



Neighbourhood

Block Party

Planning Guide

AN EASY HOW TO GUIDE TO ORGANIZE A NEIGHBOURHOOD BLOCK PARTY



CITY OF
Lethbridge



BEYOND
YOUR
FRONT DOOR



Recreation and Culture



Environment
Lethbridge



Lethbridge Early Years
Coalition



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

Top Ten Reasons to Have a Block Party

- 1 Simply, to have fun - no excuses or reasons are needed to celebrate!
- 2 To meet your neighbours and learn where they live and who lives there.
- 3 Knowing others in your neighbourhood and where they live improves community spirit and safety.
- 4 To increase the sense of belonging in your community.
- 5 To establish new friendships.
- 6 To encourage neighbours to look after the neighbourhood.
- 7 To plan other neighbourhood projects, that inspire community connection.
- 8 To learn a little about each other and know who might need a little extra help from time to time.
- 9 To meet some of the long time neighbours and learn about your community history.
- 10 To make additional connections within the community and meet neighbours who have interests or skills to share.

As friendships grow, so do engaged, welcoming and inclusive neighbourhoods



Let's have fun!

- Block parties can be a fun way to connect with the people in your direct community.
- In this guide you will find a step-by-step process for planning your event, along with templates that can be used in your planning.
- We have also included some suggested activities for your event, and considerations to make in order to provide an event that will be welcoming and inclusive for all people in your neighbourhood.
- Finally, you will also find some ideas of other ways to connect with your neighbours and get involved in community actions and projects.

Things to Consider

- It is recommended to use a public space, as this will increase the likelihood of shared responsibility for the event. If your block party is on public land (such as a street or park) a *block party permit is required* (see page 6).
- Other locations for hosting a block party may include a neighbour's yard, pasture, garage, shop or at a local church or community hall.
- Residents should observe security precautions by keeping houses and doors locked while at the event.
- Be courteous: loud amplification of music can be disruptive to others.
- When setting up your event area and parking, ensure emergency vehicles have access.
- Alcohol consumption is not permitted on City roads or public property.





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 hosting a block party, 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. (See the Tools and Templates section)
- 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 Tools and Templates Section

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; or
- A combination of the above.

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 harder 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

- Park*
- Alley*
- Street*

**Because these locations are on public lands, a permit is Required (see page 6). If a fire pit is to be used, a fire permit is also required (see page 9). Safety needs to be an important factor in planning!*

Other Options:

- A neighbour's yard/house/garage
- Community Hall or Church Hall
- 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 Lethbridge Application and Permits

A permit is required when planning a neighbourhood event on or in City of Lethbridge roadways or public land (such as parks), and is registered through Recreation & Culture.

403-320-3011 | leisure@lethbridge.ca

Permits for neighbourhood block parties can be found online at: www.lethbridge.ca - under Things To Do > Event Rentals and Permits. Choose either *How to Book* or *Block Parties* for link to application form.

- Application form submissions are recommended at least one month prior to the event
- The application form will start the approval process

Block Party Specifics

Application must be made in person by a homeowner on the block. Applicants will be asked to provide a petition signed by 100% of the residents on the block.

- Petitions will include: name; address; and approval or disapproval and reason for disapproval

Parties held on public land (parks) do not require a signed petition from residents.

A map showing the location of the block party and the location of the temporary street closure will also be requested with the application.

Block Party approvals are granted on an individual basis and take into consideration such things as disapprovals on the petition, location and previous history of block parties at the location.

