

## Organizing a Powerful Tenants Association

### 1) Get together an organizing team

You will need a small group of committed tenants to start doing outreach and help lead meetings. Who do you already know who is upset and ready to do something about it? Talk to each one of these people and set up a meeting to get together and brainstorm. At this meeting:



- Make a list of issues you and your neighbors are facing (repairs, building status, etc.)
- Decide what information you need and who will look into it
- Set a goal for the date of a first general meeting
- Divide up responsibilities for outreach (see next step)

### 2) Outreach to your neighbors

The next step is to reach out to your neighbors. You can be creative about how to contact people (knocking on doors, catching people in the hallways, or laundry room, etc.). Introduce yourself, ask what issues concern them, what changes they would like to see in the building and what they are willing to do to help. Keep track of contact information and issues that come up. Check in with each other to ensure every single tenant is contacted. Bring with you:



- Tenant surveys for documenting issues
- Information on tenants rights
- Petitions to start a tenants association
- An invitation to the first meeting if you've planned it already.

*Tips: You are trying to build trust and get commitments. Don't just talk – listen. At the end, try to get a commitment (ex. 'Can you bring someone with you to the meeting?' or 'Will you contact others on your floor?')*

### 3) Prepare for and call an initial meeting

Include all the most energetic tenants in preparing for the first meeting. As a team, come up with:

- A place for the meeting, a chairperson and a note-taker
- Clear goals for what you want to come out of it and a proposed agenda



At the meeting, as people raise issues they are facing draw attention to common issues and steer discussion towards actions to address these issues. Decide on necessary tasks such as outreach for the next meeting, getting information to bring back to the group, documenting building issues, etc. Divide up these tasks as a group. Make sure to get volunteers to prepare for, take notes at, and chair the next meeting.

*Tip: If people hesitate to take a task on, someone should offer to work with them on it.*

### 4) Create and carry out an Action Strategy

Once you've gotten enough information and enough participation and have a clear idea of the issues you want to start with, map out your strategy, starting with your long-term and short-term **goals**, the **resources** you have (think creatively, resources doesn't necessarily mean money, people and their skills, abilities and networks are also resources), the **allies** you should reach out to, the people who oppose you (**opposition**), who the person or people are that can "sign on the dotted line" to give you what you want (**targets**) and what **tactics** you are going to use to get your goals met. Tactics should be escalating, which means you start with a low pressure tactic and have a plan for how to increase the pressure if you don't get results

### 5) Debrief and create next steps

After each major step (ex. public meeting, protest, other action, etc.) make sure to debrief. Everyone who had a task should report back on it. For things that didn't get done the group should discuss why they didn't and how they will get done by next time. For things that did get done, discuss **challenges**, **lessons learned**, and **next steps**.

