



HOW TO ORGANIZE A NEIGHBORHOOD CLEANUP IN TWELVE EASY STEPS

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WITH THANKS TO THE EASTWOOD COALITION, HOUSTON, TEXAS – 1982, AND



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HANDBOOK OUTLINE

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HOW TO ORGANIZE A NEIGHBORHOOD CLEANUP: THE EASTWOOD COALITION

The success of a neighborhood Cleanup is directly related to how well it is planned. In fact, a successful Cleanup, as is the case with any worthwhile volunteer project, is 75 percent planning and 25 percent execution.

The first step in a successful Cleanup is to hold a meeting of the Cleanup Committee. The sponsoring group's Cleanup Committee, should at its first meeting:

- 1) **Set A Date For The Cleanup:** The date should be set for at least one month after the initial meeting and two months at most. This allows time for each committee to handle responsibilities adequately. A Saturday is often the best day for a Cleanup. If the Cleanup is properly planned, a half-day will be sufficient. More people are likely to volunteer half of a Saturday than all of it.
- 2) **Choose An Overall Project Coordinator:** This should be the one person who knows what all the subcommittees are doing. The overall coordinator sees that the sub-committees are on schedule with their assignments, assists the sub-committees when problems occur in their assignments, and acts as the focal point and primary contact on the Cleanup day.

The overall coordinator is where "the buck finally stops." He/she makes the final decision on problems, and should be a person who has the trust and respect of the group.

- 3) **The Overall Project Coordinator Assigns Sub-committee Responsibilities:** The important issue here is that no one person has too much to do. Remember, everyone is a volunteer.

At the initial planning meeting, everyone is assigned responsibilities. Each person is then able to concentrate on one aspect of- the Cleanup, knowing he/she is contributing to the success of the project without feeling overwhelmed. The following responsibilities should be fulfilled before the second meeting of the committee:

- 4) **Publicity:** If a neighborhood Cleanup is planned, the neighborhood should be informed two to three weeks in advance. The Eastwood Coalition prints flyers (through either a local printer or company) and distributes them door to door in the area the Cleanup is to take place. The flyers are printed in English on one side and in Spanish on the other. The flyers state the date and time of the Cleanup, and encourage residents to clean up their yards, garages, attics and basements and leave the refuse on the curb on the day of the Cleanup for pickup. The flyers request volunteer assistance in the Cleanup and supply the name and telephone number of the overall coordinator and the volunteer coordinator. Elderly and disabled residents are encouraged to call one of these two people if they require special assistance.

A second flyer is printed and distributed on the weekend before the Cleanup as a reminder. In addition, an article in the neighborhood newsletter informs residents outside the Cleanup area and appeals for volunteers to assist. Flyers can also be posted in the windows of local merchants and in the announcement sections of local church bulletins.

- 5) **Volunteers:** The coordinator for volunteers is someone who is well known and respected in the community. This person should alert the telephone network in the neighborhood and should personally call key residents to ask for their cooperation and participation. Examples of key people are: Boy & Girl Scout leaders, church ministers, school principals, etc. Volunteers are needed for heavy and light pickup along streets, preparation of refreshments, and for the party clean up. No one

is too old or too young to participate. There are jobs for everyone. The volunteer coordinator should keep a list so that the overall coordinator will have an idea of how much can be accomplished.

6) Responsibility To Arrange for Collected Trash Removal: The Houston Department of Solid Waste Management has an Adopt-A-Truck Program administered through the Houston Clean City Commission (CLEAN HOUSTON). A form is available to request a garbage truck(s) with a driver to be made available on the day of the Cleanup. The form should be mailed and followed-up with a phone call a few days later to ensure that the city will be able to fulfill the request. If it cannot, you can approach private waste removal companies for a truck donation.

Pickup trucks that are the property of residents and/or neighborhood businesses can be used, but the use of pickup trucks will limit capacity for each vehicle and require more trips to the city dump. At the same time, it provides you with considerable flexibility. Use your cell phones!

NOTE: Irving residents may generally take small trash loads to the Landfill at no charge. However, the most efficient way to handle trash is to alert City Sanitation at 972-721-2232 ahead of time and then put cleanup event trash out for normal Monday through Friday curbside pickup. Irving does not have an Adopt-A-Truck program at this printing, 7/14/04.

7) Party & Refreshments: In Eastwood, it is an established premise that any job worth doing is worth celebrating upon completion. Whether the Cleanup is planned for a Saturday morning or afternoon, there should be a party for the participants afterwards. The Party Committee is responsible for securing all the supplies and ingredients needed for the party including:

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| a. Hot dogs and/or hamburgers and buns | e. Barbeque grill(s) and charcoal. |
| b. Potato chips | f. Cold drinks and water |
| c. Condiments (mustard, ketchup, pickles, relish, onions, lettuce, tomatoes, etc.) | g. Coffee |
| d. Paper products (plates, cups, forks, knives, napkins, towels, etc.) | h. Cakes, cookies, etc. |
| | i. Cooking utensils |

As pulling together all these items takes a lot of time, it is more effective and fun to have two or three people on the Party Committee to organize it all. The largest expense is usually the hot dogs and/or hamburgers. Often, a large company in the area will purchase and donate the meat. If this is not feasible, an alternative is to have a group of volunteers prepare sandwiches.

