

The logo for QEXCA, with the letters in a bold, white, sans-serif font.

Your Community Association

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Organising Block Party

A step-by-step guide

Step 1: Decide You Want to Organise a Block Party with Your Neighbours

Perhaps you've just moved to your block, or you've lived there for several years but still don't know most of your neighbours. Deciding to organise a party in the street with your neighbours is a great way to help create community on your block. Not only will you get to know the people who help you organise the party, but you'll get to know everyone who decides to attend.

Start to plan your party about three months in advance, including gathering the following, for maximum enjoyment at minimum cost:

- a group of about 6 dedicated volunteers;
- a [City permit](#), if you require the street to be closed;
- consider promoting your party as a potluck to reduce the cost of food and soft drinks;
- tables to hold the food and drinks;
- alcoholic drinks, if desired, and lots of ice;
- some signs for before and during the party;
- ice cream, if desired, preferably donated from a local creamery or provided at a discount.

Step 2: Organise a Group of Dedicated Volunteers to Plan the Party

To organise a block party, you'll need a team of at least six volunteers. More helpers can always be put to use, but you'll definitely need people to:

- apply for the permit (if necessary), promote the party to people living on the block, and take sign-up sheets (at least 2 people)
- Organise the potluck and manage the food and drinks tables the day of the party (at least 2 people)
- post "No Parking" signs the day before, and set up and clean up the day of the event (at least 2 people)

The [City of Saskatoon website](#) has additional information that you might find helpful.

If you already know some of your neighbours, start by asking them if they're willing to help. If you don't know any of your neighbours, try posting signs on the street posts at the ends of your block, asking for volunteers to meet at a given date and time at a local gathering place. If you still come up short, you might have to go door-to-door.

Step 3: Apply for a Permit and Pick a Date

Note that all City Noise Bylaws are in effect.

If you require the street to be closed, [you will need a permit](#). You will need to have the date chosen before going to apply for the permit.

Though you can never predict the weather, you may want to take it and other things into consideration when choosing a date. You may also want to avoid picking a date that competes with a major local event, like a music festival or church picnic happening in your neighbourhood.

Step 4: Promote Your Party

There are a ton of ways to promote your block party, but here's a simple and direct approach:

Put Save-the-Dates in every mailbox on your block.

You'll want something colorful. Be sure to include the date of the party as well as contact information for the people you designated to take sign-up sheets.

If you're doing a potluck style party, you'll want to mention that, too. You also might want to use the Save-the-Date as a last-ditch attempt to beef up your team of volunteers. You'll be happy to have a few extra pairs of hands on party day.

One more tip: on the Save-the-Date, give people a deadline for signing up. Deadlines motivate people who might otherwise wait until the last minute to join the party, and you want to have a relatively solid count before the big day.

Step 5: Find That Ice Cream

So, the ice cream may not be necessary, but it can be a real crowd-pleaser.

Try to make a deal with a local ice cream shop. The proprietor doesn't need to make a flat-out donation but ask if the cost can be reduced. You'll have the satisfaction of supporting a local business.

When it's ice cream time at the party, make sure everyone knows the ice cream was provided by the local shop, a great way to thank local businesses that help defray the costs of your party.

If you're going to approach a local business for a donation, make sure to do it a few weeks before the event to give the owner time to think about your proposal. The best way to approach a local business owner is to walk in, have a written proposal, and be respectful. Most stores get a lot of donation requests, so be prepared to negotiate a deal that works for both you and the owner.

Step 6: Organise the Potluck

A potluck is great because "it's more or less self-Organising." Well, sort of ...

If you've promoted the event as a potluck on the Save-the-Dates, and your potluck organisers are the same as the people taking sign-ups, you've done two very smart things.

When people call to sign up for the block party, ask them what they'd like to bring to the potluck, and then ask them to commit to bringing that specific dish. If they say they don't know what to bring -- or if five people in a row pledge to bring chips and salsa -- start making suggestions. In the end, your suggestions will only make the block party more delicious and nutritious for everyone involved. If people seem truly afraid of the stove, put them on soft drink and ice duty.

That brings up a good point: definitely don't forget the ice. You'll need it for the drinks.

Step 7: Decide What to Do About the Drinks

Note that all Saskatchewan Liquor Laws are in effect.

People who want alcoholic drinks can be asked to chip in \$5 for an "honour bar."

Kegs work out well for parties over a certain size. If you get a keg, you'll definitely need a large bucket and plenty of ice. Coolers with cans or bottles of beer and soft drinks also work well.

If there's a small surplus of cash leftover from the honour bar, the group may use it to defray the costs of the following year's block party.

Step 8: Post Your "No Parking" Signs

For the safety and enjoyment of everyone at the party, it's time to post those "No Parking" signs.

Be sure to hang the signs in advance of the party, so car owners on the block have ample opportunity to move their vehicles.

The party is much more fun -- not to mention safer -- when the kids can run in the street.

Step 9: Clean Up

Be sure not to leave your block in a state of disarray. At the scheduled time, remove the parking signs and any traffic barriers that have been set up on the block. Take down tables used to hold the food, and pick up all garbage.