



# BLOCK PARTY Toolkit

**AN EASY HOW TO GUIDE**  
to organize and host a  
**BLOCK PARTY**  
in your neighbourhood.



403-887-1137 | [www.sylvanlake.ca](http://www.sylvanlake.ca)

## Top 10 reason to hold a block party

1. To have fun—no excuses or reasons are needed to celebrate.
2. Meet your neighbours. When you know who lives in your neighbourhood, you are more likely to identify a stranger or suspicious people.
3. To increase the sense of belonging to a community.
4. To strengthen neighbourhood spirit and encourage residents to look after the neighbourhood.
5. To make additional connections within the community. When you know people, you can exchange skills or resources and perhaps organize a book club, babysitting co-op, share walking to school duties or find a new friend for your children.
6. To meet some long time residents and learn about your community history.
7. To help with safety/crime prevention by knowing who lives where and be able to identify strangers or suspicious people.
8. To have a neighbourhood clean-up day, play some good music and barbecue once all the work is done.
9. To learn a little about each other and who might need a little extra help from time to time.
10. To establish new friendships.

## Hosting is easy

- Fill out an application form and return it to WCC (in the Wellness & Community Connedtions Centre, 4725 43 Street).
- Invite your neighbours to attend and help out.
- Create a theme and plan your party
- The Town of Sylvan Lake arranges road closures and provides bins and barricades if needed.
- Borrow a Block Party Activity Kit full of fun games and activities for everyone.
- Everyone gets together on your party date and has lots of fun!

## Getting started

### 1. WORK TOGETHER

- The idea of a neighbourhood Block Party is to bring neighbours together, so the first step is to create an organizing committee.
- Enlist as many neighbours as you can to help out.
- One can take a “Lone Ranger” approach, and it can be a great event. However, it may make it more difficult to find someone else to do it next year.

### 2. DECIDE WHO TO INVITE

- Choose natural boundaries where possible (ie. end of block)
- Make sure you invite everyone in the area you select.

### 3. CHOOSE A DATE

- Choosing a date that works for most can be challenging. Many approaches have been used;
- Flyers can be distributed to all homes on your street asking for date and party suggestions. You can also use the “Block Party Questionnaire” available in this toolkit. Have organizing committee members drop off flyers one day and collect them on another.
- Going door-to-door is another option to gather the information from your neighbours. This adds a personal touch and people will often offer to help. This is also an opportunity to collect signatures if you intend to close off any part your street.

Once a date has been determined, make sure everyone knows! Take every opportunity to talk it up in the neighbourhood as often as possible prior to the event.

### 4. DETERMINE WHICH TYPE OF PARTY TO HOLD

Your organizing committee can determine which type of party will work best in your neighbourhood. Some ideas include:

- Potluck-everyone brings one dish to share. A popular idea is to have even number houses bring dessert and odd number houses bring salad or main dish.
- Barbecue-depending on your neighbourhood preference, the organizing committee can collect money and purchase all food items for the event or everyone brings his or her own items to BBQ.
- Picnic-everyone brings their own meal.
- Catered-Everyone shares the cost and the food is purchased.

### 5. DECIDE ON A LOCATION

If at all possible, use a common public space. This will increase the likelihood of shared responsibility for the event. Safety for all participants needs to be an important factor when determining a location.

Options:

- A neighbour’s front or back yard
- House
- Garage
- Common room in a condo unit
- Public roadway (complete a Road Closure Application and get neighbours permission)



*Try not to go overboard; it can make people feel the event is too much work.*

*KISS—Keep it Simple Silly!*

## **6. GIVE YOURSELF LOTS OF TIME**

- For a first time Block Party, distribute the first flyer requesting feedback 4 to 5 weeks before the event.
- Adjustments may need to be made if a neighbour already has an event of their own 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 preferable for the event.
- Have an alternative rainout day planned, just in case.
- 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, plan to finish by 9:00 pm.

## **7. ROLE OF ORGANIZERS**

- Make planning decisions prior to the event.
- Act as greeters at the block party.
- 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 neighbourhood children with a prize for picking up the most garbage.

## **8. SET-UP**

- It's a good idea to have 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 cans available.
- Decide who will coordinate or if everyone will bring his or her own tables and chairs, plates, cutlery and cups, and beverages.
- If using barbecues, who will bring them?
- Institute a bathroom policy "everyone to use his or her own", so that home security is maintained.
- Decide if pets are allowed.
- Provide residents with an evaluation at the end of the event to collect any new ideas for next year.

