

Starting a neighbourhood association



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Great neighbourhoods start with you.



How to reach us

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E-NEWS UPDATES

Visit waterloo.ca/subscribe and sign up to receive monthly updates on all things neighbourhoods. Waterloo Neighbourhoods e-newsletter includes information about neighbourhood projects, grants, ideas, and what's happening.

ACCESSIBLE FORMATS

This material is available in alternative accessible format upon request. Please contact us a minimum of 3-5 business days before it is required.

About this guide

Whether you are beginning to build connections with neighbours, or are a long-term member of a neighbourhood group, this guide provides important details on starting a neighbourhood association in your area. Highlights include:

- information on different ways to get involved in Waterloo neighbourhoods;
- the process of developing and managing a group of interested neighbours; and,
- important details on how to become an affiliated neighbourhood association.

Although this guide is organized in six steps - it is important to note that your group may progress through steps in different ways and on different timelines! To chat about your unique group and the process of becoming an affiliated neighbourhood association, we encourage you to reach out to neighbourhoods@waterloo.ca to connect with the neighbourhoods team.

No matter where you are on your journey to developing a neighbourhood association, this guide is designed to help. Some readers may be ready to establish an affiliated neighbourhood association (jump to [step four](#)) and some may be curious about getting involved in neighbourhoods and developing a group of neighbours (start at [step one](#)).



Step 1: Getting involved in Waterloo neighbourhoods

If you are passionate about building neighbourhood connections, there are a number of ways to get involved. This section provides some great places to start.

BE NEIGHBOURLY

Every neighbourhood connection starts with a friendly hello! Begin building positive relationships by being a kind, helpful, and considerate neighbour. If you're not sure where to start, check out the list below for some helpful ideas:

- Smile and say hello! Friendly greetings help cultivate connections and make neighbours feel welcome.

- Drop off baked goods or a home cooked meal. Consider dietary restrictions and include a list of ingredients just to be safe.
- Help a neighbour with snow clearing or yard work. Keep an eye out for neighbours that may need extra assistance and offer to help.
- Check on neighbours in need. Reach out and assist those who may be isolated or needing support, especially vulnerable neighbours. It might be helpful to refer neighbours to community supports and/or help them to access meaningful care.
- Share a sense of local pride and keep your street clean or neighbourhood looking welcoming.
- Be considerate and follow neighbourhood etiquette. Communicating with neighbours and maintaining your property are good places to start.

For more inspiration, check out the [Being Neighbourly guide](#).

BECOME A BLOCK CONNECTOR

Block connectors are neighbourhood leaders that are committed to enhancing connections between neighbours. These leaders support community building by sharing information, supporting fellow-neighbours, and creating opportunities for neighbourhood connections in good and challenging times.

Block connectors must be able to participate in an orientation session, be willing to contribute 3-4 hours per month, and value diversity and relationship building. Additionally, leaders must be eager to develop connections around their home and work with staff to coordinate these in a safe and appropriate way.

For more information about the block connector program and details on how to apply online, visit the [Block Connector webpage](#).

APPLY FOR FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

There are City of Waterloo [funding opportunities](#) to support neighbourhood projects and events.

Mini Grants for Neighbours are designed to support Waterloo residents working independently or collaboratively to foster neighbourhood cohesion. Eligible projects may receive up to \$300 in cash or in-kind support. Apply anytime by reaching out to neighbourhoods@waterloo.ca with your idea to enhance neighbourhood connection.

The Neighbourhood Fund aims to support larger, place-making projects and events that are inclusive and bring neighbours together. Groups of two or more neighbours may apply for up to \$7500 in funding. For more information on the fund including, eligibility, deadlines, and the application, visit the [Neighbourhood Fund webpage](#).

