

Growing Your Block or Tenant Association





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Introduction

Bridge Street Development Corporation was established in 1995 to develop affordable housing. Bridge Street Development Corporation (BSDC) is a faith-based, 501(c)(3) not-for-profit organization whose mission is to build partnerships with businesses, government, and other community stakeholders to provide civic and economic opportunity.

Bridge Street Development Corp. vision is to preserve Bedford-Stuyvesant as a desirable neighborhood for raising families, owning businesses and taking part in rich cultural, spiritual and recreational opportunities. Our motto, “Building on Community Strength,” describes our core belief that the most effective way to improve a community is to develop and promote local assets, including people, homes, businesses, and organizations.

The members of the Bedford-Stuyvesant Youth, Education and Safety Task Force will work toward the creation of a crime-free community by engaging both the community and law enforcement entities in meaningful and long-lasting initiatives that will bring about positive change

Since its inception in 2006, the Bedford-Stuyvesant Safety Task Force (now the Youth, Education, and Safety Task Force) has had a close working partnership with the Bridge Street Development Corporation. Staffs from Bridge Street have been instrumental in the development and support of the Malcolm X Merchants’ Association, which led to the transformation of Malcolm X Boulevard from a crime-ridden “hot spot” where guns and drugs were openly sold, and youth gangs menaced the store owners and residents.

With the participation of the 81st Precinct, Community Board 3, elected officials, and the Bainbridge Street Block Association, this once-thriving commercial corridor has experienced a major reduction in crime. Malcolm X Boulevard is now home to several new businesses, and Bridge Street continues to provide technical assistance to the Merchants’ Association.

History

The Historical neighborhood Bedford Stuyvesant in Brooklyn N.Y is the home to over 150,000 people. Largely an African American community, Bedford Stuyvesant also has people of Asian, Latino and European descent. This neighborhood is known for its beautiful brownstones that were built in the early 1900’s and its rich culture. Many artists, musicians

and community activists have come from this neighborhood. Any visitor will quickly see beautiful painted murals of political leaders and community advocates, hear the beating of drums and the songs from the many choirs located in the area.

Bedford Stuyvesant is a strong community thanks to the people that make it up. These residents have weathered the hard times of redlining, the slashing of government funds, and the crack epidemic. This community has also celebrated the good times of the thriving business corridors of the past, and the emergence of hip hop music that forever changed the mindset of the residents, and put many young people to work to make a positive difference on their peers.

Despite the lean and problematic years this neighborhood has always been civically minded. In the summertime, you could find evidence in one of the mainstays of Brooklyn: the Block Party. Associations from all across the neighborhood would organize this annual event that brought together families, friends and neighbors.

In addition to the block parties, these associations would organize around issues regarding crime and public safety, lack of or the increase of public services and all political issues of the time. They would also organize stoop sales and block cleaning efforts. Some block associations have been in existence for more than 40 years. Some of these block associations even create the many community gardens that are all over this progressive neighborhood.

Although the community has always been ahead of the pack in regards to community engagement. At times the associations have waned in strength and impact on the lives of their residents. Many reasons can be pointed out that lead to this decline of significance and impact. Some of the reasons include: officers having aged out, leadership relocated, the economy, shift of family dynamics, cuts to government funding, etc.

Today organized associations are needed more than ever. An active association leads to a stable, safer, community. Associations are the thread that creates a tightly knitted neighborhood. This is the type of neighborhood that many native Bedford Stuyvesant residents are used to and would like to pass on to the next generation. Thriving associations are the backbone to a community of which everyone can be proud to be a resident.

This manual will walk you through the steps of organizing an effective block/tenant association. It will show you how to establish your association's purpose and make your association one that your residents will readily recognize its value. It will show you how to

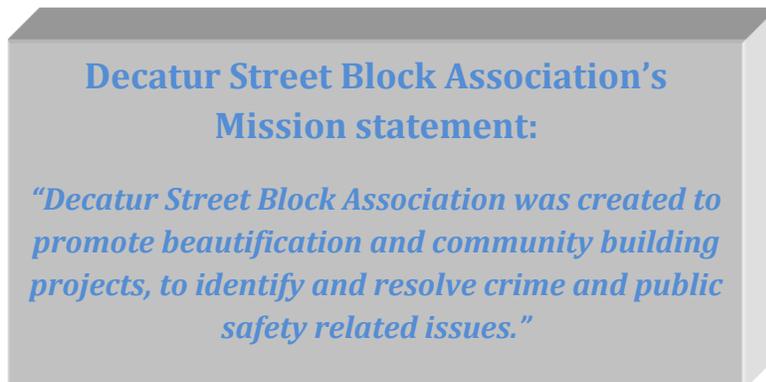
recruit and engage residents and develop your association to be one that is more than just the annual block party planning vehicle.

Purpose of an Association

What is the purpose of your block/tenant association? Is it clearly defined? Does your association have a mission statement? A mission statement is a short formal written statement of the purpose of your association. The mission statement should guide the decision making process of your association. It should be something that all officers and members are familiar with.

Without a mission statement your association will have no direction. Your mission statement will establish the identity of your association.

Example:



A mission statement should be specific enough to capture the main functions of the association, but not so specific that it narrowly defines the range of the association. A mission statement should be updated and changed as needed. A mission statement should resonate with the officers and the residents and it should be easy to understand.

If your association does not have a mission statement, or has an outdated mission statement, you can take this opportunity to ask your residents for their input. The more people that help in developing your mission statement, the more likely those people will feel like they have a real role in the association.

What is your association's mission statement?

Important Components of a Mission Statement:

- 1. Concise**
- 2. Clearly states purpose**
- 3. Encourages input from residents**
- 4. Utilize as the platform for decision making**

Your association should be a source of useful information for your residents. Have you ever been to a meeting that didn't provide useful information? These types of meetings tend to be boring, and often feel like a waste of time. Most people would prefer to do something else rather than attend a meeting that isn't relevant to their lives.

There are a lot of ways you can ensure that your meeting does not feel like a waste of time. Stay on top of the current events in your neighborhood, by reading the local papers like the Our Times Press, by attending the Community Board 3 and Community Precinct Council meetings. Keep your eyes out for issues in the news that may have an impact on your block and the residents of the community. Invite speakers from the precinct, other agencies and community-based organizations to conduct presentations at your meeting.

It is fairly easy to get agencies and local community based organizations to attend your meetings. Most of these organizations want to reach you and your residents because you are their constituents and target audience. Have them come out to a meeting and answer questions about their programs and services. Try to get agencies that provide services that your residents would most likely utilize. If you plan in advance you can have a guest speaker for each meeting. Don't forget that most elected officials would like to come and speak to your association as well. Have them all come out and meet the residents, the more the merrier!

