



BLOCK PARTY

PLANNING GUIDE

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:

1. To have fun
2. To get to know your neighbours
3. To build friendships
4. To create a sense of belonging
5. To meet others that you could help out or that could help you in the future
6. To celebrate your great neighbourhood
7. To increase sense of safety/security by knowing your neighbours
8. To learn about the history of your neighbourhood
9. To discuss events and happenings in your neighbourhood
10. 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 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're in a hamlet or acreage subdivision and are planning a street 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 and 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 block party area, it is a good idea to plan to finish by 9pm.

It's very important for you to register your block party as it enables the Red Deer County to track the needs of county residents, and to take advantage of our great resources available for loan.

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 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. Check out the list of available BBQs at www.rdcountry.ca/183/Community-Services.
- 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. (houses could organize who brings 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 Style– 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. Visit www.rdcountry.ca or call 403.343.6667 for information on Fire Services.

Check with Alberta Health Services (www.albertahealthservices.ca) to comply with all public health requirements for serving food at your event.

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!

*Red Deer County has specific regulations for the use of alcohol on County land, please ensure this use is

permitted beforehand and consult Alberta Gaming and Liquor Commission for further requirements and proper permits. (See Alberta Gaming and Liquor Commission www.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 (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 Public Event Permit prior to your event and may be required to have insurance.
- Community Hall - Consider renting a community centre or community/church hall in your area. This option works well year round when weather might be a factor.

There are many community halls and day use areas in Red Deer County that may be convenient to host your event and may offer different recreational opportunities. Visit www.rdcounty.ca for a list of facilities available for rent or public use in Red Deer County.

Some events on public lands may require a public events permit, public events road use agreement, etc. Please contact Red Deer County Emergency Management officer at 403.348.2036 ext. 5. Note: In some cases where higher risk activities such as bouncy castles, horse rides or where large tents or fire pits are used, or if you would like to close a road, you may also require a Public Event Permit and insurance.

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:

- Icebreaker Ball -Write various questions (25 or more) on an inflatable beach ball with a permanent marker. Questions can include "How long have you lived in the neighborhood?" or "What is your favorite ice cream?" At the party, toss the ball around and each person who catches the ball must answer the question under their left thumb before tossing the ball again.
- Block Party Bingo- Use our template or create your own!
- Truth, Truth, Lie - Give each person a piece of paper and instruct everyone to write down two truths and one lie about themselves. Go around the group and have each person read off their two truths and one lie. The other players then have to guess which fact is a lie. This can create entertaining story telling since players must come up with unexpected facts to stump the other players.
- Swap and Donate Table- Bring unwanted items still in great shape that you no longer use or need and place them on a designated table for other neighbours to take. Consider placing a jar out and asking for donations for the items. Any money collected could go to a charity in the name of the block party group.

- Glow in the Dark Bowling -Find an area of flat ground and use party streamers as lane dividers. Fill plastic bottles with plain or colored water and provide a sturdy ball to serve as a bowling ball. If playing after dusk, add glow sticks to the bottles for glow in the dark bowling.
- Race to Put on a T-Shirt -Gather t-shirts before the block party, soak with water, wring out and fold. Stack the shirts on a cookie sheet with waxed paper between them. Store the t-shirts in the freezer until the party. Players are handed t-shirts that are frozen solid and have to figure out how to put them on. A great way for kids and adults to cool off on a hot day. Whoever gets the shirt on first is the winner.
- Whipped Cream Eating Contest- Place a bite-sized treat in a pie tin or on a paper plate. Cover the treat with whipped cream. Players must find the treat without using their hands.
- Fishing With Your Feet- Fill a small wading pool with water and add dish soap and small toys that do not float. Kids sit at the side of the pool and use their feet to fish for treasures. Want to skip the dish soap? Blindfold the players instead.
- Mom/Dad Calling- Blindfold the mothers and fathers and line them up across from all the kids. The kids start calling “Mom” or “Dad” all at once. The kids stand still, and the parents move forward until they reach their child. The first parent to touch their child is the winner.
- Bike Parade -If you have closed off your street for the block party, let the kids enjoy the car free status of the street. Kids can decorate their bikes with streamers and balloon and then make a parade of the decorated bikes down the middle of the street.
- Hello Fun Facts Write a different question on each name tag and hand them out. When neighbours introduce themselves, they should answer the question on their neighbours’ tags as a way to start conversations. Some questions that you might use:
 - Where did you grow up?
 - How long have you lived in the neighbourhood?
 - If you could travel anywhere, where would you go? What is one of the most memorable experiences in your life?
 - If you could meet anyone in the world, who would it be?

Other activities that everyone can enjoy are:

- Water balloon toss
- Sack races or 3-legged races
- Scavenger hunt
- Croquet or bocce ball
- Bean bag toss
- Free raffle with door prizes
- Arts and crafts table
- Facepainting
- Bubbles
- Sidewalk chalk

Red Deer County has a number of resources available for lending to get you started. These include an event canopy, sound system, popcorn maker and many outdoor games. Deposit is required for the use of these resources. www.rdcountry.ca/183/Community-Services

Other party supplies can be acquired at these companies:

- Good Neighbour Coffee Company – Espresso bike, mobile BBQ trailer, great coffee – by donation, call

Rick at 403.505.9897 or email rickabma@gmail.com

- King of Bounce – Inflatables, tents, tables and chairs- www.thekingofbounce.ca
- All about Bouncing – Inflatables- www.ilove2bounce.com
- Special Event Rentals- Everything except inflatables -www.reddeer.specialeventrentals.com/
- Flying Cross Ranch- Petting Zoos/Pony Rides - www.flyingcrossranch.com/
- Grand West Event Rentals – port-a-potties, tents, hot tubs, sound system - www.grandwesteventrentals.com

Getting the Word Out

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

- Create flyers and drop them in neighbours mailboxes
- Put up a poster on the local post office or bulletin/communication board
- Post information on the community Facebook page
- Hang door knocker invites on neighbours homes
- Put out signs advertising the event

All resources are available at www.rdcountry.ca/183/Community-Services

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 Red Deer County 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 and Reminders:

- 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.
- Use name tags to help identify and remember each other's name.
- Have several garbage and recycling bins on site.
- Remember to leave it better than you found it.
- Keep noise levels reasonable.
- Be considerate of your neighbours and aware of the applicable County noise bylaws at www.rdcountry.ca.
- Decide if pets are allowed at the event.
- Ensure washrooms and a water source for washing are available.
- Have people fill in an evaluation form afterwards or provide a way to give feedback.
- Don't forget to register your party to take advantage of our great resources.

For Block Party resources and more party ideas, check out the Block Party Program on the Red Deer County website at www.rdcountry.ca/183/Community-Services

For assistance or more information please contact: blockparty@rdcountry.ca

Red Deer County

