



NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAY STREET

A HOW-TO GUIDE FOR ORGANIZING
A SUCCESSFUL PLAY STREET

Edmonton

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A photograph of three children playing hockey on a snowy field. The child in the foreground is wearing a blue jacket and a black beanie, looking down at the puck. The child in the middle is wearing a grey hoodie and a blue and orange striped beanie, looking towards the puck. The child in the background is wearing a dark jacket and is partially obscured. A hockey net is visible on the left. The text "REMEMBER SHOUTING 'CAR!'?" is overlaid in large white letters.

REMEMBER SHOUTING "CAR!"?

WHY PLAY STREETS?

Play streets allow neighbours to play together in residential streets closed off to vehicle traffic. Let's work together to bring PLAY back to our streets.





10 GREAT REASONS TO HOST A PLAY STREET

Here are a few examples of how Play Streets can benefit a neighbourhood and its residents:

- 1 : Promote social interaction between neighbours of all ages.
- 2 : Encourage the use of closed neighbourhood streets for safe, active play.
- 3 : Provide additional public spaces in areas where parks or private yards are limited.
- 4 : Encourage activities suited to road spaces such as bike riding, street hockey, chalk art, and scootering.
- 5 : Promote diverse use of quiet roadways.
- 6 : Increase sense of belonging to the community.
- 7 : Encourage neighbours to look after each other and the neighbourhood.
- 8 : Embolden children to play outside.
- 9 : Promote safety and help prevent crime by knowing your neighbours and recognizing faces.
- 10: Have fun!



The City of Edmonton supports Play Streets through planning, operational and permitting support.

PLANNING YOUR PLAY STREET

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GETTING STARTED

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

- › It's a good idea to find one or two neighbours to help you with the event.
- › Start by forming an organizing group. It is important to include this group in the decisions about the event.
- › If this is your first time organizing on a particular block, you will want to send out a survey to explain what a Play Street is, encourage attendance, share some of the benefits, and get opinions on possible dates and times for the event.
- › Enlist as many neighbours as you can to help out. This includes engaging children who will be participating in the Play Street.

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TYPES OF PLAY STREETS

The spirit of the Play Street is to increase play opportunities, ideally unstructured ones. A theme might attract participants, however organizers should be cautious to not over-program the space. Equipment is available through the City of Edmonton to help support Play Streets (see Section 3). Some of the themes might include any stand alone or combination of:

- › **Wheeled fun theme** – Bike repair kiosk, cycling, learn to ride, scootering, skateboarding.
- › **Water theme** – water blasters, water balloons.
- › **Art theme** – Chalk art, lantern making, face painting.
- › **Winter theme** – Street hockey, maple syrup pulling, snow paint.
- › **Games theme** – Capture the flag, tag, street hockey, tug of war.
- › **Intergenerational theme** – Dancing, card tables, board games.

Resident feedback can help determine which activities hold the most interest. For your first event, themed activities such as bike repairs or winter street hockey can help promote and spread word of the street closures, and will offer residents ideas on the kinds of play that can take place on a closed street.

Play Streets work best when the activities are directed by the participants.

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EQUIPMENT

The City of Edmonton's Neighbourhood Recreation Experiences lends program equipment to non-profit organizations for use at free programs or events that are open to the public (a nominal fee is in effect).

Go to Edmonton.ca and search "The Equipment Magazine." You'll find a list of play equipment and sports kits available for rental from the City of Edmonton.

The EQquipment magazine has over 30 pages of program equipment – everything from Giant Jenga, to Target Bean Bag Toss, to sports kits, to the Imagination Playground (great for younger participants).

Equipment is not necessary when hosting a Play Street, but it can be helpful for new organizers.



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LOCATION

Choosing a great location is an important key to a successful Play Street event.

- › Locations that work best for Play Streets are residential roads that tend to have low traffic volume. Any streets with transit routes should be avoided.
- › Choose a single block so that intersections are minimally impacted.
- › Cul-de-sacs are great options.
- › A block where residents may access their property via an alley with limited front driveways is best.
- › Is there a public play space nearby? Within a neighbourhood, choose streets where children don't have immediate park access. This will give these children the opportunity to play close to home.
- › Are there apartment buildings in your neighbourhood? Choose streets where children might not have backyards.

Some other considerations:

- › Are there children living on the block being considered? Streets where kids live will give you a built in audience.

For larger scale events involving multiple streets or non-residential roads, your event is considered a Civic Event and will follow the Civic Events Application Process.



