



**BNRC**

BRANDON  
NEIGHBOURHOOD  
RENEWAL  
CORPORATION

# BLOCK CONNECTORS



**RESOURCE GUIDE**

## **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

The Brandon Neighbourhood Renewal Corporation is located on unceded Treaty 2 Territory – the land of the Anishinaabeg, Cree, Oji-Cree, Assiniboine, Dakota, and Dene Peoples, and home of the Metis Nation. We acknowledge harms, past and present, and we dedicate our efforts to community development that supports reconciliation and collaboration.

---

The Abundant Community Brandon Project and Resource Guides were based on the Abundant Community Edmonton (ACE) Project and Guides developed by The City of Edmonton's Citizen Services Department.

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

- 01 INTRODUCTION
- 02 OVERVIEW
- 04 BLOCK CONNECTORS
- 13 BENEFITS OF NEIGHBOURING



# INTRODUCTION



## WHAT IS THE BLOCK CONNECTOR PROGRAM?

Across the world, cities and communities are recognizing the importance and need for a caring and connected neighbourhood life. The Brandon Neighbourhood Renewal Corporation (BNRC) believes that more neighbourliness on every block will contribute towards this culture of care and connection, increase our sense of belonging and inclusion, and ultimately lead to a more inclusive and livable community.

The Block Connector program is borrowed from Abundant Community Edmonton's (ACE) framework for neighbourhood engagement at the block level. ACE is derived from the book *The Abundant Community*, written by John McKnight and Peter Block, published in 2012.

The intent of this Resource Guide is to provide you—a community-minded member of your neighbourhood—with an outline that enables and supports you to organize your neighbourhood around the strengths and potential of the people who live there.

For more information on John McKnight and Peter Block's work, visit [abundantcommunity.com](http://abundantcommunity.com).

The background of the page features a circular arrangement of five stylized human figures made from paper cutouts. The figures are in various colors: green, yellow, orange, red, and pink. They are all holding hands, forming a circle. The word 'OVERVIEW' is written in large, bold, blue capital letters across the top of the page, partially overlapping the figures.

# OVERVIEW

## VISION

*NEIGHBOURS CONNECTED AT THE BLOCK AND NEIGHBOURHOOD LEVEL.*

*TOGETHER WE FORM STRONG, CARING AND SUPPORTIVE NEIGHBOURHOODS WHERE WE LOOK OUT FOR ONE ANOTHER, SHARE OUR TALENTS, SKILLS AND RESOURCES, RECREATE TOGETHER, AND COLLECTIVELY DEVELOP THE NEIGHBOURHOODS WE DESIRE.*

## KEY ROLES

---

### NEIGHBOURHOOD LEADERSHIP

Any neighbour or group of neighbours that are wanting to strengthen their neighbourhood can. Within Brandon neighbourhoods, it has been the Brandon Neighbourhood Renewal Corporation (BNRC), city council representatives, City of Brandon Community Services staff, community centres, churches, clubs, among many others through which neighbours have provided formal leadership to build community. Through the BNRC the Block Connector program extends the reach of these community and neighborhood groups down to the block level.

