



March 2017

Useful Community Development... quick notes

Seven Things for Your Community "To Do" List This Spring
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Seven Items on the Spring "To Do" List

Does your community or neighborhood have its "to do" list ready? Spring has officially arrived. It's time to sweep up any remaining dried leaves and get to work for a productive year in the community. Without further ado, here are our picks, without knowing your specific neighborhood needs.

1. Plant some low-maintenance annuals or perennials on public spaces that your city or town may own, seeking out those awkward little triangles or even big sites accidentally acquired. Lobby your commercial improvement district or city government to do what it takes to keep street trees healthy in your climate and environment. We found this excellent page of [tips on caring for street](#)

[trees](#).

2. Start a community garden. We actually have a [how-to page](#) on our website.

3. If you read the website, you know we love clean-ups. Stellar benefits include the brief time commitment, the reward of a visible quick win, the likelihood that all ages and abilities can participate, and ability to revise the workload on the spot depending on the number of volunteers who show up. Socializing before and after is an easy add-on. For ideas, see our page on [cleaning up your neighborhood park](#) and visitor-submitted stories about [downtown vacant lot clean-up](#) and [children participating in park clean-up](#). The hints on those pages can be adapted to many different spaces. If you want to add a group conversation over refreshments, choose a related topic. In our example, that would be [safe parks](#).

4. Take advantage of the desire to start fresh by working to bridge a local divide between groups (could be ethnic, religious, economic, political, or simply factions of your neighborhood). While the National Civic League is a U.S. organization, their excellent [resources on beginning a difficult conversation](#) would be applicable anywhere.

5. Plan something exciting for neighborhood youth to do as warm weather and school vacations arrive. For teen projects, check out these [50 community service project suggestions](#).

6. Plan a Tourists' Eye View walk and/or drive through your town. (We have to confess to borrowing this idea from our own [community development ideas](#) page!) There we suggested that hospitality industry, other business, government, and citizen leaders join forces in a tour during which participants imagine themselves as tourists who have never been to your city before. What needs doing?

7. Make plans for one person from your community to do some serious learning. If you are in the U.S., we like People and Places, May 31-June 2, near Washington DC. The idea is that both the "place" systems such as your housing, neighborhood, and infrastructure, and your people systems, such as education, jobs, and social services, need equal attention. This is in the "high" cost category, \$325 per person before April 14. It's a joint effort of the National Alliance of Community Economic Development Associations (community development corporations), National Urban League, National Coalition for Latino Community Asset Builders, National Coalition for Asian Pacific American Community Development, and Network for Developing Conscious Communities. [See details](#).

The "low" cost educational opportunity is watching a webinar. (We find audio-only webinars just too hard to pay attention to.) Plan now to have your board watch together and then discuss. We like the look of a \$35 [successful board structure and behavior](#) June 6 webinar from Boardsource. Or find something related to a community issue, such as an April 27 [webinar on strategic code enforcement](#), from the Center for Community Progress, \$45.

If you're in the southern hemisphere, the same spirit of renewal often is felt in early autumn. It's just that the optics will be different.

Website Additions: We are working on about a dozen new topics for the summer. Meanwhile, we continue to answer many questions from visitors. New this month are [Residential to Commercial Rezoning](#), [Typical Percentage of Land Uses](#), [Rule Breaking Neighbors Going to Sell](#), [Builder Does Not Meet Subdivision Restrictions](#), [Deed Restrictions on Parking on Street](#), [Could Residents and](#)

[Landlords Collaborate to Plant Shrubs, Replacement of Non-Conforming Structure, Not Informed About Covenants and Restrictions.](#) Last month one link

was incorrect. Ouch. Here's the right one:

[Role of Natural Resources in Economic Development.](#)

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