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SPREADING THE WORD

Spreading the word is important for a number of reasons:

- › It is important residents on the selected block are informed and are willing to remove their vehicles for a few hours.
- › The City of Edmonton must be informed a minimum of two weeks in advance so that the proper processes are in place for the roadway closure.
- › Let local schools know so that they can spread the word to parents and students.
- › Tie in with your community league to spread the word through social media and newsletters.
- › Connect with other social agencies in the area to promote your event.
- › Spread the word to the children in your defined geographical area to get your desired attendance.

When spreading the word, be sure to use positive language. Meeting face to face can help overcome concerns some residents may have.



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TIMING

Play Streets can be held year-round. Edmonton is a Winter City and encourages outdoor events spanning the entire year!

The timing structure of Play Streets can take on a number of different formats:

- › Stand alone event (eg. August 2nd from noon until 4pm).
- › Recurring monthly events (eg. the first Sunday afternoon of the month).
- › Recurring weekly events (eg. every Thursday from 2:30–4:30pm).
- › Recurring daily events (eg. afternoons for a week in July).

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SET UP

Set up is simple and can include some or all of the following:

- › Info Table
- › Play Street Signs
- › Lawn Chairs – encourage neighbours to bring their own.
- › Games and/or equipment – can be provided or participants can bring their own.
- › Garbage bags – only needed if there is a craft or food.

Start out by using as much of the street as possible. Without parked cars, a street is a surprisingly large play area.

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TRAFFIC CONTROL

The City will provide temporary traffic control materials (such as barricades) as well as a basic traffic plan in lead up to the event.

The organizer is responsible for moving the traffic materials into position before the event and pulling all traffic materials off the street at the conclusion of the event. There is no cost for this basic service. Enhanced service levels requested by organizers may result in costs being applied to your event.

Organizers can also source temporary traffic control materials independently, as long as

they meet the City of Edmonton Procedures for On Street Construction Safety Manual.

If during your event an emergency takes place, site volunteers will need to ensure barricades are removed at all barricaded access points to allow emergency vehicles to enter.

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CITY OF EDMONTON PERMITS

To host an event on a road, you must first obtain a Play Street Permit that grants you access to the space requested. The application will be reviewed to ensure the roadway requested is appropriate and that there are no construction considerations.

Play Street Application Process

- › A **Play Street Permit** is required from Parks and Road Services. The permit application is free and can be found at edmonton.ca.
- › Signatures from all residents affected are required on the permit application to show support for the event, regardless of whether or not they plan to attend.
- › The completed application must be submitted a minimum of two weeks prior to the event.
- › A Certificate of Insurance must accompany your completed application. See page 11 for Insurance Certificate requirements.



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ROLE OF THE ORGANIZERS

Below is a sample of possible organizing roles. Roles may be combined or filled by groups of neighbours.

City of Edmonton Liaison

Responsible for completing and submitting the Play Street Application form along with the Certificate of Insurance.

Communications

Responsible for drafting the flyers, promoting the event in the community league newsletter, and updating social media contacts.

Liaison with Community League

Responsible for proposing the Play Street to the Community League board members and requesting the league's support in the form of insurance coverage and through promotion and monetary contributions to cover roadway closure and equipment costs (if needed).

Flyer Distributor

Responsible for distributing the promotional flyer and getting support signatures. This is a great role for younger volunteers and their adults!

Equipment Organizer

Responsible for picking up and returning borrowed play equipment.

Event Team

Responsible for setting up roadway barricades, setting up play equipment and ensuring that play equipment isn't removed from play street. If during the event an emergency takes place, they will move barricades to allow emergency vehicles to enter.

Play Monitors

Play monitors can be situated in the play street to ensure City equipment and overall safety is respected.

Clean Up Crew

Volunteers will make sure the street is clear of any waste or litter before reopening it to traffic. Garbage will be removed and taken to residences for general waste collection.

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FINAL REMINDERS

Remember when setting up tables and chairs that emergency vehicles may need quick access.

You may wish to post signs the day before the event to remind residents to remove cars for the street closure.

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QUESTIONS

If you wish to discuss your event or if you have questions please talk 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.

PLAY STREETS TIMELINE AND RESOURCES

Planning a successful Play Street can help bring neighbours together in a fun and unique way. Below are some guidelines to help you plan your first event.