This can be made into a party in itself with the volunteers each bringing a part of the sandwich (a jar of mustard, a package of sandwich meat, a loaf of bread, etc.) to a central location and making up all the sandwiches together. The sandwiches can then be refrigerated until the day of the Cleanup. Visiting local merchants and restaurants and asking for a donation can often obtain the chips, condiments, paper products, charcoal, soft drinks, water, etc. Don't ask for everything from one merchant! A supermarket may provide the paper products; a fast food restaurant, the condiments; a bakery, the buns; another restaurant, a case of beer or soft drinks; and so on. Usually, the less you request, the more likely you are to receive. It also allows more merchants to be involved and for them to each feel like they are making a contribution to the community. Neighborhood cooks can prepare cakes, cookies, and pies. This is especially well received by elderly residents as a way for them to contribute. **Use your imagination and belief in your neighborhood** to get what you need!

8. Tools & Supplies--Tools you need will depend on what you plan to clean up. Hoes, rakes and shovels may be needed. If you wish to thoroughly clean a vacant lot you may need a lawnmower, wheel barrows, etc. Try to anticipate your needs before the day of the Cleanup. Of course, you will definitely need heavy-duty trash bags and work gloves. These can be obtained from a supermarket as a donated item, or from other businesses in your neighborhood. Most businesses need trash bags and will gladly donate a few hundred. Industrial companies, railroad companies and hardware stores are all good sources for work gloves.

Finally, a distinctive item of apparel should be provided for each of the volunteers on the day of the Cleanup. In Eastwood, Civic Club T-shirts are provided. The T-shirts provide not only a "payment" for services rendered, but also allow everyone to feel that they are part of the team. If you don't have your own T-shirts, a company in the area may donate its "good will" ball caps, or a department store may donate T-shirts of all one color. Be sure everyone gets a shirt or cap, especially the children. The kids will wear them with pride.

9. Field Support & Documentation--Although the Cleanup Committee has chosen an overall coordinator, it is also important to have a second-in-command--a field supervisor. The field supervisor's duties include surveying the clean-up area one week before the Cleanup to identify problem areas (i.e., heavy accumulations of trash and litter-strewn vacant lots). The field supervisor will do another survey of the area immediately before the Cleanup begins to ascertain an overall view of where the majority of work will take place. This information is given to the overall coordinator for use in the assignment of work crews. On the day of the Cleanup, the field supervisor provides assistance to the work crews. He will travel through the areas in his car (pickup truck is best) providing supplies (garbage bags, tools, etc.) and refreshments (soft drinks, beer, donuts, etc.) to the workers. He will also be available to solve difficulties the crews encounter and act as liaison between the work crews and the overall coordinator at a central headquarters.

PHOTOS! Every neighborhood has at least one amateur photographer who would volunteer to document the event. There may even be someone (as in Eastwood) who would use his own equipment to video-tape the event. Your photographer will want to document the area before the Cleanup, as workers clean the area, and after the Cleanup. The party also will provide opportunities to capture workers pleased with their work and with one another. The photographs, slides and video-tape can be used for neighborhood and company publications; as a part of news releases; for showing at meetings, and as part of the history of the neighborhood.

Having assigned everyone a responsibility at the initial meeting, **the overall coordinator will set a date for the second meeting to be held a few days before the Cleanup.** At this second meeting, everyone should report that they have fulfilled their responsibilities and report any difficulties so that they can be dealt with prior to -the Cleanup day. The field supervisor will report the condition of the clean-up area with an estimate of the amount of work to be done. The volunteer coordinator will report how many volunteers have committed. The committee will then have rough idea of what can and cannot be done by matching the work to be done with the workers and resources available to complete the work. The overall coordinator will remind the committee of the time of the Cleanup; where the central headquarters/meeting place will be; where the party will take place, and what time the party will start.

10. Execution: The first persons to arrive at the Cleanup headquarters on the day of the Cleanup should be the overall coordinator, the field supervisor (who has already done the second survey), and the volunteer coordinator. The overall coordinator will take the field supervisor's report and the volunteer coordinator's report and begin to develop work crew assignments. **BE EARLY!**

As the volunteers arrive, they are given a T-shirt by the volunteer coordinator, coffee or soft drink by the field supervisor-, and their work crew assignment by the overall coordinator. **They should also receive safe working sheets.** One member of each work crew will be assigned as the work crew leader. The work crew leader is told exactly what his work crew's assignment is and that once the assignment is completed, the crew is finished. A map should be provided to each leader.

It is important that every volunteer know what is expected. Uncertainty equals disorganization and frustration. The crews know that once their goal is reached they have done their part in the overall success of the project.

Work crew assignments will include: assignment of a garbage truck (strong men are required for heavy lifting); litter pickup along the street (good for kids supervised by an adult); a vacant lot crew; a special project crew that will respond to requests for assistance from the elderly and disabled; a party crew; and an assistant for the field supervisor.

The work crews can then execute their assignments and should be reminded of where the party will be after their assignment is completed. A half-hour after the time set for the Cleanup, the only person left at the headquarters should be the overall coordinator and the party crew (if the party will occur at the same place). The overall coordinator assigns late-comers to work crews, receives periodic reports from the field supervisor, and handles unforeseen difficulties that arise. If you have planned properly, these will be few and easy to handle, but there will always be some.

As the work crews complete their assignments and begin to arrive at the party site, the party crew will have everything prepared and waiting for them. A final complete sweep of the Cleanup area by a garbage truck will ensure that nothing was overlooked. The party will serve as a time of relaxation and self-congratulation for a job well done. It will provide a forum for "war stories" and a time for neighbors to get to know one another better.

11. Follow-up--The final jobs of the overall coordinator are to either write, or assign others to write, thank you letters to the businesses and key individuals who made your Cleanup a success and to prepare a report for the group's next board or membership meeting.

An article for the community and company newsletters should be drafted and sent to editors. The Planning Committee may want to have a follow-up meeting/party to discuss and congratulate one another on the success of the total operation: what was done right, what did not happen as it should have, and...

12). ...to set a date for the next Cleanup!