

# NEIGHBORHOOD LIAISON HANDBOOK



CITY OF FALCON HEIGHTS



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## *What is a Neighborhood Liaison?*

A Neighborhood Liaison is an extension to the Community Engagement Commission that formalizes a more localized outreach community engagement effort. They will provide a more familiar point of access to the assigned neighborhood community, while building and strengthening relationships. They will spend their time in the community talking with people, collecting suggested ideas, and forming relationships to keep the community connected. Roles among the different sub divided groups are easily overlapped and can be carried out by one person or a number of different people.

## *Community Engagement Commission Role in the Neighborhood Liaison Program:*

The Community Engagement Commission (CEC) promotes opportunities for residents to be involved by endorsing and facilitating community outreach events. They will act as a human-bridge, defining ideas and activities that help to connect Falcon Heights City Council to the people they serve. The Commission shall serve as the city's liaison with the neighborhoods, and may make recommendations to the City Council regarding changes to the Neighborhood Liaison Program.

Emphasis shall be placed on the following activities:

- Recruit and retain neighborhood liaisons
- Update and distribute a neighborhood liaison handbook
- Responsible for implementing appropriate Neighborhood Liaison training
- Provide suggestions on how to best communicate with the residents to keep our neighborhoods connected
- Act as a resource for neighborhood activities
- Provide regular reports to the City Council on the Neighborhood Liaison Program
- Attend Neighborhood Liaison training sessions.

## *How we Define Neighborhood*

The word neighborhood, in this handbook, will simply refer to a group of people living near one another; a community. The Neighborhood Liaison will coordinate with the City to define the neighborhood they represent. Some neighborhoods may include specific blocks on a street, one or more buildings, or one floor in a larger building complex. However, you define your neighborhood, the role of liaison will be similar.

# History: Introduction

## *Where did the idea of Neighborhood Liaison come from?*

The idea of Neighborhood Liaison was defined in 2002, but was the culmination of many years of community-minded efforts by Falcon Heights residents.

1. Early 1990's -- The Neighborhood Watch program was initiated by a dedicated resident volunteer. Falcon Heights was the first city in Minnesota where every block in the city had a Neighborhood Watch volunteer!
2. 1995 -- The city council began a group called Keeping Connected to brainstorm and implement ways to keep resident and neighbors connected, in addition to fighting crime.
3. 1997 -- Keeping Connected sponsored an intergenerational dialogue to develop recommendations for improving the quality of life for all ages of Falcon Heights' residents. Fifty-one residents ranging in age from 11 to 81, suggested (among hundreds of other ideas):
  - Have kids organize welcome parties for other kids.
  - Encourage informal block "lemonade on the front lawn", BBQ, or potlucks.
  - Encourage individual initiatives such as sharing meals, block caretakers, and phone contact to check on the welfare of the young and elderly.
  - Expand opportunities to match volunteer mentors with children and teens.
4. 1999 -- In response to concerns over potential computer problem (Y2K), the city sponsored an Emergency Preparedness meeting, developed recommendations for neighborhoods to keep them sustained in any type of emergency. Their long list of suggestions for each generation included:
  - Develop neighborhood "maps" which include names of residents, equipment owned and special needs.
  - Encourage people to exchange names and numbers of family members at the annual neighborhood meetings.
  - Organize "Citizen Emergency Response Teams" in each neighborhood.
5. 2001-- The city council sponsored an Intergenerational Dialogue, which brainstormed ideas for citizens to feel as prepared as possible for any situations in their own neighborhoods. Among the many:
  - Make a neighborhood phone tree with home, work and emergency phone numbers.
  - City Council to create a Neighborhood Security Task Force to develop materials for use by block leaders and formalizing this group into a permanent **Neighborhood Commission**, to oversee the training and recruitment of Neighborhood Liaisons.
6. 2015 – The Neighborhood Commission merged with the Human Rights Commission to form the Community Engagement Commission (CEC)

## Neighborhood Liaison Roles:

A Neighborhood Liaison has several roles and responsibilities:

- Welcome new residents
- Actively participate in training opportunities sponsored by Community Engagement Commission (CEC).
- Promote neighborhood meetings and/or block parties.
- Use this Neighborhood Liaison Handbook as a guide. Submit handbook suggestions and improvements to the Community Engagement Commission (CEC).
- Keep neighborhood data current.
- Distribute collected data only with neighbors.

Neighborhood Liaison Code of Ethics:

- Respect your neighbors.
- Maintain a positive attitude and image.
- Maintain local privacy of collected data.
- Be a community builder.