8 WEEKS PRIOR

- › **Find a few like-minded neighbours** who support the Play Street initiative and who are willing to help organize.
- › **Design a neighbour survey to help gauge interest** (see page 13).
- › **Deliver the survey to neighbours – talk with neighbours face to face when possible.** Remember to involve all residents – not only families with children.
- › **Discuss budget.** If there will be expenses, determine how costs will be covered.



6 WEEKS PRIOR

- › **Complete the Play Street Application to apply for road closure. This involves collecting the addresses and signatures of all residents from the Play Street block.**
- › **Request a Certificate of Insurance**
Organizers must provide a minimum of \$2 million in liability coverage. Community Leagues and other insured organizations can request a Certificate of Insurance for the Play Street, which must name the City of Edmonton as 'Additional Insured'. An organizer can make a similar request from their homeowners' policy, however there would likely be a fee involved when going this route. The Certificate of Insurance is submitted with your Play Streets Permit Application.
- › **Set a planning meeting to:**
 - › Review the survey results
 - › Confirm resident support
 - › Set Play Street date and time
 - › Select a rain out date
 - › Determine who you will be inviting
 - › Discuss a possible theme
- › If you will be borrowing play equipment from the City of Edmonton, you will need to reserve it in advance.
- › If you are planning on using a vendor (i.e. for food or entertainment), ensure that they are approved Street Vendors.



3 WEEKS PRIOR

- › Submit completed Play Streets Application form with the Certificate of Insurance.
- › Once the application is approved, create and send out invitations (see sample on page 14).
- › Gather supplies and make arrangements with vendors (if applicable).
- › Prepare any games etc.



1 WEEK PRIOR

Draft and deliver reminder letter (see sample on page 15). The reminder letter should go to residents of the affected street as well as to homes, schools, churches, etc. within your identified catchment area. Remember to include:

- › Event name
- › Brief event description
- › Event date
- › Event times – include set up / tear down.
- › Event organizer contact information.
- › Request that vehicles be removed for the duration the the event.
- › Confirm arrangements for traffic barricades.
- › Arrange to pick up reserved play equipment.



PLAY STREET DAY

- › Move barricades into position at the appropriate time.
- › Perform a visual inspection of the roadway to ensure any safety hazards such (broken glass, construction debris, etc.) have been safely removed.
- › Set up games or activity stations.
- › Welcome participants
- › End the Play Street at the designated time.
- › Distribute Feedback Questions (see sample on page 16).
- › Remove any garbage and tidy up the area.
- › Remove the barricades back to their original position for City pick up.

SAMPLE CORRESPONDENCE

OPTIONAL SAMPLE FEEDBACK QUESTIONS

Hello Neighbours,

A Play Street event is like a block party in that it involves a road closure and allows children and adults to socialize and play on a street that is otherwise inaccessible due to vehicle traffic; however, a Play Street is different from a block party in that it is open to the wider neighbourhood, so that children (and their adults) from nearby streets are free to join in play along the closed street. Examples of play include: riding bikes, street hockey, chalk art, water fun, etc.

To clarify, you do not need to provide or do anything leading up to or on the day of the event. You do not have to help organize, if you do not wish, though working as a team is always more fun. Simply, share ideas on activities you would like to see take place on our street in the survey. Or, if you are keen, please contact *name* to learn how you can help out.

Does your household support the idea of holding a one-time play street event *along ## Street between ## Avenue and ## Avenue on date between ## pm and ## pm?*

- › If you answered "No" to the previous question, what are your main concerns?

The following types of play may take place at a play street event: street hockey, bike riding, skipping rope, chalk art, tag, and water fun. Do you have concerns with these activities taking place on our block within a play street event?

- › If you answered "Yes" to the previous question, what are your main concerns?

Play street events may also include other kinds of supporting activities, such as: lemonade stands, food trucks that serve coffee for adults, and bike tune-up stations staffed by neighbourhood volunteers. Do you have concerns with this expanded set of activities taking place within a play street event on our block?

- › If you answered "Yes" to the above question, what are your main concerns?

Do you have suggestions on activities that you would like to see take place within a play street event?

Are you interested in volunteering to support this event?

- › Opportunities include: event planning, neighbour conversations, flyer delivery, and overseeing a play station (e.g. being willing to start a game of street hockey with kids and their parents). If so, please include your name and contact information with a note about how you would be willing to contribute.

SAMPLE INVITATION LETTER

Re: Play Street Event Road Closure – *Insert Date and Time*

Hello, Neighbours!

