

At Home in my Neighbourhood

A Place Where...



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At Home in my Neighbourhood

Sunshine Coast Council is pleased to launch the “At Home in my Neighbourhood” toolkit to help you plan your neighbourhood gatherings and projects, you may even start a neighbourhood tradition.

Neighbourhood gatherings are an opportunity to build friendships, have fun, share ideas or work together on a common activity, whilst developing a sense of belonging among residents.

However you chose to come together, this toolkit is designed to assist you in making your experience as enjoyable and successful as possible.

WHY SHOULD I CONNECT WITH MY NEIGHBOURS?

10 great reasons...

- ① To have fun and celebrate
- ② To hear new and interesting stories
- ③ To share knowledge, skills and resources
- ④ To learn about your neighbourhood history or create the history!
- ⑤ To recognise your neighbours and learn a little about each other
- ⑥ To create a neighbourhood that’s inclusive and safe
- ⑦ To collaborate and take action for the benefit of the neighbourhood
- ⑧ To know who might need a little extra help
- ⑨ To create a sense of belonging – a place where you feel at home
- ⑩ To welcome new people into the neighbourhood

Connected neighbourhoods lead to positive individual and family wellbeing, as well as some of the below benefits:

- Increased quality of life, healthier and happier neighbourhoods
- Feeling safe, engaged and an overall sense of belonging
- A readiness to co-operate, mutual respect and common aspirations
- Localised assistance during a weather event or natural disaster.



GETTING STARTED

It's often a good idea to start small and find one or two neighbours to help you organise your gathering or project.

If this is the first gathering in your neighbourhood you may need to explain what it is and share some of the benefits.

You could take a "lone ranger" approach and it could be really successful, however the idea of a neighbourhood gathering or project is to bring people together.

Talk to your neighbours and find out if they would like to be involved, discuss potential dates and the type of activities you could organise.

To collaborate with your neighbours, you may wish to create a planning group, take the time to discover each person's strengths and assets. Some of your neighbours may be able to assist through their interests and experiences. Discuss how each of you can contribute from your **head, hands and heart**.



Head – What knowledge do each of you have in a particular area and would you enjoy talking about it or teaching others? E.g. history of the neighbourhood, event planning, permaculture etc.



Hands – What physical skills do each of you possess and would you be willing to teach others? E.g. carpentry, gardening, painting, cooking, computer skills etc.



Heart – What are your passions, things you care deeply about that call you to action? E.g. environment, animal welfare etc.

“There are no strangers in a healthy community”

– Peter Kenyon

If you draw on everyone's strengths, someone artistic can make the invitations, a great cook can organise the catering, and a natural organiser can plan the activities, and so on...

You could also ask the neighbourhood kids to deliver the invitations to everyone's mailbox. Usual jobs for teenagers could include organising the physical games or music during the neighbourhood gathering.

Planning together is all part of the fun and another way to get to know each other.





COMMUNITY CONNECTORS – ARE YOU A NEIGHBOURHOOD CHAMPION?

Community Connectors are residents who are enthusiastic to make a difference within their neighbourhood. If you enjoy taking the time to listen to your neighbours and are happy to advocate on their behalf becoming a Community Connector might be for you.

Community Connectors may do this through:

- Participating in skill building workshops and mentoring provided by council and partners
- Gaining a clearer sense of what is possible for their neighbourhoods
- Discovering ways to create neighbourhood solutions
- Developing methods and skills for building neighbourhood connectedness
- Working with council, community centres, groups, organisations and individuals to host neighbourhood gatherings or projects.

If you like the idea of becoming a Community Connector and are looking for skills development or inspiration, council can help connect you with available resources and networks.

HOW TO WELCOME A NEW NEIGHBOUR

Many new residents want to meet their neighbours and make friends.

A day or two after your new neighbours have moved in, go over with your family or team up with your neighbours to create a welcome basket and bring it over together.

A welcome basket could include:

- Fresh flowers
- Homemade treats – you many need to be sensitive to allergies (nuts, gluten, etc.)
- A handwritten welcome note
- Menus to your favourite coffee shop and takeout places
- An IOU with an offer to help if they ever need anything.

Put together a cheat sheet for the neighbourhood. Write down all the important stuff that a new neighbour wouldn't immediately know about, like what day the household rubbish is picked up, special events in the neighbourhood and other information specific to your neighbourhood.