## Neighborhood Liaison Sub Divided Groups

### Information Liaison

Engage with assigned neighborhood by gathering block directory information about your neighbors of which they provide voluntarily. Update regularly the current block map, with names, addresses and phone numbers of people on the block and distribute routinely to neighbors. Welcome new neighbors and distribute the collected information so they may get familiar with their near community.

### Social Organizer Liaison

Responsible for coordinating activities for the assigned neighborhood, such as block parties, potlucks, and Night to Unite (National Night Out), book clubs, or a kid's holiday parade, just to name a few potential ideas. Create group activities designed to promote community togetherness.

### Communication Liaison

Communicate activities defined by the Social Organizer Liaison and other activities that may be sponsored by the Community Engagement Commission (CEC). This may include phone calls, emails, door knocking, letter writing or social media communication.

# Information Liaison

## General Description

1. Keep the block directory or block map current.
2. Distribute the directory to neighbors each year.
3. Distribute information about each household to every resident.
4. Welcome new neighbors and give them the collected information about the neighborhood.

The liaison updates information (name, address, contact information) on your block. Then the information is distributed to each resident. Please do not ask for more information than people are willing to share. As new neighbors arrive, provide them with collected information about the neighborhood residents in their area. As a community builder it is important to know your neighbors.

### BASIC INFORMATION

1. Name
2. Address
3. Preferred contact information

### OPTIONAL INFORMATION

Other information may be collected if it is useful and residents want to share it. Examples may include other means of contact, number of people living in household, pet names and characteristics, emergency equipment available for use (chainsaw, extension ladder, generator), or if someone in the home would need more help in an emergency due to medical problems.

### NEIGHBORHOOD-SPECIFIC INFORMATION

1. Neighborhood Newsletter editor
2. Alley-plowing contact(s)
3. Is anyone willing to snow shovel or baby-sit?
4. Does anyone provide services, free or for a fee (e.g., gardening advice, taxes, etc?)

## How to Collect Information

A primary consideration for the collector of a neighborhood's information is **privacy**. Many neighborhoods in Falcon Heights have block maps and several have completed neighborhood surveys, with no issues arising and with no one objecting to giving this information to their neighbors.

People in the neighborhood should know that the information asked of them is voluntary and will only be seen by others in the neighborhood. Consider asking the resident in person, for they may be more receptive to providing information.

One way to manage this is to ask that no one solicit anyone else in the neighborhood for sales or business, but allow everyone to provide their job and business affiliations so if someone is looking for Avon, or insurance sales for example, they could see if someone in their neighborhood provides it.

- The liaison may drop a questionnaire at each home and ask people to return them by a certain date.
- The liaison may put a questionnaire out at a party and ask people to fill in the information.
- Ask for information in person.

## Social Organizer Liaison

### General Description

Coordinate activities for your block, such as block parties, potlucks, bridge night and Night to Unite (National Night Out) get-togethers.

### Block Party Planning

Block parties do not need to be elaborate affairs. Depending on the amount of time you have and the amount of help you want to plan the party, you can take one of several approaches:

#### *Easy*

1. Plan the date, time, and location.
  - To request the following, fill out form through Ramsey County website: <https://bit.ly/24bTm80>
    - Law enforcement and squad car
  - To request the following go to [www.falconheights.org](http://www.falconheights.org)
    - Street barricades

- Fire fighters and fire truck
  - City Council or Commissioners
2. Distribute flyers announcing the date, time, and place of the party.
  3. Invite neighbors to bring a dish to share and their own table service.

### *Average*

1. Plan the date, time, and location.
  - To request the following, fill out form through Ramsey County website: <https://bit.ly/24bTm80>
    - Law enforcement and squad car
  - To request the following go to [www.falconheights.org](http://www.falconheights.org)
    - Street barricades
    - Fire fighters and fire truck
    - City Council or Commissioners
2. Distribute flyers announcing the date, time, and place of the party.
3. Have neighbors contact you regarding what they'll bring, or circulate a sign-up sheet.
4. Arrange for table service, tables and chairs, and games for kids.

### *Advanced*

1. Distribute flyers inviting neighbors to attend a planning session for a block party.
2. At the meeting:
  - Select a date, time, and place.
  - Decide who will bring what. (Make a list.)
  - Select a spokesperson to contact the city.
  - Plan additional related activities, such as games, entertainment, decorations, or inviting the Crime Prevention Liaison to make a presentation.

