



TOWN OF COCHRANE BLOCK PARTY PLANNING GUIDE

cochrane.ca/Neighbours



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Find printables and other resources at cochrane.ca/Neighbours

For more information, contact neighbourhoods@cochrane.ca or call 403-851-2250



INTRODUCTION

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

Top Ten Reasons to Have a Block Party

Simply, to have fun - no excuses or reasons are needed to celebrate!

To meet your neighbours and learn where they live and who lives there.

Knowing others in your neighbourhood and where they live improves community spirit and safety.

To increase the sense of belonging in your community.

To establish new friendships.

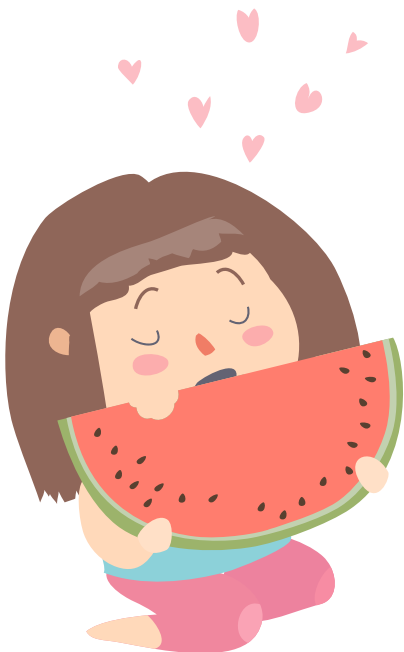
To encourage neighbours to look after the neighbourhood.

To plan other neighbourhood projects, that inspire community connection.

To learn a little about each other and know who might need a little extra help from time to time.

To meet some of the long time neighbours and learn about your community history.

To make additional connections within the community and meet neighbours who have interests or skills to share.





INTRODUCTION

Let's have fun!

- Block parties are 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) an event permit is required (see page 7).
- Other locations for hosting a block party may include a neighbour's yard.
- 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 Town roads or public property.



GETTING STARTED

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 — everyone brings his or her own food;
- Picnics — everyone brings their own meal;
- 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!

GETTING STARTED

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 7). Safety needs to be an important factor in planning!





GETTING STARTED

5. Town of Cochrane Application and Permits

A permit is required when planning a neighbourhood event on or in Town of Cochrane roadways or public land (such as parks), and is registered through the Community Event Administrator.

Permits for neighbourhood block parties can be found online at:
cochrane.ca/eventplanning

- Application form submissions are recommended at least 2 weeks prior to the event
- The application form will start the approval process

Block Party Specifics

- Application must be made online by a homeowner on the block.

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 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 7:00 am – 10:00 pm on weekdays and 9:00 am – 10:00 pm on weekends (Noise Control Bylaw 16-2011)
3. Applicant remains at the party until its conclusion
4. Alcoholic beverages are not permitted on the Town streets
5. Open fires are not permitted on the Town streets
6. Emergency vehicle access must be maintained at all times during the event (eg. Fire, ambulance or police vehicle/personnel)
7. Ensure trailer is locked, parked securely, and attached to a vehicle (Traffic Bylaw 02-2015 12.11) No person shall park any trailer (whether designed for occupancy or for the carrying of goods and equipment), upon any *highway unless said trailer is fully attached to a vehicle by which it may be safely and lawfully drawn along a highway. *highway includes streets and roads



GETTING STARTED

6. The Timing To Plan The Event

- More resources/information are found in the Tools & Template section of this guide.
- 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 invitation with date, time and what to bring should go out 2 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:

- Invitations 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 and about.
- Neighbours can be called on the phone.
- Make an extra effort to get your new neighbours out to the event.
- 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.



GETTING STARTED

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 complete at the end of the event.
- Arrange pick up of keys at FCSS to transport the trailer and return.

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.
- Line up tables for the food and have a few garbage and recycling receptacles available, label what goes in which bin—see template section.
- Coordinate for everyone to bring their own tables, chairs, plates, cutlery, cups, food and beverages.
- If using barbecues, who will bring them?
- Institute a bathroom policy “everyone to use his or her own”, so that home safety and 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.



GETTING STARTED

10. Fire Pits

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

- Fire pits are not permitted on a public road or in a park.
- Some Cochrane parks have a fire pit provided, a permit is not required.
- Fire pits can be used on private property, all Town bylaws and requirements should be considered.
- For the rules and regulations relating to fire pit permits and approval, visit cochrane.ca/FireBans

11. 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 Cochrane Community Health Center offers courses to operate temporary food concessions at fairs, festivals, exhibitions, carnivals, or other special events.
- For more information and resources:
- Call for inspector availability | M-F 8am to 4:30pm
403-851-6171
www.albertahealthservices.ca/8302.asp
- See "Special Events" tab in the primary list and the "Education Courses" tab on the left of webpage.

12. 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
- Various forms of water games
- Lawn rec. activities, such as bean bag toss
- Bouncy castles
- Relay races

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



CONNECTING

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

- 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 cochrane.ca/Neighbours

TOOLS & TEMPLATES

Resources in this section:

Planning Checklist	Page 14
Planning Committee To Do List	Page 16
Sample Invitation	Page 17
Sample Sign-In Sheet	Page 18
Sample Evaluation Form	Page 19

Find printables and other resources at cochrane.ca/Neighbours





TOOLS & TEMPLATES

Block Party Planning Checklist

2 Weeks Prior

- ☐ Gather a few neighbours to help start the planning
- ☐ Submit Block Party Application form to the Town of Cochrane (refer to page 6)
- ☐ Discuss Liability Insurance with your home insurance provider

1-2 Weeks Prior

- ☐ Send out invitations (sample found on page 17)
- ☐ Arrange to have tables for food and activities that may require them
- ☐ Arrange for BBQs, coolers, ice and water
- ☐ 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

1 Week Prior

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



TOOLS & TEMPLATES

Block Party Planning Checklist continued

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 18)
- ☐ 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 19)
- ☐ 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, return trailer and keys

TOOLS & TEMPLATES

Planning Committee To Do List

Responsibility	Who/Address	Phone / Email
Main Contact <input type="checkbox"/> Organize planning group/meeting <input type="checkbox"/> Submit Block Party Application <input type="checkbox"/> Send out invitations <input type="checkbox"/> Answer questions		
Activities <input type="checkbox"/> Activities/games for all ages and abilities <input type="checkbox"/> Decide whether to offer door prizes <input type="checkbox"/> Involve kids and teens in planning		
Food <input type="checkbox"/> Arrange tables, BBQs, coolers, ice, water, etc. <input type="checkbox"/> Collect money (donations) for any group food supplies (if needed)		
Site Preparation <input type="checkbox"/> Plan for parking, food, seating and activity areas <input type="checkbox"/> Signs and directions <input type="checkbox"/> Ensure emergency access, first aid kit and fire extinguisher		
Clean-Up <input type="checkbox"/> Obtain garbage/recycling/compost bins, with replacement bags. Use signage as to "what goes where" <input type="checkbox"/> Arrange cleaning supplies <input type="checkbox"/> Take down signs and recycle		
Other		

TOOLS & TEMPLATES

Sample Invitation



Don't forget to send invitations to your neighbours! Any card or invitation will do, but we've created this door hanger for your convenience.

Find a printable version of this invitation and other resources at cochrane.ca/Neighbours

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TOOLS & TEMPLATES

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 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 _____
date *name*

at _____
address

cochrane.ca/Neighbours

