

# Block Parties & Play Streets

A guide for organizing a successful  
neighbour gathering

| NEIGHBOURHOOD  
SERVICES

Edmonton



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## Acknowledgements

We acknowledge the collaborative contributions of the many citizens, community groups and City departments towards the ongoing success of Block Parties and Play Streets.

The City of Edmonton acknowledges the land on which we reside is in Treaty Six Territory, a traditional meeting ground and gathering place. We would like to thank the many diverse First Nations, Métis, Inuit and Indigenous Peoples whose ancestors' footsteps have marked this territory for centuries. It is a welcoming place for all peoples who come from around the world to share Edmonton as a home. Together we call upon all of our collective, honoured traditions and spirits to work in building a great city for today and future generations.

*Together, we ensure that Edmonton is a neighbourly City!*

## What is a Block Party?

A **Block Party** is an opportunity for neighbours to get together, meet each other, have fun and work together on a common activity.

## What is a Play Street?

**Play Streets** are gatherings that allow neighbours to play together in residential streets closed off to vehicle traffic.

Block Parties & Play Streets are gatherings for residents living on the same street or neighbourhood. The City of Edmonton supports both Block Parties and Play Streets through planning, operations and permitting.



The organizer must be a resident of the block where the gathering will be held. Non-profit organizations, or registered charities may apply for a temporary road closure only if they partner with a resident to organize the gathering. The Block Party and Play Street programs are not intended for public events including concerts or fundraisers or for use by businesses.

## 10 Great Reasons to Host a Block Party or Play Street

Here are a few examples of how block parties and play streets can benefit a neighbourhood and its residents:

1. Helps us feel safe by knowing who lives around us.
2. Promotes interaction between neighbours of all ages.
3. Increases a sense of belonging to the community.
4. Provides an opportunity to know your neighbours better.
5. Encourages neighbours to look after each other and the neighbourhood.
6. Connects long-time and new neighbours, and teaches about neighbourhood history.
7. Build stronger communities which have the power to make a difference.
8. Animates open spaces for social gatherings and safe, active play.
9. Boosts our health when we feel welcomed and included.
10. It's fun!!

*As neighbour to neighbour relationships grow, so do opportunities for borrowing and sharing of tools, sugar, information, skills and more!*

## Planning Your Block Party or Play Street

The idea of a Block Party or Play Street is to bring neighbours together and allow use of a space within the neighbourhood not typically used for celebration or play.

### Types of Gatherings

Decide which type of gathering will work best for you and your neighbours. Whichever type you choose, keep it simple!

- Block Social** A gathering of 10 to 30 neighbours living in the same area coming together on someone's property (Driveway, living room, garage, yard, condo building, etc.). Block socials do not involve road closures.
- Single-Street** A gathering of 25 to 75 neighbours from the same street, cul-de-sac or floor in a building. This involves closing the road in front of their homes.
- Neighbourhood-Wide** A gathering of 50 to 200 neighbours from the same area coming together on their street and extending an invitation to residents of the neighbourhood or building.
- Play Street** A gathering of neighbours from the same area to increase play opportunities and connection on a residential street by closing it off to vehicle traffic. Remember shouting "CAR!" in the middle of a street hockey game? Hosting a play street means that adults and children can play safely together. The size of the gathering will depend on the types of play activities created.

Organizers wishing to host their gathering on a roadway will need to complete a Block Party / Play Street Application.



## Location

Neighbour gatherings can take place in a variety of locations. Where you decide to hold your Block Party will determine some of the next steps.

Online	Private Property	Street or Alley	Parkland
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Host a Virtual Block Party</li> <li>• Suitable for any size of gathering</li> <li>• A variety of free virtual platforms are available</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Host a gathering in a neighbour's driveway, yard, garage or in a condo complex</li> <li>• Suitable for smaller gatherings i.e. Block Social</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gatherings must be on a residential road or cul-de-sac with lower traffic volume</li> <li>• Suitable for larger gatherings 25 to 200 residents</li> <li>• Partial street closures are discouraged</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Suitable for small and large gatherings</li> <li>• Best for neighbourhoods with roads that cannot be closed due to bus routes, construction, or other factors</li> </ul>

Larger-scale events involving multiple streets or non-residential roads may be considered Civic Events and will follow the [Civic Events Application Process](#). Events that take place in City parks may be considered a Parkland Event and will follow the [Parkland Events Application Process](#). Some examples include: weddings, parades, processions, festivals, runs/walks, and sporting events.