If you are a bit uncomfortable introducing yourself to new people, but still wish to let your new neighbour know that they're welcome, you could also leave a note to introduce yourself.

PLANNING YOUR EVENT OR PROJECT

Whether you live in a house, an apartment building, a flat, or something else entirely, you can be part of organising a neighbourhood gathering or enhancement project.

As a general rule, try not to go overboard, you do not want to burn yourself out and miss out on the fun. Keep it simple.

GATHERINGS AND PROJECTS

There are many types of neighbourhood gatherings and projects you could start planning. Think about what can work for your type of neighbourhood, be creative and have fun.

Neighbourhood gatherings can include:

- **Barbecues** – organisers purchase what is needed and everyone chips in, or everyone brings their own food
- **Picnics** – decorate your garden and invite everyone to bring a picnic basket and rug
- **Pot luck** – have a house party and ask everyone to bring a dish
- **Conversation circles** – invite neighbours around to talk about subjects of interest, you could even hear from a guest
- **Backyard movie night** – throw out some rugs and bring out some popcorn
- **Pet parade** – meet your neighbourhood pets, dress them up and enjoy the shenanigans!
- **Sidewalk chalk** – create a rainbow of colour that connects from one house to the next
- **Games night** – dress up like high rollers
- **Garden tour** – don't forget your secateurs for clippings!
- **Photography exhibition** – photograph your neighbourhood and host an exhibition
- **Book club** – people that read together, succeed together!
- **Start an exercise group**
- **Diner en Blanc** – set up a temporary, chic dining area. Guests come dressed in white to enjoy quality food and wine.

When people connect with each other there is an opportunity to take collective action on an issue or project that will benefit the neighbourhood. Work on a project with your neighbours to create fun, beautiful and interesting neighbourhoods.

Neighbourhood projects can include:

- Building a park bench
- Planting a community garden (see council's website for application details)
- Painting street numbers
- Starting a collective economy through sharing and exchanging resources (E.g. food, books, tools)
- Decorating neighbourhood trees
- Hosting a street clean up
- Creating a neighbourhood newsletter.

Some neighbourhood projects may be eligible for funding support. Turn to page 11 for more information.





LOCATIONS PRIVATE AND PUBLIC

You will need to decide whether your gathering or project will take place on private or public land.

Private land includes your yard, house, garage, driveway and a shared common area or roof top within a block of units.

Private land can be managed as you would any private function, however it will be harder to gain shared responsibility for the event.

Public land includes your neighbourhood park or reserve, the verge, your street, a cul-de-sac, alley way or parking area.

Holding a gathering on public land increases the likelihood of shared responsibility for the event, but the organising process may be more complex depending on the specific location.

NOTE: A Temporary Event Permit will be required for events on public land that involve road or car park closures and where attendance will be more than 50 people. Turn to page 13 for more information on the permit process.

WHO TO INVITE

The Sunshine Coast community is growing increasingly diverse. Providing opportunities to learn about other people is important and our neighbourhoods will flourish when they are welcoming and inclusive for all people, from different age groups, cultures, backgrounds and ways of life.

Most neighbourhood gatherings are “invitation to residents only” and there is no outside “publicity” – that would make it a public event.

The gathering or project is generally restricted to the natural neighbourhood boundaries, if you are planning a block, street or cul-de-sac gathering it’s important to invite everyone from the area.

NOTE: Creating a large public event and broadening the invitation to the general community means you will require a Temporary Event Permit. Turn to page 13 for more information on the permit process.

PRIVACY

Your neighbours will normally join in as it’s right outside their door, however they do have the choice to participate and should feel comfortable whether they attend or not.

GETTING THE WORD OUT

When organising a neighbourhood gathering it’s important to keep all your neighbours informed through both written and verbal communication.

Take every opportunity to talk about your plans in the neighbourhood as often as possible prior to the event.

Inviting people face to face is the ideal way to get people excited. The best way to do this is by knocking on doors and handing out paper invitations. You could also approach neighbours casually if you see them out walking the dog or gardening.

To reach neighbours in townhouses and apartments, it is best to approach the manager. They will let you know how to get in touch with the residents.

Ensure you outline any specific details guests should know about the gathering.

For example:

- What type of gathering it will be, does it have a theme, what will happen?
- Date and time (be specific about start and finish times)
- Who can attend (including pets)
- What to bring
- Do you need help?

You can download an invitation template from the “At Home in my Neighbourhood” section of council’s website.



