



*"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it's the only thing that ever has."*

*Margaret Mead*

# NEIGHBORHOOD BLOCK CLUB MANUAL

Issued courtesy of the Moorhead Police Department  
Last update 11/17/09

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*Mission Statement of the Moorhead Police Department*

*Our mission is to maintain peace and order through the provision of police services that are of the highest quality and responsive to the needs of the community. We will contribute to the safety and security of the community by apprehending those who commit criminal acts, by developing partnerships to prevent, reduce or eliminate neighborhood problems, and by providing police services that are fair, unbiased, judicious and respectful of the dignity of all individuals.*

Dear Moorhead Residents,

On behalf of Mayor Mark Voxland and the Moorhead City Council, we welcome your interest in neighborhood block clubs. Block clubs create close-knit neighborhoods and close-knit neighborhoods are a great defense against crime.

By organizing a neighborhood block club, you are investing your time and efforts into your neighborhood that will ultimately culminate in a safer and richer environment in which to live and raise a family. The quality of life for all residents of your neighborhood will be improved.

Please remember to invite and include *all* your neighbors in your neighborhood block club activities. A neighborhood block club should embrace diversity and should not ever act as a barrier to people of any race or background. Block clubs provide a means for us to get to know our neighbors and work together toward common solutions to common problems. When we take time to meet our neighbors, we often find they share the same concerns and problems.

We have put this manual together for your benefit. It is not intended as a static document. It is only a guide. Feel free to be as creative as you want, with the caution that you always need to respect the rights of others and always assume that they will work with you until such time as they demonstrate otherwise. Also, if you have any recommendations for improvements in this manual, please share them with us so we can share them with others.

Thank you and we sincerely hope this manual will be of some help!

David Ebinger  
Chief of Police

## **F.A.Q. (FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS) ABOUT NEIGHBORHOOD BLOCK CLUBS**

**WHAT IS A NEIGHBORHOOD BLOCK CLUB?** A neighborhood block club is a group of neighbors committed to working together to watch out for one another and address quality of life issues that affect their neighborhood. Block clubs provide the structure through which the police, city officials, and the community meet one another; building trust and recognition in a partnership to reduce crime and improve neighborhood livability. Neighborhood block clubs are a good defense against crime because neighbors that know one another create safe neighborhoods.

### **HOW MANY HOUSEHOLDS SHOULD BE IN MY NEIGHBORHOOD BLOCK CLUB?**

There are no set geographic boundaries that define a neighborhood block club. Normally, it will consist of the north and south or east and west side of any given street between two parallel intersections. However, unique neighborhood situations, natural barriers or neighborhood characteristics can influence the design of any block club. The Moorhead Police Department cannot tell you how big or small your block club should be. Only *you* know what you consider to be your neighborhood. There are usually natural landmarks or boundaries such as schools, busy intersections or streets, buildings, or a city park that may create a natural boundary for your block club.

### **HOW MANY PEOPLE NEED TO BE INVOLVED IN MY BLOCK CLUB?**

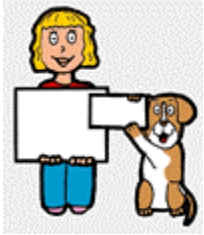
There is no minimal level of participation at which a block club can operate. Obviously, the greater the level of participation, the more successful your block club is likely to be. Don't be discouraged if not as many neighbors as you would like join your block club at first. With determination and persistence, your numbers will grow. Also remember that levels of participation can vary. Some neighbors will attend all your meetings and others will attend only a few. Some neighbors are only comfortable volunteering for special events sponsored by your block club, while others will limit their participation to reading your newsletter.

**HOW DO I GET STARTED?** Organizing a neighborhood block club starts with just one person who is interested in making a difference in his/her neighborhood. Take some time to promote the idea of a neighborhood block club to your neighbors. If there seems to be some interest or curiosity, take the initiative and organize the first

meeting. Ask Nancy Taralson at the Moorhead Police Department, 299-5143, to help you. She will arrange for a Moorhead Police Department representative to speak at your first meeting. This Moorhead Police Department representative will explain to you and your neighbors everything you need to know about organizing a successful block club.

