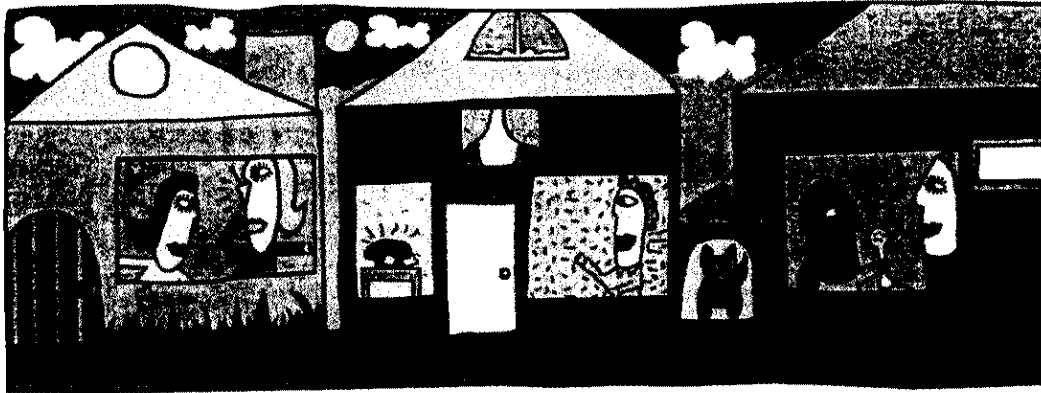




Block Club Organizing



A Step-by-Step Guide to Starting a Block Club

*Part of Mayor Daley's Block Club University,
a partnership among the Chicago Police Department, the CAPS
Implementation Office and the City Colleges of Chicago*



City of Chicago
Richard M. Daley
Mayor



City Colleges of Chicago
Wayne Watson
Chancellor



Department of Police
Jody P. Weis
Superintendent

Chicago Block Clubs

What is a Block Club?

Traditional block clubs are groups of people who have homes and families on any given block in the city and have organized to improve the quality of life in their neighborhoods. People who form block clubs are concerned and care about their communities and share information, identify concerns and act collectively to address those concerns.

There are many benefits to organizing a block club. Knowing your neighbors and communicating on a regular basis can help you identify quality of life issues and other trends in your neighborhood and allow you to address those issues. Taking collective action, sharing information, and raising awareness among your neighbors will also help improve the safety of your block. With just a little time and work from you and all your neighbors, you can make a big impact on your community.

But what if a traditional block club isn't right for your neighborhood? There are many ways that people organize themselves; the important part is organizing around issues that affect you and your neighbors in a way that works for you. Some different, but equally effective ways to organize include:

- *Vertical block clubs* – In many neighborhoods throughout the City, high-rise or multi-unit apartment buildings or condominiums are the pre-dominant form of housing. Organizing within your building will help you recognize who may belong in and around your building as well as identify issues that may only be affecting your building. Once your building is organized, you can connect with other building organizations in your neighborhood to work issues you may all have in common.
- *Walking clubs* – Walking clubs combine the goals of improving your personal health and the overall health of your neighborhoods by taking regular community walks. Engaging in low impact physical activity at least once a week and continuing to learn

- *Work on problem buildings* – One bad building can ruin a whole block; one bad store can ruin a whole neighborhood. But you and your neighbors can help make a real difference when it comes to problem buildings. By working with police and other City Departments, you can help hold landlords or store owners accountable for criminal or nuisance activity that may be occurring on their property.
- *Start a neighborhood garden* – Beautification efforts make the neighborhood more pleasing for everyone and, again, are a deterrent to crime. Gardens could be planted on vacant lots, in the parkway or in traffic circles. You might also consider a vegetable garden allowing all the neighbors to share the fresh produce throughout the summer. Don't forget – recruit young people in your neighborhood to help maintain and care for the garden. The City can provide training and assistance to groups who want to start a garden through the Greencorps program.
- *Become a Court Advocate* – Of ten criminals go free because victims and witnesses are afraid to go to court. By volunteering with your Police District's court advocacy group, you can provide vital support to victims and witnesses. Attending court or administrative hearing proceedings also shows judges that the community is concerned about an issue and visibly demonstrates the impact crime has on you and your neighbors.
- *Organize field trips* – Too often, Chicagoans don't take advantage of the nationally and internationally recognized cultural and educational attractions that draw tourists to the City by the millions. From museums to architecture to historical parks and facilities, your group should take advantage of these opportunities throughout Chicago's neighborhoods. Many museum passes can be obtained from your local library.
- *Celebrate* – Block parties are a Chicago tradition throughout the summer. But you don't have to confine your celebrations to just one day. Smaller events can be easily organized throughout the year.

with your neighbors so you can introduce yourself and explain why you are interested in forming a block club. Always revisit homes where no-one was available at least twice to try and make that personal connection before merely leaving a flyer.

- Keep a list of all the neighbors you contact, indicating those who plan to attend and participate. Also keep a record of what issues they identify during your initial conversation that are of interest or concern to them; this will help you later on to decide what types of projects or activities the majority of your neighbors will be interested in undertaking.
- Always remember to be inclusive. Chicago is one of the most diverse cities in the country. In some instances, you may need to identify a bilingual neighbor who would be willing to translate for neighbors who do not speak English.