City Government

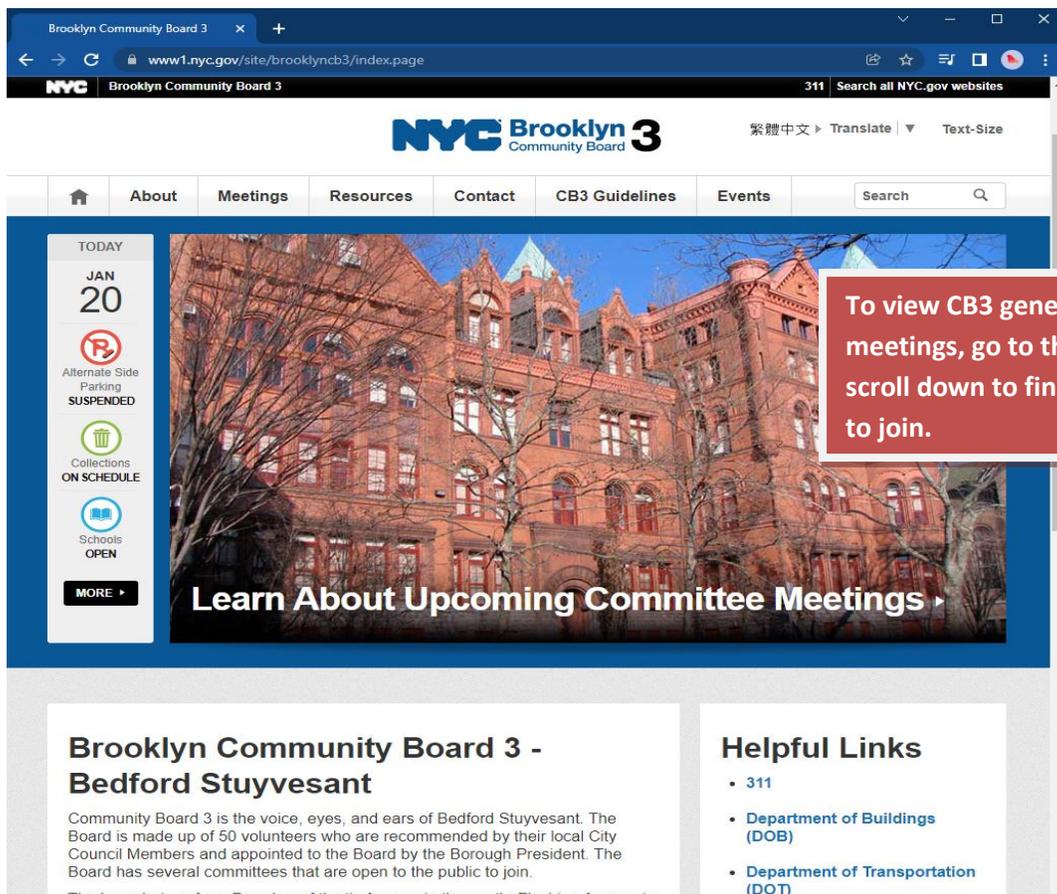
Officers of associations should be able to point their residents to the appropriate person/entity to resolve issues or to provide needed services. You should make sure that you have a direct link with your local community board. In Bedford Stuyvesant, Community

Board 3 should be the first place you look to take care of problems on your block especially when they involve services from public agencies. [Community Board 3 is located at 1360 Fulton Street and is open 5 days a week 9:00-5pm M-F.](#)

You can contact [Community Board 3 at 718-622-6601](#). Make sure that the board has your contact information. Community Board 3 sends out pertinent information monthly to their mailing list. In addition to being a source of information Community Board 3 also holds monthly (virtual) general board meetings open to the public. In this public forum members of the community can have their voices heard regarding a myriad of issues affecting the neighborhood. These meetings are usually scheduled every 1st Monday from September to June but are postponed during the summer months of July and August.

At the general board meetings there are speakers which represent various agencies and programs. Your association should have at least one officer attend these meetings. Your association should act as a liaison between the community board and the residents of your block/building. You can use the information you learn from these meetings to share with your residents.

You can find information online regarding Brooklyn Community Board 3 at www1.nyc.gov/site/brooklyn3/index.page



Other City Resources

An association should function as an entity where residents can solve problems related to quality-of-life issues and government services. There may be some instances where the Community Board may not be able to assist you. In these cases, you can call **311** to report problems with city services. In addition, you should learn how to navigate the city's official website at www.nyc.gov.

This website will give you information of all city agencies. Simply click on the tab labeled "NYC311" or scroll down to the yellow highlighted area and click on the button that best describes the basis of your problem.





State Agencies

Your residents will probably have more direct contact with state agencies than the federal agencies. State agencies such as Dept of Housing Community Renewal (DHCR) and Housing Preservation and Development (HPD) are agencies that come to mind. Then there are the agencies that are part state and part federal such as Mass Transit Authority and New York City Housing Authority. You can find state agencies contact information at: www.ny.gov

Elected Officials

Congress

There are 535 voting members in Congress: 100 senators and 435 representatives make up the house. Your neighborhood is represented by both sections of Congress. Members of Congress should hear from you and your residents especially when issues and concerns arise regarding public services and programs. If you live in the zip codes below then you are in the 8th Congressional district and your representative is Congressman Hakeem Jeffries.

11201	11208	11216	11233	11238
11205	11210	11217	11234	11239
11206	11212	11221	11235	
11207	11213	11224	11236	

His office can assist you in resolving issues with federal agencies such as the U.S Department of Housing and Urban Development and Federal Emergency Management Agency. His website is <http://jeffries.house.gov/>. His phone number and address are:

2232 Rayburn HOB
Washington, D.C 20515
Phone: (202) 225-5936
Hours: M-F 9AM-5PM

55 Hanson Place, Suite 603
Brooklyn, NY 11217
Phone: (718) 237-2211
Hours: M-F 9am - 5pm

U.S Senator

Each state has two elected U.S Senators. Currently New York Senators are Senior U.S Senator Chuck Schumer schumer.senate.gov, and Junior Senator Kirsten Gillibrand gillibrand.senate.gov

NYS Elected Officials

New York State government is divided into three separate branches just like the federal and city government. In the executive branch the people of the state of New York are represented by the Governor, the legislative branch of government is divided into the Assembly and the Senate. Each representative's office can assist you in resolving issues with state agencies and being heard on issues that affect your community. Remember: the more vocal your association is, the more likely that your community needs will be met.

