Block Parties

A neighbourhood block party is an opportunity for people to meet and get to know each other. The focus is on having fun but some communities find it a great way to work together on a neighbourhood project.

[Neighbourhood Block Party Kit](http://www.edmonton.ca/residential_neighbourhoods/NeighbourhoodBlockPartyKit.pdf)

**Benefits of Block Parties**

* Have fun
* Meet your neighbours and make new friends
* Re-establish old friendships
* Increase the sense of belonging to a community
* Encourage neighbours to look after each other and the neighbourhood
* Promote safety and help prevent crime by looking out for each other and recognizing faces
* Increase security by knowing your neighbours' schedules
* Learn about your community history

**City of Edmonton Permits**

**Road Use Permit**

A permit is required from Transportation Services when a block party is held on a location where there is traffic (streets, back alleys, or cul-de-sacs). The permit is required to block off the street. Signatures from all your neighbours in the block 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 $100 (including GST).

Alcohol consumption is not permitted on city roads or public property.

[Block Party Permit Application](http://www.edmonton.ca/residential_neighbourhoods/Forms/BlockPartyPermitApplication.doc)

[Block Party Permit Application](http://www.edmonton.ca/residential_neighbourhoods/BlockPartyPermitApplication.pdf)

**Parkland Permits**

Parkland Permits for a neighbourhood park are available from your[Community Recreation Coordinator](http://www.edmonton.ca/programs_services/for_communities/community-recreation-coordinators.aspx) at no cost. Dogs are allowed on trails in parks, but not on sports fields or playgrounds. Alcohol consumption is prohibited. Food, drink, alcohol or merchandise cannot be sold on parkland. No vehicles are permitted on a park site. At the end of the function, the site needs to be clean.

Liability insurance is required for parties on City parkland. 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.

**Fire Pits**

Check to see if there is a [fire ban](http://www.albertafirebans.ca/) in the City of Edmonton.

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 Community Recreation Coordinator to add a fire permit to your application. 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.

**Planning Your Neighbourhood Block Party**

**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. 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 block party in your neighbourhood, you may want to send out a flyer to explain what a block party is, encourage attendance, recruit volunteers, and find out possible dates and times for the event.

**Types of Block Parties**

* Barbecue - Organizers purchase all that is needed and neighbours provide the money. Everyone brings his or her own meat or veggie burgers/weiners.
* Picnics - Everyone brings their own meals.
* Pot luck - Everyone brings 1 dish to share.
* Catered - Everyone shares the cost and the food is provided by a catering company.

**How Big to Make It**

* Start off with a smaller event rather than a large one. You can always expand it if you have more resources than expected.
* 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).

**Locations**

**A permit from the City of Edmonton is required if the block party is held in the following locations:**

* Alley
* Street
* Park

[Block Party Permit Application](http://www.edmonton.ca/residential_neighbourhoods/BlockPartyPermitApplication.pdf)

**A permit is not required if the block party is held in the following locations:**

* Neighbour’s backyard
* House
* Garage (in the event of rain)

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

**Block Party Schedule**

* For a first time block party, distribute the first flyer requesting feedback 4 to 5 weeks before the event.
* 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 the end of August is a good time.
* A weekend or holiday is often the best time 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 9pm.

**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 in their yards.
* Neighbours can be called by 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 residents.
* Take every opportunity to talk it up in the neighbourhood as often as possible prior to the event.

**Role of the Organizers**

* Make decisions about the set up.
* Act as greeters at the event.
* Introduce new neighbours and help them make connections.
* Make sure the area is cleaned up following the party.

**Set Up**

* Have a sign-in book. It can become a contact list for the neighbourhood.
* Provide nametags.
* Get tables for the food and have garbage cans available.
* Decide whether you will coordinate or if everyone will bring their own tables, chairs, plates, cutlery, cups, beverages. If using barbecues, who will bring them?
* Institute a policy that everyone is to use their own bathrooms so that home security is maintained.
* Decide if pets are allowed.
* Be ready to oversee clean up after the event.
* You may wish to do an evaluation at the end of the event to collect any new ideas for next time.

**Activities During the Event**

* Visit and eat.
* Games (some organized, some that kids can plan themselves).
* Introduce people and find out where they live.
* Encourage people to share their talents, e.g. musicians, magicians.

**Final Reminders**

* Keep back doors locked and equipment in sight.
* Loud music is prohibited.
* Remember when setting up tables and chairs that emergency vehicles may need access.
* Post signs the day before the event to remind everyone to remove cars for the street closure.