

52 Ways to Engage Your Neighbors

All of these ideas were taken from the table discussions at the Adopt-A-Block Annual Meeting on March 23rd, 2010

1. Institute Sunday evening walks in the neighborhood, where neighbors get out and walk together after dinner.
2. Hold monthly brunches. One Saturday a month, have a different person host the brunch in their home.
3. Have a pre-cleanup walk, where you and your neighbors walk the block and alleys to scope out what needs to be cleaned before you do your actual cleanup.
4. Walk door to door with another neighbor, and invite residents to a community meeting or block cleanup.
5. Go door to door and pass out the Adopt-A-Block door hangers from KIB. When you leave a door hanger, also leave a trash bag and pair of gloves for the neighbor to get started.
6. Hold an ice cream social.
7. Write a sidewalk chalk message about your cleanup, block or neighborhood meeting.
8. Walk your dog regularly, and make sure to talk to neighbors when you do so.
9. Mail nice invitations to your neighbors about your community event.
10. Clean a neighbor's yard, especially an elderly or disabled neighbor.
11. Do a tool swap with your neighbors – borrow a shovel and let them borrow a rake!
12. Partner with a neighborhood school, church or business and use their youth groups and staff to volunteer at your community cleanups.
13. Keep an updated roster of all Adopt-A-Block coordinators in your neighborhood, complete with their addresses, phone numbers and e-mails. Have a weekly or monthly cleanup and rotate whose block you will work on.
14. Invite someone you want to get involved in Adopt-A-Block as your guest to the Adopt-A-Block Annual Meeting and Appreciation Dinner in March. Then get them to sign up that night.
15. Don't be afraid of the young people. "I was able to get some gang members to help me clean the street one afternoon," one block coordinator said. "It kept their minds off of violence for about a half an hour and they said they would not mark the street any longer."
16. Don't try to do it all in one day.
17. Wear a KIB T-Shirt when you work. It will formalize your cleanup activities.
18. Whistle while you work.
19. Always smile and wave.
20. Meet the parents of children you would like to involve in helping to clean the street. Get their permission to involve the child, and explain to them what you are trying to do.
21. Give a gift to the person who picks up the most trash on your block.
22. Organize a "gutter cleanup" day and take turns cleaning each other's gutters, including the gutters of elderly or disabled residents.
23. Ask the children to offer refreshments at your cleanups.
24. Use blogging, Twitter and Facebook to communicate with techno-savvy neighbors.

25. Engage institutions to help – use university students to help canvass the neighborhood and do asset mapping of your community.
26. Organize a “progressive dinner” with your neighbors – start with appetizers at one neighbor’s house and keep moving until you have dessert and coffee!
27. Organize a nature walk of a nearby natural area or park.
28. Print your flyers and newsletter in both Spanish and English.
29. Hold a fish fry at a local park.
30. Invite a KIB representative to a block meeting to encourage and inspire your neighbors to get involved in cleaning up the neighborhood.
31. Ask local merchants to donate goods and services to your projects. Don’t be afraid to ask.
32. Clean up the yard of a vacant house or abandoned house. Pick up the trash, weed-eat and mow. Your neighbors will really take notice.
33. Recruit new Adopt-A-Block coordinators during your annual neighborhood cleanup, if you already do one.
34. Organize a community plant exchange. Dig up plants in your yard and trade them for some plants from your neighbors’ yards.
35. Don’t be afraid to “talk it up” at all community events. You never know where you will find new Adopt-A-Block volunteers.
36. Hold monthly front porch meetings or social gatherings.
37. Organize regular morning litter cleanups, such as on Saturday mornings. Offer coffee and rolls as an incentive to participants.
38. Use your neighborhood organization as a platform to recruit more blocks to be involved.
39. Create a block roster and make sure everyone on the block has one. Include each person’s address, phone number and e-mail address and make sure the list is continually updated and distributed.
40. Make personal phone calls inviting and reminding neighbors of community events, using the block roster.
41. Pass out reminder flyers a day ahead of events.
42. Ask neighbors who are already cleaning up in their yards to participate officially through Adopt-A-Block.
43. Use your school-aged children to engage other kids in the neighborhood – ask them to set an example of not littering, therefore developing a “clean” conscience on the street.
44. Gang up on problem properties. Have a group of neighbors watch nuisance properties and call regularly to report violations.
45. Create a block newsletter, highlighting events, personal stories, and neighborhood history.
46. Hold a cook-out, pitch-in or block party.
47. Don’t underestimate the power of face to face contact.
48. Form a Gardening Activity Club. Work on each other’s yards or focus your energy on common spaces such as medians, neighborhood entryways or community gardens.
49. Organize a neighborhood Garden and Flower Show, where neighbors can take tours of each other’s gardens, or neighbors can create competitive bouquets with flowers from their own gardens.
50. Hold a beautification contest for the most beautiful yard – Award the “best yard” with the flowers that KIB grants every year through the Spring Flower Distribution.
51. Choose a new neighbor every year to be the recipient of a “garden.” All of the other neighbors get together to design and plant up the yard using the flowers that KIB gives through the Spring Flower Distribution. The rest of the flowers are divided amongst the rest of the neighbors to be put in their own yards.
52. Organize a tree planting with KIB.