GAMES AND ACTIVITIES

Think about the age groups attending your gathering. Games and activities should cater for a range of ages. Keep it simple and do not organise too many different activities to ensure your gathering runs smoothly.

For the kids:

- Kid's talent show
- Face painting
- Magician
- Bike decorating and a bike parade
- Scavenger hunt or treasure hunt with clues
- Water games like water balloons or sprinklers to run through.

For the adults:

Hello Fun Facts – write a different question on each name tag and hand them out. When neighbours introduce themselves, they should answer the question on their neighbour's tag as a way to start conversations.

Some questions that you might use:

- Where did you grow up?
- How long have you lived in the neighbourhood?
- If you could travel anywhere, where would you go?
- What is one of the most memorable experiences in your life?
- If you could meet anyone in the world, who would it be?

MUSIC

Will you have music at your celebration? When inviting residents encourage them to bring musical instruments.

Council recommends using a portable or battery operated music player to avoid loud amplification and additional cables.

Be courteous, loud amplification of music can be disruptive to others.

Noise restrictions occur between:

- 10:00pm and 7:00am Monday to Friday
- 6:00pm and 8:00am on Saturday and Sunday, or public holidays.

If you play music at other times, you need to ensure the noise level is no more than 10 decibels above the ambient background noise level. Check your Local Laws for more information.





PETS

Firstly, decide whether you want to include pets in your gathering or celebration. Anyone who brings a pet to the neighbourhood gathering must keep the animal on a leash at all times and remember to clean up after their pet.

WAYS TO REDUCE RISK

Risks could include trips and falls, electrical cords, manual lifting, food preparation and handling, access to water, access to toilets, accessibility for older people or people with a disability, sunburn, fire, activities near the road, and alcohol consumption. Ways to reduce risks include:

- Have a first aid kit
- Have sunscreen and mosquito repellent on hand
- Practice food safety, proper food handling should always be a priority
- Be aware of noise restrictions
- Stick to your start and finish time
- Have a wet weather plan
- Appoint someone to escort vehicles in or out, if applicable
- Think about child safety, especially around barbecues.

ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

We all have a vested interest in environmental sustainability. Here are some considerations as you plan your gatherings and projects to ensure a smaller ecological footprint.

Consider generating less waste by asking your neighbours to bring their own reusable cutlery, plates and mugs.

Ensure garbage, recycling and compost bins are available even before the event starts, and that you have a plan to manage waste at the end of your event.

Make some signs and place them on or near your waste bins so people know what goes where!

Determine if anyone in your neighbourhood has a backyard composter. They could possibly handle the natural compost items after the event.





FUNDING FOR NEIGHBOURHOOD PROJECTS

Are you interested in taking on a neighbourhood enhancement project to create interesting, fun and beautiful outdoor spaces and streets in your neighbourhood?

Examples of suitable projects include, murals, community gardens, street art and furniture. Council offers a range of grants and funding for community projects.

Each program has specific guidelines and conditions. Please contact council's Grants Team on 07 5475 7272 to discuss your project idea.

NOTE: projects on public land may also require permission from Council's Development Services or Parks and Gardens departments. Council Officers will assist you if this is required.

HINTS AND TIPS

- Nametags – they may seem geeky, but it's a lot easier than trying to remember everyone's names or doing self-introductions.
- Allow for diversity, your gathering may need to cater for a range of ages and cultures, and different tastes in food, dance and music.
- Be aware that older people, or people from a different cultural background can feel quite wary or vulnerable.
- Respect differences and don't seriously inconvenience anyone. Talk to all residents to prevent any formal "objections" if you are having a road closure.
- Days of worship may mean some neighbours will be unable to attend, discuss this when you are planning.
- It's best to have at least four households participating.
- If you're having a Pot Luck, ask people to identify the ingredients in their dishes, just in case someone has allergies.
- It is important someone is available to meet and greet everyone as they arrive and to introduce them to their neighbours. People can take turns doing the meet and greet at your gathering.
- Borrow or make as much as you can for your gathering. Share your resources.





PLANNING CHECKLIST – THINGS TO CONSIDER

Here are some things to think about when planning your neighbourhood gathering.