Governor

The New York State Governor's office is the executive branch of the state government. The current governor is Kathy Hochul and her website is www.governor.ny.gov you can call her office at:

Telephone (518) 474-8390

**Address: The Honorable Kathy Hochul
Governor of New York State
NYS State Capitol Building
Albany, N.Y 12224**

New York State Attorney General

As head of the Department of Law, the Attorney General is both the "People's Lawyer" and the state's chief legal officer. The current Attorney General is Letitia James. As the "People's Lawyer," the Attorney General serves as the guardian of the legal rights of the citizens of New York, its organizations, and its natural resources. In her role as the state's chief legal counsel, the Attorney General not only advises the Executive Branch of State government, but also defends the actions and proceedings on behalf of the State.



**Phone Number: (718) 560-2040
Fax Number: (718) 687-1430
55 Hanson Place
Suite 1080
Brooklyn, N.Y 11217**

Brooklyn Regional Office

**Assistant Attorney General in Charge:
Michael Barbosa**

www.ag.ny.gov

State Senator

Jabari Brisport is the State Senator of the 25th Senate District, which covers the majority of Bedford-Stuyvesant. His website is www.nysenate.gov/senators/jabari-brisport. His office can assist you in resolving issues with state agencies and providing you with information on state agencies and programs that affect your neighbors.



His district office is located at:

The Shirley Chisholm State Office Building
55 Hanson Place
Suite 702
Brooklyn, NY 11217
Phone: (718) 643-6140
Fax: (718) 237-4137

Julia Salazar is the State Senator of the 18th Senate District, which also includes parts of Bedford-Stuyvesant. Her website is www.nysenate.gov/senators/julia-salazar. Her office can assist you in resolving issues with state agencies and providing you with information on state agencies and programs that affect your neighbors.

Her district office is located at:

212 Evergreen Avenue
Brooklyn, NY 11221
Phone: (718) 573-1726

State Assemblyperson

Assemblymember Stefani Zinerman **56th Assembly District**
www.nyassembly.gov/mem/Stefani-Zinerman

Her district office is located at:

1368 Fulton Street, 3rd Fl., NW
Brooklyn, N.Y 11216
Phone: (718) 399-7630

Assemblywoman Latrice Walker of the **55th Assembly District**
www.nyassembly.gov/mem/Latrice-Walker/

Her district office is located at:

400 Rockaway Avenue, 2nd Floor
Brooklyn, N.Y 11212
Phone: (718) 342-1258

Assemblymember Phara Souffrant Forrest of the **57th Assembly District**
www.nyassembly.gov/mem/Phara-Souffrant-Forrest

Her district office is located at:

55 Hanson Place
Brooklyn, N.Y 11217
Phone: (718) 596-0100

NYC Elected Officials

New York City residents are represented by the City Council, the Mayor, Comptroller and Public Advocate. Each office can assist residents in resolving issues with city agencies.

Mayor

The Mayor's office manages all street fair permits and applications. This includes the block parties. Block party applications are currently being done online. To register your block party, go to the following address: www1.nyc.gov/site/cecm/about/sapo.page . Be sure to register your block party in at least 60 days in advance of your date. Block associations that are unable to apply online can contact the Mayor's Office of Citywide Event Coordination and Management at (212) 788-0025 Monday - Friday 9 AM – 5 PM EST.

The Community Board also has a limited number of applications at their board office.

The Mayor's office also provides information on the citywide budget, and other data that may be of use to your association. You can go to the website: www1.nyc.gov/office-of-the-mayor/ for more information.

Comptroller

The Comptroller is the chief financial officer of the city. An independently elected official the Comptroller is responsible for overseeing the financial condition of the city and advising the mayor, city council and public on the financial health of the city government. Currently the Comptroller is Brad Lander. His office can be contacted at:

David Dinkins Municipal Building
1 Centre Street, Room 517
New York, N.Y 10007
212-669-3916
www.Comptroller.nyc.gov

Public Advocate

The job of the Public Advocate is, most fundamentally, that of a watchdog, ensuring that all New Yorkers receive the city services they deserve and have a voice in shaping the policies of their government. All associations should be familiar with this office.

Currently the public advocate is Jumaane D. Williams his website is: www.pubadvocate.nyc.gov

Office of the New York City Public Advocate:
1 Centre Street, 15th Floor, New York, NY 10007
(212) 669-7200



City Council

36th District City Councilmember Chi Ossé

1360 Fulton Street, Suite 500
Brooklyn, NY 11216
Phone: 718-919-0740
District36@council.nyc.gov

41st District City Councilwoman Darlene Mealy

400 Rockaway Avenue
Brooklyn, NY 11212
718-953-3097
District41@council.nyc.gov

35th District City Councilmember- Crystal Hudson

55 Hanson Place, Suite 778
Brooklyn, NY 11217
718-260-9191
District35@council.nyc.gov

Borough President

The Borough President is the advocate for the residents of Brooklyn. This office represents the borough needs on the city, state and federal level and assists the Mayor in drafting the budgetary needs for the borough. The community boards throughout the borough of Brooklyn report to this office.

Currently the Brooklyn Borough President is Antonio Reynoso and he can be reached at:

209 Joralemon Street
Brooklyn, NY 11201
718-802-3700
www.brooklyn-usa.org

Tenant Associations

Tenant Associations can be a part of the larger block association but are typically organized to address issues important to the tenants of the building or complex. While most tenant associations focus on building maintenance and repair issues, some associations focus on crime and public safety. Tenant Associations within buildings that are funded by U.S Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) and New York Dept of Housing and Community Renewal (DHCR) typically have space set aside for tenants to meet. In the event that there isn't space available landlords must allow tenants to use the common spaces such as lobbies and courtyards to hold their meetings.

New York City Housing Authority

All tenants have the right to participate in tenant associations. However, all tenant associations are not built equally. Tenant associations in NYCHA properties are referred to as Resident Associations, Tenant Councils or Resident Councils. These Residents Associations are often well funded by the agency and address issues that directly affect the lives of the residents in the complex. Since these organizations tend to be funded by NYCHA, they are very active and often have programs in the community centers and organize extracurricular activities such as field trips for young people and seniors.

Resident Associations are also represented by the citywide Council of the Presidents which act as the liaison between the residents and NYCHA. This council consists of representatives elected by the residents of nine districts in the City. Currently the board has three representatives from Brooklyn: President Mr. Reginald Bowman of Brooklyn East, Richard Johnston of Kingsborough, and Mia Berrios of Roosevelt I.

President Reginald Bowman can be located at:

Reginald Bowman, District Chair

District Office
Seth Low Houses
180 Powell Street, Suite #2-B
Brooklyn, New York 11212
Tel: 718-922-7141
Fax: 718-922-9047
E-mail: Reginaldhbowman@aol.com

Tenants Associations that are not a part of the NYCHA system are often at a disadvantage when it comes to meeting, organizing and developing their associations.

