

# Neighbourhood Development Initiative



## An easy How-To Guide To organize a Neighbourhood

**BLOCK PARTY**



**Government  
of Alberta** ■

## INTRODUCTION

With the hectic lifestyle most of us lead, it's much harder to get to know our neighbours than it used to be. Between rushing to our jobs, racing to drop the kids at daycare, running off with them to soccer practice, or catching up on weekend errands, people seem to spend very little time around their home. Neighbours are often greeted with a quick wave at best.

Block Parties provide the opportunity for neighbours to relax, have some fun and socialize at least once a year. Neighbours who know each other look out for one another. It's helpful if neighbours can spot a stranger on the street, and especially if one is lurking near your home. Children need to know where they can turn in an emergency, and the difference between a friendly neighbour and a stranger. A concerned and connected neighbourhood helps to create a sense of well-being and safety for all who live there.

### 10 TOP REASONS TO HAVE A BLOCK PARTY

1. To have fun – no excuses or reasons needed to celebrate!
2. To meet your neighbours. When you know who lives in your neighbourhood, the more likely you are to identify strangers or suspicious people.
3. To increase that sense of belonging to a community.
4. To strengthen neighbourhood spirit and encourage residents to look after the neighbourhood.
5. To make additional connections within the community. When you know people, you can exchange skills or resources and perhaps organize a book club, baby-sitting co-op, share walking to school duties, or find new friends for your children.
6. To meet some old time residents in the neighbourhood and learn the neighbourhood's history.
7. To establish new friendships.
8. To learn a little about each other and who might need a little extra help from time to time.
9. To have a neighbourhood clean-up day, play some good music and barbeque once all the work is done.
10. To start a neighbourhood tradition of getting together at least once a year!

#### Benefits

1. make new friends
2. find a sitter
3. increase sense of belonging
4. recipe exchange
5. increase security
6. decrease vandalism
7. small town feel
8. learn something new
9. help others

***As friendships grow, so do safe and caring neighbourhoods.***

# **PLANNING YOUR NEIGHBOURHOOD BLOCK PARTY**

One of the first things to be aware of is that both the Neighbourhood Watch Association of St. Albert and the St. Albert Citizen's Patrol Society are encouraging neighbourhoods to organize Block Parties by supplying FREE burger, hot dogs and buns. To qualify, organizers need only distribute a flyer about crime prevention along with their Block Party invitations. For details contact 780-459-1715.

## **1. HOW BIG TO MAKE IT**

- Start off with a smaller event rather than a large one. It can always grow, but it is hard to shrink it.
- In selecting who to invite, use natural neighbourhood boundaries where possible (i.e. end of the block). If you are planning a street or cul-de-sac party, you need to invite everyone from that area.

*Decide early and make it clear in your flyer if this will be a Block Party restricted to those on the street/block or whether people can invite friends/relatives (if yes, how many).*

## **2. GETTING STARTED**

- The idea of a neighbourhood Block Party is to bring neighbours together, so the first step is to create an organizing committee.
- You may want to send out a flyer to explain what a Block Party is, encourage attendance, and get opinions on how to handle the food, possible dates and times to have an event (see sample questionnaire on page 5).
- Enlist as many neighbours as you can to help out. One person can type the flyer; someone else can deliver and collect them. Perhaps local youth can drop the flyers in the mailboxes.
- It's important to include as many interested people as possible in planning and organizing your event.

## **3. GETTING THE WORD OUT**

*It is important to keep your neighbours informed. Here are some ideas:*

- Flyers can be used with a request to drop back their suggestions for the event in your mailbox.
- Have organizing committee members drop off flyers one day and collect them on another.
- Information can be gathered from your neighbours by going door-to-door. This adds a personal touch and people will often offer to help. This is also an opportunity to collect signatures if you intend to close off any part of your street.
- A casual approach can be used to inform or remind neighbours of the event as you see them out mowing their lawns or gardening.

