

Mansfield Environmental Services  
Neighborhood Beautification Program  
Handbook



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What is a Neighborhood Beautification Project? It is an opportunity for the residents to take charge and cleanup areas that mean something to them. Is there a vacant lot next your house that accumulates trash, or do you drive by one on the way to work? Is there a creek or drainage channel around your home that has become unsightly because of water borne litter? Are there illegal dumping activities occurring near your home?

The most important questions are, are you tired of seeing it and ready to do something about it? Then this program is for you. The Mansfield Environmental Services Department will help sponsor your Neighborhood Beautification Event by providing: **trash bags, gloves, this manual, fliers and other promotional tips, coordination for removing the trash collected, getting permission to access the site if it is on private property, and other assistance.**

Studies have shown that people are more likely to litter or dump their own trash in a place that has already been littered. By keeping areas clean, it reduces the chance that people will litter or dump nearby. This gives the community a clean appearance and keeps pollutants out of our local creeks, ponds, and lakes.



The key to a successful Neighborhood Beautification Project is good planning. This manual is designed to help interested citizens in coordinating their own Neighborhood Beautification Event.

In order to make it even easier, 12 steps have been identified to plan and conduct a Neighborhood Beautification Event. The following 12 steps are provided as a general guideline and should help make sure the event is a success.

**Getting Started:** The following is a general guideline for items to be discussed during the first planning committee meeting.

**Step 1 - Set a Date and Time!** This may not be as easy as it sounds. Try to select a date that doesn't conflict with too many other things, especially holidays, to maximize the participation for your event. Also keep in mind how much time will be needed to plan and coordinate the event. You cannot plan for an event a week, or even a month ahead of time. It takes time to get the idea together, and the word out.

Try keeping the time as short as possible. You will be surprised at how much can be done in a half day.

**Step 2 - Select an overall project coordinator:** This will be the one person who knows, keeps track, and can motivate the different subcommittees. This person should also be a pretty good problem solver. There will be hiccups along the way that will need to be smoothed out. This person will also be the focal point and primary contact for the event. There will be a lot to do, but it is not overwhelming.

The overall coordinator is where “the buck finally stops.” He/she makes the final decision on problems and should be a person who has the trust and respect of the entire group.

**Step 3** - Subcommittee assignments and responsibilities: The important thing to keep in mind is that everyone is a volunteer, and trying to make their committee more attractive. No one person needs to be given too much responsibility or too much to do.



**Making it happen:** These steps should be addressed in a later meeting, or over several of the next meetings. Subcommittees will generally be assigned these tasks. The final step of these tasks should be hosting the event itself.

**Step 4** - Getting the word out!! No one will show up for your event, if they don't know it's happening. Publicity can be easy, an article in a Homeowner's Association newsletter/website, Mansfield News Mirror, or City Newsletter. Publicity can also be more involved, door hangers and fliers, announcements at HOA meetings, church announcements, or any other form of letting people know what, where, when and why you are planning to do.

An Environmental Services representative can be scheduled to give one presentation for each event. The information covered will be a general outline of the goals of having a Neighborhood Beautification Event and how those goals will benefit the natural resources of the City. Additionally, the City can provide a limited number of fliers for each event. The design of the flier will be the same for all events, but the event information and any contact information will be updated for the specific event.

**Step 5** - Volunteers!!!! Volunteers are what make these events a success. Getting the volunteers motivated to show up is a fine art. But it is not an impossible mission. The key is to get the right message to the right people. The person(s) responsible for coordinating volunteers may or may not be the same people responsible for publicizing the event. But they should use some of the same means to reach out and encourage volunteers to participate.

Approaching key people at local civic groups is a good start. Boys and Girls Scouts, Key Clubs, church ministers, school principals, Chamber of Commerce, and other similar groups can often help get the word out to their members, and may even offer to help themselves.

No one is too old or too young, provided there is proper supervision. There are almost always jobs for everyone. The volunteer coordinator will also be responsible for getting volunteers to sign a registration and liability form and returning the form to the City for record keeping purposes.

**Step 6** – Tools, supplies and implements of destruction will be needed. Depending on the type of Neighborhood Beautification project, some special tools may be needed. These include

rakes, loppers, hedge shears, possibly shovels, wheelbarrows, and other items depending on the location and type of work being done. If your event wants to clean a vacant lot, a lawnmower may even be used when all of the litter has been removed to cut down overgrown vegetation. Any one using an implement of destruction should know how to properly use the item and take care not to injure themselves or those around them.

The City can provide trash bags and some work gloves. The City may also provide T-shirts. Check with the Stormwater Manager for availability. Other things to keep in mind are bug spray, sun block, hand sanitizer, a first-aid kit, and anything else that may help protect your volunteers. Small two-way radios may also help with the coordination of the event if it covering a large area.

**Step 7** – Getting rid of the trash. This is what the program is all about. Collecting trash from our environment and getting placed in a proper location. The City may provide a dumpster for the event, provided there is enough participation and the City has been given enough notice. Otherwise it will be the responsibility of the one of the volunteers to arrange how to get dispose of the trash properly.

Possible ways of disposing of the trash collected include taking it to the landfill in Arlington in trucks provided by the volunteers, or coordinating with a local business or other organization to make use of one of the their dumpsters.