## Timing

Be neighbourly - consider access, noise, music, use of lighting, etc. when organizing activities for your neighbour gathering, especially into the evening hours.

Temporary road closures can take place between 9 a.m. and 10 p.m. We recommend winding down by 9 p.m. in consideration of others in the neighbourhood or on your block.

Block Parties and Play Streets can be held year-round. A residential block can be closed once per season. Edmonton is a winter city and encourages outdoor events spanning the entire year! Consider having a recurring event in winter, spring, summer and fall. Visit [WinterCity Edmonton](#) for inspiration in the [Be Social in Winter Toolkit](#).

## Neighbour Support

Reach out to your neighbours to gauge interest, seek permission for a street closure, if applicable, and to ask for their input. This can be done through door-to-door conversations, by email, letter or online survey. If the gathering involves a road closure, neighbours directly impacted must be contacted with the majority providing support.

## Other Considerations

### Insurance

Activities taking place exclusively on private property are generally considered to be covered by the homeowner or renter insurance policy.

The City encourages gathering organizers to obtain \$2 million in General Liability insurance to respond to any bodily injury and/or property damages to the third party for activities occurring on a City of Edmonton roadway. Depending on the circumstances of each event including the risk exposures and mitigations put in place by the organizer, the City may require evidence of insurance. The City recommends contacting your home insurance provider or other insured organization for an "event policy" if the organizer does not wish to use their own home insurance policy to discuss liability coverage as required. We would be happy to help you with further questions.

Examples of high-risk events taking place on a roadway can include

- Fire pits on roadways
- Inflatables such as bouncy castles\*
- Involvement of any high-risk recreational activities which may have a potential for an injury and/or property damage
- Multi-street Block Parties or Play Streets where attendance is harder to control
- Serving of alcohol\*
- Stages\*
- Use of portable swimming pools

\* May require additional permits.

We recommend contacting your home insurance provider, community league or other insured organization to discuss liability coverage as required. The insurance provider may charge an additional fee to cover the liability associated with the gathering.

### Equipment



Equipment is not necessary when hosting a neighbour gathering, but it can be helpful. We encourage hosts to ask their neighbours and community league what they might be able to contribute. Find out which neighbour might bring a table, music, yard games, etc.

The Edmonton Federation of Community Leagues (EFCL) lends program equipment to groups for a nominal fee. Visit [efcl.org/rentals/](https://efcl.org/rentals/) for details. When making a request for equipment please list your organization name as "Block Parties and Play Streets".

## Traffic Control

To host a gathering on a roadway, you must obtain a Temporary Road Closure Permit also called an On-Street Construction & Maintenance (OSCAM) Permit that grants you access to the space requested. Application for the appropriate permit happens automatically through the [Block Party/Play Street Application](#).

- Block Parties will be considered only on residential roadways; check the [Permit Reference Map](#) to ensure your location is considered residential. The application will also be reviewed for construction considerations and availability of City resources.
- Block Party / Play Street applications must be submitted at least 14 days prior to your gathering date in order to process your road closure permit. If your application is approved, temporary road closure permits are currently no charge.
- Although signatures are not required at this time, you will be asked to confirm that you have consulted with all neighbours impacted by the gathering and potential road closures.
- The City will create a basic Traffic Accommodation Plan (TAP) which will be included with the permit. The traffic plan will show you where you need to set up the traffic control on your street before your gathering.
- A-frame signage and traffic cones will be provided to organizers for traffic control. Organizers must be able to pick up and return A-frames signage and cones for their gathering. These folding signs and cones are not very large and will easily fit into most vehicles. There is no cost for this basic service. Organizers will also be responsible for storing and ensuring these materials are kept in good condition during the period they are in their possession.
- The organizer is responsible for setting up the traffic control materials before the gathering and removing all materials off the street when the gathering ends.
- If an emergency takes place during a gathering, site volunteers will need to ensure traffic barricades are removed at all access points to allow emergency vehicles to enter.



## Building Connections

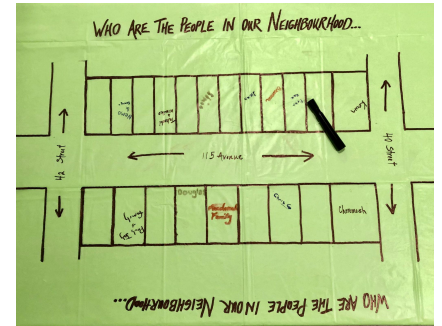
Here are ways you can build connections at your gathering. For any activity you choose, consider how activities bring neighbours together and include everyone.