Three months before

- Talk about your idea with the neighbours you know.
- Survey the neighbourhood, agree on a theme and date for the gathering.
- Think about any costs that may be involved with your gathering, create a simple budget if needed.
- Form a planning group and hold regular meetings.
- One member should become the main contact person, responsible for arranging invitations and answering questions.
- Put another person in charge of organising food and refreshments.
- Appoint another person to be activity coordinator.
- What equipment will you need? E.g. marquees, rugs, tables and chairs, an esky, BBQ and decorations. Make a register and see what everyone in the neighbourhood can contribute.
- Create a basic map/plan and designate areas for parking, BBQs, food, garbage/recycling/compost bins, sitting, entertainment and games/activities.
- Don't forget to put someone in charge of coordinating the clean-up.
- Decide how the food will be handled, will it be purchased, will you plan a menu and assign recipes to each household, or will you ask everyone to bring a dish to share with others?
- Decide whether you will coordinate catering supplies or will everyone will bring their own plates, cutlery, cups and beverages?
- Decide if pets are allowed.
- Think about a bathroom policy "everyone to use their own", so that home security is maintained.
- Is the proposed area safe for everyone to attend? E.g. pets, small children and elderly neighbours.
- Have a wet weather plan, just in case.

If you are using public land or organising a road closure you will also need to:

- Have a street meeting to ensure the neighbourhood is happy to proceed with a road closure, if necessary.
- Organise a meeting onsite to identify infrastructure (marquees etc.) power and lighting, if needed.
- Assign one person to handle the permit and public liability insurance.
- Contact council's Community Land Permits Team to help you with the process
email: landpermits@sunshinecoast.qld.gov.au

One month before

- Send invitations.
- Finalise your equipment list and site map, discuss how you will set up the tables, chairs, food, activities and entertainment.
- Make posters and display them around the neighbourhood to promote the event.
- Encourage talented residents in your neighbourhood to come forward, such as musicians.
- If you are using public land or organising a road closure make arrangements for barricades to block off the street.



One week before

- Confirm arrangements for entertainment, food, refreshments, marquees, tables and any other equipment that will be rented or borrowed.
- Confirm games, activities and entertainment.
- Send out a reminder about the gathering and moving some cars if you are closing your street.
- Confirm which neighbours will be helping you out on the day.

On the day, don't forget...

- Set up the arrival area, with greeters to welcome – provide directions and introduce people.
- Set up a sign-in book for records, it can help develop a contact list for the neighbourhood.
- Allocate tables for food, place garbage and recycling bins close by, label what goes in which bin.
- Be ready to oversee the clean up after the event. Consider making someone the waste and recycling coordinator for your event.
- Take lots of pictures or videos to share with your neighbours.

If you are using public land or organising a road closure

- You may wish to post signs the day before the event to remind everyone to remove cars for the street closure.
- Set up road closure barriers early.

Be sure not to leave your neighbourhood in a state of disarray. After the event remove any signs and traffic barriers that have been set up. Take down tables, chairs and marquees and ensure they are

returned and responsibly dispose of any rubbish.

Then, share your photographs and pat yourself on the back for planning a great, laidback get-together for your neighbourhood!

You can access event planning resources and templates on the "At Home in my Neighbourhood" section of the council's website.

PERMITS, PUBLIC LIABILITY INSURANCE AND ROAD CLOSURES

So, you've tried a backyard gathering and now your neighbourhood would like to plan a bigger celebration.

It's the festive season and everyone would like to shut the street or use the local park to pop up marquees, tables and chairs, share food, play some games and sing some carols.

Where do you start?

TEMPORARY EVENT PERMIT

If you wish to hold a gathering in a public park with more than 50 people in attendance, or you need to close your street for a celebration, you will need a permit from council.

Council regulates temporary events to ensure community safety, balance temporary events with community use and maintain relevant infrastructure.

A permit also ensures you can secure the location you want for the day and time of your event.

A permit, however, does not guarantee exclusive use of an area or its facilities. The permit holder is required to work with other groups and the public using the area on the day.

PUBLIC LIABILITY

To host a temporary event on public land you will need to provide a Certificate of Currency for Public Liability Insurance with a cover for \$20 million noting Sunshine Coast Council as an interested party.

It may be possible for your public liability obligations to be covered under the umbrella of your neighbourhood or community centre, or another not for profit organisation. You will need to discuss this in detail with the organisation and also ensure you provide all appropriate documents with your permit application.

If you are hosting a gathering in your home or yard you should have public liability insurance to protect yourself against any personal injury or property damage claims. Speak to your insurer to ensure your household cover is adequate.

HOW TO APPLY

You will need to complete and lodge a Temporary Event Application Form at least six weeks prior to the event. Following this, your application could take up to one month to assess if all the relevant information has been provided.