**WHAT HAPPENS AFTER THIS FIRST MEETING?** You will be responsible for planning future meetings. How often you meet is up to your neighborhood. **But keep in mind that to be recognized as an official neighborhood block club, the Moorhead Police Department requires you to meet two times per year.** If your neighborhood has issues it wants to work on, you may need to meet once a month for a while. If your neighborhood is relatively quiet, you may want to meet only twice a year. After your neighborhood block club is established and you get to know your neighbors even better, you may find your group likes to get together just to socialize. That's great! The more close-knit your neighborhood, the safer it will be.

## TIPS FOR GETTING YOUR NEIGHBORS TO COME TO NEIGHBORHOOD BLOCK CLUB MEETINGS



**Create flyers:** Distribute the flyers five to seven days before the meeting to the neighborhood. Mail flyers to any city department director, city council member or other individuals who may have an interest in your meeting. You might also want to include the topic you will be discussing. Contact the Community Policing Coordinator at 299-5143 if you need assistance with the design and printing of your flyers. Be sure to continue to give flyers to neighbors who don't initially attend your meetings. They may do so in the future. We have included a sample flyer for your use in this manual.



**Door-to-Door contacts:** When distributing flyers to the neighbors, try to speak to the neighbor as well. When personal contact is made, meeting attendance tends to be very good. Personal contact also helps to develop group cohesiveness as friendly relationships develop. Although it takes more time, personal contacts allow you to learn about your neighbor's interests and concerns that can be discussed at the meeting.

**Get commitments:** When inviting neighbors, try to get them to commit to attending your neighborhood block club meeting. They may be more likely to attend so as not to disappoint you!



**Arrange for refreshments:** Food is always a good draw. Even lemonade and cookies can go a long way towards enticing your neighbors to the

meeting. Often the local fast food restaurant (i.e. McDonalds) will provide you with a five-gallon jug of lemonade for a very minimal cost. Ask one or two other neighbors to bring a dozen cookies.



**Reminder phone calls:** If you have the time, give a reminder phone call to your neighbors and other invited guests the day before the meeting.

# YOU ARE INVITED TO A NEIGHBORHOOD BLOCK CLUB MEETING!

DATE:

TIME:

PLACE:

Please join your neighbors to learn about starting a neighborhood block club. A neighborhood block club is a group of neighbors committed to working together to watch out for one another and address quality of life issues that affect our neighborhood.

## AGENDA

1. Presentation by a representative of the Moorhead Police Department on the purpose and benefits of starting a neighborhood block club
2. Questions and answers
3. Your issues and concerns
4. Next steps.



## TIPS FOR HANDLING NEGATIVE ATTITUDES

In the process of inviting your neighbors to your first neighborhood block club meeting, it might be possible that one or two of your neighbors will respond negatively to the idea. Don't be discouraged and don't take it personally! They just need a little more convincing about the benefits of neighbors coming together as a group. We have given you some responses that you could use to address a less than enthusiastic response to the idea of a neighborhood block club.

**Their comment:** "Organizing a neighborhood block club? That's a great idea, but it'll never work in this neighborhood. The neighbors don't even know each other."

**Your response:** "That's the problem and a neighborhood block club is the solution! How can you solve problems if you don't know your neighbors well enough to work together on issues that affect all of us in the neighborhood?"

**Their comment:** "I don't want to be forced to become buddies with my neighbors. I've got my own set of friends outside the neighborhood."

**Your response:** "Getting involved in a neighborhood block club doesn't mean you have to become best friends with your neighbors. It means that you agree to cooperate to make your neighborhood a better place to live."

**Their comment:** "I don't want to get involved and be a nosy neighbor."

**Your response:** "Many people have discovered that getting involved doesn't mean being nosy; it means being concerned for your neighbor and your neighborhood."





