



Neighbourhood Block Parties are a great way for neighbours to get together to meet each other and connect over food and fun. Connecting with neighbours creates a sense of belonging in your neighbourhood and contributes to wellbeing and safety in your community. It is a time to celebrate what you love about where you live and an opportunity to identify and discuss ways to make it even better. This guide was created to help make the process easy and fun.

Top Ten Reasons to Host a Block Party:

- ✓ To have fun
- ✓ To get to know your neighbours
- ✓ To build friendships
- ✓ To create a sense of belonging
- ✓ To meet others that you could help out or that could help you in the future
- ✓ To celebrate your great neighbourhood
- ✓ To increase sense of safety/security by knowing your neighbours
- ✓ To learn about the history of your neighbourhood
- ✓ To discuss events and happenings in your neighbourhood
- ✓ To form a group to plan more fun events!



Planning Your Neighbourhood Block Party

Find Some Neighbours to Help!

The idea of a neighbourhood block party is to bring neighbours together, so the first step is to bring some people together to plan the party. Start by connecting with a couple neighbours you already know to see if they would help with planning and ask them to talk to neighbours they know. You may want to send out a flyer to explain what a Block Party is and generate interest to see if others would like to help with the event. Enlist as many neighbours as you can to help out and lessen the work load.

It's important to include as many interested people as possible (including youth) in planning and organizing your event. Areas they could help with include:

- Invitations & Promotion of Event
- Food & Beverages
- Application or Permits
- Set-up & Takedown
- Games or Activities

➔ Start Simple Start Small

Start off with a smaller event rather than a large one. Block Parties don't need to include big street closures or require inviting the whole neighbourhood. It can be as simple as a few households getting together on the front driveway. The size of the event will also impact the complexity of the event. In selecting who to invite, use natural neighbourhood boundaries where possible. If you are planning a street or cul-de-sac party, you will need to invite everyone from that area and have their support especially if blocking off a street.

*You may also want to decide if this event is just for neighbours or if outside family and friends can be invited too.

➔ Pick a Date & Time

While a block party can happen all year round, most will occur during "block party season" May- September. This is when the weather is most likely to be favorable for an outdoor event. A weekend date or holiday is often the best time for the event, though many residents have had success with a weekday evening as well.

Keep in mind those who live in the neighbourhood when setting the hours for the party. If there are young children or seniors living near the party area, it is a good idea to plan to finish by 9pm.



➔ Decide What to Eat

Food tends to be the main incentive that brings people together. There are many different ways to go about your Block Party and the options are endless. Here are some ideas to get you started:

- ✓ **Barbecue** – organizers can arrange for use of a large BBQ (See listing on City website) or have neighbours bring their portable BBQ to the event. Guests may bring their own meat or the organizing committee may supply this part for the event.
- ✓ **Picnic** – everyone brings food for their own families. (Planning committee may want to supply dessert, cake or ice cream treats for everyone.)
- ✓ **Potluck** – everyone brings one dish to share. (Even # houses could bring dessert, odd # houses could bring salads or everyone brings a family favorite or cultural main dish)
- ✓ **Catered Dinner** – hire a catering company to prepare the food and have everyone pitch in to share the cost.
- ✓ **Progressive Supper** – appetizers at one house, main course next door, and dessert down the street. (These parties are fun year round.)
- ✓ **Chili Cook-Off** – turn your event into a friendly competition and have neighbours prepare their version of a dish to be sampled by everyone.
- ✓ **Backyard Campfire** – have neighbours over to roast some hotdogs or marshmallows if you have a safe fire pit to do so. (See City of Red Deer Fire Permit Bylaw for details)

Be sensitive of food allergies. If people are bringing food to share encourage them to bring the recipe as it is not only provides useful information for those with allergies but a recipe exchange is also a fun activity!

* As a reminder the City of Red Deer does not allow for consumption of alcohol on City property including parks, sidewalks or roads. For events held within a facility or where you are serving alcohol, you may be required to have a liquor license. (See Alberta Gaming and Liquor Commission <http://aglc.ca>)

Try to be environmentally conscious by having people bring their own dishes, recycling bottles and containers and minimizing waste.



➔ Choose Your Location

Consider what activities you want to have and where in your neighbourhood the best location might be. Each neighbourhood is unique and you or your neighbours likely know where those hidden sweet spots are. Depending on your planning time available, number of people you would like to include and how much neighbourhood interest you have, here are some party options to choose from.

