

## Neighborhood Coalition Core Services

What are Portland neighborhoods? They are people in the places where they live and do business, people who are inspired to come together to improve the physical and social health of these communities.

We believe in an equal right to participate, and we work to invite everyone to the table. Neighborhood associations are designed to give any willing volunteer a voice, and neighborhood offices are there to support the individuals and the Associations in fulfilling their visions for the places where they live and do business.

Together, volunteers and staff provide an opportunity for community members to assemble and promote their views, to plan and engage in community projects, and to create and support new groups in response to community needs.

### **Volunteer Efforts**

Neighborhood volunteers fight crime, plan for improved streets, parks, schools, and better housing and development.

Neighborhood volunteers build trails and clean up the urban and natural environment. Neighborhood associations and or coalitions host community events--sometimes fun, sometimes hard-working, often both.

These projects and events are as varied and diverse as the needs and imagination of the people who live in each neighborhood, but they all contribute in engaging community members to improve the life and well being of people in the place they live.

After this introduction to our basic, our core services, you will hear more specifics about these efforts from representatives of each of the neighborhood offices.

A brief word about Land Use: Land use is by no means the majority of what volunteers do, but it is the issue around which local volunteers first organized to have a voice in government. The right to participate in land use decisions was supported by a sweeping state law which secures the right of community members to have a voice in deciding what their neighborhood looks like.

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### **Services**

Each Coalition Office offers a range of services based on the needs of their area, not only supporting the recognized neighborhood associations within their geographic area, but providing advice and assistance to individual community members. We serve as a clearinghouse for information, assisting people to find everything from street cleaning schedules to opportunities to engage the city on matters of public policy.

### Community Involvement/Public Engagement

While volunteers are very generous with their time and commitment, there are never enough of them—and there are many people who are not yet aware that neighborhood involvement offers an opportunity to have their voices heard.

The two activities at the core of our work are outreach and communication. Much of the work we do connects people to people, resources and services.

The neighborhood offices publish or assist with the publication of coalition wide and/or individual neighborhood newsletters. We manage and publish calendars of events and meetings. Collectively the neighborhood offices distribute nearly 70,000 newsletters every month.

Examples of this are the SW Neighborhood News, a coalition-wide newsletter which is mailed monthly by request to over 10,000 households, and the Concordia News, a neighborhood newspaper delivered to 4,000 resident addresses monthly. These leverage the funds from ONI—by a factor of ten, in Concordia—and nurture relationships with the business community which advertises locally.

Coalitions and neighborhoods also maintain a variety of electronic discussion and notification groups and websites, to provide ongoing current information, updates and announcements to the community and membership.

### Support to Community Members

When you contact us, we don't ask for any proof of membership or ID: we serve the entire community. We provide information about neighborhood projects and city programs, and provide information and advice on topics ranging from leaf removal to public transportation policy. The neighborhood offices answer about 12,000 requests for assistance monthly.

Help for projects is available—neighborhood offices help volunteers plan and implement hundreds of projects monthly, such as Northeast Coalition's 'Good in the Hood' annual community fair which originally supported Holy Redeemer School and now brings together 6,000 neighbors for two days to celebrate the neighborhoods. NECN provides fiscal sponsorship, publicity and technical assistance to the volunteer planning committee.

We also facilitate partnerships with community groups and with local non-profit agencies and businesses. We offer fiscal sponsorship to small non-profits in order that they may be eligible to apply for our small grant program.

Neighbors West-Northwest partnered with the Old Town Chinatown Business Association to provide fiscal sponsorship and assistance for their grant for the August Moon Festival.

We work with city, state and regional agencies to connect community members to government services.

For example, the SWNI contract with the Bureau of Environmental Services created and is now implementing 112 identified projects of the Fanno Tryon watershed management plan, which involves over twenty government and private agencies.

We partner with the City of Portland Crime Prevention program staff to address our communities' needs.

For example, a Northwest Public Safety Forum was recently held with service representatives from twelve city and county agencies.

We provide individual and group training to volunteers so they can be up to speed on current trends and best practices, and orient new volunteers to the history, the physical, social and political landscape of their neighborhood and neighborhood organizations.

Southeast Uplift is the model for volunteer trainings, providing an array of training programs to develop leadership in neighborhood boards and project volunteers.

### Support to Neighborhood Associations

Every volunteer organization has the problem of where to keep their stuff: is it in someone's garage or dining room table? Who has the checkbook, pays the bills, complete the (inevitable) paperwork that comes from being an organized group of people? The coalition staff plays a major role either in doing this work or assisting the volunteers with it. This includes keeping records of project work and meeting minutes. Our offices help with accounting, with making sure state and federal registrations are up to date, and that tax documents are filed correctly and on time.

For example, we are currently preparing to file annual federal and state tax returns for our member neighborhoods and coalitions.

Other direct services include archiving of minutes, financial record keeping, assistance in writing grants, assistance with land use and transportation, and developing responses to public policy proposals.

Coalitions also protect volunteers by purchasing insurance policies and by keeping abreast of current regulations which affect volunteer responsibilities. Staff worked with the City to develop a back-up insurance pool for volunteers.

For instance, the Multnomah Neighborhood could not put on its annual *Multnomah Days* celebration and parade without the insurance protection provided by the Southwest Neighborhoods coalition.