Oftentimes these associations have little resources and have a hard time keeping their association moving forward. If your association is in this category there are things that you can do



to ensure that your association is sustainable and making progress.

Some buildings in this category may seem like they are a privately owned, but may be receiving subsidies from HUD, HPD or DHCR essentially requiring them to abide by the policies and procedures of these agencies. If your building is under this category your landlord may be required by law to allow you to utilize the community room or common space for meetings, and to allow your association to exist without harassment.

Does your building accept vouchers? Does Housing Preservation and Development (HPD) or the Dept. of Housing and Community Renewal (DHCR) conduct building inspections? If you can answer yes to these two questions, chances are your building falls under the policies and procedures that govern those agencies.

[U.S Dept. of Housing and Urban Development](#)

As a resident of a federally subsidized building, you and your neighbors have rights. These rights include:

HUD Tenant Rights

1. The right to organize as residents without obstruction, harassment, or retaliation from property owners or management.
2. The right to post materials in common areas and provide leaflets informing other residents of their rights and of opportunities to involve themselves in their projects.

3. The right, which may be subject to a reasonable, HUD-approved fee, to use appropriate common space or meeting facilities to organize or to consider any issue affecting the condition or management of the property.
4. The right to meet without the owner/manager present.
5. The right to be recognized by property owners and managers as having a voice in residential community affairs.

As a resident of a HUD-assisted housing project, you also have certain responsibilities to ensure that your building remains a suitable home for you and your neighbors. By signing your lease, you and the owner/management company have entered into a legal, enforceable contract.

You and the owner/management company are responsible for complying with your lease, house rules, and local laws governing your property. If you have any questions about your lease or do not have a copy of it, contact your management agent or your local HUD field office

If your building was funded under **Section 202 Direct Loan Program, Section 202/811 Capital Advance Programs, or is assisted under any applicable project-based Section 8 programs**, and prior HUD approval is required before the owner can prepay, you have the right to participate in or be notified of, and comment on, the following:

1. An increase in the maximum permissible rent.
2. Conversion of a project from project-paid utilities to tenant-paid utilities or a reduction in tenant utility allowance.
3. Conversion of residential units in a multifamily housing project to a nonresidential use or to condominiums, or the transfer of the project to a cooperative housing mortgagor, corporation or association.
4. Partial release of mortgage security.
5. Capital improvements that represent a substantial addition to the project.
6. Nonrenewal of a project-based Section 8 contract.
7. Any other action which could ultimately lead to involuntary temporary or permanent relocation of residents.
8. Prepayment of mortgage.

If your unit has a project-based Section 8 contract that is expiring or being terminated and will not be renewed, the assisted family may elect to remain in the same project in which the family was residing on the date of the eligibility event for the project. The family residing in an assisted unit may be eligible for an enhanced voucher. Owners must provide a 1-year notification of their intent to opt out of the Section 8 contract. Eligible tenants can receive enhanced vouchers only if they remain in the same project in which they resided on the date the Section 8 contract was terminated. If an eligible tenant moves, they are eligible for a Section 8 voucher that is not enhanced. You also have the right to Relocation Counseling, where you can learn about housing options available to you.



If you live in a building that is **owned by HUD** and is being sold, you have the right to be notified of, and comment on, HUD's plans for disposing of the building.

For more information contact:

The project manager in HUD's Multifamily Hub, Multifamily Field Office, or your local Contract Administrator.

- Your local HUD Field Office -

- www.hud.gov/program_offices/field_policy_mgt/localoffices#NY

- The housing counseling agency in your community at **1-800-569-4287**

- HUD's National Multifamily Housing Clearinghouse at **1-800-685-8470** to report maintenance or management concerns.

- HUD's Office of Inspector General Hotline at **1-800-347-3735** to report fraud, waste, or mismanagement.

- Website - www.hud.gov



Jacob K. Javits Federal Building
26 Federal Plaza, Suite 3541
(Broadway - btwn Duane St & Worth St)
New York, NY 10278-0068

Phone: (212) 264-8000

Fax: (212) 264-0246

Email: NYWebmanager@hud.gov

Department of Housing Preservation and Development

If your building receives vouchers or other government subsidies it may fall under the guidelines of HPD. Many buildings with private owners or community-based organizations fall into this category. HPD's mission is to provide affordable homes for New Yorkers. You can find out from your management office whether or not your building is under the HPD program.

Tenants in privately owned buildings with maintenance problems should first notify the building owner or manager. If verbal notification does not resolve the problem, tenants may wish to send written notification through certified mail, with a return receipt requested. If the problem persists, or the condition constitutes an emergency, tenants may file a complaint with 311, which is open 24-hours-a-day, seven-days-per-week.

The 311 operator forwards the complaint to HPD, where a notification call is made to the registered owner and a call may also be made to the tenant to confirm whether the condition has been corrected. If there is no confirmation of correction, an inspector may be dispatched. If HPD inspectors determine that a building has violations, the owner has a certain amount of time to correct them, depending on their severity. The Housing Maintenance Code provides for three classes of code violations: A, B and C.

Once a violation condition has been corrected, it is the property owner's responsibility to notify HPD that the condition has been corrected through the certification process.

You can determine whether your building is an HPD building by going to the following website and entering in your building number and street name:

http://167.153.4.71/Hpdonline/provide_address.aspx

HPD works with not-for-profit organizations that provide fair housing services throughout the City, including: counseling building owners and tenants on their rights and responsibilities under various housing and discrimination prevention laws; explaining Housing Court procedures; assisting senior citizens in filling out Senior Citizen Rent Increase Exemption applications; helping low- and moderate-income tenants find housing and conducting fair housing workshops.



Fair Housing Counselors can also assist in resolving building owner/tenant disputes:

Bedford Stuyvesant Restoration Corp
1368 Fulton Street
Brooklyn, NY 11216
(718) 435-7585
(English, Spanish)

Neighborhood Housing Services of Brooklyn
506 MacDonough Street, Lower Level,
Nazarene Community Center
Brooklyn, NY 11233
718-919-2100

Brooklyn Neighborhood Improvement Association
465 Sterling Place
Brooklyn, NY 11238
(718) 773-4116 ext. 11

Dept. of Housing and Community Renewal (DHCR)

DHCR is the state agency that oversees the affordable housing state funding programs. Buildings that accept vouchers and other subsidies are typically under this program.