- ✓ **Yard or House** - Host a social get together in your own yard, house or garage! This is the simplest way to start and works well for a smaller number of people. You could invite those neighbours that live closest to you to share a meal together or just hang out and get to know each other
- ✓ **Park or Green Space** - Host a gathering in the park in your neighbourhood! Park sites allow you to not only enjoy a meal together but you can engage in fun active games. The green spaces in your crescent/close or even your neighbourhood central park site work well.
- ✓ **Street Party** - Host a Block Party on your neighborhood street or cul-de-sac (sorry streets with bus routes cannot be used). Transform your street into a hub of activity for the day. As this event occurs on a public street, you may need to apply for a *City of Red Deer Special Event Permit* prior to your event and will be required to have insurance.
- ✓ **Neighbourhood Activity Centre** - Consider renting the activity centre or community/church hall in your neighbourhood. This option works well year round when weather might be a factor.

Neighbourhoods with activity centres in Red Deer include: Bower, Clearview, Deer Park, Eastview, Eastview Estates, Grandview, Highland Green, Normandeau, Morrisroe East, Morrisroe West, Mountview, Oriole Park, Parkvale, Pines, West Park.

Note: In some cases where higher risk activities such as bouncy castles, horse rides or where large tents or fire pits are used, you may also require a **Special Event Permit and insurance**. (Contact City of Red Deer Inspections and Licensing department for more information on Special Event Permits www.reddeer.ca or 403-342-8190)



It's All Fun and Games!

➔ Play Some Games

While food and visiting will be the focus of the event, it is always a good idea to have some games or activities planned to keep people engaged. You could even base your event around a theme such as community soccer game, cultural heritage or favorite holiday.

To help people get to know each other and break the ice try one of these ideas:

- Neighbourhood Bingo
- 21 Questions
- Speed Dating
- On this day in the year _____

Keep the kids busy with these ideas:

- Sidewalk Chalk
- A Scavenger Hunt
- Lawn Games
- Face Painting

➔ Getting The Word Out

A party is only so good as people know it happening. So make sure you are talking about it every chance you get. Make a special effort to personally invite new Canadians who may not be familiar with the term Block Party. Other ways to advertise could be to:

- ✓ Create flyers and drop them in neighbours mailbox
- ✓ Put up a poster on the local bulletin/communication board
- ✓ Post information on the neighbourhood Facebook page
- ✓ Hang door knocker invites on neighbours home
- ✓ Put out lawn signs advertising the event



Quick Planning Checklist

You as the organizers are responsible for supporting the event in a way that makes it a success. One of the keys to success is good planning. Make a to-do list and identify with your organizing committee who will be responsible for each item. Some of the items you are going to want to discuss include:

Before	
	Choose your date, time location and size of event.
	Decide what type of food you want and if you need to purchase additional supplies in advance.
	Decide if everyone will bring his or her own tables and chairs, plates, cutlery and cups, and beverages.
	How will you advertise and who will deliver invites?
	Who will register you Block Party with the City and complete permit forms if necessary?
	If using barbecues, who will bring them? What safety measures have you put in place for BBQ? e.g. Fire extinguishers, water
During	
	Who will be greeter(s) at the event; introducing new neighbours and helping them make connections. Provide everyone with a name tag and have a sign in sheet.
	Who will set up tables for food and supplies?
	Do you want to have a collection jar for donations to either off set cost or go to a local project or charity?
	Institute a bathroom policy “everyone to use his or her own”, so that home security is maintained. Are there washroom facilities close to the site? Rent a porta potty if needed.
	Designate someone to be in charge of facilitating games and activities.
After	
	Make sure to leave it how you found it. You may wish to encourage clean up by rewarding the neighbourhood children with a prize for picking up garbage.
	Who will take down any signs that were put up and return borrowed equipment?
	Provide residents with an evaluation at the end of the event to collect any new ideas for next year



Final Tips & Reminders:

1. It is a good idea to have a sign-in sheet to collect contact information so you can stay connected all year long or start a Facebook group if you don't have one.
2. Use name tags to help identify and remember each other's name.
3. Have several garbage and recycling bins on site.
4. Remember to leave it better than you found it.
5. Keep noise levels reasonable.
6. Be considerate of your neighbours and aware of the Community Standards Bylaw, and all other applicable City Bylaws.
7. Decide if pets are allowed at the event.
8. Encourage people to use their own washrooms but have a water source on site for rinsing.
9. Remind people to lock their doors even if the party is close to their house.
10. Have people fill in an evaluation form afterwards or provide a way to give feedback.

For Block Party resources and more party ideas check out the Block Party Program on the City of Red Deer website: www.reddeer.ca/blockparty

For assistance or more information please contact:

City of Red Deer - Community Facilitators

403-314-5910 or 403-314-5911

blockparty@reddeer.ca