**Their comment:** "We don't have any crime in our area. This is a nice, quiet neighborhood."

**Your response:** "Organizing a neighborhood block club can keep it that way. A close-knit neighborhood is a safe neighborhood. It can be helpful in addressing other neighborhood concerns as well."

**Their comment:** "I just don't have time to be involved."

**Your response:** "We do not need to meet very often...just a couple times a year...in order to be effective as a group. These meetings will only last 1 to 1  $\frac{1}{2}$  hours."

# SUGGESTIONS FOR YOUR BLOCK CLUB ACTIVITIES

1. Block party  
personal crimes, juveniles,  
any problems that may arise
2. Guest speakers - police  
officer, locksmith, council  
member, etc.
3. Operation Identification  
sign-up
4. Block Club scrapbook
5. Cookie exchange 
6. Kids parties or activities
7. Cookbooks for fundraising
8.  Citizen patrols on  
Halloween
9. Exchange of services -  
babysitting, fix-ups, snow  
shoveling, etc.
10. Block clean-ups
11. Problem solving - noise,  
trash, animals, parks,
12. Physical security  
improvements
13. Neighborhood  
garage sales 
14. Any outdoor sport -  
iceskating, sledding,  
tobogganing, etc.
15. Holiday caroling - perhaps  
at a nearby senior citizen  
home or high-rise
16. Snow shoveling for those  
who cannot do their own
17. Party for kids during  
holiday vacation
18. Potluck dinner or  
progressive dinner parties -  
perhaps featuring ethnic  
dishes
19. Movie or card party 

# NEIGHBORHOOD BLOCK CLUB "TO DO" LIST

☑ **CREATE A NEIGHBORHOOD MAP.** Many neighborhoods create block maps that list the address and name of each resident of the neighborhood. The map can be hand drawn or some neighborhoods request a drawing of their neighborhood from the City Engineering Department and label each home shown on the drawing. A word of caution...make sure you get your neighbor's permission before placing their name and address on the map. Make sure everyone in the neighborhood gets a copy of the finished map. Try to keep the map updated by displaying it at each neighborhood gathering and routinely asking for updates.

☑ **CREATE A TELEPHONE TREE.** What is a telephone tree? It is a list of the phone numbers of your neighbors. This list can be used to notify neighbors of upcoming meetings or social gatherings or to spread the word about any crime problems in the neighborhood. Many neighborhoods found the telephone tree a useful means of communication during recent floods. How does it work? One neighbor agrees to be on the top of the list and telephone two other neighbors. Those two neighbors then each telephone two more and so on. (See the sample on page 20) While it is not a perfect system (i.e. some people may not be home, etc.) it can be surprisingly effective. Again, make sure you get your neighbor's permission before placing their name and phone number on the telephone tree.

☑ **NAME YOUR BLOCK CLUB.** Naming your block club gives your neighborhood a sense of identity and solidifies you as a group. Some neighborhoods use fun and creative names - Blockbusters, 10<sup>th</sup> Street Stompers - and some neighborhoods use names that identify where they are located in the city - Thomas Edison Block Club, Moonlight Addition Block Club. A consensus on the name can usually be reached at the first meeting.

☑ **PLACE CRIME WATCH SIGNS IN YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD.** If your neighborhood agrees to organize a neighborhood block club, it is important to let everyone know you exist. Placing Crime Watch signs in your neighborhood can do this. The process for obtaining these Crime Watch signs is described in further detail on page 12.

☑ **ESTABLISH A BLOCK CLUB NEWSLETTER.** This is a great way to maintain the presence of the block club in your neighborhood. Your newsletter can profile a good

neighbor, notify neighbors of upcoming events, display pictures of past events or print other interesting or fun bits of information. While a newsletter is not absolutely essential, it is a good link to those neighbors who do not regularly attend your gatherings. If someone in your neighborhood is computer proficient, ask them if they would be willing to put together a newsletter. The Moorhead Police Department has samples of neighborhood newsletters available for your review.