START VOLUNTEERING IN YOUR NEIGHBOURHOOD

There are many opportunities to volunteer in neighbourhoods. Check out this list of possible volunteer opportunities:

- Become an outdoor rink volunteer. Outdoor rink volunteers help maintain community rinks throughout the winter months. If you are interested in volunteering, reach out to waterloorinks@waterloo.ca for more information.
- Join Waterloo's Pollinator Working Group. This environmental working group consists of adult volunteers that work with city staff to provide educational and park stewardship activities relating to native pollinators and their habitat. For more information on this position, check out the [pollinator working group](#) details.
- Volunteer at one of Waterloo's community gardens. For more information on garden locations and program details, visit the [community garden webpage](#).
- Volunteer with other environment-focused community groups. Visit the [community programs in parks webpage](#) for details on other volunteer opportunities.
- Connect with your local block connector, neighbourhood group, or association, to chat about volunteer opportunities they have available. Whether it's setting up an event or delivering flyers, there is often work to be done!

Step 2: Start planning opportunities for neighbourhood connections

Once you have made the decision to become involved in your neighbourhood, it's time to start thinking about ways to build connections. This section provides some general tips and inspiration for neighbourhood events, projects, and communications.

EVENTS

Neighbourhood-wide events are great ways to meet people that live nearby and develop lasting relationships. Work independently or collaboratively with neighbours to plan events for your neighbourhood. Some potential options may include:

- neighbourhood BBQ, corn roast, or potluck
- neighbourhood concert or street party
- community skating day and winter carnival
- sports game or tournament
- fun run or walk
- charity or fundraising event
- ice cream social
- food truck event
- movie night
- crafting event (paint night, DIY bird feeder, pottery class)
- fun group workshop or learning activity (cooking class, gardening workshop)

There are so many other creative ways to bring neighbours together too. Whatever you choose for an event, prioritize community engagement, inclusivity, and accessibility during planning. For more information on planning inclusive gatherings, check out the [Supporting and Encouraging an Inclusive Community guide](#).



Don't forget- the City of Waterloo offers funds to support neighbourhood connection opportunities, check out [step one](#) for more details. To chat about your event or project idea, reach out to neighbourhoods@waterloo.ca.

PROJECTS

Neighbourhood projects help enhance connection and interaction amongst neighbours. Projects can be short-term or long-term, simple or complex, and range from free to costly. There are many different types of neighbourhood projects, check out the list below for inspiration:

(I) Placemaking projects are about creating a sense of place and shared identity within your neighbourhood. Some examples include:

- public art (murals, painted walkways, and other art installations)
- neighbourhood welcome signs
- community benches
- park and playground enhancements

(2) Safety projects are designed to enhance the safety and well-being of neighbourhood spaces. Examples of safety projects may include:

- traffic calming initiatives
- snow-shovelling programs
- healthy living workshops

(3) Environmental projects preserve and enhance the neighbourhood environment. Examples could include:

- resource sharing initiatives (tool lending, produce sharing)
- neighbourhood clean-up events
- paint or fix-up projects where neighbours connect to repair and revive old household items

(4) Communication projects aim to enhance connection and information sharing between neighbours. Some examples of communication projects may include:

- developing a newsletter
- adding a community message board in a local park
- creating a neighbourhood group on social media

Get creative and think of projects that could help build connections, support recreation, and promote the overall well-being of your neighbourhood. If you have questions about your project idea or need funding, reach out to neighbourhoods@waterloo.ca to discuss it.

COMMUNICATION

Whether you are organizing a meeting with your neighbours, or planning an event or project, communication is key! There are many ways to get the word out. This list provides some inspiration:

- Newsletters – consider writing a monthly or quarterly neighbourhood newsletter. This will keep all neighbourhood residents informed about news, projects, and fun upcoming events. Send this newsletter via email, or print and distribute.
- Print bulletins, notices, pamphlets, posters, postcards, flyers, or door hangers - distribute to neighbours or post in local businesses or common areas of multi-residential spaces (with permission).
- Email and phone – develop an email chain to communicate with neighbours. Easily send out meeting details, and event and project information. Consider using a tool like a [Listserv](#) to help manage email lists.

- Facebook – develop a neighbourhood Facebook group to provide important updates quickly and enhance connections between neighbours. Online groups can be a great place to share recommendations, provide supports, and encourage relationship building. For tips on establishing and moderating an online community, check out the [Managing a Neighbourhood Facebook Group guide](#).