Based on responses in the online survey and door-to-door conversations, the majority of residents responded in favour of the proposal to hold a Play Street event on the above date. *XXX Community League* is supporting the play street, which opens the street for all neighbourhood children and their adults to use for various types of street play.

This road closure does not require residents to participate in the event in any way. The only ask is that residents remove all vehicles from the affected street for the event period. The street will also be closed to vehicle traffic.

- › **Event:** Play Street
- › **Date:** *Insert date*
- › **Road closure in effect:** *Insert time*
- › **Event time:** *Insert time*
- › **Roadway closure route:** *Insert map*
- › **Parking requirements:** Remove all vehicles before *Insert time* from street. If needed, please use street parking along adjacent streets and avenues.
- › **Traffic considerations:** The cross streets at *## Avenue and ## Street* and *## Avenue and ## Street* will be open. Motorists moving North-South along *## Street* will detour to adjacent streets.
- › **Event organizer:** If there any questions about the event, contact *insert organizer name*.

Thank you for your cooperation. Please join us if your child is interested in street play!

Insert Name and Contact Information

SAMPLE REMINDER LETTER

REMINDER:

We are Hosting a Play Street Event – *Insert Date and Time*

- › **Event:** Play Street
- › **Date:** *Insert date*
- › **Road closure in effect:** *Insert time*
- › **Event time:** *Insert time*
- › **Roadway closure route:** *Insert map*
- › **Parking requirements:** Remove all vehicles before *Insert time* from street. If needed, please use street parking along adjacent streets and avenues.
- › **Traffic considerations:** The cross streets at *## Avenue and ## Street* and *## Avenue and ## Street* will be open. Motorists moving North–South along *## Street* will detour to adjacent streets.
- › **Event organizer:** If there any questions about the event, contact *insert organizer name*.

Thank you for your cooperation. Please join us if your child is interested in street play!

Insert Name and Contact Information

OPTIONAL SAMPLE FEEDBACK QUESTIONS

At the conclusion of your Play Street event, you can choose to survey residents and participants to get feedback on their experience. This can be done formally as a questionnaire, or informally in conversation format. Gathering feedback can be especially helpful if you are intending on hosting future events. Here are some questions that you may consider:

- › How many individuals from your household attended the Play Street event on *## Street on date) ###?* Please indicate NUMBERS of both children and adults and AGES of children.
- › How far do live from the Play Street event?
- › Did your children play with someone new at the event?
- › Did you or another adult from your household meet someone new at the event?
- › What play street activities did your children most enjoy?
- › Would your family/children attend regular/semi-regular occurring play street events?
- › During which seasons would your children/family attend play street events?
- › What other unprogrammed (i.e. unstructured) activities would your children enjoy doing at a play street event?
- › Would your household be willing to help organize a play street event on your own street? If so, please leave your e-mail address so that we can follow up about the possibility of a future event on your street.

RESOURCES AND INSPIRATION FROM AROUND THE WORLD AND HERE AT HOME

Toronto “Street Play Pilot Project”:

<https://earthday.ca/earthplay/streetplay/>

City of Bristol “Playing Out”:

<http://playingout.net/>

UK/Bristol “Playing Out” Video:

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p05nls20>

“London Play”:

https://www.londonplay.org.uk/content/30290/our_work/recent_work/play_streets/play_streets

Los Angeles “Unlocking the Block” Video:

<https://www.nytimes.com/2018/04/29/arts/design/play-streets-los-angeles-boyle-heights.html>

Seattle “Play Streets”:

<http://www.seattle.gov/transportation/projects-and-programs/programs/public-space-management-programs/play-streets>

Seattle Play Streets Program Overview – Video:

<https://youtu.be/SRGd97hZ9B4>

San Francisco Play Streets Video:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uc5ODQxK4Xo>

Edmonton Sun:

<http://www.edmontonsun.com/2017/05/31/westmount-street-being-closed-so-children-can-play-for-one-day>

Edmonton Journal (front page):

<http://edmontonjournal.com/news/local-news/westmount-street-being-closed-so-children-can-play-for-one-day>

Edmonton Examiner (front page):

<http://www.edmontonexaminer.com/2017/05/30/play-street-movement-to-temporarily-close-roads>

CBC Edmonton AM interview:

<http://www.cbc.ca/player/play/958828611975>

EQuipment Magazine is a list of play equipment available for rental from the City of Edmonton:

https://www.edmonton.ca/activities_parks_recreation/documents/PDF/EquipmentMagazine2018.pdf





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