New York City Regional Office
Greg Watson, Regional Director
25 Beaver St.
New York, NY 10004
Phone: 212-480-6238

Brooklyn Branch is:
Brooklyn Borough Rent Office
55 Hanson Place, Room 702
Brooklyn, NY 11217
Phone: 718-722-4778

NYS Attorney General Office

Tenants have a legal right to organize. They may form, join, and participate in tenant organizations for the purpose of protecting their rights. Landlords are required to permit tenant organizations to meet, at no cost, in any community or social room in the building, even if the use of the room is normally subject to a fee. Tenant organization meetings are required to be held at reasonable times and in a peaceful manner which does not obstruct access to the premises.

RETALIATION

Landlords are prohibited from harassing or retaliating against tenants who exercise their rights. For example, landlords may not seek to evict tenants solely because tenants (a) make good faith complaints to a government agency regarding violations of any health or safety laws; (b) take good faith actions to protect their rights under the lease; or (c) participate in tenant organizations. Tenants may collect damages from landlords who violate this

law, which applies to all rentals except owner-occupied dwellings with fewer than four units.

HARASSMENT

A landlord is prohibited from any action intended to force a tenant out of an apartment or to compel a tenant to give up any rights granted the tenant by law. No landlord, or any party acting on the landlord's behalf, may interfere with the tenant's privacy, comfort, or quiet enjoyment of the apartment. Harassment may take the form of physical or verbal abuse, willful denial of services, or multiple instances of frivolous litigation. If a landlord lies or deliberately misrepresents the law to a tenant, this may also constitute harassment.

Brooklyn Office

NYS Attorney General's Office
55 Hanson Place, Suite 1080
Brooklyn, NY 11217
(718) 560-2040

New York City Office

NYS Attorney General's Office
25 Beaver Street
New York, NY 10004
(212) 480-6238

Goals

After clearly identifying your group's mission statement the next step is to develop clear goals for your association. It is very important to include your volunteers in this process. People respond better and work harder for goals that they helped to create. Ask around at your meetings or plan a brainstorming session. Identify the main issues that people are concerned about and use that information as a foundation for constructing your goals. You can also use surveys to find out what things the residents care most about.

To prevent your association from being spread too thin, concentrate on no more than five goals. The last thing you want to do is to have your association overwhelmed by a long list of goals. Remember to mix the goals up to include short and long-term goals. Start on smaller achievable goals. Accomplishing of any goals strengthens your association and gives your volunteers the sense that they are making good use of their time. Completion of goals also builds up group and individual confidence.

Residents that aren't involved will be able to see the progress the association is making. Be sure to document all projects and inform the residents on the goals that have been achieved, no matter how small. When people ask you what the association is doing you want to be in the position to say what you have done versus what you would like to be doing.

All goals should be specific in time, action and purpose. For example:

The goal of Flower BedStuy 2022 is to have 45 block and resident associations on Saturday, May 14th clean and beautify the Bedford Stuyvesant community.

Although you may state your goal, sometimes things just don't happen as anticipated. In these situations, do not panic. It will be okay. You may not have met your target, your date had to be changed, or the project unraveled in front of your eyes. You should document the near misses as well as the successes because you and your residents can learn what to do better the next time.

When you are working on a project you should make sure that your group revisits the goal. Plan your action using the end goal as the basis of your framework. Things that fall out of the scope of the goal should be left for another project.

Remember Goals Should Be:

- 1. Specific in time, nature and task**
- 2. Concise**
- 3. Have group input**
- 4. Used as the framework for planning**
- 5. Documented**
- 6. Mix of short-term and long-term goals**

What are some of your association's past goals?

What are some of your association's present goals?

What are some of your association's future goals?

Project Ideas

After you create your association's goals, use these goals to plan projects. It cannot be stressed enough that your association should encourage group participation. Your goals will form the basis of your projects. Your association projects should be achievable. The last thing you want is for your volunteers to be frustrated and feel like they are fighting a losing war.

There is no better boost to the volunteer's morale and more rewarding than the completion of a successful project. Start on small projects, make them fun, take many pictures and document them and send them out to all residents of your block. Pictures filled with people having fun will get others to see what they are missing out on from not participating in the association.



Projects should have a start and end date or time. For example:

The Vernon Houses will host "Bedford Stuyvesant YMCA Zumba Round" on May 25th join us in the community room at 6pm.

Projects should be fun and informative. In the beginning projects should require little to no funding. You do not have to spend money to have good projects. Keep the projects well

within your budget. You will have enough obstacles without making lack of funds one of them.

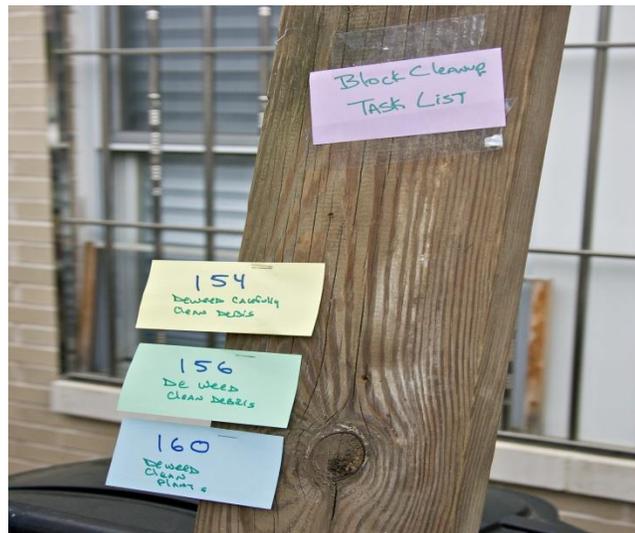
Another good source for project ideas is the information extracted from surveys.

Project Ideas

- **Block and building clean-up**
- **Community Garden, tree planting, flower planting**
- **Back-to-school party and school supply drive**
- **Murals or neighborhood art project**
- **Neighborhood video blog**
- **Crime watch program**
- **Block party or festival**
- **Community awareness projects**
- **Cooking contests**
- **Tool lending libraries**
- **Tutoring program for youth**
- **Bus trips and other outings**
- **Neighborhood cook-out, picnic, or potluck**
- **National Night Out Celebration**
- **Holiday celebration**
- **Bereavement committee**
- **Newsletter, web site, directory, email tree**
- **Paint up/fix up projects**
- **Flea market and stoop sales**
- **Speakers on topics of interest to the neighborhood**
- **Representative to attend city council, community education council, community board and precinct council meetings**
- **Philanthropic projects, such as “adopting” a family who needs help with Christmas dinner**

Strategically Planning

Strategically planning is a very important part of organizing your group projects. Most associations neglect this component of organizing. Your strategical plan should be in align with your mission statement, and short term and long-term goals. An effective strategical plan is one that is revisited periodically and lays out the action plan of the association.