Guidelines:

1. Block used is occupied predominantly by owner/residents
2. Block party time limits are 10:00 a.m. – 10:00 p.m. (Noise Bylaw 5270)
3. Applicant remains at the party until its conclusion
4. Alcoholic beverages are not permitted on the City streets
5. Open fires are not permitted on the City streets
6. Emergency access will be permitted and available at all times during the event (eg. Fire, ambulance or police vehicle/personnel)



6. The Timing To Plan The Event

- More resources/information are found in the Tools & Template section of this guide.
- For a first-time block party, distribute the first flyer requesting feedback 4 to 6 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 September is a good time, but you can always have some winter fun as well.
- A weekend date or holidays are 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 is a suggested approach as it 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 (refer to page 11).
- 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 Organizer

- 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.
- **Name tags** are important. You can purchase them at a dollar store, or get creative.
- 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 and recycling receptacles** available, label what goes in which bin—see template section.
- Decide whether you will coordinate or everyone will bring their own **tables, chairs, plates, cutlery, cups and beverages**.
- If using **barbecues**, who will bring them?
- If having a potluck, have people identify ingredients of the dishes, just in case someone has allergies.
- Are there extra coolers, **water**?
- 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. Consider making someone the waste & recycling coordinator for your event.
- You may wish to do an **evaluation** at the end of the event to collect any new ideas. (See sample in the Tools and Template section).
- Encourage the talent in your neighbourhood to come forward, such as musicians, magicians, or mimes.



10. Environmental Sustainability

We all have a vested interest in environmental sustainability. Here are some considerations and steps as you plan your block party to ensure a smaller ecological footprint at your event.

- Appoint someone as environmental coordinator for your event, who will be responsible for making sure there is as little waste as possible created.
- Consider generating less waste by asking your neighbours to bring their own reusable cutlery, plates and mugs. Consider setting up a green bin too to collect green waste!
- Determine if anyone in your neighbourhood subscribes to curbside recycling, or has a backyard composter. If they are willing to help, they can handle the blue bin and green bin items after the event.
- Determine what can be collected in the blue bins - just bottles and cans, or all types of plastic, paper, metal and glass recycling?
- Ensure garbage, recycling, and compost bins are placed out before the event starts, and that you have a plan to manage the waste at the end of the event.
- Use the ready-to-print signs found at the end of this guide and place them on or near your waste bins so people know what goes where! You might want to have a volunteer help guide people as to what goes in each bin to ensure maximum waste diversion.

Do you need large blue bins to collect bottles and large green bins to collect compost at your event? City of Lethbridge Waste & Recycling Services can help you with that!

Call 320-7367 | wrs@lethbridge.ca





11. Fire Pits

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

- Fire pits are not permitted on streets but can be used in residents backyards, so long as they adhere to local bylaws.
- In public parkland where a fire pit is not provided a permit is required from Fire Prevention.
- For the rules and regulations relating to fire pit permits and approval, contact Fire Prevention:
403-320-3800 | fireprevention@lethbridge.ca
- More information on fire pits can be found at: www.lethbridge.ca

12. Food Safety

- Community organizations/groups **do not** need a permit from AHS to serve food at a community event, including fundraising events where food (such as hot dogs/hamburgers) are sold for a minimal cost.
- However, **proper food handling should always be a priority.**
- The Lethbridge Community Health Center offers courses to operate temporary food concessions at fairs, festivals, exhibitions, carnivals, or other special events.
- For more information and resources:
801 1 Avenue S, Lethbridge | **403-388-6689** (Call for inspector availability) | M-F 8am to 4:30pm
<http://www.albertahealthservices.ca/8302.asp>
- See “Special Events” tab in the primary list and the “Education Courses” tab on the left of webpage.

13. 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.



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.
- Encourage the talent in your neighbourhood to come forward - you may be living next to a musician, artist, magician, singer, dancer, radio host or prize-winning cook.
- Invite different community groups to set up displays.
- Consider who will be attending your celebration; try to host activities that **everyone** can participate in.
- Encourage intergenerational and intercultural participation. Communities thrive when we all celebrate together, across our lines of identity.
- Ensure that the party is accessible for everyone, including individuals with mobility challenges.