Other social media – consider using other forms of social media such as TikTok, Instagram, and Next Door. These platforms support the sharing of information and promote community building.

In addition to communicating, strive to consult with community members when possible. Engaging, through feedback, surveys, and meetings, is an effective way to understand what projects and events your neighbours would like to see in nearby spaces. If your group is planning to host a summer event, send out a quick survey or do a poll on social media, to see what type of event neighbours would prefer. Consultation helps to ensure your group is being reflective of the interests of neighbours and ultimately will increase participation and engagement in your initiatives.



Step 3: Develop a group of interested neighbours

The more the merrier! Work alongside like-minded neighbours to plan neighbourhood events and projects. This section highlights some important things to consider when you begin working together as a group.



Every group is different! While some neighbours may start planning events independently and then transition to group work, others may establish group connections early and plan events together.

CREATE A GROUP CHAT

Creating a group chat is helpful for both new and existing groups. Having a common space to communicate helps to support group connections and facilitates event and project planning. Work

together to discuss what platform would be best for your group (some popular examples include Messenger, Google Teams, Slack, or WhatsApp). Use your chat to connect, share stories, as well as plan and organize group meetings. Strong communication supports group bonding and organization.

A group chat might not be the perfect solution for your group. Take time to discuss what form of communication works best for all members.



ESTABLISH NEIGHBOURHOOD BOUNDARIES

When creating your neighbourhood group, determining geographic boundaries is essential.

Boundaries determine your membership, provide a scope for initiatives, and support the development of a neighbourhood identity. To establish geographic boundaries, consider the following:

- Collaborate with community members to determine boundaries that make sense. Think about unique landmarks, historical divisions, major roads, natural features, and zoning, among other things.
- Check out other neighbourhood associations and groups to see how your neighbourhood may fit on the entire [map of Waterloo neighbourhoods](#). Make sure your proposed area does not overlap with existing neighbourhood boundaries and that no small sections exist between boundaries nearby. Taking time and care with this process ensures no one feels left out or confused about the place they call home.
- Consider the size and number of residences within your proposed area. Make sure the size and population is manageable for your group to reach out to and include in events. If your group is relatively small, taking on a large area may be difficult and overwhelming. When deciding on group boundaries, connect with neighbourhoods@waterloo.ca. The neighbourhoods team will help you review your proposed boundaries.



Are you interested in finding out how many homes are in your neighbourhood? Try this! Visit the [City of Waterloo map](#) and toggle to find your neighbourhood boundaries (streets, cross streets, etc.) Click the “I want to” button, and select “Find data on the map” from the drop down menu. Draw a rectangle over your neighbourhood. On the left hand side, a legend will appear with information on your specified rectangle. Look at the “address points” value for an estimate of the number of houses in your area!

- If your neighbourhood does not already have a name, develop a descriptive name for your space. Ensure community support by engaging in a collaborative naming process. There are many ways to promote community engagement in neighbourhood naming: invite neighbours to submit names, host a naming contest, have a neighbourhood-wide vote, and hold an open meeting to discuss options.



When naming your neighbourhood, ensure you are being inclusive and thoughtful of all neighbours in your space. Historically, the practice of naming places in Canada has caused significant and ongoing harm to equity-deserving groups. To be conscious of this damaging practice, groups are encouraged to avoid naming spaces after historical figures (like business owners, politicians, religious leaders, military personnel, etc.). Further, when selecting a name, groups are encouraged to perform thoughtful research and community consultation to ensure widespread support for the new name.

- Once your name is developed, you may want to work with a local artist or talented neighbour to develop a logo to represent your neighbourhood. It's important to ensure community support for the image. To do this, consider voting on designs, having a logo creation contest, or maybe developing fun neighbourhood swag (hat, mugs, t-shirts with logo).

HOST MEETINGS

Meetings help support group operations - they provide time to connect with neighbours, develop positive relationships, brainstorm, and plan opportunities for recreation and connection in the neighbourhood. Meetings may be in-person at a specific venue, around a kitchen table, or over a video-conferencing platform – the formality of your meetings will depend on your group and the type of meeting you are hosting.