# WATCHING FOR CRIME



A block club is a group of concerned neighbors who are on the lookout, know what is suspicious on the block, and know what to do as a good witness and police contact. An important part of being a member of a neighborhood block club is watching out for your neighbor and your neighbor's car and home. Good block club members do not intervene, put themselves in danger, or become confrontational.

Neighbors are your best defense against crime. For too long, "minding one's own business" has been viewed as positive, while being watchful has been described as being "nosy" and, therefore, negative. The "not wanting to get involved" attitude actually facilitates the work of vandals, burglars, and other offenders. Good surveillance does not mean monitoring your neighbor's every move. It does mean being concerned, alert, and aware of a neighbor's absence. It means doing for another what you would like done for you.

As a block club, there are tools you can use to prevent crime or help you when reporting crime in your neighborhood. They are:

**Neighborhood Map:** Hopefully, your block club has produced a map with all your neighbor's addresses, names and phone numbers on it. When you witness suspicious behavior near a neighbor's house, you will be able to give the Moorhead Police Department dispatcher the exact location of the activity as well as the name and phone number of your neighbor. This could save police officers precious minutes in responding to the call because they will not have to search for the house that is the scene of the suspicious behavior. They will have an exact address to help them.

**Telephone Tree:** Your neighborhood block club telephone tree will be of assistance to let your neighbors know of suspicious activity or crimes that have been occurring in the area. For example, if your car was broken into, you will be able to notify neighbors that they may want to take extra precautions with their vehicle.

**Neighborhood Information Sheet:** On page 18 you will find a Neighborhood Information Sheet which will assist you in keeping track of and recording suspicious behavior in your neighborhood. After the sheet has been completed, you can turn your information over to the police department. The specific information you provide on the sheet will greatly assist in any investigation the police department undertakes.

**Crime Watch Signs:** While it is nearly impossible to track how much crime a crime watch sign *prevents*, it is a well-known fact that most crimes are crimes of opportunity. A criminal is always looking for the fastest and easiest way to commit a crime. If they enter a neighborhood where crime watch signs are present, they may be discouraged from committing their crime. They may be concerned that people who reside in the neighborhood are watching them. They may move on to another location. The process for obtaining these crime watch signs is described on page 12.

## CRIME WATCH SIGNS

One way to let others know there is a neighborhood block club in your neighborhood is to display crime watch signs. For block clubs interested in purchase a crime watch sign, follow these simple steps:

1. Select the desired location for the signs and sketch this location on a piece of paper.  
Keep in mind signs are \$6.00 if placed on an existing pole in your boulevards or \$14.00 if a pole needs to be put in place.
2. Put your request in writing, include payment and mail it to:

Nancy Taralson  
Community Policing Coordinator  
Moorhead Police Department  
P.O. Box 817  
Moorhead, MN 56561



Checks should be made out to the Moorhead Police Department. Please include the name and phone number of someone from your block in case there are questions as to the location of these signs.

3. Your choice of sites will be reviewed.
4. Place a phone call to the Community Policing Coordinator at 299-5143 to follow the progress of your request if you have not had your signs installed after two weeks.
5. Please note that your neighborhood block club must meet a minimum of twice a year to maintain these crime watch signs. In an effort to respect those neighborhoods that *do* have an active neighborhood block club, we do not want crime watch signs displayed in inactive neighborhoods. They will lose their effectiveness at deterring crime if placed in neighborhoods with no neighborhood block club meeting regularly.

## WELCOMING NEW NEIGHBORS

Once you have organized your neighborhood block club, you want to make sure you invite new neighbors to join. It is a good idea to assemble a "welcome to the neighborhood" packet which contains your block map, telephone tree, latest newsletter, crime prevention materials, crime watch stickers, and any other information you feel would be helpful. A representative of the block club can deliver this packet to the new neighbor along with a welcome letter. Below is a sample welcome letter. Remember, face-to-face contact is the best way to get someone involved in your block club, so don't be shy!