- Residents can be called on the phone. If you don't know your neighbour's phone number, a reverse directory telephone book can be used, which is available at the library or on the Internet.
- To reach neighbours in townhouses, apartments and condos, it is best to approach the manager. They will let you know how to get in touch with the residents.
- Once a date has been determined, put up signage at the entry to your crescent, cul-de-sac or street prior to, and on the day of the Block Party.

Take every opportunity to talk it up in the neighbourhood as often as possible prior to the event.



~2007 Garden Crescent Block Party

## SAMPLE BLOCK PARTY QUESTIONNAIRE

A few neighbours have been talking and we thought it would be fun to get together and have a "meet-on-the-street event". This would be an opportunity to get to know one another, and hopefully reduce the amount of crime and vandalism in our neighbourhood. To get this event underway, we would like to know what you think!

**Yes**, our family would be interested in participating in this Block Party \_\_\_  
Number attending \_\_\_\_\_

**No**, will not attend, but have no objection to blocking off the street (if needed) for this event.  
\_\_\_\_\_

What would be the best time of day and the best date?

1<sup>st</sup> choice \_\_\_\_\_ 2<sup>nd</sup> choice \_\_\_\_\_  
Date Time of Day Date Time of Day

Your Name \_\_\_\_\_ Address \_\_\_\_\_

Evening Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Daytime Phone \_\_\_\_\_

A planning meeting is scheduled for \_\_\_\_\_  
Would you be interested in helping organize this event? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

Do you have a talent you would like to share with us? \_\_\_\_\_

We are asking each family to bring:

- Salad or dessert or snacks or condiments (please bring enough for 6 people)
- Hot dogs or hamburgers and buns for your family
- Beverages for your family
- Non-breakable plates, cups and cutlery for your family
- Chairs/blanket for your family to sit on

Would you be willing to bring your barbeque and help cook? Yes \_\_\_\_\_

Committee members will be around to pick up this flyer on \_\_\_\_\_. Please ensure the flyer is back in your mailbox. Thank you.

If you have any questions, please contact: \_\_\_\_\_

Thanks Neighbour!

**Sample form**

#### 4. TYPES OF BLOCK PARTIES

Your organizing committee can determine which type of Block Party will work best in your neighbourhood;

- Barbecues – organizers purchase all that is needed and neighbours provide money or everyone brings his or her own meat.
- Picnics – everyone brings their own meal.
- Potluck – everyone brings one dish: even # houses could bring dessert; odd # houses could bring salads or main dish.
- Catered – everyone shares the cost and the food is purchased.

*Try not to go overboard; it can make people feel the event is too much work.  
Keep it simple.*

#### 5. LOCATION

If at all possible, use a common public space. This will increase the likelihood of shared responsibility for the event. Safety for all participants needs to be an important factor when determining a location.

Options:

- Existing park or common area: must abide by City park use bylaws
- A neighbour's front or back yard
- House
- Garage
- Common room in a condo unit
- Public roadway

**SPECIAL NOTE:** If you intend to use the street or alley in any way, City permission is required.



## 6. CITY OF ST. ALBERT PERMISSION FOR BLOCKING STREET

Only local (residential) roadways will be permitted for a Block Party closure. An applicant must submit the following to the FCSS department at least 5 business days prior to the party date:

- A cover letter indicating the Block Party date and times.
- Possible rain out date.
- The applicants full name, address and contact information.
- Exact location of where the barricades are to be placed i.e. in front of which house numbers. See sample on page 9.
- A petition with at least 60% approval of those residents affected by the blockage is required. See sample on page 8.

FCSS will ensure:

- Neighbourhood Watch is notified to provide barricades & signage for pick up by the applicant. A **\$20.00 cash deposit**, to be left with the Neighbourhood Watch representative, will be forfeited if items are not returned by noon the next day (unless other arrangements are made in advance). Applicants are responsible for loss or damage to any barricade or sign.
- Fire Hall is notified of the Block Party should they require access the street.
- By-Law will be informed of the Block Party should they receive any complaints.

