighborhood Council.

Section 2. The Vice President shall:

- A. Act as special assistant to the President and represent the President whenever so designated.
- B. Be empowered to sign any documents as authorized by the Executive Committee. This may be done in the event of an emergency during the absence of the President or due to the President's inability or refusal to act.
- C. Be responsible for preparing and distributing the Association's newsletter.
- D. Perform all such duties as requested by the President or Executive Committee.

Section 3. The Secretary shall:

- A. Keep minutes of the proceedings of all meetings of the Association.
- B. Preserve and file all records of value to the Association.
- C. Sign with the President all contracts and legal documents.
- D. Maintain a current roster of membership indicating the name, address, and telephone number of each member as well as his or her classification of membership.
- E. Conduct the correspondence of the Association.
- F. Perform such other duties as requested by the President or Executive Committee.

Section 4. The Treasurer shall:

- A. Have charge of all funds of the PNA and their deposit in a financial institution in the PNA's name as approved by the Executive Committee.
- B. Pay all bills and disburse funds as authorized by the Executive Committee.

- C. Present financial status reports at each meeting.
- D. Keep itemized and complete records of all receipts and expenditures in a permanent file.
- E. Perform such other duties as requested by the President or Executive Committee.

Section 5. Directors at large shall:

- A. Serve as chairs of standing committees as appointed by the President.
- B. Provide advice and assistance in carrying out PNA activities.
- C. Perform such other duties as requested by the President or Executive Committee.

Section 6. Each officer shall deliver to his or her successor within fifteen (15) days after retiring from office, all records, papers, and other property belonging to the Association.

ARTICLE XII – PARLIAMENTARY AUTHORITY

The rules contained in the current edition of Robert’s Rules of Order shall govern all proceedings of the Association.

ARTICLE XIII – AMENDMENTS

These bylaws may be amended by a two-thirds (2/3) affirmative vote of the regular and business members present and voting at a regular meeting, provided that notice of such an amendment has been given to the membership at a previous regular meeting. A full text of such an amendment shall be mailed to all members at least ten (10) days prior to the date the amendment will be considered.

ARTICLE XIV – DISSOLUTION

PNA may be dissolved in the same manner as the procedure outlined in Article XIII, provided that the disbursement of all monies and properties be acted upon prior to dissolution, and in accordance with the requirements of the Texas Non-Profit Corporation Act then in existence.

ADOPTED BY A MAJORITY VOTE OF THE MEMBERSHIP AT THE REGULAR SCHEDULED MEETING HELD ON

THE _____ DAY OF _____, 2003.

President

Sample Flyers

Sponsor:

**City of Abilene
Office of
Neighborhood Services**

&

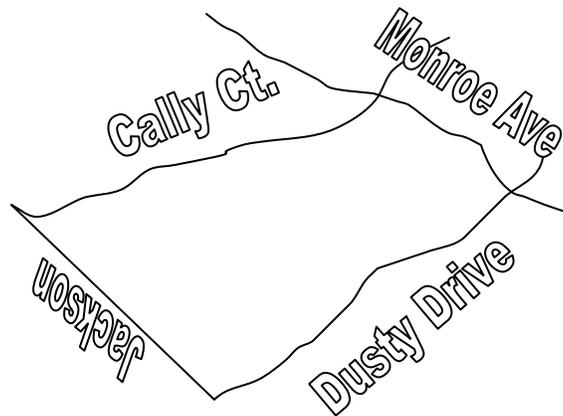
**Park
Neighborhood Association**

NEIGHBORHOOD MEETING

To Discuss the City's New Comprehensive Plan!

Everyone is welcome and invited to participate

**Bring Your
Neighbors and
Your
Questions!**



Thursday, October 10, 2004

7:00 p.m.

**Forest Mandly High School
2902 Bobwhite**

THE SITE IS HANDICAPPED ACCESSIBLE