*OUR BLOCK CLUB WELCOMES YOU TO THE NEIGHBORHOOD!*

*You will be happy to know that you have moved into an area noted for the caring "good neighborliness" of its residents. Our neighborhood is committed to maintaining or improving the quality of life for everyone that lives here. We have banded together as a neighborhood block club with the aim of making our neighborhood clean, quiet, safe, and friendly – the best in the city!*

*We get together on a regular basis to discuss any issues that arise in the neighborhood or to simply socialize and get to know one another better. We know that neighbors that know one another create a safe neighborhood. We watch for suspicious activity in the neighborhood and report it promptly to the police. We are ready and willing to help each other out in times of need. We care about each other's children and work to create a safe environment for them.*

*We hope you will consider joining our neighborhood block club. We need your help and we want to get to know you better. Someone from the neighborhood block club will be contacting you very soon to answer any questions you may have. We hope you enjoy living in your new neighborhood!*

*Sincerely,  
The Pleasant Valley Block Club*

# NIGHT TO UNITE

On the first Tuesday of August, neighborhoods throughout Moorhead are invited to join forces with thousands of communities nationwide for “**Night to Unite**,” a crime/drug prevention event. Night to Unite is sponsored by the Minnesota Crime Prevention Association is designed to:



- ▣ Heighten crime and drug prevention awareness;
- ▣ Generate support and participation in local anti-crime efforts;
- ▣ Strengthen neighborhood spirit and police-community relations; and
- ▣ Send a message to criminals letting them know neighborhoods are organized and fighting back

From **5 to 10 p.m.** on this day in August, residents in neighborhoods throughout Moorhead are asked to lock their doors, turn on outside lights and spend the evening outside with neighbors and police. Many neighborhoods throughout Moorhead plan a variety of special events such as block parties, street dances, garden tours, cookouts, contests, and youth activities.

Please consider adding to the success of the evening by organizing or participating in the events in your neighborhoods. Help us to “**Give Crime and Drugs a Going Away Party**.” If you have any questions, please feel free to contact the Community Policing Coordinator at 299-5143.

## SPEAKER LIST

The Moorhead Police Department would like to see your neighborhood block club get together at least twice a year. These neighborhood block club meetings are perfect opportunities for citizens to become informed on a variety of topics pertaining to safety and community health and well-being. In order to assist neighborhoods, we have compiled a list of agency speakers who would be pleased to share information with your neighborhood block club. Please consider inviting a representative of one of these agencies to your next block club meeting as a guest speaker.

ORGANIZATION	CONTACT PERSON	TOPIC(S)
A.A.R.P <a href="http://www.AARP.org">www.AARP.org</a>	Donna Chalimonczyk 287-2065	Issues for people over 55
American Red Cross	233-8040	CPR class (2 hours) Flood Mitigation
Clay County Crime Victim Advocacy	Shelly Carlson 299-5035	Crime victim rights Crime victim services
Clay County Historical Society	Mark Peihl 233-4602	History of the Red River Valley Silent films of Moorhead Flood of 1897
Clay County Restorative Justice Program	Shelly Carlson 299-5035	Community response to crime Volunteer opportunities

ORGANIZATION	CONTACT PERSON	TOPIC(S)
Cultural Diversity Project	Yoke-Sim Gunaratne 526-3000	General diversity education Undoing prejudice Dismantling racism Housing and Employment
Minnesota Extension Service	299-5020	Positive parenting Nutrition education First time homeowner information Many, many other topics - contact them for a list
Moorhead Fire Department	Rich Duysen 299-5248	Fire prevention Fire extinguisher training
Moorhead Healthy Community Initiative	299-KIDS	What neighborhoods can do to help their kids
Moorhead Police Department	Nancy Taralson 299-5143	D.A.R.E. G.R.E.A.T. Canine demonstrations Many crime prevention and personal safety topics