---

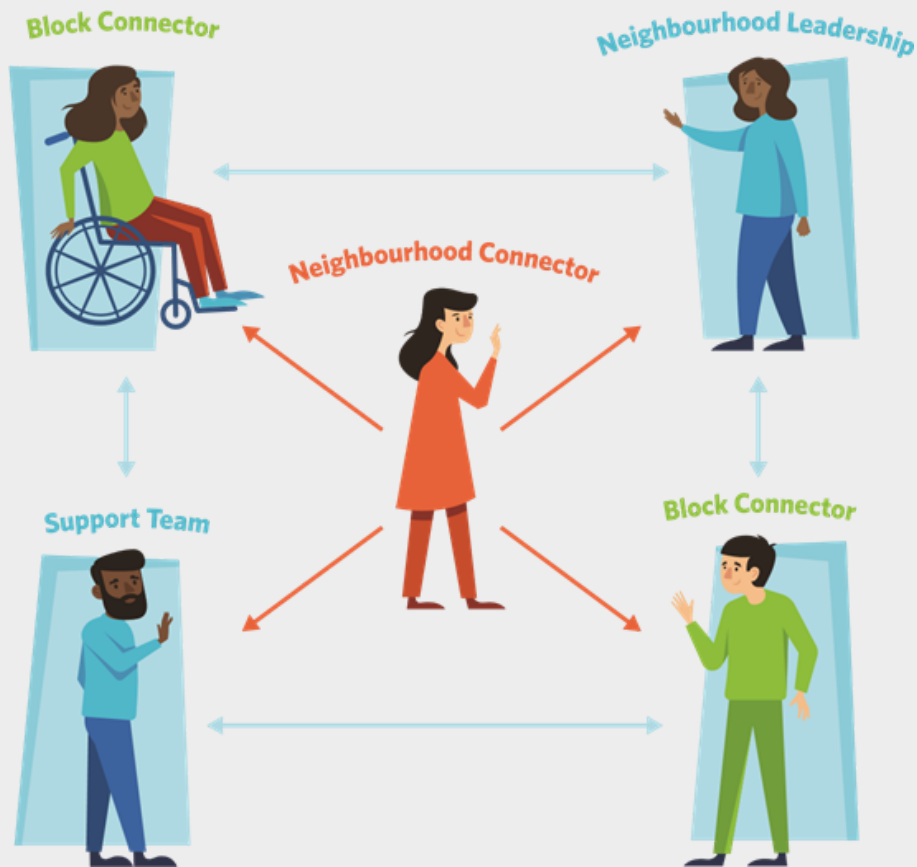
### SUPPORT TEAM

The BNRC & the Community Wellness Collaborative are passionate about building community in our neighbourhood. We are representatives of the initiative to the various Neighbourhood Leadership groups and work with various agencies to support the Block Connector program in our community.

---

### NEIGHBOURHOOD CONNECTORS

The Neighbourhood Connectors primary role is to identify and support Block Connectors. In these initial days of this project the Community Development Coordinator at BNRC will play this role. In the future this role may be a temporary part-time paid position, coordinated by the Support Team and supported through Neighbourhood Leadership.



## THE PROCESS

### BLOCK CONNECTORS

Block Connectors connect with the neighbours that live around them (approximately 20 households). They introduce themselves and their three key roles: Point Person, Party Person and Listener. This introduction is often paired with an invitation to a block social (e.g. block party, bbq, etc.). Over time neighbours get to know one another through the initiatives taken by the Block Connector. An important dimension of that initiative is that the Block Connector listens to their neighbours by asking good questions about them.

Block Connectors use the Connector Card to facilitate conversations and to document what their neighbours share with them.

Content from the conversation is collected into a neighbourhood inventory and used to build community and a sense of belonging. The information in the neighbourhood inventory is not confidential but is safe-guarded at the BNRC.

# BLOCK CONNECTORS

*GREAT NEIGHBOURHOODS HAVE ALWAYS REQUIRED THAT A FEW NEIGHBOURS INITIATE FRIENDLY CONNECTIONS. RESEARCH AND EXPERIENCE CONFIRM WHAT WE HAVE KNOWN FROM THE PAST, THAT MAKING INTRODUCTIONS, HOSTING SOCIAL GATHERINGS AND LISTENING TO EACH OTHER, FORM THE BASIS OF HEALTHY NEIGHBOURHOOD RELATIONSHIPS. FROM THIS, THE ROLE OF THE BLOCK CONNECTOR WAS FORMED.*

---

1



**Point Person** or the “go-to” person for your Block, keeping neighbours updated about block and neighbourhood life. You might put together a block contact list to help neighbours get connected.

---

2



**Party Person** for the block, initiating block social gatherings such as BBQs and block parties once or twice a year.

---

3



**Listener** for each neighbour on the block, hopefully hearing from every neighbour. You’ll be asking for their ideas for the neighbourhood, what pastimes they would enjoy doing with neighbours and the skills and gifts they would be willing to share with the block or with the neighbourhood.