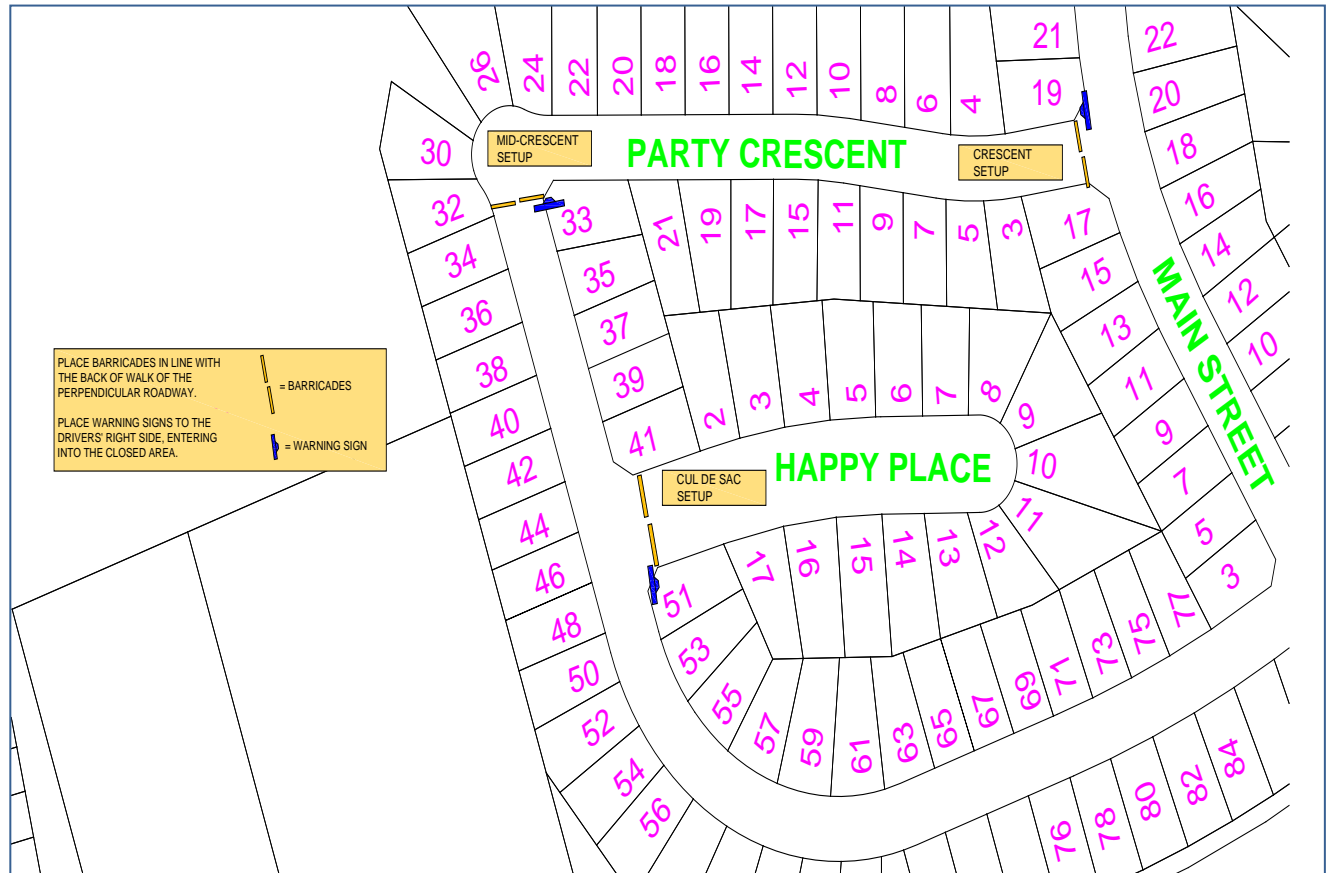
**Note:** If a residential fire pit is being used for the Block Party, a permit must be obtained from the St. Albert Fire Department. Arrangements can be made by calling 780-418-6069.

