

# Stages of Working Together

ToolTip #8  
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Neighborhood Associations (NA) are ever evolving organizations. New people move into the neighborhood, older members become more or less active, emerging issues bring new people in. With this changing climate, it is useful to understand the stages of groups successfully coming together to achieve goals -- and to realize that every time new people join a group, these stages may need to be repeated.

**Stage 1: Coming together.** This is an exploratory time, getting to know each other, identifying common goals, and agreeing upon basic "ground rules". Milestones of Stage 1 are:

- Residents attend Association meeting(s).
- Personal commitments are made to work together.
- Group agrees upon basic "ground rules".

**Stage 2: Building trust and common goals.** Building trust begins by establishing common ground. Get to know each other, share experiences and ideas. After a common ground is established, you may want to create a shared vision of the neighborhood (see other side for help in creating a vision) and agree upon goals to guide future actions. Milestones of Stage 2 are:

- Individuals get to know each other and discover common experiences and goals.
- Respect develops for the group diversity including others' viewpoints and values.
- Group begins to define shared vision(s) and goals.

**Stage 3: Developing neighborhood strategies:** Residents begin to explore options based on their common concerns and shared vision. (See ToolTip #4 for how to work effectively with committees.) Milestones of Stage 3 are:

- Group agrees to focus on specific goal(s) and/or project(s).
- Analysis is done identifying steps needed and assets that are available to achieve a goal.
- Action items are defined and agreements/commitments made to achieve actions.
- Missing "skills" or essential elements to achieve the goal are identified and secured.

**Stage 4: Taking Action.** Commitments are honored and goals achieved. An ongoing evaluation and reporting system is developed to help identify change requirements to make mid-course corrections. Milestones of Stage 4 are:

- Coordination is achieved through completion of commitments within established timeframes.
- Progress is evaluated at regular meetings.
- Adjustments in strategies are made as needed.

**Stage 5: Sustaining results/follow-up.** Once a goal is met, it is important to ensure that the desired results are maintained. Likewise, when a project is completed, there are "loose ends" to tie up. This maintenance/follow-up stage is critical. Milestones of Stage 5 are:

- Group evaluates & debriefs to determine any follow-up actions that are needed.
- Procedures are established for on going evaluations and commitments to follow-up are made.
- If appropriate, future status reports are provided regularly. (yearly, quarterly, etc.).

**Stage 6 $\Rightarrow$ 1: Coming Together (Evaluation/Regrouping):** Regroup. Come back together and evaluate success. This is a great time bring others into the loop, start a new project, keep the momentum going.

# Visioning Process

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The following are two ways to help the Association create a vision statement.

## A. CREATIVE VISIONING WITH GROUPS:

1. **REFLECTION:** Reflect on your own values and beliefs relating to community. "Quick Write" or brainstorming by yourself on paper. Challenge yourself to dream, to write from your heart! Fill in "What do I value most in my community? What do I want for the future in my community?" Everyone participates.
2. **PAIR SHARE:** Join with another person that you don't know (or don't know well) and share with each other what you have written.
3. **PAIR SHARE (2):** Each pair then links with another pair. Each partner in a pair introduces the other partner and describes their vision. (For groups over 30, you may want to have 3 pairs join together.)
4. **GROUP SHARING:** Final groups of 4 to 6 people then put their visions together by creating one large picture by drawing the vision on big paper with colorful markers or, if this is not possible, create a presentation for the larger group. This could be in the form of a drama/skit, a poem, or a song. This vision is then presented to the larger group and let that group interpret what you are saying.
5. **COMBINING VISIONS:** From each group, write down the most common themes in a list form. Compare lists to find shared visions. As you create a vision statement, incorporate these ideas. Agree upon what the most important quality is and start with that. For example, all groups might said beauty is a most important quality. A vision statement may say "The \_\_\_\_\_ Neighborhood is a beautiful, \_\_\_\_\_ etc. \_\_\_\_\_ community."

## B. ADDING UP VISION WORDS

Another process that allows a large number of people to help create a vision statement is by using vision words.

1. **VISION WORDS:** Everyone involved writes one or two words on a strip of paper that they think are the most important for their community.
2. **DETERMINE COMMON Themes:** Collect words and group words with similar meanings, counting the most common words or themes to indicate priorities.
3. **VISION STATEMENT:** Create a vision statement from words that are most often used or represent the most common themes.

**EXAMPLE:** Hundreds of people participated in creating the Santa Ana Empowerment Zone's Vision Statement in this way. The final Vision Statement combined the most common words and themes into a single sentence. The final Empowerment Zone Vision Statement is:

*"Santa Ana is a diverse, progressive, unified and empowering community, secured by the values of love, hope and mutual support, rich in opportunities, jobs and education in a safe and beautiful environment."*