Neighborhoods in Falcon Heights have done parties at all of these levels. Some have simple ice cream socials where they send out a note with a date and everyone volunteers for paper supplies, ice cream and toppings. The leader makes sure there are tables and garbage cans.

Another neighborhood has combined several blocks, raised money, solicited donations from local businesses for door prizes, and hired ponies for rides for the kids. Following that fun is a potluck meal.

It depends on how much energy, volunteer help, contacts, and imagination you have. The page that follows takes you through the steps for planning any type of event.

**Remember, there is no right or wrong way to plan or conduct a block party. The most important things to keep in mind are the needs and personality of your block and its residents!**



## Steps in Organizing Successful Events

### I. **WHY:** Define the Purpose of the Event (Why hold the event? What need should it fill?)

Will your event inform, improve community relations, welcome new people to the neighborhood, etc...? Be sure to recognize if one of the purposes is to have fun. It's much easier to involve volunteers in a cause or need if you can make it fun.

### II. **WHAT:** Choose the Right Event (pot-luck, picnic, ice cream social ...)

- A. Remember your goals
- B. Who are your participants? (young, old, interests, schedules, ...)
- C. What is your neighborhood interested in or what have they done in the past?  
*Ask around to see what people would be interested in doing.*
- D. Do you want to extend your event beyond your own neighborhood?  
*Involving other neighborhoods can contribute more resources and broaden the audience.*
- E. How much will your event cost?  
*Very little, if it's a potluck. Talk to others who have tried a similar event in the past. Were there any hidden costs?*
- F. What are your resources?  
*Who are your volunteers? Are there any businesses that would help sponsor your event? Is there someone in your neighborhood who could make a contact?*

### III. **WHEN/WHERE:** Set the Date and Location

- A. Check the calendar to avoid conflicting community events
- B. Choose the location and get confirmed reservations  
*Most neighborhoods in Falcon Heights have used barricades to block off their street and just use the street itself. Some smaller groups have used city hall or alleys.*

*If you decide to rent a space, be sure to plan ahead, get enough room, and have something that fits your budget. Considerations include requirements for deposits, insurance, and cleanup as well as facility features like floor plan, seating, lighting, electricity, and restrooms. And be sure to get any agreements in writing.*

### IV. **HOW:** Planning and Organization

- A. Leader  
*Informs others of process, delegates responsibilities to persons/committees, coordinates activities of different committees, sets time limits, settles disputes, praises progress*
- B. "Committees" defined and staffed, as needed (many will have only one member!)

*Decorations, Entertainment, Refreshments/Concessions, \*Publicity, Budget/RSVP List, Donations, Clean-Up*

*If the Committee is larger than one, the members should hold scheduled meetings at set places. Specific agendas help provide logical steps for attacking tasks. Written descriptions of individual responsibilities help to avoid duplicating effort, chronologically order tasks, and clarify time requirements and deadlines. Always give praise to individuals meeting deadlines.*

*\* Publicity types can include: group e-mail, phone calling tree, posters, balloons, sidewalk chalk, door hangers, mailings, plywood corner signs, t-shirts, city newsletter, website, ...*

## V. **POST EVENT**

### A. Follow-up

*Return any borrowed items. Write thank you notes to recognize volunteers and donors.*

### B. Evaluation

*What went right? What went wrong? Record each step for future reference. Determine the true cost (consider donations) and true benefit. Should it become an annual event? File it away in a folder for future reference.*

### C. Begin preparing for next year

# Communication Liaison

## General Description

Communicates activities defined by the Social Organizing Liaison or the Community Engagement Commission (CEC).

Includes:

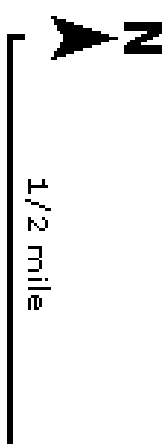
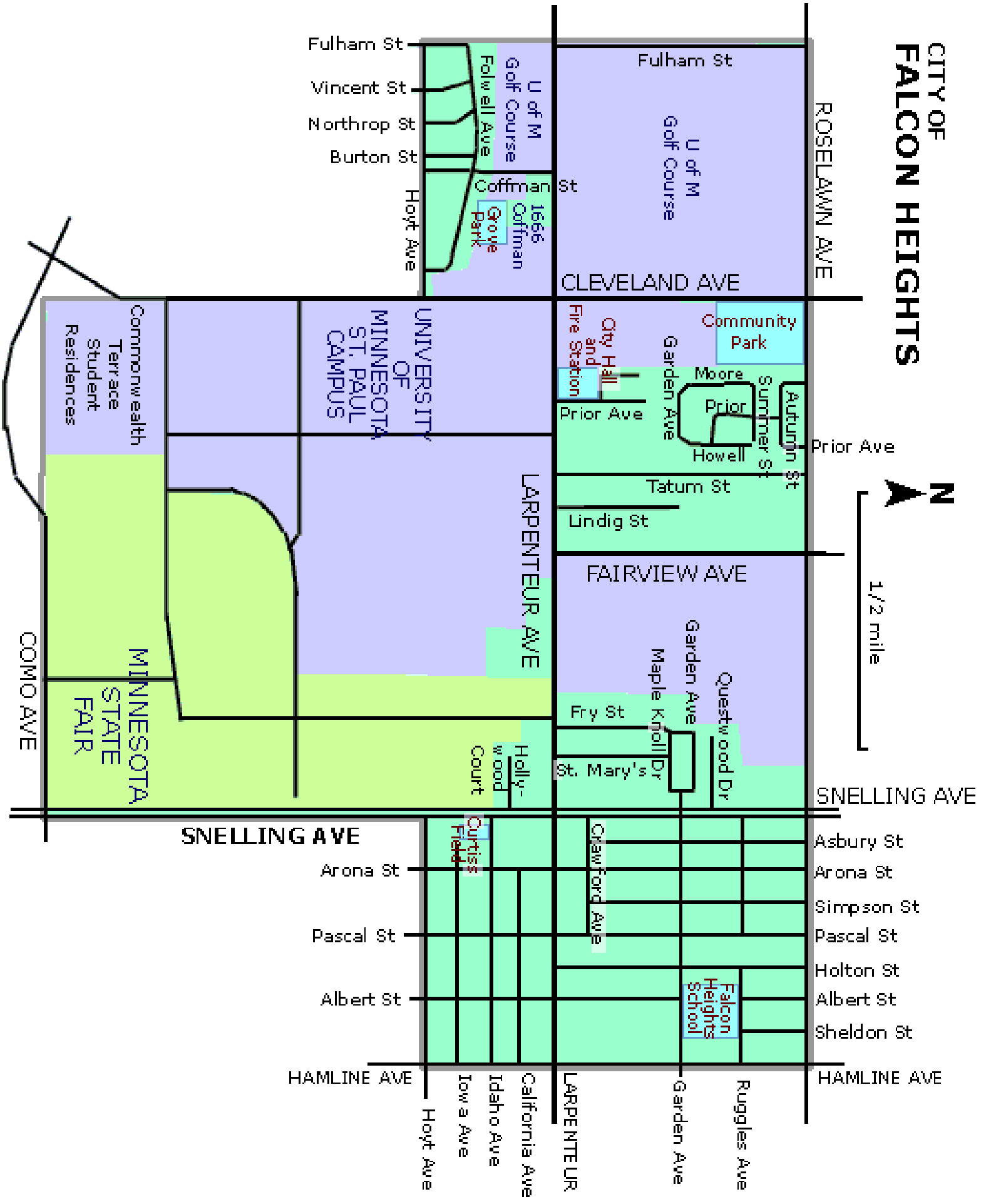
- Organizes communication within and between blocks
- Liaison to the Community Engagement Commission (CEC) and assigned neighborhood
- Community news from city website

Types of communication:

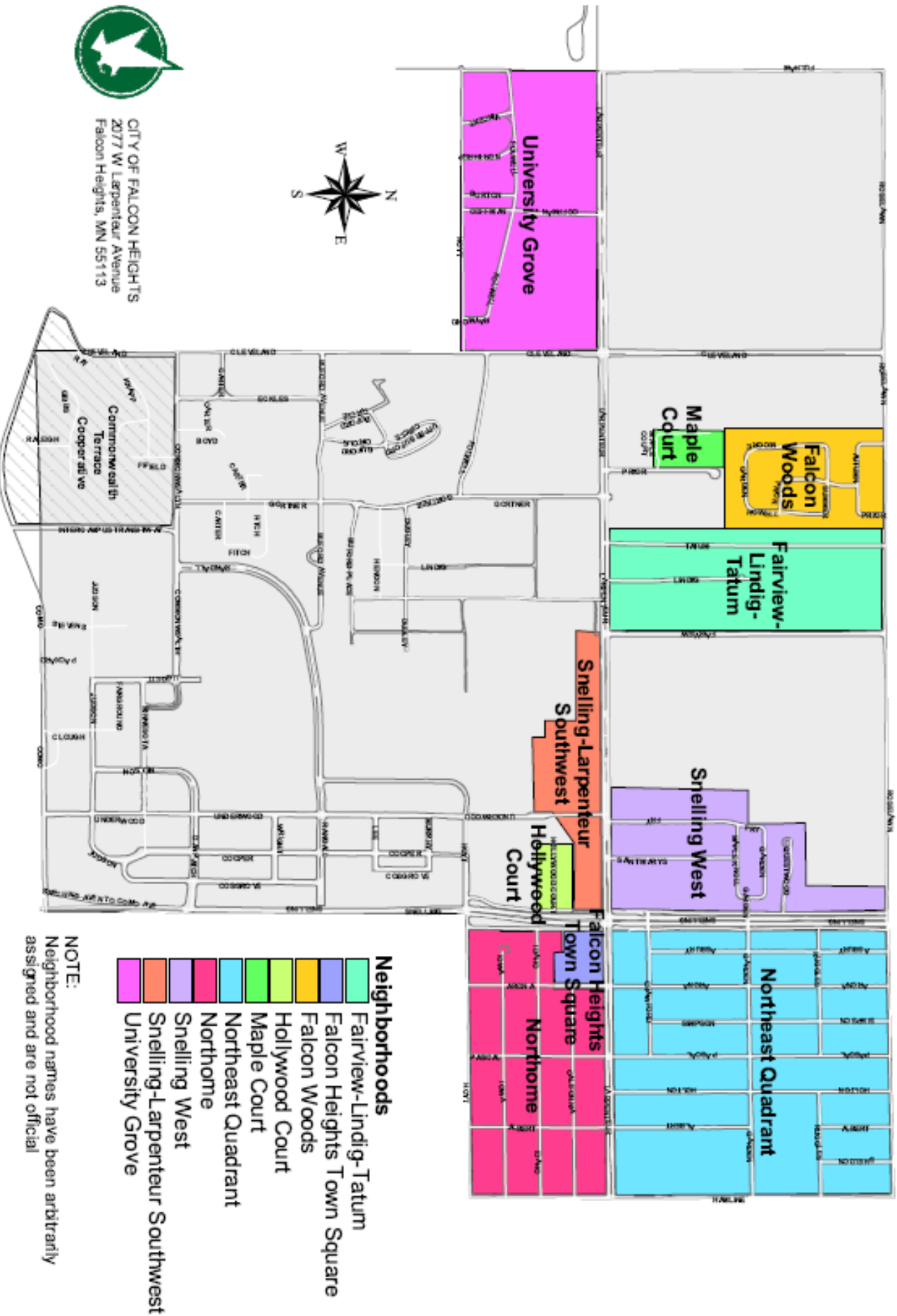
- Email
- Phone
- Door Knocking
- Social media