**Create a warm welcome** - Assign greeters to introduce neighbours to each other. At the point of entry, have greeters ready to say “glad you're here” and provide information regarding activities, food, etc.

**Name Tags** - Provide a way to identify who has come to the party, where they live and even something about their interests.

**Map your block, building floor, cul-de-sac or neighbourhood:**

- Use a plastic tablecloth and felt pen to draw a map of your block, building floor or cul-de-sac.
- Ask neighbours to indicate where they live. Lead the way by writing your information first!
- Also ask neighbours if they would like to be a part of a shared contact list for the sole purpose of building supportive connections over time and for safety in the neighbourhood.
- Later share the contact list or 'block white pages' with those who agreed to provide their contact information.



### Get to Know You Activity Ideas

- **Neighbour Bingo** - A downloadable bingo card is available on the City of Edmonton [website](#)
- **Neighbouring Questions** - Plan fun conversation starters in small groups or as a large group. You could also write questions on a beach ball and whoever catches it answers a question, such as:
  - How long have you lived in the neighbourhood?
  - What do you love about our neighbourhood?
  - Where is your favourite place in the neighbourhood?
  - What is something you want to create in our neighbourhood?
  - Share a fun neighbouring story
- **Two Truths and a Lie** - Share three statements about you with the objective to disguise one lie and two truths.
- **Intergenerational Activities** - Set-up table hockey, remote control cars, card games, 4 squares, scavenger hunt, javelin with straws, storytelling, etc.
- **Themed Activities** - Some organizers find that having a theme will help to attract participants; others prefer unstructured activities. Themed activities might include:
  - Wheeled fun theme - Bike repair kiosk, cycling, learn to ride, scootering, skateboarding.
  - Winter theme - Street hockey, maple syrup pulling, snow paint.
  - Art theme - Chalk art, lantern making, face painting.

## Additional Resources

The City of Edmonton can offer additional resources to help your Block Party or Play Street be successful:

**Block Party Kits** - animate your party with bunting flags, name tags, plastic table cloth to draw an area map, sidewalk chalk, neighbouring question games and more! Contact [blockpartyplaystreet@edmonton.ca](mailto:blockpartyplaystreet@edmonton.ca) if you would like a Kit.

**Grants** - talk to your Community League about applying for a [Neighbourhood Micro-Grant](#) to help cover the costs for food, insurance, and other expenses. Your block party or play street may be eligible for up to \$350 in funding.

**Abundant Community Edmonton** - For more information on building neighbour to neighbour connections reach out to your Neighbourhood Connector, Block Connector or Abundant Community Edmonton Coordinator [abundantcommunity@edmonton.ca](mailto:abundantcommunity@edmonton.ca)



**Neighbourhood Resource Coordinator** - For general support regarding resources available from the City of Edmonton reach out to your Neighbourhood Resource Coordinator (NRC). If you do not know who your NRC is, call 311 to be connected, or visit the City of Edmonton's website to be connected and to find out more about [Community Development in Neighbourhoods](#).

## Questions

To discuss your Block Party or Play Street email [blockpartyplaystreet@edmonton.ca](mailto:blockpartyplaystreet@edmonton.ca)

*"I think the community block parties are amazing, they bring that sense of community back resulting in safer and more engaged communities." Block Party Host*

## Planning Checklist

### 4-6 weeks Prior

- ☐ **Build a Team** - Find a few like-minded neighbours and/or property manager who supports a Block Party/Play Street and is willing to help organize.
- ☐ **Pick a Date** - Weekends are popular with many people, but a weekday evening may also make sense for your neighbours. Gatherings that go through an application process will need to provide an alternate date.
- ☐ **Pick a Time** - Consider the needs of families in your neighbourhood. It is a good idea to end your event by 9 p.m.
- ☐ **Pick a Location** - Online, private property, street, alley or parkland.
- ☐ **Seek Neighbour Support** - contact ALL of the neighbours directly impacted by a potential street closure to seek their approval. (Signatures are not required at this time, but you must be able to demonstrate that you checked in with each neighbour. We suggest creating a list of your neighbour's names, addresses, and contact numbers/emails so that you can keep in touch about the gathering).