Organizing an Association

Formal Structure

The size of your association will determine which structure best fits the needs of your organization. For example, a small group may decide not to incorporate or apply for non-profit tax-exempt status. However, all block and tenant associations should consider writing and adopting bylaws as a means of establishing how their group will be governed.

Your block and tenant association might want to conduct some research and reach a consensus to decide which organizational structure best fits the needs of your group. The size of the organizations, mission and financial activity will be factors in deciding how the association will be structured. The following tips can be utilized to help begin the structuring process:

- **Write bylaws.** Bylaws can help clarify boundaries and responsibilities, officer roles, rules of procedure, and other relevant issues.
- **Open meetings and records.** Meetings and records should be made available to any member requesting such information.
- **Accounting.** Even if organizations are dealing with small sums of money, a bookkeeping system should be set-up. The bookkeeping system that an organization adopts will be determined by the group's needs. The larger the amount of money the organization receives, the greater the need for a sophisticated accounting system.
- **Business name.** Associations may wish to apply for business names to confirm their identity.
- **Tax I.D. Number.** Similar to a Social Security number, this number is used for opening bank accounts and is obtained from the Internal Revenue Service (IRS). Associations looking to acquire a Tax I.D. Number can go to www.irs.gov.

By-Laws

Bylaws are rules which identify the basic structure and operational characteristics of an association. Therefore, it is important to begin work on the bylaws early in the organizing effort. Block and tenant associations are encouraged to develop organizational bylaws.

Bylaws typically establish rules for the following areas:

- The name, purpose, functions of the association, description of members (including non-discrimination clause), boundaries, and frequency of meetings.
- The number, duties, and term of officers, the method of electing and replacing officers.



- The handling of the association’s funds.
- A provision for amendments.
- Other functions and operations.

These items must be settled before an association can effectively function. Bylaws can also help your association over rough spots: the resignation of an officer, the continued absence of an officer, or the need to call a meeting very quickly without the usual period of advance notice. Writing bylaws and thinking through the questions they raise is an important and necessary educational process for your steering committee.

Sample of By-Laws

Name

The name of the neighborhood association shall be: _____

Purpose

The neighborhood association is organized exclusively for educational and charitable purposes. The purpose of the association is to promote a better neighborhood and community through group action.

Membership/Boundaries

Any person residing or owning property on _____ between _____ and _____ is eligible for membership.

Non-Discrimination

The neighborhood association will not discriminate against individuals or groups on the basis of race, religion, color, sex, age, disability, national origin, income or political affiliation.

Dues

Dues shall be \$ _____ per household per year. Business dues shall be \$ _____ per year.

Officers

The officers shall be a President, Vice President, Secretary, and Treasurer, who shall be elected in _____ of each year. The term of office shall be _____ year(s).

Committees

The membership may establish necessary committees at any meeting. The President may also establish such committees. The committee chair shall be appointed by the President.

Steering Committee

The officers and committee chair shall constitute the Steering Committee and may act for the group between meetings.

Meetings

Regular meetings will be held on the _____ of each month, or more often as deemed necessary. At the very least, one annual meeting will be held per year to provide for the election of officers.

Quorum

At least _____ percent of the membership must be present to conduct official business.

The bylaws may be amended at any regular meeting. Two-thirds of those members in attendance must approve the amendment.

Registering as a Non-profit

Articles of Incorporation do not make an association a nonprofit organization. Nonprofit status is given by the Internal Revenue Service. The decision to apply for nonprofit or 501(C)3 status with the IRS is a big step for a block/tenant association and should be considered carefully. Applying for and maintaining nonprofit status requires a great deal of paperwork and record keeping. The following are:

Benefits of Nonprofit Status:

1. Enables your association to accept tax-deductible donations.
2. Allows you to avoid paying sales tax on your purchases.
3. Allows you to avoid paying income tax on interest earned in the association's bank account and on qualified non-profit income.
4. It is organized solely for charitable purposes.

To apply for non-profit status, you must file IRS Form 1023 seeking tax-exempt status and charitable organization status. *IRS Publication 557* explains how to complete Form 1023. The IRS requires the submittal of a filing fee along with Form 1023. To determine the appropriate filing fee for your organization, complete Form 8718 User Fee for Exempt Organization.

For more information on becoming a nonprofit or to attend free workshops on how to become a non-profit go to www.nyc.gov/nonprofit

Officers

President:

The president of the block/tenant association serves as the chief executive officer of the association. The president serves at the will of the board of directors (if a non-profit status has been established) and can be removed with or without cause at any time by a majority vote by the association or board of directors. The president should not allow personal feelings or outside pressures to influence his/her actions.

Examples of the duties and responsibilities of the President are:

1. Presides at all meetings of the association, including helping the secretary prepare the meeting agenda, and to begin and close the meeting.
2. Appoints chairmen of all committees. The president should not serve as a committee chairman.
3. Assumes general charge of the day-to-day administration of the association.
4. Has the authority to authorize actions in promoting the board's policies.
5. Leads orderly discussions by tactfully and politely enforcing rules that offer every member a chance to speak.
6. Determines whether enough members (a quorum) are present to conduct business. There must be at least 50 percent plus one of members present to take a motion.
7. Informs members how the meeting will proceed. Reviews the agenda and explains each motion before it is voted upon.
8. Serves as spokesman for the board of directors in most matters relating to general association business (non-profit).
9. The president cannot, without specific board approval, borrow funds in the name of the association or otherwise act beyond the scope of the authority established by the association's bylaws.



Vice President:

The vice president of the association is responsible for performing the duties of the president in the absence of the president. Examples of the types of duties and responsibilities the vice president may perform are:

1. Perform the duties of the president in the absence of the president.
2. Coordinate committees and report status to the board.
3. Assume duties as defined in the bylaws or assigned by the president and/or board of directors.

Secretary:

The secretary is responsible for maintaining the records of the association, including preparing the notice for all meetings of the board and the membership and certifying the records of the association.

Examples of the type of duties and responsibilities the secretary may perform are:

1. Take the minutes of meetings and keep a permanent, accurate record of what has taken place in meetings.
2. Prepare written minutes for the board of directors.
3. Be familiar with previous minutes in order to provide needed information to the president.
4. Receive and handle all correspondence addressed to the association.
5. Prepare meeting notices of all association meetings.
6. Keep an accurate list of members' names, addresses, & telephone numbers.

Treasurer:

The treasurer is responsible for the association's funds and financial records. Examples of the types of duties and responsibilities the treasurer performs are:

1. Coordinate the development of the proposed annual budget for the association.
2. Keep an accurate account of all revenues and expenditures, signs or co-signs all checks or vouchers.
3. Pay all the expenses, upon authorization of the board, of the association.
4. Present a written report each month to the board of directors and/or association of the month's disbursements and the balance on hand.
5. Prepare all financial reports in accordance to applicable state law and IRS Codes.

