Guide for Planning a Neighbourhood Block Party in the city of Red Deer
INTRODUCTION

This guide was developed to provide ideas and suggestions for a successful block party. It also outlines City requirements based on the type of event you host (Appendix A).

Getting together with neighbours for fun and food is not only enjoyable, but it also allows you to develop connections and friendships and a real sense of belonging in your neighbourhood and contributes to community safety and crime prevention. It is a time to celebrate what you love about where you live and is an opportunity to discuss issues or concerns and come up with solutions to make it even better.

Ways to Get To Know Your Neighbours
Ideas for connecting with your neighbours could include:
- Perennial exchange
- Garden tour party
- Group garage sale
- Block/street/park clean up
- Family Festivals
- Seasonal Activities
- Block Parties – the focus of this document.

PLANNING YOUR NEIGHBOURHOOD BLOCK PARTY

Starting Simple
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. If you are planning a street or cul-de-sac party, you need to invite everyone from that area. The size of the event often impacts the complexity of the event. 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 it will be for the entire neighbourhood or portion of the neighbourhood.

Types of Block Parties
One of the first considerations should be what type of Block Party would work for your neighbourhood:
- Street dance
- Games or activity focused
- Celebration of a special day or season
- Celebration of diversity or cultural heritage
- Neighborhood feast

No Special Event Permit Required
- A neighbours front or backyard or driveway
- A grouping of houses
- House
- Garage
- Common room in a condo unit
**Special Event Permit Required** (see Appendix A, Special Event Permits – Block Parties)

- Park or community activity centre (permit may not be required for small events please call 403.356.8946 for more information.)
- Street or alley (permit may not be required for small events please call 403-356-8946 for more information.)
- Other City owned property

**Suggestions for Organizing Your Block Party**

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. Enlist as many neighbours as you can to help out. One person can type the flyer; someone else can deliver and collect them. Perhaps a local community group or 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. Areas they could help with include:

- Promotions
- Food & Beverage
- Permits
- Set-up & Takedown
- Activities (see Appendix C for ideas)

**Role of the Organizers**

The organizers are those responsible for supporting the event in a way that makes it a success. One of the keys to success is good planning. Some of the items you are going to want to plan for are:

- Plan far enough in advance for a successful event.
- If you are planning a roadway closure ensure you have the support of at least 2/3rds of the affected neighbours. (See Appendix B for a sample support form)
- Make decisions about the set up and take down.
- Who will be greeter(s) at the event; introducing new neighbours and helping them make connections.
- Decide if everyone will bring his or her own tables and chairs, plates, cutlery and cups, and beverages.
- If using barbecues, who will bring them? What safety measures have you put in place for BBQ? e.g. Fire extinguishers, water
- Institute a bathroom policy “everyone to use his or her own”, so that home security is maintained. Consider washroom facilities relevant to the site.
- Decide if pets are allowed.
- Consider other events in your neighbourhood.
- Alcohol is not allowed on streets or in public parks but if your event is held within a facility and you are serving alcohol, liquor license is required through Alberta Gaming and Liquor Control Board ([http://aglc.ca/](http://aglc.ca/)).
- Make sure the clean up is done. You may wish to encourage clean up by rewarding the neighbourhood children with a prize for picking up garbage.
- Provide residents with an evaluation at the end of the event to collect any new ideas for next year.
- Post event evaluation. Talk about how the event went and what you would change next time. Make sure to keep notes so if the planning committee changes you can pass on your suggestions.

**Food Service Options**

Your organizing committee can determine what food 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 or the meat is purchased and side dishes are potluck.
- 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 – someone is hired to provide the food and everyone shares the cost.

Try to environmentally conscious by having people bring their own dishes, recycling bottles and containers and minimizing waste. Be aware of food content if anyone in your neighborhood may have food allergies. If people are bringing food by displaying a recipe it not only provides useful information for those with allergies but a recipe exchange is a fun activity.

**Location**

Start with the basics. Consider what activities you want to have and where in your neighbourhood the best location is. Where do you live? Look around and evaluate your area. Cul de sacs and dead end streets are great places for hosting a block party (remember if the party is held on a roadway, park, alleyway or other City owned property a *Special Event Permit may be required*). What if you can not have a block party on your street? There are many neighborhood parks available for your enjoyment. Many are equipped with picnic tables, benches, and other amenities. Safety for all participants needs to be an important factor when determining a location.

**Timing Your Event Planning**

If a special event permit is being obtained, start contacting neighbours 5 months before the event. Adjustments may need to be made if neighbours already have an event of 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. A weekend date or holiday is often the best times for the event. Have an alternative day planned, just in case the weather does not cooperate. How will you notify neighbours if the event is cancelled? Set an alternate date. 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, it is a good idea to plan to finish by 9:00 pm.

**Promotions**

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.
- A casual approach can be used to inform neighbours as you see them out and about.
- Residents can be called on the phone.
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.

Depending on the size of your event, you may want to publicize the event in your school or community association newsletter.

**Set Up**

Setting up for your event can include but is not limited to:

- Having 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. 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 and recycling cans available.

For assistance or more information please contact:

**The City of Red Deer**  
**Recreation, Parks and Culture Department**

For information on community associations and/or planning events in your neighbourhood contact:

Neighbourhood Facilities and Community Development Unit  
403.309.8427

For information on Special Event Permits  
Inspections and Licensing  
403.356-8946

or visit [www.reddeer.ca](http://www.reddeer.ca)
City of Red Deer Special Event Permits – Block Parties

A special event permit is required for an organized event, program or service in which the number of people or type of activity affects public use of City parks, property or roads, and/or may affect the general public. To clarify if a permit is required for your event, please call the Community & Program Facilitator, Special Events, at 403.356.8946.