If you have any questions with regard to obtaining permission for setting up barricades on your street contact:

City of St. Albert  
Family & Community Support Services (FCSS)  
201, 8 Perron Street  
Phone: 780-459-1715  
Fax: 780-458-1260

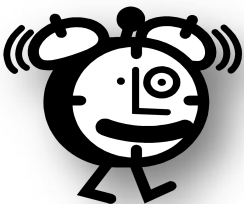


## EXAMPLES OF BARRICADE AND SIGN SETUPS:



## 7. THE TIMING TO GET THE EVENT PLANNED

- For a first time Block Party, distribute the first flyer requesting feedback 4 to 5 weeks before the event.
- Adjustments may need to be made if a neighbour already has an event of their own planned.
- Once the planning group has looked at all the suggestions, the final flyer with date, time and what to bring should go out 3 weeks before the event.
- May to the end of August is a good time.
- A weekend date or holiday is often preferable for the event.
- Have an alternative rainout day planned, just in case.
- Keep in mind those who live in the neighbourhood when setting the hours for the party. If young children or seniors are living near the party area, plan to finish by 9:00 pm.



## PLANNING COMMITTEE TO DO LIST

<i>Responsibility</i>	<i>Who</i>	<i>Address &amp; Phone</i>
<i>Chair/Main Contact</i> <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Distribute invitations</i> <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Answer questions</i> <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Organize planning meetings</i> <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Get nametags from Atco Gas (780-460-4090)</i>		
<i>Activities</i> <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Include games/activities/ icebreakers for all ages and cultures</i> <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Decide whether to offer prizes</i> <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Get kids &amp; teens involved in planning &amp; supervising</i>		
<i>Food</i> <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Arrange tables for food, BBQ's, coolers</i> <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Collect money for any group food supplies (if needed)</i>		
<i>Permission to use Street</i> <input type="checkbox"/> <i>If you are using the street in any way, City permission is required. Call 780-459-1715 for information.</i> <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Collect signatures from 60% of neighbours</i> <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Submit letter of request &amp; signatures to FCSS at least 5 business days prior to the event</i>		
<i>Clean Up</i> <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Pick up garbage cans and replacement bags</i> <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Take down any signs that may have been put up</i> <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Return barricades to Neighbourhood Watch (if used)</i>		

Sample form

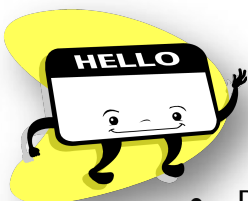
### 8. ROLE OF THE ORGANIZERS

- Make planning decisions prior to the event.
- Act as greeters at the block party.
- Introduce new neighbours and help them make connections.
- Make sure the clean up is done. You may wish to inspire clean up by rewarding the neighbourhood children with a prize for picking up the most garbage.



### 9. SET UP

- It's a good idea to have a sign-in sheet with the names of everyone who attends the party and everyone you contacted. After all, the idea of a Block Party is to connect neighbours. This is a great resource for next year, as it can help develop a contact list for the neighbourhood.
  - Nametags are important. Atco Gas will supply 300 nametags at no cost. Call 780-460-4090.
  - Decide what you want neighbours to write on their name tag e.g. first and last names, house numbers.
  - Line up tables for the food and have several garbage cans available.
- Decide who will coordinate or if everyone will bring his or her own tables and chairs, plates, cutlery and cups, and beverages.

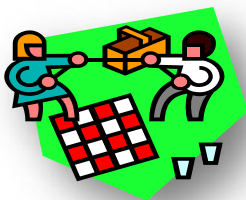


- If using barbecues, who will bring them?
- Institute a bathroom policy "everyone to use his or her own", so that home security is maintained.
- Decide if pets are allowed.
- Provide residents with an evaluation at the end of the event to collect any new ideas for next year.