Use the [Gathering Spaces Asset Map](#) to find spaces to host meetings and events. Make sure the space is accessible for all group members.



To host successful meetings, consider the following tips:

- Develop agendas to keep the conversation on target and share these in advance.
- Book or use an accessible venue, preferably in your neighbourhood or close by.
- Assign a chairperson to manage the discussion and ensure the agenda is followed.
- Assign a note taker to prepare meeting minutes and keep track of ideas and comments made throughout the meeting.
- Consider inviting special guests to lead discussions on relevant issues.
- Perform territorial and land acknowledgements at the beginning of all meetings.



Performing territorial and land acknowledgements support reconciliation and recognize the deep and enduring presence of Indigenous people and their contributions to our communities. Take time at the beginning of meetings to perform acknowledgements and reflect as a group. For more information on this practice and helpful resources, visit [Know the Land Territories Campaign website](#).

- Make sure meetings are organized, brief, and productive.
- Budget time for questions and discussion at the end of every meeting.
- Consider incorporating a fun social element at the end of your meetings. This could include:
 - icebreakers,
 - games,
 - food and drinks, and/or
 - time for socialization and networking.



If including food and beverages at your meetings, consider dietary restrictions and offer alternatives for all attendees!

Step 4: Working with your neighbourhood group

As your group continues to grow and plan more opportunities for neighbourhood connections and recreation, it may be helpful to consider ways to organize and manage your group's activities. This section of the guide is designed to serve as a guide for group discussions and provide ideas to get you thinking about organization (and potentially affiliation – see [step five](#)), such as:

- tracking finances,
- recording meeting minutes, and
- developing methods for group governance.

Groups will adopt different solutions to manage their operations. It is important to be flexible and open - work together as a group to discuss what works best for everyone and if something isn't working, collaborate to make changes.



NAMING YOUR GROUP

A group name provides a common identity and helps promote your group to the neighbourhood! Neighbourhood groups will often identify with the name of the space they are working in. If you have established a neighbourhood name (refer back to [step three](#)), this would be a great opportunity to start using it.

The City of Waterloo defines groups in different ways. Check out the definitions below:

Neighbourhood or community association: These groups work collaboratively with the City of Waterloo in a formal partnership as an affiliate to foster neighbourhood connections and create opportunities for recreation. For more information on affiliated neighbourhood associations, visit [step five](#).

Homes association: These groups also work to foster neighbourhood connections and create opportunities for recreation. Many associations were initiated by covenants/agreements created by land developers at the time the neighbourhood was built. These agreements often include pools, basketball, and tennis courts operated and maintained by area residents.

Neighbourhood group: These groups are another example of residents working as a neighbourhood to foster connections and create opportunities for recreation. These groups are not formally affiliated with the City of Waterloo but can still access support from the city in ways that are more informal such as grants.

Block Connectors: Block connectors are neighbourhood leaders that work independently or collaboratively with other connectors to plan opportunities for neighbourhood connections. They

typically work within a smaller geographic area than a neighbourhood association would, or work within a sub area of a larger neighbourhood. For more information on block connectors, refer to [step one](#).

Although these definitions help the City classify different groups, your group is welcome to select whatever name you wish! For name ideas, check out the list of neighbourhood associations, homes associations, and neighbourhood groups on the [neighbourhoods website](#). You will notice that some neighbourhood groups refer to themselves as communities, organizations, neighbourhood associations, or homes associations. Naming your group is flexible and you are not confined to the City of Waterloo's categories.

If you want to discuss your group name, reach out to neighbourhoods@waterloo.ca.

ASSIGNING ROLES

Up until now, your group is likely operating without clear, established roles; some group members may lead one project, while someone else may spearhead another. To provide structure, consider creating designated roles and establishing a board to lead the group. The table below outlines some key roles and responsibilities that you may benefit your board.

