

# NEIGHBOURHOOD BLOCK PARTY KIT

"Building communities one block at a time!"



AN EASY HOW TO  
GUIDE TO ORGANIZE  
A NEIGHBOURHOOD  
BLOCK PARTY

**Compiled by:**  
Community Services Department  
2009 Edition

## INTRODUCTION

A neighbourhood block party is the opportunity for neighbours to get together, meet each other, have fun and maybe work together on a common activity

## 10 TOP REASONS TO HAVE A BLOCK PARTY



- To have fun - no excuses or reasons are needed to celebrate.
  - To provide an opportunity to know your neighbours and where they live.
  - To establish friendships.
  - To increase that sense of belonging to a community.
  - To meet neighbours on your block that might be able to help you with a gardening problem, or lend you that needed ingredient for your recipe.
  - To encourage neighbours to look after the neighbourhood.
- To help with safety/crime prevention by knowing who lives where and who does not.
  - To learn a little about each other and know who might need a little extra help from time to time.
  - To increase security by knowing each other's schedules.
  - To develop an opportunity to meet some of the old time neighbours and learn about your community history.

*As friendships grow, so do opportunities for borrowing and sharing of tools, sugar, information etc.*

# PLANNING YOUR NEIGHBOURHOOD BLOCK PARTY

Things to consider when organizing your event.

## 1. GETTING STARTED

- The idea of a neighbourhood block party is to bring neighbours together. It's a good idea to find 1 or 2 neighbours to help you with the event.
- One can take the "Lone Ranger" approach, and it can be a great event. However, it may make it more difficult to find someone else to organize it next year.
- The first step is to create an Organizing Committee. It is important to include everyone in the decisions about the event.
- If this is the first time you may want to send out a flyer to explain what a Block Party is, encourage attendance, perhaps share some of the benefits, get opinions on how to handle the food, and possible dates and times to have the event.
- Enlist as many neighbours as you can to help out. Someone can type the flyer; someone else can collect them. You may want to ask some kids to drop the flyers in the mailboxes.



*Refer to Flyer Package*

## 2. TYPES OF BLOCK PARTIES

Which type of block party will work best in your neighbourhood?

- barbecues - organizers purchase all that is needed and neighbours provide the money;
  - everyone brings his or her own meat.
- picnics -- everyone brings their own meal;
- pot luck - everyone brings one 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!*

### 3. 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).

### 4. LOCATION



- Alley\*
- Street\*
- Park\*

Because these locations are on public lands, a permit is required (see permit information below). Safety needs to be an important factor in planning!

#### **Other Options:**

- A neighbour's backyard
- House
- Garage (rainout)
- Common room in a condo unit

*It is recommended to use a public space, if at all possible. This will increase the likelihood of shared responsibility for the event.*

### 5. CITY OF EDMONTON PERMITS

- A permit is required from The **Transportation Department** when a block party is held on a location where there is traffic - for example, streets, back alleys or cul-de-sacs. A Block Party permit is required to block off the street.
- Signatures from all your neighbours in the party zone are required on the permit to show support for the event, whether or not they plan to attend.
- The permit must be submitted at least 2 weeks before the event. The cost for the permit (which includes road barriers and their pick up and delivery) is on the City's website, as well as shown on the Block Party permit application.
- See your permit in the kit or call **311**.
- **Alcohol consumption is not permitted on city roads or public property.**

- **Parkland Permits** for a neighbourhood park are available from your Community Recreation Coordinator (CRC) at no cost.
- Contact a CRC in your Service Area ( South, East or West) at **311**.
- Bylaw 2202 allows dogs on unimproved and improved trails in parks, but not on sportsfields or playgrounds.
- Bylaw 2202 prohibits the consumption of alcohol and no selling of food, drink or merchandise on parkland.
- No vehicles are permitted on the park site.
- Remember that at the end of the function, the site needs to be clean.
- **Liability Insurance** is required for parties on city parkland. Check with your Community League about this. If your event is a sponsored Community League event, their insurance may cover you. If not, you may wish to check with your home insurance.

*Don't let obstacles stand in your way. In organizing the event, be creative!*

## 6. 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 Committee has looked at all the suggestions, the final flyer with date, time and what to bring should go out 3 weeks before the event.
- Mid-May to end of August is a good time.
- A weekend date or holiday is often the best times for the event.
- Have an alternate rainout day planned, just in case.
- Keep in mind who lives 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 9:00pm.



## 7. GETTING THE WORD OUT

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

- Flyers can be used with a request to drop back their suggestions for the event in your mailbox.
- Information can be gathered from your neighbours by going door-to-door. This adds a personal touch and people often offer to help.
- A casual approach can be used to inform neighbours as you see them out doing their lawns.

- Neighbours can be called on the phone. (If you don't know your neighbours, a reverse directory telephone book can be used. They are available at libraries.)
- Make an extra effort to get your new Canadian neighbours out to the event (see the handout in the kit for some ideas).
- 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.

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

## 8. ROLE OF THE ORGANIZERS

- Make decisions about the set up.
- Act as a greeter at the event.
- 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 children with a prize.)

## 9. SET UP

- Set up a **sign-in book** for records for the next year, and it can help develop a contact list for the neighbourhood.
- **Nametags** are important. Call **Atco** at 420-3856. They will supply 300 nametags at no cost. Pick-up is at their Downtown office.
- Decide what you want neighbours to write on their name tags (e.g. -first and last names, house numbers).
- Line up **tables** for the food and have a few **garbage cans** available.
- Decide whether you will coordinate or everyone will bring their own

**Tables and chairs**

**Plates, cutlery and cups**

**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.
- Be ready to oversee the **clean up** after the event.
- You may wish to do an **evaluation** at the end of the event to collect any new ideas. (*See sample in the kit.*)



## 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.
- Games for kids (some organized, some they can plan themselves).
- Take time to introduce one another and point to one's house. This can be done in a game format.
- Encourage the talent in your neighbourhood to come forward such as musicians, magicians.

### **Fire Pits:**

*Especially during September neighbours have asked if a fire pit is allowed.*

- There are no specific fire permits required on streets; however a fire permit is required on Parkland.
- If your block party will be held on Parkland ask your CRC to add a fire permit to your application. Refer back to Section 5.
- If your block party is held on the street then neighbours are asked to follow the same guidelines that are set by the Open Air Fire Bylaw (a brochure is available at any Fire Hall Station).
- For further information call the Edmonton Emergency Response Department at **311**.

## **OTHER WAYS TO GET TO KNOW YOUR NEIGHBOURS**

- Perennial exchange
- Garden tour party
- Group garage sale



*Allow the majority to determine the event.*

## **FINAL REMINDERS**

- Neighbours should observe security precautions by keeping back doors locked and equipment in sight.
- Loud music is prohibited.
- Remember when setting up tables and chairs that emergency vehicles may need access.
- You may wish to post signs the day before the event to remind everyone to remove cars for the street closure.

## **QUESTIONS**

If you wish to discuss your event or if you have questions please call the office in your area: South, West & East at **311**.

### **CHECKLIST OF FLYERS**

- ✓ Block party permit application
- ✓ Planning check list
- ✓ Block party questionnaire and sample of an invitation
- ✓ How to welcome your new Canadian neighbour to the Block party
- ✓ Block party sign-in sheet
- ✓ Suggested activities to learn about your neighbours
- ✓ Ice breaker game - Bingo
- ✓ Evaluation