### Sample Correspondence

*Neighbours,*

*Let's gather to celebrate life in the neighbourhood!*

*We are thinking about holding a [Insert type of gathering] at [Insert location] on [Insert date] between [Insert start and end time]. Does your household support this idea?*

*The following activities may take place at the gathering: [Insert activity plans and indicate if there will be a road closure] Do you have other suggestions or concerns with these activities?*

*Would you be willing to contribute any time, talents or items to the gathering? Such as a table, game, special skill, help with organizing, etc. It would be great to have input from all ages!!*

*Please share your thoughts and include your name and contact information. Once there is enough support from neighbours, a request will be submitted to the City of Edmonton. Pending the City's response, confirmation of gathering details will be sent to you prior to the date.*

*I look forward to gathering together!*

*Your neighbour, [Insert name of organizer(s) with your contact information]*

- ☐ **Consider Health Measures** - All current [Alberta Health Services public health measures](#) related to COVID-19 must be followed when planning and hosting a Block Party or Play Street. As circumstances evolve, Parkland Licences, Block Party and Play Street Events may be **suspended or cancelled** in accordance with Alberta Health Enhanced Relaunch Status and / or City of Edmonton directives.

## 2-3 weeks prior

- ☐ **Complete the [Block Party/Play Street Application](#)** (if requesting a road closure)
- ☐ **Request a Certificate of Insurance** - Depending on the type of Block Party/Play Street you are hosting you may need to consider obtaining a Certificate of Insurance, which names the City of Edmonton as 'Additional Insured'.
- ☐ **Plan Activities** - Remember to keep it simple! Avoid the urge to overplan and be sure to allow for some unstructured activity.
- ☐ **Equipment Rental** - If you will be borrowing [equipment](#) from the Edmonton Federation of Community Leagues, you will need to reserve it in advance.

## 1 week prior

### ☐ Send Confirmation of Gathering Details / Reminder

#### Sample Reminder

*We are hosting a Block Party/Play Street!*

*What: Block Party/Play Street*

*When: [Insert date & time]*

*Where: [Insert address and/or map]*

*Road closure in effect: [Insert time] (if applicable)*

*Roadway closure route: [Insert map] (if applicable)*

*Parking requirements: Remove all vehicles before [Insert time] from street. If needed, please use street parking along adjacent streets and avenues.*

*Remember to bring: [Insert supplies you might like them to bring] (i.e. bring your own chair, beverage, food item, etc.)*

*If there are any questions about the gathering, contact [Insert organizer name].*

*We are looking forward to connecting with all of our neighbours!*

- ☐ **Pick up Traffic Signs & Cones** - Confirm arrangements with Neighbourhood Services
- ☐ **Pick up Supplies and/or Equipment** - Arrange to pick up gathering supplies and/or reserved equipment, if applicable.

## Block Party or Play Street Day!

- ☐ **Set -Up** - Set up is simple and can include some or all of the following:
  - ☐ Put supplies and/or equipment in place.
  - ☐ Welcome table.
  - ☐ Block Party signs.
  - ☐ Lawn chairs - encourage neighbours to bring their own.
  - ☐ Garbage bags - only needed if there is a craft or food.
  - ☐ Games and/or equipment - can be provided or participants can bring their own.
  - ☐ Traffic control signs and cones - if your event involves a road closure, Move signs and cones into position at the appropriate time, according to the plan provided with your permit. Perform a visual inspection of the roadway to ensure any safety hazards (broken glass, construction debris, etc.) have been safely removed. Remember when setting up

tables and chairs that emergency vehicles may need quick access. Display or have your permit available, if requested.

- ☐ Food and Drink - Alcohol consumption is not permitted on City roads and public property.
- ☐ **Welcome Participants** - Encourage neighbours to wear a name tag to help with introductions.
- ☐ **Have FUN!!** - Get to know your neighbours.
- ☐ **Plan your Next Gathering** - Talk about what you might like to do together in the future!
- ☐ **Clean-up** - End at the designated time.
  - ☐ Ask neighbours to help clean-up.
  - ☐ Remove any garbage and tidy up the area.
  - ☐ Take-down traffic barriers.

## After the Event

### ☐ Follow-up with your neighbours

Sample Questions:

1. Did you meet any new neighbours at the Block Party?
2. What did you enjoy most about the Block Party?
3. Would your household like to gather again?

### ☐ Return traffic signs and cones