Block Party Requirements
1. One road closure per neighborhood, per day is permitted.
2. Maximum of 10 block party road closures per day City-wide are permitted.
3. Block party road closures can only be considered on lanes or local roadways (not collectors or arterials). Streets may only be closed that allow residents access to their home by a back lane.
4. Block parties can not be considered on bus routes.
5. Reasonable attempts must be made to notify all affected residents and business operators, we also suggest that tenants advise their landlords. Please see attached Agreement for Road Closure for Block Party form. Two thirds support must be obtained.
6. Liability insurance is required as a part of the special event permitting process.
7. Block Parties can take place between 10:00 a.m. and 10:00 p.m. only.
8. Loud, excessive or unreasonable noise is prohibited as per the Community Standard Bylaw. Please be considerate of your neighbours noise levels must remain within limits acceptable to neighbouring property owners.
9. The consumption of alcohol is not permitted in parks or on streets, lanes or other public property.
10. Open fires except in areas designated for that purpose are not allowed unless approved through a Special Event Permit.
11. The organizer must allow the use of the designated street by emergency and police vehicles. Do not block fire hydrants. Any barriers erected to close the street or other activities taking place on the street must be able to be quickly removed to allow the passage of emergency vehicles. All structures, tables, etc. should be placed at sides of street and must be easily removable.
12. Organizers are liable for any damage done to City property and private property on the site during the event.
13. After the block party is over, please clean up the street and sidewalk. Organizers are responsible for clean up of the streets to the condition prior to the function.
14. The applicant(s) will be the contact person(s) in charge of the function and must remain at the Block Party until its conclusion.
15. Street closure permission is granted on the understanding that the block party is for the residents of your neighbourhood, not invited guests from elsewhere
16. Event Organizers are responsible to be aware of municipal bylaws that may affect the event. The following is a list of bylaws that may be needed. These bylaws are available on The City of Red Deer website at www.reddeer.ca.
   - Community Standard Bylaw (Noise)
   - Parks and Public Facilities Bylaw
   - Use of Streets Bylaws
   - The License Bylaw (street entertainers, vendors etc)
   - Land Use Bylaw (Signs & Banners)
**AGREEMENT FOR ROAD CLOSURE FOR BLOCK PARTY**

Please attach to your completed Special Event Application Form

- **Block Party**
- **Neighbourhood:**
- **Location or Address:**
- **Date:**
- **Start and Finish Time:**
- **Organizers’ Names:**
- **Home Phone:**
- **Work Phone:**
- **Cell Phone:**
- **Email:**

Description of the event, including: activities planned and expected impact on neighbours.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Address</th>
<th>Phone</th>
<th>Approval (Y/N)</th>
<th>Signature</th>
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Tips and Ideas

✓ Use natural neighbourhood boundaries where possible (i.e. end of the block).
x 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).
x Have neighbours pull together 3 or 4 BBQ’s so that everyone can eat at the same time.
x Remember to reserve one BBQ for vegetarians, vegans, kosher meats, and other types of diet restrictions.

Activity Ideas:

Neighbourhood History
- Research the history of your neighbourhood through the Library or the Red Deer & District Archives
- Identify special people that lived in your area such as a politician, artist, eccentric, hero, etc
- Have neighbours guess the neighbourhood history by playing charades (who, what, where and when questions)

Cultural Connections
- Have everyone bring their favorite 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
- Discuss what issues or concerns neighbours may have and establish teams to explore how to resolve them.
  (Note: keep this part of the party to a set time; remember a block party should be fun!)
- Have a clean up time, plant a garden, paint street numbers etc. as part of the block party activities- this is a good way to start a block party tradition in your neighbourhood.

Kids Games
- Side walk chalk, obstacle course, face painting, balloons, skipping ropes, road hockey, etc.

Neighbourhood bingo
- Collect neighbours’ signatures in this fun icebreaker game.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Wearing black socks</th>
<th>Speaks a second language</th>
<th>Traveled outside of Canada in 2010</th>
<th>Plays soccer</th>
<th>Born in another country</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Born in the 1930’s</td>
<td>Has freckles</td>
<td>Plants a vegetable garden</td>
<td>Wearing Jeans</td>
<td>Has a sister</td>
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<tr>
<td>Plays a guitar or piano</td>
<td>Likes to jog/run</td>
<td>Wears glasses</td>
<td>Has brown eyes</td>
<td>Is a football fan</td>
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<tr>
<td>Has a great smile</td>
<td>Wearing sandals</td>
<td>Likes to play golf</td>
<td>Did not see Avatar</td>
<td>Born in another province</td>
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Live Music
- Find out who plays musical instruments, if there is a local musician in your midst, or an inspiring group of kids that play together as a band in your neighbourhood. Set up a stage outside with a microphone and speakers and let the music begin!

Face Painting
- Put up some flyers in the local high schools- many students are looking for weekend work and volunteer hours.

Other
- Contests of any kind can be exciting and allow people to showoff their skills and hobbies. Why not try a baking contest, craft exhibit, scrapbooking display, karaoke contest, or joke contest with a laugh-o-meter.
- Have some kids sell lemonade and rice crispy squares, then put the money towards charity, neighbourhood projects, or the block party fund for next year!