Suggested Activities

Spring/Summer



- Driveway / backyard theatre
- Bike or pet parade
- Garden tours
- Walking tours
- Sidewalk chalk
- Informal sport activities
- Scavenger hunt
- Face painting / tattooing
- Various forms of water games
- Lawn rec. activities, such as bean bag toss
- Bouncy castles
- Relay races

Be CREATIVE and have FUN

Fall/Winter



Many people think block parties can only happen in the summer but here are some activities you can do as a community during the colder months.

- Skating party
- Hot chocolate station
- Book or craft clubs
- Build a snowman or snow fort
- Ice sculpture competition
- Karaoke party
- Hockey game / mini tournament

Be CREATIVE and have FUN



Activities Focused on the Early Years Development of Children

Lethbridge Early Years Coalition has put together some suggestions of simple, low cost activities for preschool aged children:



Sidewalk Chalk or Bubbles

Painting on sidewalk or fences with homemade cornstarch paints (1/4 cup water, 1/4 cup + 2Tbsp cornstarch, food colouring)

Shaving cream paint - mix food colouring and shaving cream – have fun!

Bicycle decorating and parade

Recycled cardboard boxes - decorate and invent with boxes, duct tape, crayons, and plastic lids

Pop bottle bowling - Fill pop bottles with water and food colouring for pins.

Dinosaur dig - plastic toys buried in a sand box.

Streamer wands - Tape assorted colored streamers to large sticks or tubes and have the children dance with them to music.

Water table - Young children love to play in water. You can turn any baby pool, or large shallow Rubbermaid tote into a water table on the ground. Add things that float like boats and cups so children can pour the water and manipulate the water. Supervision required.

Relay Race - Have a lineup of activities such as jump rope, spoon water from one bucket to another, running through pylons (or simple items such as buckets), egg carry on a spoon, and a hoola hoop for children to do one at a time. When they have completed the line of activities they can run back to the start and the next person on the team can run through the relay and so on and so forth. This is a great teamwork activity and you can also encourage the older children to assist the younger children through the relay.

Borrow the parachute, scoop balls, or giant hop scotch from Lethbridge Public toy lending library.

Some **parachute games** include:

- Two teams hold on to the sides around the parachute. Each team has a different colored ball. The object of the game is to bounce the balls in the centre of the parachute and try to knock off the other team's colored ball but keep your own on.
- Flying Saucer: All take one step forward upon lifting the chute in the air. Upon command, all let go, and watch as it slowly floats.



LEYC—(403)715-4585 lethbridgeearlyyears@gmail.com Facebook: Lethbridge Early Years Twitter: #letheyc



How To Welcome Your New Canadian Neighbour to the Block Party

Many New Canadians want to meet their neighbours and make friends. Some are shy because they speak little or no English. Others may not know how to participate or are worried about the intentions of their neighbours. It is important to make everyone feel at ease and to communicate clearly the purpose of a Block Party.

Here are some suggestions that may help neighbours feel welcome:

- If possible, knock on the door of a New Canadian with someone else who speaks the language.
- Be specific about what the expectations are.
- Remember words like barbecue, face painting or pot luck may need to be explained.
- If you are blocking the street for the day, explain about street parking changes.
- It may take more than one invitation for a New Canadian to fully understand what a Block Party is. One idea is to follow up in the weeks leading up to the party.
- Assign a designated host to new families (long time Canadians or New Canadians) to make sure that neighbours meet and participate in the activities.
- Make activities accessible to those with limited English language skills.
- Ask about special cultural/religious diets or activity constraints.

Safety is a big concern for New Canadians because of past experiences. Fear is often caused by not knowing the language. Do your best to make everyone feel comfortable!





Connecting With All Neighbours

Our community is growing increasingly diverse, which is a benefit to everyone by providing opportunities to learn about other people. It is important that we build our neighbourhoods that are welcoming and inclusive for all people, from different cultures, backgrounds and ways of life.

