

“How-To” Guide: Neighbouring for Climate in Multi-Unit Residential Buildings (MURBs)

The term MURB refers to any structure that contains multiple separate housing units for residential inhabitants. This can range from duplexes and townhouses to high-rise apartment and condominium complexes.

Key characteristics and examples of a MURB:

- Multiple Units: It contains two or more dwelling units within a single building or complex.
- Shared Structure: The units are typically either fully or partially stacked or joined by a common space or shared walls.
- Examples:
 - ◆ Apartment complexes (both mid-rise and high-rise)
 - ◆ Condominium buildings
 - ◆ Duplexes

Adapting the **Neighbouring for Climate program** for MURB living requires a focus on shared spaces and collective actions that are feasible within a multi-unit dwelling. Many of the principles remain the same – fostering community, sharing knowledge, and taking small, actionable steps – but the implementation will differ.

Key Considerations for MURB Living

- **Shared Spaces:** Identify common areas where actions can be taken, such as laundry rooms, communal gardens, recycling areas, social rooms, and building/lobby entrances.
 - If your property does not have a communal space, *consider alternative shared spaces in the surrounding neighbourhood such as:* libraries, parks, and coffee shops.
- **Building Management/Owners:** Engage with building management or owners early on to gain support and approval for initiatives that affect common property.

- Consider reaching out to schedule an in-person or virtual meeting, or send an email etc.
- Consider if the property owners have a way to communicate with all residents (newsletter or social media, etc.)
- **Resident Engagement:** Utilize existing resident communication channels (e.g., bulletin boards, building newsletters, resident social media groups) to promote the program and invite participation.
- **Scale of Action:** Focus on actions that are practical for individual units and shared building infrastructure, rather than large-scale retrofits of individual homes.

Adapting the Toolkit for MURBS

Here's how some of the existing toolkit categories can be adapted for residents living in MURBS:

Starter Actions

- **Introductions:** Host a "meet your neighbours" event in a common area (e.g., lobby, rooftop patio, communal lounge).
- **Skill Sharing:** Organize a skill-sharing session in a common room, focusing on skills relevant to apartment living (e.g., repairing small appliances, indoor plant care, cooking with minimal waste, etc.).
- **Communication Hub:** Set up a dedicated bulletin board or online forum/platform for residents to share community climate action ideas and coordinate efforts.

Energy and Fuel Savings

- **Common Area Efficiency:** Work with building management to identify opportunities for energy-efficient upgrades in shared spaces (e.g., LED lighting in hallways, smart thermostats for common areas).
- **Sustainable Transportation Alternatives:** Organize a carpool board for residents, start a walking group, or promote nearby public transit options and local bike share programs (help promote bike racks on site, etc.).

- **Individual Unit Tips:** Share tips on reducing energy consumption within individual apartments (e.g., unplugging electronics, turn down the heat, efficient use of heating/cooling, proper appliance use, etc.).
- **Community Retrofit Information:** Host an information session on programs for individual unit energy efficiency upgrades that residents can pursue independently (if applicable).

Food Security

- **Community Garden:** If space allows (and is approved), establish a communal garden on a rooftop, balcony, or designated shared outdoor area.
- **Composting Program:** Educate on composting. Promote building-wide composting for food scraps.
- **Food Sharing Network:** Create a system for residents to share surplus food or participate in a community-supported agriculture (CSA) program together.
- **Local Food Mapping:** Create a map of nearby farmers' markets, grocery stores, and food-sharing initiatives.

Emergency Preparedness

- **Building Emergency Plan:** Work with building management to ensure residents are aware of the building's emergency plan and evacuation procedures.
- **Neighbourhood Buddy System:** Encourage residents to establish a buddy system for checking on each other during emergencies, especially for vulnerable residents (seniors, etc.).
- **Emergency Kit Workshop:** Host a workshop on creating individual emergency kits suitable for apartment living.

Waste and Water

- **Enhanced Recycling:** Advocate for expanded recycling options within the building (e.g., hard-to-recycle plastics, electronics).
- **Water Conservation:** Share tips for reducing water usage in individual units and highlight any water-saving features in common areas.
- **Reduce, Reuse, Repair Event:** Organize a swap meet or repair clinic for residents to exchange unwanted items or fix broken ones.

Nature and Plants

- **Indoor Plant Swaps:** Host a plant swap for residents to exchange cuttings or unwanted plants.
- **Green Balcony Contest:** Encourage residents to create green balconies with native plants or small container gardens.
- **Common Area Landscaping:** Work with building management to incorporate native plants or pollinator-friendly species into existing outdoor landscaping.
 - If this isn't possible at your location, consider looking into nearby areas where you can contribute (e.g. participate in a [Root for Trees](#) planting, volunteer with [Partners in Parks](#), etc.)

Getting Started

1. **Form a "Green Team":** As the Climate Connector, gather a small group of interested residents to help you champion the program within the building. Create group meetings, review the toolkit actions, share ideas, and make a plan.
2. **Engage Building Management:** Present your ideas to building management to gain their support and identify potential resources.
3. **Conduct a Resident Survey:** Gauge resident interest and identify key climate/environmental concerns specific to your building.
4. **Start Small:** Begin with one or two easily achievable actions to build momentum and demonstrate success.
5. **Celebrate Successes:** Share achievements and positive impacts with all residents to encourage continued participation.

By adapting the Neighbouring for Climate toolkit with MURB-living in mind, residents can collectively make a significant impact on local climate action and build a stronger, more resilient community.