Effective Meetings

Schedule of Meetings

You should hold association meetings on the same day and at the same time throughout the year. Your residents should get use to meeting on a particular day of the month. Pick a day and time that works for most of the participants and stick with it. Use a survey to determine which day is the best day to meet. Try to avoid canceling and rescheduling meetings. Rescheduling and cancellations of meetings discourage people from attending.

If an event is cancelled or rescheduled give yourself enough time to contact all of the residents. Be sure to send the message to the “regulars” and to the people who never attend meetings. You do not want “first timers” to come to a meeting that is cancelled.

If you can, create your calendar in advance. Association meetings, dates and times should be predictable. The consistency of a regular scheduled meeting will increase the chances of having a well-attended meeting.

Refreshments

If you have been doing community or volunteer work for longer than a week, you already know how much people love refreshments. Try to have something to eat and drink at all your in-person meetings. You don’t have to have a meal, but snacks, soft drinks or coffee can go a long way especially for those meetings that are after work hours or in the morning.

Group Participation

Encourage group discussion to get all points of views and ideas. You will have better quality decisions as well as highly motivated members; they will feel that attending meetings is worth their while.

- Encourage feedback. Ideas, activities and commitment to the organization improve when members see their impact on the decision-making process.
- Keep conversation focused on the topic. Feel free to ask for only constructive and non-repetitive comments. Tactfully end discussions when they are getting nowhere or becoming destructive or unproductive. Write up and distribute minutes within 3 or 4 days. Quick action reinforces the importance of meeting and reduces errors of memory.
- Discuss any problems during the meeting with other officers; come up with ways improvements can be made.
- Follow-up on delegation decisions and see that all members understand and carry-out their responsibilities.
- Give recognition and appreciation to excellent and timely progress.
- Put unfinished business on the agenda for the next meeting.
- Conduct a periodic evaluation of the meetings. Note any areas that can be analyzed and improved for more productive meetings.
- Use the above meeting tips for planning and conducting your neighborhood meetings as well.

How your association conducts its meeting will attract potential members if done right. There are many ways to make meetings productive and efficient. Evaluate what works for your group and make adjustments when it is necessary. Remember, effective meetings will keep them coming back!

Agenda

Your meetings should be well organized. People hate coming to meetings that are sloppily run and unorganized. Have a written agenda with a beginning time and end time. Start on time and finish on time. Your agenda will help people stay on the topic. A well run meeting will have an agenda.

Recording meeting minutes

All meetings minutes should be recorded. This is typically the role of the secretary. In these days and times you can keep minutes via paper, voice recorder and even video recordings. A good record of the minutes allows you to keep track of the activities of your association. Each general meeting should have some time allotted to reviewing the minutes of the previous meeting.

Remember that people come to community meetings because they want to, not because they are required to come. If your meetings are sloppily run, never start or end on time, or are dominated by a few people, it won't be long before some of your members get frustrated, stop coming to meetings, and finally drop out of the group. Many groups have lost valuable momentum because of poorly run meetings. With a little thought and some attention to detail, your meetings can be effective.

Resident Outreach

Outreach is one of the most important aspects of developing your association. Many people do not place enough emphasis on getting their message out to their constituents. In order to have a strong association you must have a strong outreach plan. A good outreach plan has a few components.

If you want to reach your residents and inform them of the general meetings, special events and volunteering opportunities you must maintain a good database. The database should consist of up-to-date mailing addresses, emails and phone numbers. You do not have to go out and purchase a special database program. Most computers come with a spreadsheet program such as Microsoft Excel. It is easy to use.

Make sure that the information is input correctly and updated periodically. Store all of your residents contact in the database. You can even put notes and answers to surveys in the spreadsheet.

You must gather intelligence on your resident's wants, needs, and concerns. The better you are at surveying your neighbors the better your projects and events will be, and the more likely that you will have group participation. You can use a survey to get information on the best time to have meetings, important issues, and the types of projects residents find interesting.

Make sure that you store the data and follow up on the information contained in the survey. These surveys are worth their weight in gold. Instead of organizing a project that you *think* residents would be interested in, you can organize projects that you *know* residents will be interested in.

Three-Pronged Approach

Outreach requires that you contact residents in at least 3 different ways. You definitely need a team of people to help you with this undertaking. First is door to door knocking. This is by far the most effective way to connect with your residents. Don't just leave the flier under the door or wedged in the gate. Knock or ring their bell. Face to face contact goes a long way and it prevents them from saying they never knew about a project or meeting.

Compile a phone list of the residents on your block or building and then call the list. This can be done either as the initial, follow up, or the reminder communication. Make sure to get help. Call directly from the list and update it as necessary. The old fashion phone call is almost as good as speaking to residents in person. Don't forget to write notes in your database to capture questions and concerns of the residents.

Emails are good for the reminder as well as the first communication. For big projects you may want to email, and then follow up with the door knocking or phone calls. A lot of people particularly seniors do not have emails. Emails are not very personable and it is hard to build a relationship using this communication alone. Avoid using them as your only source of communication they are ineffective when used in this way. Instead, use it as a supplement to your other communications.

Other ways to Conduct Outreach

Some associations have websites or social media such as Facebook, Twitter and Instagram where residents can visit and find information about the association. Other associations may blog or publish newsletters. In Bedford Stuyvesant a newsletter would probably work better than a blog, but this neighborhood does have sections that are more apt to use electronic communications, so find out which one works for you. If your association decides to create a Facebook page, it would be a good idea to join a Facebook Group such as

Bedford Stuyvesant Brooklyn (www.facebook.com/groups/321827414675541/). If your association prefers to do newsletters, please note that they are hard work and require a lot of time. You may want to start out with publishing a newsletter once per quarter until you have enough support to do more.

Tenant Associations can use the bulletin boards in the lobby. Make sure to advertise association projects at your general meeting.

What ways do you currently use to conduct outreach?

How can you improve your outreach?

Do you have a database of resident contact information?

How many times a year do you update your contact information?

How many times do you survey your residents?

Identifying Leaders

All volunteers are not the same. You should not expect the identical output from your volunteers. Things like time, work and family can affect the amount of work that your volunteers are willing to do with the association. As the officer of your association it is important for you to be able to determine the level of your volunteers. It is up to you to make sure those old volunteers are not being under appreciated and burned out and that new volunteers are not being rushed and overwhelmed.

Volunteers are special people and should be treated as such. As you know being a volunteer is often a thankless job without much reward. To determine the level of the volunteer, you must first find out why the person has



volunteered their time to the association. What do they want to get out of being a participant? Do they want to work on a special project or cause? Find out what their skills are.