**Step 8** – The party!!! To show your appreciation to all the hard work the volunteers will put in, it is a really good idea to have a party afterward. It is generally better to have food and refreshments at the party, as opposed to just a pool party. Remember the volunteers will be putting in a considerable effort to try to clean up the area, and they will also need a considerable reward to encourage them to volunteer again in the future.

A party committee should be formed and made responsible for the refreshments during the clean up as well as for the party. Things the party committee should keep in mind are:

Hot dogs, hamburger meat, buns, condiments, kid's drinks, water, sports drinks, coolers, ice, barbeque grills, charcoal, chips, paper products, cups, cakes/cookies, and eating and cooking utensils.

Sometimes it is possible to get local companies to donate some of the products, and some restaurants may even let the volunteers come in for lunch if the group is small enough. When looking for donations, do not try to get everything from one place. Include as many of the local businesses as possible so that they feel like a party of the local community as well. And don't forget the local fast food places for condiments.

The party committee is also responsible for coordinating the location for the party. Sometimes one of the volunteers home will do, sometimes a park or other location may be needed. Remember that everyone will need a way to get from the cleanup to party! So the closer the better, usually.

**Step 9** – Field support and documentation. It is a good idea to have a second-in-command to the overall coordinator. This should be the field supervisor. The field supervisor should conduct an inspection of the area to be cleaned about a week before the cleanup to determine a plan of attack, areas with a lot of build up or difficult items to be removed, as well as areas too rough or unstable to be entered. This information should be relayed to the overall coordinator for work crew assignments. Another survey the day before may be needed to ensure conditions have not changed. Work crew leaders should be used to guide groups of 4-8 people during the cleanup event. The field supervisor should take a role in gathering trash bags, supplying new trash bags, and providing refreshments to the volunteers in the field. The field supervisor should also be available to help solve problems and act as a liaison with the overall coordinator.

Taking before and after photos of the area(s) cleaned is a good way of showing people exactly what their hard work accomplished. There is usually someone who is an amateur, or sometimes professional, photographer who may volunteer their services. If not, most every home has a digital camera that can be used to snap a few quick photos before, during and after the event. Remember that the event doesn't really end until the party ends.

The overall coordinator should hold another meeting within a couple weeks of the event. At this meeting, the overall coordinator should remind everyone of their responsibilities, as well as provide a more detailed discussion about the specific execution of the event. Hopefully by this time the volunteer coordinator will have a general idea of how many volunteers to expect and this can be used to anticipate how much will be able to get done by matching these numbers with the field supervisor's inspection of the area.. Any questions or problems should be brought up at this time so that they can be addressed before the event. This meeting should end with the overall coordinator reminding everyone of the date and time of the event, meeting location, where the coordinator will be located during the event, and the location and time of the party.



**Step 10** – Execution. The day of the event the most important thing to remember is to BE EARLY!! People will be anxious to get started and typically will start showing up as much as 30 minutes early. Make sure someone is there, preferably the volunteer coordinator to meet and greet these early starters. Otherwise they may give up and leave. The overall coordinator and field supervisor should also be there a little early.

Volunteers should be met with a big thank you by the volunteer coordinator and given a t-shirt. The field supervisor should also offer a thank you with an offer of drink and breakfast (if being provided). The overall coordinator should also meet volunteers as they arrive with an offer of thanks and their work crew assignment.

One member of each work crew will be assigned as the work crew leader, hopefully this has been worked out in advanced and the leaders have been given an extra safety briefing

and their responsibilities. If not, try to pull them aside at the event and provide this information. Do not place responsibilities on someone who is not willing to accept them.

Work crew assignments will include: assignment of a garbage truck (strong men are required for heavy lifting); litter pickup along the street (good for kids supervised by an adult); a vacant lot crew; a special project crew that will respond to requests for assistance from the elderly and disabled; a party crew; and an assistant for the field supervisor. If your event does not have that many different types of work, work crews should be given a certain area to clean, from one landmark to another.

The work crews can then execute their assignments and should be reminded of where the party will be after their assignment is completed. A half-hour after the time set for the Cleanup, the only person left at the headquarters should be the overall coordinator and the party crew (if the party will occur at the same place). The overall coordinator assigns late-comers to work crews, receives periodic reports from the field supervisor, and handles unforeseen difficulties that arise. If you have planned properly, these will be few and easy to handle, but there will always be some.

As the work crews complete their assignments and begin to arrive at the party site, the party crew will have everything prepared and waiting for them. A final complete sweep of the Cleanup area by a garbage truck will ensure that nothing was overlooked. The party will serve as a time of relaxation and self-congratulation for a job well done. It will provide a forum for "war stories" and a time for neighbors to get to know one another better.

**Step 11** – Follow up. Following up on the event requires a little more than just thanking everyone at the party. The overall coordinator, or someone the coordinator assigns, needs to write thank you letters to every business and key individuals that offered donations or assistance that made the cleanup a success. A report for the planning committee should also be prepared and a follow up meeting scheduled to discuss what went wrong, what went right and how things could have been improved.

An article for the community newsletter should also be prepared, or even a letter to the editor of the local newspaper.

**Step 12** – Set a date for next year. This may be the easiest task. If possible, try to get a date set for an event the following year. Most areas that need to be cleaned up once will need it again. The next year can be used to do maintenance cleaning or to reach an areas that there wasn't time for this time.