Your application will also need to include the following:

- A simple site plan of the event
- Certificate of Currency for public liability insurance.

You can find the application form and information pack on council's website.

Please contact council's Community Land Permits Team if you have any questions. Call 07 5475 7272 and ask to speak with a Community Land Permits officer or email us at landpermits@sunshinecoast.qld.gov.au

Information regarding council's local laws can be found at: sunshinecoast.qld.gov.au/Council/Local-Laws

WHO CAN HELP?

Sunshine Coast Council and regional Community and Neighbourhood Centres have been working in partnership to deliver the "At Home in my Neighbourhood" program.

Community Development workers are available to assist neighbourhoods to plan their gatherings or enhancement projects.

You can call 07 5475 7272 and ask to speak with a Community Development Officer or email: commdevelopment@sunshinecoast.qld.gov.au

Alternatively, you can drop into one of the following community centres for guidance:

Nambour Community Centre	2 Shearer St, Nambour, QLD, 4560	07 5441 4724
Maroochydore Neighbourhood Centre	Cotton Tree Parade, 2 Fifth Ave, QLD, 4558	07 5443 6696
Maleny Neighbourhood Centre	17 Bicentenary Ln, Maleny, QLD, 4552	07 5499 9345
Caloundra Community Centre	58 Queen St, Caloundra, QLD, 4551	07 5491 4000
Beerwah and District Youth and Community Centre	Beerwah Sports Ground Roberts Rd, Beerwah, QLD, 4519	07 5494 0505
Glasshouse Mountains Neighbourhood Centre	Ryan Street, Glasshouse Mountains, QLD, 4518	07 5438 7000

RESOURCES AND LINKS

Please head to council's website for event planning resources, templates and links to loads of inspiration.

You can download and print out invitations, tags for your treats and event planning documents.

CASE STUDIES

Neighbourhood Gathering Example – Neighbours worth more than diamonds

Tucked away in the Sunshine Coast hinterland, neighbours are considered more valuable than diamonds

In a rural residential area of Mooloolah Valley, people live on small acreage blocks, close enough to pop over for visits and chats along the road. Over the years, many of the neighbours have formed wonderful friendships and overall, a sense of community. Neighbours support and connect with each other by sharing home-grown and homemade produce, gardening and building equipment and a lending hand. Sharing is part of life amongst neighbours with carpooling, babysitting, job opportunities, skills and interests.

People in the neighbourhood socialise at the occasional party at someone's house where everyone brings a plate to share and enjoys spending time together. There is a weeding and planting group which works on each other's properties each month, a book club, a yoga group, Halloween trick-or-treating, annual Christmas party, kids craft sessions and even concerts. Pets are also very much part of the neighbourhood, as dogs, horses and even goats, all known by name, join the neighbours for walks down the road and are looked after when their owners are away.

In times of natural disasters, such as floods and fire, the neighbours join forces to protect their properties, lend whatever is needed and support each other. After a major flood, the neighbours did a waterway clean-up through the valley, collecting piles of debris and rubbish.

The trick is, people not only know each other, they talk and socialise with each other. They share contacts and a Facebook page, which is particularly useful in times of heavy rain events. When it comes down to it, neighbours are the diamonds in the valley that become one of the most valuable aspects of people's lives.

Neighbourhood Project Example – Edmund Street Park Seat

In 2007 we had recently moved to Australia and the neighbourhood. I have always been an advocate of using art to create community and out of a need to make friends designed a project aimed to assist with community building while creating a fun and funky space at a local park for all ages to enjoy.

It takes the need to connect, the confidence to reach out and others also wanting community and friends. After much saddling up to neighbours and discussing the project, people came on board with their children to meet others and get messy in someone else's yard! They told others through school networks and playgroups and folk from further afield and their grandmas turned up too. People with clay, mosaic and concreting skills turned up to offer help creating a network of artists locally.

People of all ages were invited to decorate clay tiles. I ran clay tile making workshops at day-care centres, at library story time sessions, schools, Karingal Aged Care Home, and in my front yard for residents who lived near the park. The tiles formed part of a large mosaic bird and Tree of Life mural on the seat. Because of the community workshops there is often a broader sense of connection with families in Caloundra when we recognise each other from the project.

Ten years later, some people have moved on, many are core to my friendship group, and we often meet at the seat on Friday night for a catch up. There remains a sense of belonging, creative contribution and a sense of community.





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