## 10. ACTIVITIES DURING THE EVENT

*What should we do during the event?*

- Visit and eat. Over the centuries, food has always had a very social component in societies.
- Take time to introduce one another and point to one's house. This can be done in a game format.
- Invite crime prevention groups to set up a display.
- Have a presentation by on crime prevention through environmental design.
- Plan lots of games for kids, some organized and some they can play themselves. Examples:
  - Sidewalk chalk
  - Face painting
  - Hula hoops
  - Bean bag toss
  - Basketball
  - Fruit loop necklaces
- Encourage the talent of your neighbourhood to come forward - you may be living next to a musician, artist, magician, singer, dancer, radio host or prize-winning cook!
- Bulletin board/Sign up sheets for special interests
  - Babysitters (needed/offered)
  - Interested in walking group
  - Interested in reading club



I am interested in  
a book exchange

My name/# Cara/555-1234

I will pick up this sheet at the end of the Block Party

Name	Number and/or Email

I am interested in  
5:30 a.m. walking partner(s)

My name/# Colleen

I will pick up this sheet at the end of the Block Party

Name	Number and/or Email

Be sure to encourage intergenerational participation. For example, have youth leading games for younger children, seniors and teens working the barbecues. Make sure that people with disabilities can participate in activities, including their attendants (those with seeing-eye dogs or in wheelchairs)

## OTHER WAYS TO GET TO KNOW YOUR NEIGHBOURS

- Perennial exchange
- Garden tour party
- Group garage sale
- Block/street clean up

*Allow the majority to determine the type of event.*



## REMINDERS

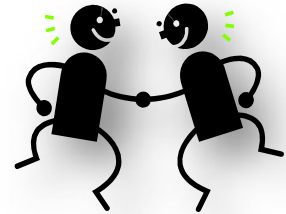
- Residents should observe security precautions by keeping back doors locked and equipment in sight.
- Be courteous, loud amplification of music is prohibited.
- Remember when setting up tables and chairs that emergency vehicles must have access.
- You may wish to post signs the day before the event to remind everyone to remove their cars if the street is being used.
- Alcohol is only permitted on private property, not on City streets or in parks.



## SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES TO LEARN MORE ABOUT YOUR NEIGHBOURS

### *Canada Day*

- *Who can trace their Canadian family origins back the furthest?*
- *Who is the newest Canadian?*
- *Canadian quiz from newspaper, library, Internet, etc.).*
- *Canadian heroes' charades.*
- *A cake decorated with the maple leaf.*
- *Canadian music.*



### *Neighbourhood History*

- *Research the history of your neighbourhood through the library or the City of St. Albert archives.*
- *Identify special people that lived in your area such as politicians, artists, heroes, etc.*
- *Have neighbours guess that neighbourhood history by playing charades (who, what, where and when questions).*

### *Cultural Connections*

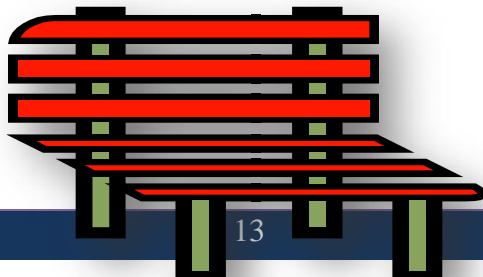


- *Have everyone bring a favourite family dish.*
- *Teach everyone how to say 3 things in another language.*
- *Use a world map to indicate where everyone originally came from.*
- *Record the story of how everyone came to live in the neighbourhood and what they like best about the neighbourhood, give a copy to the city archives and the Mayor.*



### *Neighbourhood Action*

- *Clean up the street, build a bench, plant a garden, paint out graffiti as part of the Block Party activities.*
- *Are you interested in brainstorming neighbourhood concerns/projects you could work on together as a neighbourhood?*
- *The Neighbourhood Development Team can provide guidance, coaching, facilitation and seed money to get you started... and ensure your success. You can contact the Neighbourhood Development Team at 780-459-1507.*



**Sample form**

## MISSION AREA BLOCK PARTY

SATURDAY, JULY 17, 2010  
3:00 P.M. TO 7:00 P.M.