Position	Responsibilities
Chair	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Key leader of the group• Often involved in ongoing administration• Runs meetings
Vice-Chair	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Performs chair's duties when this individual is absent• Often coordinates committee connections and reports status to the Board• Assists with duties of the Chair
Secretary	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Maintains the records of the association including contact information of members• Takes minutes of meetings• Shares written minutes with the Board and other outlets• Often receives correspondence addressed to the association and shares with appropriate members
Treasurer	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Keeps track of all expenses• Presents a report each meeting• Organizes banking needs• Obtains signatures for cheques



Although these roles are common, additional or alternative roles may be more fitting for your group. Collaborate to determine what positions will work best.

Make sure board members are selected in a fair and equitable way. Consider having an election for each position. The election may be an informal vote at a meeting or a more formal process with nominations in the community, whatever makes sense for your group.

COMMITTEES

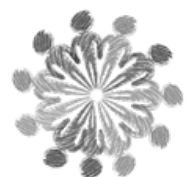
In addition to the board, it may be helpful to establish committees to handle certain initiatives and activities. Dividing your group into committees can help enhance organization, share the workload, and ensure members are working on topics they are interested in.

Common committees include:

- Special events – plans and manages major events
- Fundraising – organises and manages fundraising events and activities
- Welcoming – prepares welcome packages and greets new neighbours that join the area
- Volunteer – recruits, coordinates, recognizes and works to retain volunteers
- Communications – manages group communications, consultation, and outreach (social media, website, newsletters, and more)

These committees are a few common examples. Work together as a group to develop committees that work well for your unique group.

When recruiting volunteers and electing leaders, strive for a diverse membership of neighbours. Having a diverse team helps ensure events and projects are inclusive and equitable for all neighbours. For more information, check out the [Supporting and Encouraging an Inclusive Community guide](#).



TAKING MEETING MINUTES

Meeting minutes keep track of all the important discussions and votes at group meetings; they serve as a record for decision-making, issues discussed, and the general business of the group. Recording meeting minutes can also help inform group members that were unable to attend.

Minutes may be as detailed or basic as needed. It is good practice to record the following information in your minutes:

- date, time, and meeting location,
- purpose of the meeting,
- name of attendees and people that were unable to attend,
- agenda items,
- decisions made,
- action items,
- details for follow-up meetings, and
- next meeting date.

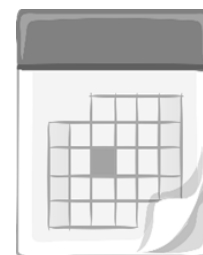


Assign one group member to prepare meeting minutes. Store the files in a common space that is accessible for all group members (such as a Google Drive or Dropbox).

PLANNING REGULAR MEETINGS

Regular meetings help support your groups' operations. To maximize attendance, consult group members to determine what dates and times are preferable for meetings. Another helpful practice, tentatively schedule your next meeting date/time at the end of your meetings. For more tips on hosting effective meetings, refer back to [step three](#).

The occurrence of meetings may change depending on your group's availability and the activities that you have planned. For example, you may find that monthly meetings in the fall make sense for your group as you plan and deliver a number of neighbourhood events from September – December. The number and length of your meetings is flexible. However, if you are considering becoming an affiliated Neighbourhood Association (outlined in [step five](#)), quarterly meetings are required. If this is something your group is considering, it may be good to start this habit early!



HOSTING AN ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING (AGM)

Annual General Meetings (AGMs) are held once a year for your group. At these meetings, groups will update members of the neighborhood on the successes and challenges from the previous year and discuss plans for the coming year. Most AGM agendas will focus on reviewing financial reports, past and future plans, discussing changes to rules (where applicable), and electing new leadership and board members. A fun bonus – these meetings often incorporate some form of celebration and social element at the end.



AGMs are required for affiliated Neighbourhood Associations (see [step five](#)). Although informal neighbourhood groups aren't required to host AGMs, these meetings provide a great opportunity to connect, chat about successes and areas for improvement, and plan for the next year!