Cultural Connections

- Have everyone bring a traditional family dish.
- 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 most.
- Language is important. At the very least, try to use the word for “hello” and/or “welcome” when creating posters and other promotional materials for the event. Saying “hello” to someone in their native (first) language can go a long way toward a healthy relationship.

Why Connect With Your Neighbours?

Connected neighbours leads to positive individual and community well-being: feeling safe; being engaged and having an overall sense of belonging.

Neighbourhood Action

When neighbours connect with each other there is an opportunity to take collective action on an issue or project that will benefit all neighbours of the community. You can take a brief moment before the celebration to have a discussion, or plan for a community discussion group.

Plan a clean up day, build a bench, plant a garden or paint street numbers as part of the Block Party activities, or as an activity for another day - be creative!

For more information on how to connect with others in your neighbourhood visit

lethbridge.ca/Neighbourhoods



Tools & Templates

Resources in this section:

- Planning Checklist
- Planning Committee To Do List
- Planning Meeting Decision Sheet
- Sample Block Party Questionnaire
- Sample Invitation
- Sample Sign-In Sheet
- Sample Evaluation Form
- Sample Event Poster
- Waste/Recycling/Compost Signs



Block Party Planning Checklist

2 Months Prior

- Locate a few neighbours to help start the planning
- Talk with and deliver the survey to neighbours to gauge interest
- Once results are in, invite those interested to a planning meeting and have the Block Party Guide available. Complete the Planning Meeting Decision form (found on page 17)

4 - 6 Weeks Prior

- Canvass the neighbourhood to have neighbours complete the Questionnaire (found on page 18)
- Submit Block Party Application form to the City of Lethbridge (refer to page 6)
- Discuss Liability Insurance with your home insurance provider

2 - 4 Weeks Prior

- Send out invitations (sample found on page 19)
- Make posters and post around the neighbourhood to promote the event (sample found on page 22)
- Plan a couple icebreaker activities
- Plan games/activities for all ages and abilities
- Get kids and teens involved in the planning and supervising
- Arrange to have tables for food and activities that may require them
- Arrange for BBQs, coolers, ice and water
- Arrange for generators for power (if needed)
- Arrange for garbage/recycling/compost bins (with replacement bags) and clean-up supplies
- Arrange for first aid kit(s), fire extinguisher(s) and make a site plan ensuring emergency access
- Arrange for barricades of closing a street (the City has a limited supply that can be obtained through the application/permit process)
- Arrange for signs to be made and placed during the day of the event



Block Party Planning Checklist *continued*

1 Week Prior

- Follow-up meeting
- What's been done? What still needs to be done?

Day Of

- Designate the areas for parking, BBQs, food, garbage/recycling/compost bins, sitting and games/activities
- Set up the arrival area, with greeters to welcome - provide directions and introduce people. Have a sign-in sheet and name tags (sample sign-in sheet found on page 20)
- After everyone has arrived, welcome everyone, announce the day's events and any special announcements
- Have a neighbourhood contact sheet for people to sign up for future events or projects
- HAVE FUN!!!

Clean-Up

- Have a Block Party evaluation available (sample found on page 21)
- Ensure all trash and garbage has been picked up and cleared away and that recycling and compost is taken to the proper places.
- Take down and recycle any signs that may have been posted (this may be held over to the next day)

End of Day

- Celebrate a job well done
- Make a few notes for next year's event

Day After

- Follow up on anything that may have been missed during the clean-up and end of day



Planning Committee To Do List

Responsibility	Who & Address	E-mail & Phone
Main Contact <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Organize planning group/meeting Submit Block Party Application Send out invitations Answer questions 		
Activities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Activities/games for all ages and abilities Decide whether to offer door prizes Involve kids and teens in planning 		
Food <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Arrange tables, BBQs, coolers, ice, water, etc. Collect money (donations) for any group food supplies (if needed) 		
Site Preparation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Plan for parking, food, seating and activity areas Signs and directions Ensure emergency access, first aid kit and fire extinguisher 		
Clean-Up <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Obtain garbage/recycling/compost bins, with replacement bags. Use signage as to "what goes where" Arrange cleaning supplies Take down signs and recycle 		
Other		



