

# HOW TO START A **BLOCK CLUB** IN DETROIT

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Block clubs have been an instrumental part of life in Detroit for decades. The LaSalle Gardens Block Club, running strong since the 1960s, may be the oldest continuously operating Detroit block club.

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A block club doesn't have to be overly formal. It can be a group of neighbors getting together to address neighborhood concerns, make improvements and socialize. But, a block club can also be more structured and registered with the city's Department of Neighborhoods (DON).

Block clubs may find it easier to successfully petition for street lights or speed humps, form neighborhood watch teams, conduct neighborhood cleanups or keep up vacant properties. Some build small parks or neighborhood gardens or organize walking clubs to promote physical health. Groups of block clubs in the same general area can form a Community Association together. These associations have even more people and usually funds to tackle big challenges.

If you're thinking about starting a block club in Detroit, *here's how.*

01

## GET YOUR HANDS ON THE BLOCK CLUB STARTER KIT

Before beginning the process of starting a block club, check the [DON's Interactive Block Club Map](#) to see if one already exists in your neighborhood. Ask your [district manager](#) if the club is still active and to help get you in touch with the group.

This [kit](#) on the DON's website can help you start a block club from scratch.

02

## PLAN AN INTEREST MEETING

Anyone can start a block club, but you should gauge your neighbors' interest first. Make sure you all have time to meet about and maintain the block club.

Some block clubs have limited participation to homeowners, but in Detroit where the majority of residents are renters, that leaves a lot of people out. So, consider including all your neighbors.

Together, you can decide on the purpose and physical boundaries of the block club. Hold your meetings in a central and public location like a neighborhood park, library or community center. Remember, block club meetings can be hosted online too!

Block clubs can register to be considered a community partner of the Detroit Land Bank Association (DLBA). As a community partner, a block club can purchase vacant land for reuse or endorse individuals looking to purchase through the Neighborhood Lots program.

03

### PLAN THE FIRST OFFICIAL MEETING

You don't have to plan every aspect of the block club before you start meeting, but you should set an agenda for the first meeting. Consider inviting a leader from an established neighborhood block club to describe how they operate their group and offer advice to yours.

Allow community members time to introduce themselves, talk about their concerns and explain the skills, talent and time commitment they can offer the group.

At the first meeting, a temporary president and leadership team should be selected. These officers will be crucial for the block club's success. Each manages important tasks to help guide the group through formation. Generally, all positions are volunteer.

Some leadership roles may include president, vice president, secretary, treasurer, committee chairs, etc. Some committees to consider include beautification, communication, events, fundraising and safety.

04

### SET STANDARDS FOR THE BLOCK CLUB

Block club members should work together to decide on what kind of activities will promote their own community values. Some of these activities (like an annual clean up) can be volunteer-based while others (like snow removal or safety patrols) may need to be supported by fundraising or dues.

05

### DISCUSS AND VOTE ON THE FUTURE OF THE GROUP

Formalize how the group will function. Decide how the group will communicate updates for meetings, emergencies, etc. Be sure to have an agenda for each meeting, and keep track of the minutes. Don't forget to have members fill out a sign-in sheet with contact information at each meeting.

Block clubs can have a lot of structure—with a written constitution and bylaws or they can be less formal. A block club will be valuable if it is a collective effort neighbors can depend on to be a venue where people find community and community concerns are addressed.

06

### STEP 06: DOT YOUR I'S AND CROSS YOUR T'S

To register as an official group with the Department of Neighborhoods, a representative of the block club should fill out [this application](#) and submit it to your neighborhood's district manager.