MANAGING VOLUNTEERS

As your neighbourhood activities grow, there will be larger neighbourhood events and projects to lead. To support the core group of leaders taking on tasks, having volunteers will be helpful! Brainstorm ways to recruit and retain volunteers to help deliver events, coordinate projects, and spread the word about your group and its work. Things to consider when recruiting new volunteers:

- Establish a way to screen potential volunteers. If your volunteers are working with children or vulnerable populations, obtaining vulnerable sector checks and reference checks are recommended.
- When recruiting volunteers, reach out to local students. Secondary school students are often looking for volunteer opportunities to fulfill graduation requirements.
- Offer flexible volunteer opportunities to cater to busy schedules. Volunteers appreciate flexible time commitments.
- Consider friends in the neighbourhood that may be willing to help. Ask your friends to ask their neighbourhood friends! Word of mouth can be an effective way to recruit volunteers.
- Spread the word to neighbours you bump into at neighbourhood spaces - walking the dog, using the playground, enjoying a trail, and other activities – these are great opportunities to talk about the neighbourhood and engage passionate people.
- Post volunteer opportunities on your group's website, social media page, or message board.

- Aim to engage a diverse set of neighbours with a variety of interests and skills. Having neighbours engaged in different ways helps ensure activities are considered for various ages, cultures, abilities, interests, skills, and more.
- Make sure the sign-up process is clear for prospective volunteers. If the process is too confusing or lengthy, applicants may become disinterested.

To retain volunteers, prioritize their experience and make sure to show your appreciation. Good practices to promote volunteer retention may include:

- Excellent communication with volunteers. Respond promptly to inquiries, be clear about mutual expectations, and send reminders about commitments and upcoming events.
- Thank volunteers with an email, postcard, or small treat.
- Make sure to provide volunteers with food and beverages while completing the project or helping at an event that extends through typical meal times.
- Support different skillsets to help everyone find a role. Engage neighbours in topics and projects that interest them and allow them to use their unique talents. This will help promote retention and create a more vibrant group.

TRACKING FINANCES

As your group begins organizing more neighbourhood events and projects, more money will be handled. This means that it is important to monitor group finances and establish ways to manage revenue and expenses. While the amounts of money and the complexity of group finances may differ, smart financial management includes:

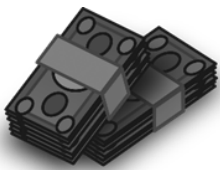
- Establish a bank account for the neighbourhood group. Shop around with different banks and credit unions to find the account that works for the needs of the group. When comparing alternatives, consider:
 - monthly banking fees,
 - number of withdrawals,
 - other fees, and
 - minimum account balance

Many banks and credit unions offer accounts specifically for small community groups and local non-profit organizations.

- [Community Account](#) – LIBRO Credit Union
- [Scotia Community Bank Plan](#) – Scotia Bank
- [The BMO Community Account](#) - BMO
- [Royal Business Community Account](#) – RBC
- [Community/Not-for-Profit Banking Plan](#) – TD
- [Community/Not-for-Profit](#) – Meridian Credit Union



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- Establish a system for recording revenue and expenses, such as submitting receipts, and make sure all members understand the process. Assigning a treasurer to manage and oversee this process helps to ensure consistent record keeping.
 - Consider creating categories for revenues and expenses, such as grants, community gardens, winter carnival, and printing. This will help coordinate good record keeping.
 - Having two or three group members with signing authority for cheques is a good practice. Two members should sign off on each item.
 - Create a spreadsheet to track revenue and expenses. Excel, Google Sheets, and Numbers provide helpful templates to assist with this.
 - Develop a budget for each project, program, and event. Make sure budgets are reasonable and within the financial realities of the group. After completing the project or event, review the budget and compare it to the actual cost. If there are major discrepancies, make note of these. This will help with preparing accurate budgets in the future.



Financial management is a key to success! If you are thinking about becoming an affiliated neighbourhood association, financial reporting is required on a quarterly basis. Getting in this habit now, may help your group down the road.

SETTING GROUP GOALS

Creating goals helps to provide direction and guide planning. Reviewing goals on a regular basis helps ensure decision-making is true to values and priorities.

