

Preserving Landmarks

Get Organized!

The Cleveland Restoration Society has worked with many grassroots groups who seek to organize around a specific preservation issue. These tips will help your group organize and become more effective:

1. **Organize Now.** Don't wait for a crisis. Develop a membership base and communication system now so that you are prepared when an advocacy crisis looms. Collect names, addresses, phone numbers and e-mail addresses of other people who care about preservation in your area. Get together on a regular basis to share ideas.
2. **Focus on One Key Project.** Select one preservation project to tackle and focus your limited resources on achieving that goal. Select a high-visibility project that will have a big impact on the community and will help motivate people to join your efforts.
 3. **Get the Facts.** Don't rely on rumors. Research local ordinances and talk to local officials. Find out who makes the decisions and what the process is for making decisions.
 4. **Learn Your Political Landscape and Establish Relationships With Decision Makers.** Find out not only who the local decision makers are but also who their constituents are. Understand which constituents would support your position on your issue and seek them out. Visit with elected officials and decision makers before the issue heats up. Getting to know people face to face will help you when the going gets rough.
5. **Invite Elected Officials and Community Leaders to Address Your Group.** Invite local officials to your meetings, allow them to address your group and participate in the public ceremony. Use events as opportunities to educate local officials about your group and its objectives. Ask for their viewpoints on preservation issues. Make sure they know how many voters your group represents, and keep them informed of your activities by making sure they are on your mailing list. Follow-up with a positive thank you letter to let them know how much you appreciate their efforts
6. **Have a Simple Message.** Craft a clear, simple message about your preservation issue and how it benefits the local community. Write it down, publish it and train your members to communicate a consistent message every time they speak with someone.
7. **Communicate Your Message.** No one will know about your efforts unless you publicize them. Write letters to the editor, send press releases on activities, meetings and events, post flyers and newsletters at local businesses, churches and other gathering spots. If you can raise the money to do so, mail a letter directly to the residents who are affected by the preservation issue.
8. **Be Respectful and Develop a Responsible Reputation.** Ranting and raving will not save buildings or neighborhoods. Your patience, cooperation and tenacity will

demonstrate that you are an organization that deserves respect and carries weight with voters.

9. **Volunteer for Political Campaigns.** Once you have determined which candidates support your preservation issue, don't be afraid to endorse them by helping them get elected (unless you are a 501 (c) (3)). Go door-to-door, stuff envelopes, work the phones, go the polls on Election Day. If they are elected, they will remember who helped them get there.
10. **Learn From the Process.** If you try your best and are unsuccessful on your specific preservation project, take what you have learned and apply it to the next issue. You can lose a battle, but still win the war. Work with elected officials and other community leaders to take a proactive approach to preservation and anticipate future problems. It is much easier to work on solutions before situations reach the crisis stage.
11. **Be a Part of the Preservation Community.** Network with preservationists in other communities. Learn from their successes and challenges.