COMMUNICATIONS & OUTREACH

Clear communication is key for good neighborhood associations. This is one reason Block Captains can be very helpful – they can go door-to-door, collect contact information (phone and/or email), note preferred method of communication, and help spread the word. Don't assume everyone is on your neighborhood Facebook page. It is important to have 3 forms of outreach for every gathering: fliers around the neighborhood, calling people who do not use computers, and an email or social media blast.

GATHER COMMUNITY CONACT INFO

This is challenging but so important. Divide and conquer using a list of your entire neighborhood. Knock on doors and ask for contact information (phone and email) and determine best method of contact. While face-to-face, consider asking participatory questions like, "What would you like to see our neighborhood association do?" or "What would make you interested in attending our meetings?" You could also see if monthly meeting time works for their schedule. It is very helpful to have a complete contact list of phone numbers and email addresses of your neighborhood.

POSSIBLE SCRIPT FOR COLLECTING INFORMATION & INVITING YOUR NEIGHBORS TO A MEETING

Hi. My name is _____ (your name) and I'm one of your neighbors on _____ (street). I want to invite you to an important community meeting on _____ (date) at _____ (time) at _____ (place). [hand the neighbor a flyer] Many of the neighbors are concerned about _____ (problems) in our neighborhood. We believe that by working together we can _____ (solution to the problems). This meeting will be an opportunity for you to state your concerns about the neighborhood and your ideas for improving it. _____ (guests) will be there to share ideas and also answer any questions you may have. I hope you will be able to attend. We need your ideas and support. Also, will you provide your preferred method for being contacted? Your phone number and/or email address? And, if there is anything you would like to share about the neighborhood, we're here to listen and work together to improve our community -- thank you!

CREATE FLIER

Anyone with a computer and access to a printer can design and print their own simple flier. The larger the better (11x17 is a standard size, US LEGAL, and is good for visibility) though 8 ½ x 11 paper works fine too. Neighborhood Services will print for your association for free but you are required to provide the paper. A template for the flier is on page 25.

Simple Design Guidelines:

- Center text.
- Keep text simple and make the text AS LARGE as possible for legibility from distances.
- BOLD all key information.
- Less is more.
- Create event on Facebook with all the details and provide link to your FB page or event on the flier.

E-CONNECT: FREE ON-LINE PLATFORMS FOR NEIGHBORHOODS

NEXT DOOR (www.nextdoor.com)

Nextdoor is a free private social networking service for neighbors that acts as an online catalyst to connect neighborhoods. There is a vetting process to join, and then you can tailor communication (daily or weekly). It is a strong resource for events, safety, pet needs, shared resources and services, and building community.

PROS:

- There are already a large number of Charleston residents registered.
- Nextdoor restricts communication to only those people who live close to one another.
- Nextdoor provides tools like postcards to get your neighbors to join.
- Users are required to verify their identity and home address when signing up.
- Works with government agencies to send out citywide alert like utility shutdowns, etc.

CONS:

- You must be on-line and a registered member to participate.
- Membership is by invitation only (to protect from scams).

FACEBOOK (www.facebook.com)

Neighborhood Facebook Pages or Groups are a popular way to stay connected. Pages have a FB administrator (someone from the neighborhood) who monitors the posts and ensures neighborly communication methods. Groups are open forum. Neighborhoods need to decide if they want an administrator or an open Group. More information is located in the HELP section of Facebook.

PROS:

- Many people are already on Facebook so it is relatively easy to get a sizeable neighborhood group active.
- Free and easy-to-use and post.

CONS:

- You must be on Facebook to participate.
- It is difficult to keep a topic, event or committee in communication on FB.
- These are closed groups so members must be “accepted” by administration.

SLACK (www.slack.com)

Slack is an on-line messaging and communications platform to organize team conversations. You can create channels for different topics and teams so everyone has a transparent view of what is going on. You can also direct message people. It is a good tool for organizing an event.

PROS:

- Streamlines texting and communications to one platform.
- You can share files, documents, photos, etc and search for them with ease.

CONS:

- Less familiar to many - some on-line savvy required to get started and navigate.