Once goals are set, think about the actions needed to reach them. This could resemble a formal strategy/work plan or be a simple brainstorming session where the group identifies a list of actions (projects, events, initiatives) to pursue. Check out this example below:

Goal	Action Items
Make our neighbourhood more connected and engaged!	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a neighbourhood Facebook group for community members to connect, develop relationships, and share information • Create a quarterly newsletter to email to neighbours • Apply for funding to add a neighbourhood message board to the community park.

HANDLING GROUP CONFLICT

Conflict and differences of opinion are natural parts of group work. This section provides some helpful tips for preventing and managing conflict within neighbourhood groups.

- Be proactive and develop a group handbook or constitution that outlines the rules of operation, how decisions will be made, and ways to handle conflict. Having a process in place will help facilitate decision-making and address issues as they arise.
- Assign clear roles and create position descriptions for each position. This will prevent confusion and accountabilities.
- Foster open, honest, and clear communication among the group. Encourage everyone to voice concerns in a polite and constructive way.
- Focus on tone, listening, timing, and resolutions, when resolving conflicts. Encourage group members to speak in a relaxed and calm manner, becoming agitated and loud can escalate a situation.
- Focus on listening and try to understand the other parties' opinions and actions. Make sure the time and space is conducive to having open and honest discussions. For example, rather than addressing the conflict in the middle of a meeting, connect with both parties after the meeting in a quiet and calm environment. Although it can be tempting to focus on blame, work together to determine a resolution.

Conflict is normal, especially for new groups. Forming, storming, norming, performing, and adjourning are the typical phases that groups work through when planning projects and events. 'Storming' helps everyone explore each others working styles and personalities. For more information on group formation stages, check out this [helpful article and video](#).



If a conflict between group members persists and begins to affect neighbourhood work, or the group's experience, consider engaging in professional mediation. Community Justice Initiatives (CJI) is a local organization that emphasizes restorative justice and provides conflict coaching and mediation. For more information on their services, visit [CJI's Program Page](#).

SETTING RULES AND GROUP GOVERNANCE

To govern group actions and reduce disputes, establishing a constitution or handbook is a helpful practice. Handbooks or constitutions may include:

- the name of the association, its boundaries, and general mission and objective,
- board governance and roles,
- terms for board members and process for filling vacancies,
- definition of membership,
- committees and structure,
- meetings (number of meetings and annual general meeting),
- decision-making, voting, and quorum,
- process of handling disputes within the group,
- fees, and
- record keeping.

For an example of neighbourhood constitutions and handbooks, contact the [neighbourhoods team](#).

EVALUATING BOUNDARIES

If you are considering becoming an affiliated neighbourhood association, it is a great opportunity to reflect on your neighbourhood boundaries (established in [step three](#)) and make any changes.

When evaluating your neighbourhood boundaries consider land-use planning:

- Are there new multi-unit buildings being built?
- Are there new subdivisions or developments planned within your group's boundaries or along the borders?

Consider how planned growth may influence your group and activities. For information on planning in Waterloo and tips for getting involved in the process, check out the [Understanding Urban Planning in Waterloo guide](#).



If you are interested in connecting with neighbours in multi-unit buildings, check out the [Creating Connections in Multi-Unit Buildings guide](#).

Step 5: Establishing an affiliated neighbourhood association

After operating as a successful neighbourhood group, you may consider taking the next step and becoming an affiliated neighbourhood association. To become an affiliated neighbourhood association (NA), there are certain requirements to meet. Specifically your group must:

- be in operation for five or more years,
- prepare and take regular meeting minutes,
- maintain financial records (track income and expenses),
- have a board of elected members,
- host annual general meetings (AGMs),
- have quarterly meetings (at a minimum), and
- establish annual plans and goals to guide your work.

For more details on these responsibilities, review [step four](#) above.

If your neighbourhood group is interested in affiliation, but is unsure all of the requirements are met, reach out to neighbourhoods@waterloo.ca to discuss your unique situation.