## **9. ACTIVITIES FOR 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.
- Invite crime prevention or other community groups to set up a display.
- Encourage the talent of your neighbourhood to come forward - you may be living next to a musician, artist, magician, singer, dancer, radio host or prize-winning cook!
- Bulletin board/Sign up sheets for special interests:
  - Babysitters (needed/offered)
  - Interested in walking group
  - Interested in reading club



- Plan lots of games for kids, some organized and some they can play themselves. Examples:
  - Sidewalk chalk
  - Face painting
  - Hula hoops
  - Bean bag toss
  - Basketball
  - Fruit loop necklaces
- Equipment bags that include some of the items listed above as well as a canopy tent are available to borrow from Wellness & Community Connections (WCC). Call 403-887-1137 for more information.

*Be sure to encourage intergenerational participation. For example, have youth leading games for younger children, seniors and teens working the barbeques. Make sure that people with disabilities can participate in activities, including their attendants (those with seeing-eye dogs or in wheelchairs).*



## **Important Reminders**

- Residents should observe security precautions by keeping back doors locked and equipment in sight.
- Be courteous: loud amplification of music is prohibited in accordance with the noise bylaw.
- Remember when setting up tables and chairs that emergency vehicles must have access.
- You may wish to post signs the day before the event to remind everyone to remove their cars if the street is being used.
- Alcohol is only permitted on private property, not on Town streets or in parks.
- If you would like to book a Town Facility (ie. Picnic shelter, tournament house, gymnasium) please contact Facility Booking at 403-887-2199 (a fee may apply).
- If you intend to use the street or alley in any way, a Road Closure Application must be submitted to the Public Works Department. You obtain this form by calling 403-887-2800.



# BLOCK PARTY QUESTIONNAIRE

A few neighbours have been talking and we thought it would be fun to get together and have a "meet-on-the-street event". This would be an opportunity to get to know one another. To get this event underway, we would like to know what you think!

**Are you interested in a neighbourhood block party?**

\_\_\_\_\_ Yes Number of people attending \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ No

**If yes, when is the best date and time of day?**

1<sup>st</sup> choice Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Time of Day: \_\_\_\_\_  
2<sup>nd</sup> choice Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Time of Day: \_\_\_\_\_

**Which of the following options best suits your family?** (*List options in most favourable to least favourable order: 1 = most favourable, 4 = least favourable*)

\_\_\_\_\_ Each family brings their own hamburgers/hot dogs, buns and refreshments and we grill the burgers/hot dogs together, plus a dessert to share.  
\_\_\_\_\_ The meal is catered by an outside company and everyone contributes a little bit of money.  
\_\_\_\_\_ Each family brings their own picnic meal and a dessert to share.  
\_\_\_\_\_ Potluck. Everyone brings one dish to share with the party.

**Would you be willing to bring a barbecue and help cook?** \_\_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No

**Would you be interested in helping organize this event?** \_\_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No

**Do you have any suggestions for our block party?**

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**Please return this questionnaire by:**

\_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_ at \_\_\_\_\_  
*Date Name Address*

We will send out a second notice to let everyone know the outcome of the survey. Please remember to give us your name and address so we can contact you directly.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone #: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

**Thanks neighbour!**

# Block Party Activity Kits

If you are interested in borrowing a Block Party Activity Kit for your Neighbourhood Block Party please contact WCC at 403-887-1137. You will be required to fill out a Block Party Activity Kit lending agreement to be signed before release of the equipment and after the return and inspection of the kit.

## Activity Kit #1

Football (1)  
Soccer Ball (1)  
Volleyball (1)  
Potato sacks (4)  
Plastic Flying Discs (2)  
Hula Hoops (3)  
Skipping Rope, long (1)  
Ball & Scoops (2 scoops, 1 ball)  
Sidewalk chalk

## Activity Kit #2

Football (1)  
Soccer Ball (1)  
Volleyball (1)  
Potato sacks (4)  
Plastic Flying Discs (2)  
Hula Hoops (3)  
Tug of War Rope 75' (1)  
Skipping Rope, long (1)  
Ball & Scoops (2 scoops, 1 ball)

## Activity Kit #3

Football (1)  
Basketball (1)  
Volleyball (1)  
Potato sacks (4)  
Plastic Flying Discs (2)  
Hula Hoops (3)  
Bean Bag Toss Game (1)  
Skipping Rope, long (1)  
Baseball & Gloves (2 adult gloves, 2 youth gloves, 2 balls)

## Activity Kit #4

Football (1)  
Basketball (1)  
Volleyball (1)  
Potato sacks (4)  
Plastic Flying Discs (2)  
Hula Hoops (3)  
Ladder Game (1)  
Skipping Rope, long (1)  
Baseball & Gloves (2 adult gloves, 2 youth gloves, 2 balls)