

## Neighbourhood Services



### **Block Parties and Play Streets**

A guide for organizing a  
successful neighbour  
gathering

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## Acknowledgements

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

## Land Acknowledgement

The City of Edmonton acknowledges the land on which we reside is in Treaty Six Territory, a traditional meeting ground and gathering place. We 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 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.**



**“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**

### **What is a Block Party?**

A Block Party is an opportunity for neighbours to get together, meet, 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.

## **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!

## Planning Your Block Party or Play Street

### 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.

No Permit Required	Temporary Road Closure Permit (OSCAM) Required
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Online Block Parties</li> <li>• Small Block Parties on private property: i.e., on a neighbour's driveway, yard, or in a garage or condo complex</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• For residents* hosting on their block or cul-de-sac</li> <li>• For single-road closures on a residential road (partial street closures are discouraged)</li> <li>• Participants include residents living on the same street or neighbourhood</li> <li>• Involves low-risk activities such as sharing food, listening to music, celebrating holidays or cultural events, playing games, making art or dancing</li> <li>• Free for Block Party hosts</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Visit</b> <a href="https://edmonton.ca/keepneighbouring">edmonton.ca/keepneighbouring</a> <b>for permit application</b></p>
Neighbourhood Event Parkland License Required	Civic Event Permitting Required
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• For groups between 50-1000 people</li> <li>• For gatherings on City of Edmonton district, community or pocket parks</li> <li>• Involving activities such as birthday parties, picnics and weddings to niche events or festivals organized for the entire neighbourhood or district-wide audience</li> <li>• Free for Community League events and public events and fundraisers with a direct neighbourhood connection. Fees may apply for events over 1000</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Visit</b> <a href="https://edmonton.ca/usingneighbourhoodparkland">edmonton.ca/usingneighbourhoodparkland</a> <b>to apply for a Neighbourhood Event License</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• For organizers planning a gathering on multiple streets or non-residential roadways</li> <li>• For large public events</li> <li>• Involves activities such as open fires, alcohol, inflatables, vendors, parades or concerts</li> <li>• A fee for services will apply</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>For more information, visit the Civic Events webpage:</b> <a href="https://edmonton.ca/civiceventsoffice">edmonton.ca/civiceventsoffice</a></p>

\*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, fundraisers, or use by businesses.

## 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 [wintercityedmonton.ca](http://wintercityedmonton.ca) 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 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

For activities occurring on a City of Edmonton roadway, 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. 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.



### 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 can 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/](http://efcl.org/rentals/) for details. Please list your organization name as "Block Parties and Play Streets" when requesting equipment.

## Traffic Control During Temporary Road Closures

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. Apply for a free temporary road closure permit for a Block Party or a Play Street online at [edmonton.ca/keepneighbouring](https://edmonton.ca/keepneighbouring).

A **Temporary Road Closure Permit** for a Block Party will be considered only on residential roadways. Check the OSCAM Permit Reference Map at [edmonton.ca/oscampermit](https://edmonton.ca/oscampermit) to ensure your location is considered residential. The application will also be reviewed for construction considerations and availability of City resources.

- Temporary Road Closure Applications (OSCAM) must be submitted at least **14 days before your gathering date** to process your road closure permit. If your application is approved, temporary road closure permits are free.
- 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 to set up 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-frame signage and cones for their gathering. These folding signs and cones are small and 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 while 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 occurs during a gathering, site volunteers must remove traffic barricades 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.

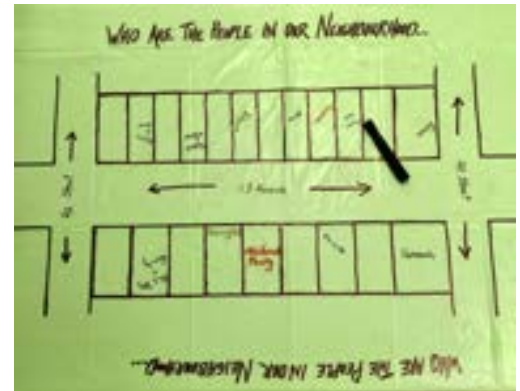
**Name Tags** - Downloadable name tags, including space for name, home and interests, are available on the City of Edmonton website at [edmonton.ca/keepneighbouring](https://edmonton.ca/keepneighbouring). They are great conversation starters and help neighbours learn about one another.



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

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

- Use a paper roll 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 to build supportive connections over time and for safety in the neighbourhood.
- Later, share the contact list or 'block white pages' with those who agree 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 at [edmonton.ca/keepneighbouring](http://edmonton.ca/keepneighbouring).

### BINGO - 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?
- What is your favourite neighbouring story?

**Two Truths and a Lie** - Share three statements about you 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:

- Wheel theme - Bike repair kiosk, cycling, learning to ride, scootering, skateboarding.
- Winter theme - Street hockey, maple syrup pulling, snow painting.
- 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** - Build connections and create a welcoming gathering with free supplies from Neighbourhood Services. Kits include activities and materials for animating your block party and getting to know your neighbours. Block party kits are available for pick up with traffic control signs and pylons, while supplies last.
- **Guidelines for Creating Inclusive Gatherings** - There is so much beauty when people with different backgrounds and perspectives are brought together. Check out the planning templates and guides at [edmonton.ca/keepneighbouring](https://edmonton.ca/keepneighbouring).
- **Community Event Signs** - A-frame signs indicating a community event is taking place and welcoming neighbours to the gathering will be provided. The signs can be picked up and returned along with traffic control cones and road closure signs.
- **Grants** - Talk to your Community League or your City Neighbourhood Resource Coordinator about applying for a City of Edmonton Neighbourhood Micro-Grant to help cover the costs of food, insurance, and other expenses. Your block party or play street may be eligible for up to \$500 in funding.
- **Neighbourhood Community Development** - For more information and resources, visit [edmonton.ca/keepneighbouring](https://edmonton.ca/keepneighbouring).

**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. To learn more about Neighbourhood Services, visit: [edmonton.ca/neighbourhoodservices](https://edmonton.ca/neighbourhoodservices).

## Questions

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

## Planning Checklist

### 4-6 weeks Prior

- Build a Team** - Find a few like-minded neighbours and/or property manager who supports a Block Party 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]

### 2-3 weeks prior

- Complete the Temporary Road Closure Permit for Block Parties** on [edmonton.ca/keepneighbouring](http://edmonton.ca/keepneighbouring) (if requesting a road closure).
- Request a Certificate of Insurance** - Depending on the activities planned for your Block Party/Play Street, you may need to consider obtaining a Certificate of Insurance, which names the City of Edmonton as an "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

What: We are hosting a Block Party!

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., 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 Day!

- Set up** - Set up is simple and can include some or all of the following:
  - Put supplies and/or equipment in place.
  - Set up a welcome table.
  - Put up Block Party signs.
  - Lawn chairs - encourage neighbours to bring their own.
  - Garbage bags are 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. If setting up tables and chairs, consider that emergency vehicles may need quick access and plan accordingly. Display or have your permit available if requested.
  - Food and Drink - Alcohol consumption is prohibited 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:  
Did you meet any new neighbours at the Block Party?  
What did you enjoy most about the Block Party?  
Would your household like to gather again?
- Return traffic signs and cones.**