BENEFITS OF BECOMING AN AFFILIATED NEIGHBOURHOOD ASSOCIATION

There are many reasons a neighbourhood group may want to become affiliated. Here are some benefits to consider:

- (1) Established NA's are eligible to receive foundational operating funds from the City of Waterloo to support their work.
- (2) Access to support from City staff to assist with volunteer management, risk management, and communication. Staff can also help groups access community resources and form partnerships.
- (3) Access to in-kind resources including pop-up tents for events, booking credit and discounts, liability insurance through the City, volunteer recognition, workshops, printing, and membership with Volunteer Waterloo Region.

Overall, NAs support connected and engaged residents. When your neighbourhood is more connected and engaged, residents tend to see greater benefits outside of the association that impact everyday life such as increased neighbourhood safety, improved social connectedness, and strengthened support networks.

BECOMING AN AFFILIATED NEIGHBOURHOOD ASSOCIATION

If a group is interested in becoming an affiliated neighbourhood association, basic steps to affiliation include:

- (1) Appoint a committed leader to coordinate the affiliation process and develop a core group of neighbours that are committed to the neighbourhood association.
- (2) Refer to [step four](#) in this guide and review some of the recommended ways to manage and organize your groups operations.
- (3) Contact the neighbourhoods@waterloo.ca to discuss your group and the affiliation process. At this meeting, a staff liaison will explain the affiliation process and provide tips for your group.
- (4) Review the [Affiliation Policy](#) details and complete and Affiliation application. Be prepared to provide the neighbourhoods team with important documents, including:
 - a copy of the minutes from your most recent group meeting,
 - a copy of your financial statements, and
 - the names and contact information of your group members.
- (5) Upon approval, work with a staff liaison to sign an affiliation service agreement. The service agreement will list the responsibilities of your association and the City.

City staff are here to help with this process, reach out to the [neighbourhoods team](#) to chat.

Step 6: Operating as an affiliated neighbourhood association

Fast forward to when you have signed your service agreement and are now an affiliated neighbourhood association with the City of Waterloo. This section provides guidance for managing your newly affiliated NA.

ADHERE TO SERVICE AGREEMENT RESPONSIBILITIES

Service agreements will outline responsibilities for your affiliated neighbourhood association:

- A staff liaison will attend meetings for support.
- Continue to host meetings quarterly, at minimum, or as often as your group requires. Record minutes at each meeting.
- Host an AGM.
- Submit financial reports on a quarterly basis or at meetings.

These processes help the group remain accountable. Requirements also help develop an ongoing relationship and partnership between your group and the City of Waterloo. Your staff liaison at the City will help connect you to resources and will attend the majority group meetings for support.

ADDRESSING CHALLENGES

After developing your Neighbourhood Association, it's important to manage challenges that arise. Consider these tips for how to address them:

- (1) Volunteer engagement is important for all voluntary organizations. Issues with engagement arise due to busy schedules, other commitments, and changing volunteer attitudes. The affiliation process sets out responsibilities- meeting these may be challenging if volunteers are limited. Talk to your staff liaison about ways to remove barriers to participation for those interested in volunteering with the association.
- (2) Affiliates are always expected to do their best to manage risks to ensure safe and inclusive programs. Sometimes, this means taking extra steps and precautions to ensure participants feel comfortable. Rules and regulations also guide some areas of risk management. It can sometimes feel challenging to follow these when the grassroots nature of neighbourhood connection does not often consider risk management at the forefront. Talk to you staff liaison well in advance of plans to help work through these concerns early on in the planning process.

- (3) Differences in opinions. Conflict and difference of opinion often occur in-group settings. To mitigate issues, establish clear rules and guidelines for behaviour in the group. Also, make sure to foster a fun, inclusive, and supportive environment. You want to ensure that members are comfortable sharing their opinions and working together to find the ideal solution.

CONNECT WITH US

As shared throughout this document, the [neighbourhoods team](#) is here to help! Don't hesitate to reach out along any stage of your journey. Thanks for connecting with your neighbours and making great neighbourhood opportunities come to life!