Planning Meeting Decisions Date: _____ Time: _____ Location: _____

Party date: _____ Time: _____

Location of the party: _____

Inclement weather alternative:

Type or theme of party (BBQ, potluck, Canada Day, Neighbour Day)

Scope of the party—who is involved (cul-de-sac/street, parts of or all of the neighbourhood, etc.)

Budget (how will costs of supplies, toilets, activities, etc. be covered?)

Will pets be allowed? Yes No

Have all application details been discussed?

How can we reduce the amount of garbage created by our event, and encourage neighbours to recycle and compost?



Block Party Questionnaire

A few neighbours have been talking and thought it would be fun to have a “get together.” It would be an opportunity to meet each other and to have some fun! To get this event underway, we would like to know what you think!

Are you *interested* in participating in a neighbourhood party? Yes No

If Yes, what is the best *time* of day and the best date?

Date	Day	Times	Indicate your choice
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____

Which of the following *suggestions* would suit your family best?

- Each family bring their own main dish and drinks, plus bring either a dessert or salad to share.
- Each family brings one dish to share (to be assigned) and their own refreshments.
- Each family bring their own picnic meal and drinks.
- Hamburger/Veggie burgers and buns supplied and everyone contributes money to pay for them, with each family bringing their own refreshments.
- Other suggestions _____

If you or a family member would like to help organize, plan an activity or set-up, please let us know.

Yes No

If you have a talent to share, please let us know. _____

Do you have a backyard composter that could be used for any food waste scraps collected at the event? Yes No

Would you be willing to act as the recycling coordinator to collect all recyclables at the end of the event? Yes No

Please give us your name and contacts so we can contact you directly and keep you informed.

Name: _____ Phone#: _____

E-mail: _____

Please return this questionnaire by _____ to _____ at _____
date name address

Thanks Neighbour!



You are invited!

Come have some fun and meet your neighbours at our

Date: _____

Time: _____

Place: _____

Block Party

Your host is:

To contact them, please call _____ or, e-mail _____

We are asking each family to bring:

- Chairs to sit on
- Meat or vegetarian food to barbeque for your family
- 1 salad and 1 dessert to share (enough for 6-8 people)
- Beverages for your family (coffee and tea will be provided)
- Non-breakable plates, cups and cutlery for you family
- Other _____

Please note: You are responsible for meeting any special dietary needs of family members

In addition, do you have the following that could be used at the party?

a barbeque tables chairs

Pets are allowed not allowed

Do you have a talent that you would like to share with us? Any suggestions for activities you could organize?
Are you able to help with some of the set-up and/or clean-up?

Please contact the host if any of the following pertain to you.

See you at the party!



It's a Block Party Evaluation Form

Your feedback is appreciated to help plan our future block parties.

What were the 3 best things about the block party?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

What 3 best 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 contacts

Name: _____ Phone#: _____

E-mail: _____

Please return this form by _____ to _____ at _____
date name address

Thanks Neighbour!



Come have some fun and meet your neighbours at our

Block Party

Decorative flourish
EATS
TREATS
GAMES
Decorative flourish

DATE:

TIME:

LOCATION:

Decorative flourish
FUN
FOOD
FRIENDS
Decorative flourish

LANDFILL



**TAKEOUT DRINK CUPS
CHIP BAGS & WRAPPERS
STYROFOAM CONTAINERS**

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BOTTLES & CANS



ALUMINUM CANS
JUICE BOXES & POUCHES
GLASS & PLASTIC BOTTLES

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COMPOST



FOOD SCRAPS
FRUITS & VEGETABLES
COMPOSTABLE NAPKINS & PLATES

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