Running An Effective Meeting:

There are several keys to running an effective meeting:

- Introduce yourself and the neighbors who helped organize the meeting and thank the hosts. Ask everyone to introduce themselves and tell each other a little bit about themselves. This will help people make a personal connection.
- Always prepare an agenda and provide copies to everyone participating. This will help keep your meeting on track and will help you keep the meeting to a reasonable time. Some issues that you can include on your agenda include discussing neighbors concerns about the block, developing strategies to address those concerns, and discussing projects or activities that neighbors might be interested in starting. For following meetings, always make sure you include on your agenda time to provide updates on projects or concerns from the previous meeting.

Community Policing and Problem Solving:

Since 1993, the City of Chicago and the Chicago Police Department have been successfully implementing a comprehensive community policing strategy – CAPS – that has been recognized as a national and international model and has helped to continue to reduce crime in Chicago since that time. There are several critical elements to the City's community policing strategy:

- That police, residents and other City agencies working together can prevent crime and improve the quality of life in all of Chicago's neighborhoods;
- That positive working relationships need to be established between local police and residents; and
- That law enforcement, community-based, and City service strategies need to be developed and implemented in order to prevent and reduce crime.

Many block clubs focus significant attention on crime and disorder issues that impact the quality of life on their blocks. In order to stay informed about emerging crime and disorder issues that could impact your block, at least one member of your block club should attend your beat meeting. Beat meetings are held by the Police Department on a regular basis, often once a month, in each of the City's 280 beats. At the meeting, residents and beat officers discuss priority crime and disorder issues, as well as develop strategies to address those issues. Attending the beat meeting will give you the opportunity to provide information about your block's concerns to police, meet other residents in your beat who may be working on similar issues, and bring back the latest information from police to your neighbors.

One important tool for making community policing effective in Chicago is the five-step problem solving model. This model can also help you and the members of your block club focus on issues and activities specific to your block. The five steps of problem solving area:

include trimming trees that block street lights, repairing pot holes, baiting alley to get rid of rats, towing abandoned vehicles, and replacing burned out street and alley lights out. To make sure that these types of services are addressed quickly, you should call 311 as soon as possible to report the service need. You can also report service needs on-line on the City of Chicago's website at www.cityofchicago.org.

Children and Young People

Block clubs can play an important role in protecting children and providing young people positive alternatives to gangs, guns and drugs. Even though there may not be many children on your block, you and your neighbors should consider undertaking specific activities that help other children in your area, as well as including children and young people in your other endeavors. Some examples of those activities include:

- *Supporting local school safety initiatives* – In many neighborhoods, block clubs support Parent Patrol and Walking School Bus activities by making sure one or more members are out on the block while children and young people are walking to and from school. This adult presence can help deter gang recruitment and help ensure our children and young people feel safe going to and from school.
- *Organizing positive youth activities* – Giving young people something positive to do after school and during the summer can also help keep them safe from gangs. Some examples could include mentoring, organizing a sports league at a local park, organizing field trips, or providing homework assistance.

Other Action Steps:

Now that your block clubs is organized, here are some suggestions on projects and activities that may be right for your neighborhood. While this list is not all inclusive, it may help you find projects that are the right fit for your issues. Always remember to include your local police in projects to address criminal activity in order to increase your chances of successful addressing the problem.

Guidelines - City Service Requests

Abandoned vehicles

Car make – Chevrolet, Toyota, Ford, etc.

Model – Camry, Impala, 300Z, etc.

Body style – 2 or 4 door sedan, hatchback, SUV, pick up truck, etc.

Color – red, blue, white, etc.

State – Illinois, Indiana, etc.

License plate number

State/tag date – Expiration date

Information such as flat tires, broken window and not locked

How long parked there

Abandoned/vacant building

Any known information, but particularly if being used by gangs or others and if locked/secure or not secure

Alley rat abatement

Date of last abatement

Graffiti

Provide location such as on front, side, rear, on mail box, newspaper box, sign or pole

On what type surface – unpainted or painted brick, painted or unpainted wood, vinyl siding or other surface

Distance from ground level – if over 6 feet from the ground level

Gym shoes hang from wire

Describe location, in alley, along street, etc.

Street light pole missing cover at base (bottom) of pole

Shape of opening – round or square

Color of pole – green, black or silver

Pot hole

Placement in street – in traffic or curb lane

Describe – Small, large, 2 x 4 feet, deep, etc.

Sign damaged

Type sign – Stop sign, street name sign, one way sign, etc.

Problem – missing, damaged, rusted, faded, laying in parkway, etc.

Street light(s) out

Single light

Several lights out – provide available information

Trash cart damaged

Lid missing or side damaged, etc.

Tree trim (parkway)

In what way does the tree need trimming – high, low, to clear street light, to clear roof, away from street, etc.

Block Activity Log

What happened? _____
Who was involved? _____
Where did it happen? _____
At what date and time? _____
When did the Police arrive? _____
What was done? _____
Other comments? _____
What was decided at the CAPS meeting? _____

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Telephone Tree

Captain/Capitán

Name/Nombre: _____
Address/Dirección: _____
Telephone/Teléfono: _____

Name/Nombre: _____
Address/Dirección: _____
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If you see something wrong:

1. Call 911.
2. Call the two members who live closest to the crime.

Cuando veas un mal hecho:

1. Llame al 911.
2. Llame a dos miembros que viven cerca al crimen.

When someone calls:

1. Call 911 if you see something to report.
2. Call the next person on the list. If you are the last name, call the Captain so they know the tree is complete

Cuando alguien llama:

1. Busque para el problema y llame al 911.
2. Llame a la persona siguiente en la red. Si usted es el ultimo nombre en la red, llame a capitán, para informarle que se completo la lista de la red.