ORGANIZATION	CONTACT PERSON	TOPIC(S)
Rape & Abuse Crisis Center	293-7273	Rape prevention Impact of domestic violence on kids Date rape Child abuse
Riverkeepers	Christine Holland 235-2895	Paint the Drain program Adoption programs Constructing duck houses
Safe Kids Coalition	234-SAFE	Safety issues for children - bike, gun and toy safety

**NEIGHBORHOOD INFORMATION SHEET** (Provide as much information as you can)

ADDRESS OF CONCERN:

APARTMENT #

PEOPLE WHO LIVE THERE: (Include children)

NAME	<input type="checkbox"/> Male <input type="checkbox"/> Female	Race	Age	Height	Weight
NAME	<input type="checkbox"/> Male <input type="checkbox"/> Female	Race	Age	Height	Weight
NAME	<input type="checkbox"/> Male <input type="checkbox"/> Female	Race	Age	Height	Weight
NAME	<input type="checkbox"/> Male <input type="checkbox"/> Female	Race	Age	Height	Weight

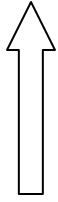
DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY

DATE/TIME	LOCATION OF ACTIVITY (FRONT, BACK, STREET, ETC.)	DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY	DESCRIPTION OF VEHICLES (plate #, make & year, color)	DESCRIPTION OF INDIVIDUALS INVOLVED (name, sex, race, height, weight, age, clothing)

Send information to: Nancy Taralson, Community Policing Coordinator, Moorhead Police Department, 804 13<sup>th</sup> St. N., Moorhead, MN 56560, 218-299-5143

NAME:  
ADDRESS/HOUSE COLOR:  
PHONE:

NAME:  
ADDRESS/HOUSE COLOR:  
PHONE:



North

### STREET NAME

### SAMPLE NEIGHBORHOOD MAP

NAME:  
ADDRESS/HOUSE COLOR:  
PHONE:

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# TELEPHONE TREE (Sample)



Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
Phone: \_\_\_\_\_



Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
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Phone: \_\_\_\_\_



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## HELPFUL WEBSITES



[www.moorheadpolice.com](http://www.moorheadpolice.com) : Lot of information about events and programs

[www.neighborhoodlink.com](http://www.neighborhoodlink.com) : Create a free neighborhood website

[www.usaonwatch.org/resource/publications.aspx](http://www.usaonwatch.org/resource/publications.aspx): Publication library full of information on helping make your block club successful

[www.ncpc.org](http://www.ncpc.org): National Crime Prevention Council - Lots of crime prevention information

<http://comm-org.wisc.edu/papers97/beckwith.htm> Primer on community organizing

[http://ctb.ku.edu/en/tablecontents/sub\\_section\\_main\\_1053.htm](http://ctb.ku.edu/en/tablecontents/sub_section_main_1053.htm) Community organizing toolbox

[www.pps.org](http://www.pps.org) : Project for Public Spaces - How to create great public spaces

[www.bettertogether.org/stories.htm](http://www.bettertogether.org/stories.htm) : Importance of community and working as a group to problem solve

<http://www.sustainable.org/creating/civic.html> : Reading list on civic engagement

These links are current as of 11/17/09

## "Someone Ought To..."

*by Mike Guthrie, Southeast Area Commander, Fresno, California*

*Each night as we watch the "news at six"  
And read the daily rag,  
We ponder just how bad things seem  
And our hope begins to sag.*

*It never used to be this way,  
The "good ole days" are fact.  
What has happened to our land?  
"Someone" has got to act!*

*Day after day, week after week  
Solutions we strive to find,  
But usually the conclusions reached  
Leave us in tighter bind.*

*The answers we hear all boil down  
To the same repeated sound,  
That "someone" ought to do something,  
But that "someone" can't be found.*

*To really make a difference,  
And return to the way things were,  
We all must look inside ourselves,  
A bright future to ensure.*

*Until our finger pointing  
Is directed inwardly,  
We never will quite understand  
That "someone" else is me.*

*So decide to freely give yourself  
To help your neighbor out,  
If you wait for "someone" else to act,  
Our future is in doubt.*