Join your neighbours for a fun afternoon of  
food, fun, visiting and laughter!

Find out how to make your house less of a target  
and  
help bring back that small-town, safe-streets feeling!

Find someone to trade books with! Find a walking partner!  
Find a new friend! Find someone to walk your dog! Find someone  
who likes to quilt or knit or crochet! Find someone who enjoys  
doing crafts!

*Bring your own lawn chairs, cups  
and non-alcoholic beverages*

**Hot dogs and Hamburgers are Free!!!**

Mustard, relish and ketchup will be available

(Please leave your pets at home)

# Don't Miss Out!!

**DEERBOURNE PARK  
NEIGHBOURHOOD BLOCK PARTY!!**

*Many thanks to the  
Organizing Committee  
from Deerbourne Park  
Neighbourhood for  
sharing this great idea!*

**SATURDAY, AUGUST 25<sup>th</sup>**  
**4:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m.**

**Sample form**

In case of rain, we will have the party on Sunday from 1 – 5 p.m.

**Join your neighbours at Deerbourne Park for a fun afternoon of  
games, visiting, and food!!**

**All are welcome!!**

**Children's Bike Parade  
4:30**

*Decorate your bike and  
show off your creativity!!  
Children will parade their  
bikes through the park.*

Test your  
Chess skills!!

**Face  
Painting!!**

3-legged Race!!

RCMP Patrol car for the  
kids to check out!!

**Bring your remote  
control car to race  
around a track!**

Crime Prevention  
Groups – how to make  
your house less of a  
target!

Find a walking partner! A babysitter!  
Someone to trade books with! A new  
friend! Trade plant slips! Someone to  
walk your dog!

Get to know your  
neighbours!! Bring back  
that small-town, safe  
streets feeling!

If you have not previously  
confirmed your attendance,  
please email  
[person@hotmail.com](mailto:person@hotmail.com) with  
the number attending so  
we can be sure to have  
enough burgers!!

**Please Bring:**

1. Lawn chairs or blanket for your family!
2. Even #'d houses bring a salad.
3. Odd #'d houses bring a dessert.
4. Beverage for your family.



# NEIGHBOURHOOD BINGO

*Sample form*

Your name: \_\_\_\_\_

- **All completed forms will be placed in a box for a draw**
- Find someone who has/is: (cannot use a person for more than one)

Moved here from Winnipeg	Likes liver and onions	Has 2 cats	Plays guitar	Can play the spoons
Has travelled to more than 2 other countries	Can do card tricks	Lived here longer than 10 years	Electrician	Volunteers
House number ends in 4	Has more than 3 kids	Helped organize this Block Party	Is wearing something home-made	Born in another country
Retired	Knows how to play pinochle	Is Irish	Lived here less than 6 months	Teacher
Owens more than 200 books	A marathon runner	Can raise one eyebrow	Is 8 years old	Military Family



**SAFE NEIGHBOURHOOD BLOCK PARTY**  
**EVALUATION FORM**

**Sample form**

To help plan future block parties your feedback is appreciated.

What were the 3 best things about the Block Party?

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

What 3 things would you recommend for the next party?

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

How would you like to maintain the neighbourhood connection that was started at the Block Party during the rest of the year?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Are you willing to help with the planning of a future neighbourhood event?

Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

If yes, please leave your name and phone # \_\_\_\_\_

Return this form to \_\_\_\_\_ by \_\_\_\_\_





## QUESTIONS

If you wish to discuss your event or if you have questions please call:

Colleen Lamble  
Community Development Coordinator  
780-459-1715  
[clamble@st-albert.net](mailto:clamble@st-albert.net)

May 2011