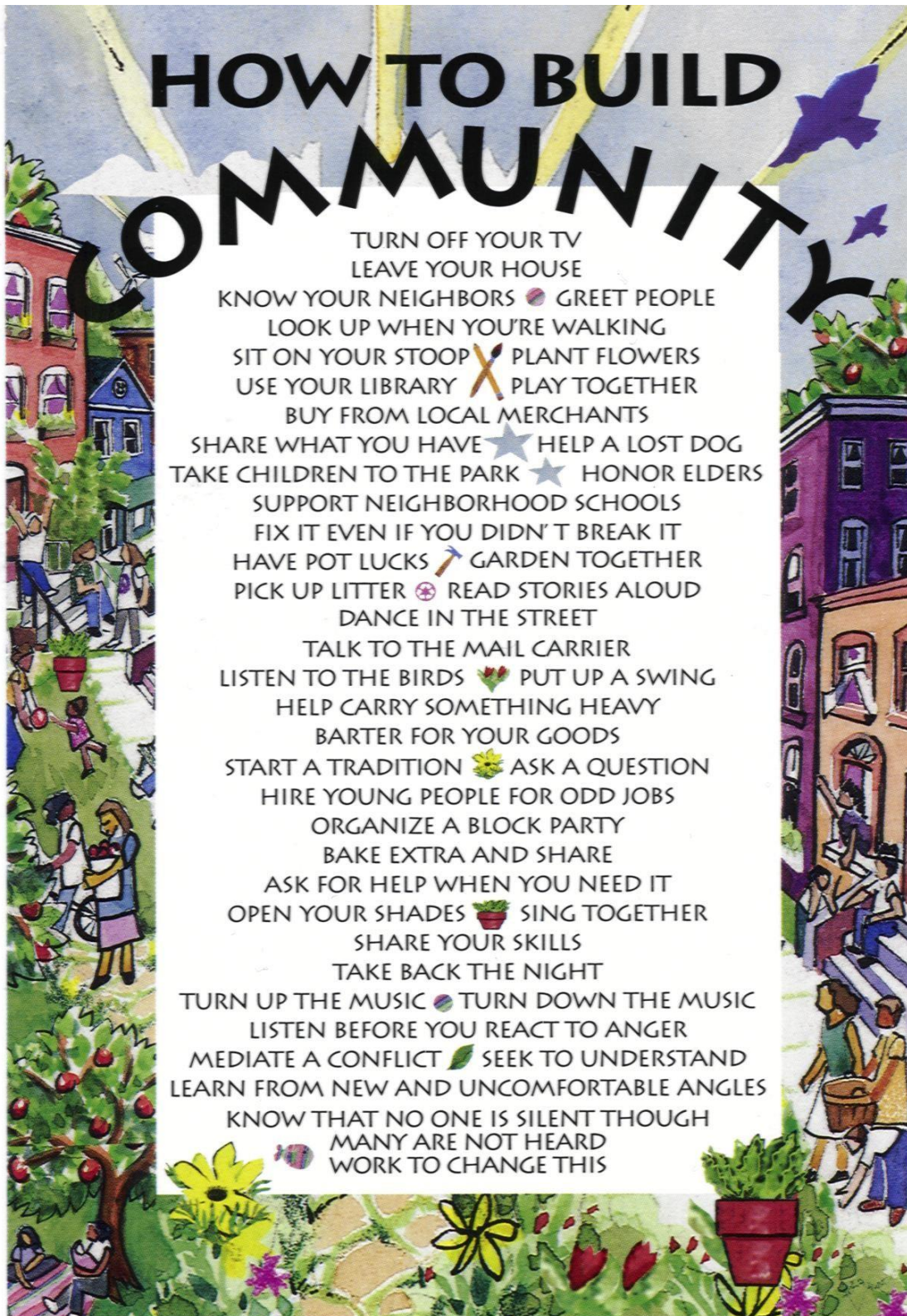


# CITY OF FALCON HEIGHTS



# Falcon Heights Neighborhoods





# HOW TO BUILD COMMUNITY

TURN OFF YOUR TV  
LEAVE YOUR HOUSE  
KNOW YOUR NEIGHBORS ● GREET PEOPLE  
LOOK UP WHEN YOU'RE WALKING  
SIT ON YOUR STOOP ✂ PLANT FLOWERS  
USE YOUR LIBRARY ✂ PLAY TOGETHER  
BUY FROM LOCAL MERCHANTS  
SHARE WHAT YOU HAVE ★ HELP A LOST DOG  
TAKE CHILDREN TO THE PARK ★ HONOR ELDERLY  
SUPPORT NEIGHBORHOOD SCHOOLS  
FIX IT EVEN IF YOU DIDN'T BREAK IT  
HAVE POT LUCKS 🛠 GARDEN TOGETHER  
PICK UP LITTER 🌿 READ STORIES ALOUD  
DANCE IN THE STREET  
TALK TO THE MAIL CARRIER  
LISTEN TO THE BIRDS 🌻 PUT UP A SWING  
HELP CARRY SOMETHING HEAVY  
BARTER FOR YOUR GOODS  
START A TRADITION 🌻 ASK A QUESTION  
HIRE YOUNG PEOPLE FOR ODD JOBS  
ORGANIZE A BLOCK PARTY  
BAKE EXTRA AND SHARE  
ASK FOR HELP WHEN YOU NEED IT  
OPEN YOUR SHADES 🪴 SING TOGETHER  
SHARE YOUR SKILLS  
TAKE BACK THE NIGHT  
TURN UP THE MUSIC 🎵 TURN DOWN THE MUSIC  
LISTEN BEFORE YOU REACT TO ANGER  
MEDIATE A CONFLICT 🌿 SEEK TO UNDERSTAND  
LEARN FROM NEW AND UNCOMFORTABLE ANGLES  
KNOW THAT NO ONE IS SILENT THOUGH  
MANY ARE NOT HEARD  
WORK TO CHANGE THIS

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