All residents should be able to volunteer, but not all volunteers should be officers. Make the process for electing officers special. Officers should have to submit a resume and maybe even a written statement. Of course if no one is stepping up to the plate than you have to adjust the nominating process accordingly, but people should know that being an officer is a very important title with large responsibilities. This position should not be taken lightly. Make the induction for the officers special. Give a certificate, allow them to make a public statement or even take an oath. The more formal the process the more likely the new officer will respect the duties of their office. Remember you can make it formal without spending a lot of money!

Before a volunteer gets to be an officer they should have spent time volunteering at lower levels of the association. Perhaps being a part of the outreach committee, designing fliers, or chairing a sub-committee. Let them prove themselves worthy of being a leader for your association. No associations have the luxury to turn volunteers away, but you should work them in slowly so that they are not overwhelmed and burned out before they get started doing real work for the association.

Here are six steps to successful volunteer recruitment:

1. Be prepared

Have in mind a mini-strategy consisting of how you will explain your goal and what you want the person to do. Review what you know about the person, such as interests, experience, and family.

Look and listen for clues as to what interests this person.

2. Legitimize yourself

You need to gain quick credibility. Find a common background or a mutual friend. Explain that you have the same problem that they do. Mention people that they might know. Explain why the persons participation will make a difference.

3. Listen, listen, listen

Draw people out. Listening is more important than just not talking. It is asking good questions, providing encouraging remarks, and using body language that says you are interested. Be sure to listen for special skills, useful contacts, and organizational networks that can be useful to your organization.

4. Challenge

Encourage people to produce change. Challenge people to care about the organization's goals.

5. Get a commitment

Never leave a conversation open-ended. Get a commitment with a firm deadline. Write it down, make a note for follow-up and clarify exactly what should happen next.

6. Follow-up

There is nothing worse than making a big fuss over people while recruiting them and then ignoring them once they show up. Have greeters or a welcoming committee at meetings, introduce new people to experienced volunteers, and keep the lines of communication between you and your volunteers open at all times.

Keeping volunteers is just as important as recruiting them. Recruitment has to be backed up by an organizational plan with clear goals and expectations of what volunteers will do. Have a committee or program designed especially for volunteer and membership issues. This program should include training, supervision, recognition, and leadership development. Always explain the organizational importance of each task and assign tasks to fit the time that the volunteer is able to give. Recognize volunteers and make them feel like a part of the team.

Recruiting and keeping volunteers is something that is learned through practice and experience. Have fact sheets for each recruiter addressing such things as how to overcome objections to volunteering, the purpose of the task they are recruiting for, organizational information, and a brief description of the task. Growing, thriving organizations must train leaders on how to recruit others and build recruitment strategies into their on-going program work.

Association Dos and Don'ts

Don't

- Don't reschedule meetings
- Plan events without group participation
- Don't assume you know the needs of the block or building
- Don't let a group of people dominate the meetings
- Don't run sloppy meetings
- Don't run boring meetings
- Don't join sides
- Don't take your volunteers for granted
- Don't do all the work yourself
- Don't have meetings that are irrelevant to the attendees
- Don't take it personal
- Don't leave flyers under the door as your outreach strategy
- Don't take yourself so seriously

Do

- Have predictable regularly scheduled meetings
- Encourage group participation in the planning and implementation of projects
- Conduct regular surveys of your neighbors and store the data
- Do pass the leadership opportunities around to those willing to take the job
- Start on time end on time have an agenda and stick to it!
- Invite speakers, have special announcements, get everyone involved in the conversation
- Be diplomatic and listen to both sides of the story
- Make them feel special, they are! Thank them and recognize them (publicly)
- Delegate, delegate, delegate
- Be a source of information that effects your residents' daily lives
- Be patient
- Do door knock, email, and call...maintain an up-to-date database
- Have fun!





Resources

Community Board 3

Bedford-Stuyvesant's boundaries are Flushing Avenue to the north, Broadway to the northeast, Saratoga Avenue to the east, Classon Avenue to the west, and Atlantic Avenue to the South. If you live in this area then Community Board 3 (CB3) is the board that represents your neighborhood. CB3 advocates for city services and programs for Bedford Stuyvesant. CB3 holds monthly general board meetings. For more information you can contact them at 718-622-6601 or go to their website at: www1.nyc.gov/site/brooklyn3/index.page

79th Precinct Council

The 79th Precinct Council President: Kim Best

Meetings: The precinct community council meeting is held the fourth Wednesday of the month at 7:00pm at Brooklyn Job Corps, located at 585 Dekalb Avenue.

Precinct Address:
263 Tompkins Avenue
Brooklyn, NY 11221
Tel: (718) 636-6611

79th Clergy Council

417 Throop Avenue
Brooklyn, NY 11221

The BedStuy Works Alliance of Block and Resident Associations

The BedStuy Works Alliance of Block and Tenant Associations began in 2010 as a small collaborative of block and tenant groups. The alliance is the result of the dynamic partnership between the Bedford-Stuyvesant Youth, Education, and Safety Task Force and the Bridge Street Development Corporation. Both groups had the common long-term goal to strengthen and galvanize block and tenant associations for the purpose of establishing a unified voice that would:

- Identify issues that impact tenants and homeowners
- Provide a forum for common concerns
- Generate ideas that would contribute to the ongoing revitalization of Bedford-Stuyvesant
- Advocate for improvements/change in a cohesive and proactive manner



- Strengthen existing civic initiatives such as the Community Board and the 79th and 81st Precinct Councils
- Improve police-community relations in order to maximize safety services throughout the neighborhood

Bridge Street Development Corp

Is a faith based community development corporation whose mission is to help residents of the Bedford Stuyvesant section of Brooklyn acquire appreciating assets including real estate, businesses, and education.

Dr. Betty Shabazz ATTAIN Lab

This is a public computer lab that offers free computer classes, adult education and certifications. You can get more information at www.bsc.sunyattain.org/

700 Gates Ave, #1F
Brooklyn, NY 11221
(718) 453-3243

NYC Office of Emergency Management Cert Team

The NYC Cert team consists of volunteers that assist response teams in the event of an emergency. They assist associations in developing emergency kits and evacuation plans. For more information you can go to nyc.gov/cert or contact OEM's [CERT staff](#) at 718-422-8585.

Grants and how to apply for them

There are many grants available for associations from public and private companies. To find assistance on how to write grants and proposals and other important aspects go to www.nyc.gov/nonprofits

Citizens Committee of NYC

The Citizens Committee of NYC provides grants for block and tenant associations on a periodic basis. Their website is: www.citizensnyc.org

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