

**Calgary**



# **Block Party Guide**

**for Neighbour Day**





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## What is Neighbour Day & why a block party?

The City of Calgary designates the third Saturday in June every year as Neighbour Day. While you can organize a block party any time, holding your event on Neighbour Day comes with the advantage of your neighbours anticipating this annual event.

Strong neighbourhoods are important to the health and well-being of our whole city. When neighbourhoods thrive, the people who live there thrive too. Neighbour Day started in June 2014 to celebrate the incredible outpouring of support and generosity neighbours demonstrated after the 2013 floods. We want to continue to celebrate one of the things that makes

Calgary such a great city – our strong and caring communities. Neighbour Day now provides the opportunity for Calgarians to celebrate our community spirit.

A block party is a citizen-initiated event held on a city street within a specific block in a community for entertainment purposes. A permit is required to close roadways for the

event. It is powerful! Few things have the power to connect neighbours like a well-planned party. This is an opportunity to get to know your neighbours and where they live. Friendships are formed, a sense of belonging and pride on your block increases, and you open the door to all kinds of other benefits from building a strong neighbourhood.





## Getting started & applying for a City permit

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### Pick your time

The best place to start is to just commit to a time! Don't worry too much about it needing to work for everyone. If it works for at least a couple of neighbours then worst case scenario is you will get to know those neighbours really well.

Block parties may only occur between 10 a.m. and 10 p.m., so you can pick a broad time frame to accommodate more people. As an example, if your block has lots of young children, picking from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. might work best. If it's mostly older children or just adults, maybe from 5 p.m. to 10 p.m. is a better time. If you would like to avoid meal times, 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. is a great option!

### Pick your location

If you are planning a party in a back or front yard of someone's house then there is no need for a permit. If, however, you would like to close your street or alley, you will need to get a block party permit for your party.

### Apply for a block party or greenspace permit

Go to [calgary.ca/NeighbourDay](http://calgary.ca/NeighbourDay) to review the permit requirements and apply for your permit. Note that the block party permit application requires the support of a majority of residents affected by the road closure, so you'll want to allow extra time to gather those signatures. One of the benefits of this is it forces you and your planning team to go door to door!

As you get the necessary signatures to shut down traffic make sure you invite your neighbours to the party and any future planning meetings or group chats. Permits take at minimum 15 days to process. We strongly encourage planners to submit their Neighbour Day permit request before the last week of May, but the more notice you can give to your neighbours about this event, the better!

**“Block party and greenspace permits are free.”**





## Putting a plan together & City resources to use

# 3

You have a date, and your permits are taken care of (or are in progress)... Congrats! Now is time for the fun part: dreaming up a party with as many of your neighbours as possible.

### Look for inspiration

Block parties have been done before. A simple browser search can find you all kinds of examples and advice for how to plan a great block party. A great party often starts with some great creative ideas. The more inspired you are during the planning the more likely your neighbours will get inspired alongside of you and bring great ideas and contributions to the planning.

### Share the load

Every block needs at least one party planner to get the ball rolling but we strongly encourage you to find as many neighbours as possible to help out. The more you share, the more possibilities you will unlock, and the more value the block party will have for you and your neighbours long term.

### Have a meeting or a group chat

Do not plan your block party alone! When people have a say in something they immediately take more ownership of it and will be more interested in it. Invite your neighbours to sit around your dinner table, fire pit, or porch/deck to dream together about what your block party could be. Make sure someone takes notes! Bring a notepad and pen and do as much of the planning together as time allows.

Too busy to gather before the event? Start a group chat! This is also a great place to chat in the future about a suspicious activity or when you need a cup of sugar. Discuss what each of you can contribute. Whether it's an activity like face painting, water balloons for a water fight, or making the event a potluck, having everyone share the load helps to share the cost.

### Activity Ideas

- ▶ Request a visit from the Mayor, your area Councillor, a fire truck, police or peace officer! Complete the request form at [calgary.ca/NeighbourDay](http://calgary.ca/NeighbourDay) to invite one or more of these people to drop by your event and say hello. We will do our best to accommodate as many requests as possible.
- ▶ Kids and adult activities to consider: A bike parade, scavenger hunt, water fight, sidewalk chalk, etc.
- ▶ See more ideas at [calgary.ca/NeighbourDay](http://calgary.ca/NeighbourDay).

**Be creative! Have fun dreaming up new ideas and using the resources that each of your neighbours bring to the table.**



# Safety considerations

When planning your block party, safety should be your first priority (with fun being a close second). Here are some overall safety points to consider:

## Traffic

Your block party permit requires you to put barricades up to safely close the road during your event. The extra space on the street is an amazing experience for kids to ride bikes, skateboards, and participate in other activities. Just keep in mind that they will get more and more confident with this newfound freedom and may venture past the barriers you set up if no one is watching.

## Supervision

As the planner, you will know some of the things that could go wrong and will want to keep an eye on it all. But you need to have fun, too! Find other responsible neighbours to help monitor different activities. Make sure there is an adult close by a bounce house, watching the kids on the trampoline or supervising other higher risk activities.

## Alcohol

It shows up at almost every social function. No alcoholic beverages are permitted on the city right-of-way and must be kept on private property. Here are some other suggestions to ensure a safe and fun party for everyone that includes drinking:

- ▶ The first thing you can do to help with this is ensure there are activities for people to participate in that mix the children and adults. There will be less heavy drinking if there is ball hockey, chalk murals, and other activities happening during the day.
- ▶ In your event planning, let the adults at the block party know when the drinking starts. You will not be able to enforce this and we don't suggest you try. A designated time in the plan should create enough of an expectation that any heavy drinking doesn't happen before then (we suggest after parents put the younger kids down).
- ▶ Have a water source available! As the party unfolds it will be helpful for everyone to have water readily available.



## Getting the word out

### Expectations

If it is your first block party make sure you temper your expectations on attendance. Even on the most engaged and connected blocks you won't get everyone out. People are busy and it takes time to build momentum—on some blocks more than others. Your goal is to use the tools available so that everyone feels welcome. Flyers and social media are great ways to get the word out.

### Paper flyers

A hand-delivered paper flyer works SO well. A paper flyer put right into your neighbour's hands with a friendly smile and personal invitation is even better! You want to communicate the main details on flyer, including date, time, expectations (i.e.: bring a food item or activity).

Casually dropping the flyers off as you are out walking your dog or doing yard work is a great way for anyone who has a hard time going door to door. Flyers can include a request for your neighbours to share their suggestions for the event and a way to contact you.

### Social media

A Facebook group for your block can be a powerful organizing tool. We strongly suggest that you first see if one exists and/or create one alongside your block party planning. Once you have a group setup you can create an event for your block party. It can become a powerful tool for communicating and organizing your block party, and for communicating in the future.

## After the party

- ▶ You will need to clean up the space and make sure it can be open by the time your permit expires. Make sure all garbage has been picked up, toys put away, and barricades taken down. You can help tidy messes created on your neighbours' properties and sweep any hard to pick up messes.
- ▶ Return the barricades to the City by the following week.
- ▶ Discuss the event with neighbours and take note of feedback about what worked and what didn't.
- ▶ **Make plans for next year's Neighbour Day!**