

# Forming a Resident Action Group

*In RainReady<sup>SM</sup> communities, better water management means that homes, schools, and businesses are prepared for rain—whether too much or too little. RainReady programs keep residences secure and dry, services running, and rivers and lakes clean.*

When faced with wet basements, cracking building foundations, or polluted beaches, residents often find themselves alone, not realizing that these problems may impact many members of their community. If you're in this situation, you may want to set up a Resident Action Group composed of local residents interested in addressing these issues.

By enabling residents to document and vocalize problems, discuss causes and solutions, and engage with government and nonprofit entities, Resident Action Groups are an essential tool for helping communities become RainReady.

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**NEED HELP SETTING UP A  
RESIDENT ACTION GROUP?**  
RAINREADY CAN PROVIDE ADVICE  
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## START BY HOSTING A MEETING

Resident Action Groups consist of local residents who seek solutions to their shared problems at a community level. While all members of the wider community should be encouraged to contribute ideas and materials to the campaign, it's helpful to maintain a small group of core members. Reach out to neighbors and acquaintances and invite them to your house, or another informal space, to discuss the issues and see who might contribute their time.



## DEVELOP A MISSION

Resident Action Groups should articulate a clear set of initial goals, whether reducing basement flooding, preventing sewer overflows, or minimizing water wastage in the community. These goals can change over time as necessary, but having a clear mission helps the group communicate clearly with other organizations and agencies. Your group may want to choose a memorable name for itself, as this will help publicize its efforts more effectively. Clarity and tactful humor often work well when selecting names.

## AGREE ON A STRUCTURE

Members should agree on an organizational structure (or lack thereof) that helps it best accomplish its mission. There are many potential roles. A chairperson could lead meetings and act as an ambassador for the group. A publicity expert might manage the group's social media page(s) or spearhead efforts to contact local politicians. "Watchers" can be tasked with documenting problems in the community and reporting them back to the group. Residents with strong computer skills may be useful for helping record and map these problems.

## HOLD MEETINGS

Informal spaces, such as centrally located homes or garages, work well as meeting places. These sessions can take many forms, but they might be used to discuss options for addressing water problems, brainstorm ways to reach out to politicians and government agencies, or delegate related tasks.

## CREATE A VISUAL PORTFOLIO

Photos, videos, maps, and incident records are useful ways of communicating with agencies and politicians. Photos and videos are both informative and emotionally resonant, even when they are just snapped



with a phone. These media should be consolidated in a visible place. A Facebook page can be useful as a tool for gathering up-to-the-minute information about water issues directly from community members.

### DEVELOP A PUBLIC PRESENCE

A communal Facebook page can also be a jumping-off point for another important task: publicizing the goals and efforts of the action group. Local news agencies can be very helpful for increasing the visibility of grassroots organizing, so you might consider offering them your group's story. Also, there are likely to be local community organizations that can offer resources or guidance. Introduce them to your Resident Action Group and its mission! Spreading awareness among both knowledgeable professionals and general community members can be a huge step toward solving community water issues.

### PRESENT YOUR CASE TO OFFICIALS

By documenting your problems and publicizing your mission, your concerns will start to get attention.

Your next step might be to call an open meeting and invite several government agencies and politicians to attend it. At this meeting, members of your group can present your case, showing them the problems you have documented and explaining what efforts have and have not worked thus far. Request the assistance you believe they could provide your community. Remember to stay polite at all times, and keep in mind the various constraints acting on any politician or agency (usually funding).



Although clear decisions might appear not emerge immediately, your Resident Action Group's efforts will continue to snowball toward effective solutions.

### CASE STUDY: Midlothian, IL

Midlothian is a small town located in the South Suburbs of Chicago. Although the town has suffered from occasional flooding for many decades, residents noticed that the episodes have quickly become more frequent and more severe in recent years. Even small rain events produce flooded homes, garages, yards, and streets, which are not only distressing but also cost community members thousands of dollars in damage.

After a particularly severe flood in 2013, five hard-hit families banded together as the "Floodlothian 5." They began to meet regularly in one member's garage, and they set up a [Facebook page](#) where members of the community post can post various updates and links.

Midlothian's Resident Action Group has been extremely successful in publicizing their mission and building relationships with different organizations, agencies, and politicians. They have spoken at innumerable public hearings and discussions, been featured in many videos and newspaper articles, and made significant progress in appealing to influential state agencies for assistance. Although the town's problems have not disappeared, the efforts of its Resident Action Group have helped put Midlothian on the path to becoming RainReady.

*We are grateful to the [National Flood Forum](#) for helpful guidance in creating this factsheet.*

**DOES YOUR COMMUNITY HAVE A RAINREADY PLAN? LEARN MORE AT [WWW.RAINREADY.ORG](http://WWW.RAINREADY.ORG)**