## KEY CONVERSATION TOPICS & DESIRED OUTCOMES

---

### VISION

This helps neighbourhood leaders determine the wishes of the residents of the neighbourhood. This may inform decision making around programs, services and projects at the neighbourhood level.

---

### ACTIVITIES & INTERESTS

An invitation to join existing neighbourhood groups or form new neighbourhood groups based on common interests and pastimes. The local element often removes existing barriers and has the potential to increase sense of belonging at the block and neighbourhood level.

---

### SKILLS, ABILITIES & EXPERIENCES

Neighbours helping neighbours. Everyone is valuable and has something to offer neighbourhood life. The discovery of the skills, abilities and experiences of neighbours—the community assets—leads to a more engaged, connected and supportive community life in the neighbourhood.



Address: \_\_\_\_\_ Family Name(s): \_\_\_\_\_

First Name	Email	Phone Number	Birth Year
1.			
2.			
3.			
4.			
5.			

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_

**Hi Neighbour!**

My Name is: \_\_\_\_\_  
 I live nearby at: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Email: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Phone: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Our next block social is on: \_\_\_\_\_

Our neighbourhood has asked if I would be our block's Point Person, Party Person, and Listener and I'd like to chat with you!

Project based on ACE Edmonton. For more information contact Brandon Neighbourhood Renewal Staff: (204)729-2490 ext. 104, visit [bnrc.ca](http://bnrc.ca) or email [community@bnrc.ca](mailto:community@bnrc.ca)

**GET NEIGHBOURING**

**BNRC**  
BRANDON NEIGHBOURHOOD RENEWAL CORPORATION

1. Vision for our neighbourhood:

2. Activities and Interests you would enjoy with neighbours:  
(Would you want to assist with any of these?)

3. Skills, abilities or experiences you would be willing to share with other members of our neighbourhood:

## CONNECTING WITH YOUR BLOCK

### THE CONNECTOR CARD PROVIDES:

- A point of focus for you and your neighbour that looks somewhat official yet neighbourly.
- A comfortable way to introduce yourself and your role to your neighbours.
- Clear information for your neighbour to keep:
  - A short description of the role the neighbourhood has asked you to take on.
  - Your contact information.
  - A Block Social date.
  - Links that give them the opportunity to see the larger picture through The BNRC website.
- Something to record your neighbours' contact information on.
- A script so you don't have to worry about the basics of what to say.
- Meaningful questions that will create neighbourly relationships and connections on the block and in the neighbourhood.
- The order of the Connector Card is significant. The card helps establish your three roles: **Point Person, Party Person, and Listener.**

## POINT PERSON

*Below are the elements that make you the "Point Person". i.e., You are welcoming them to be in touch with you.*

1. "HI NEIGHBOUR..." we want to be clear that we are neighbours.

2. "MY NAME IS..." As the Block Connector, you reach out early in an act of hospitality and share your contact info.

3. "I LIVE NEARBY AT..." This really introduces the neighbouring relationship.

4. "MY EMAIL IS/MY PHONE NUMBER IS..." Just easy ways to be in touch.

---

## PARTY PERSON

*Next is the "Party Person" part of your role. Here you get to connect people through simple social gatherings.*

1. "OUR NEXT BLOCK SOCIAL IS ON..." Having introduced yourself, you can now introduce the idea of the block social.

- These are small social gatherings which allow neighbours to connect together.
- They can be simple get togethers in a neighbour's yard, a game of cards at a picnic table in the local park, etc. Be creative.
- We avoid calling it a block party because that sounds like a big deal and may feel a bit overwhelming. "Block Socials" are small and should feel welcoming.
- People like being invited and included. Most people think block socials are a great idea whether they plan to show up or not.
- The tearaway portion of the card is also an invite to your block's next social. It offers a very tangible, easily understood reason for your visit.
- Set a tentative date and write it on the card. You can always change the date if you have to. Having a date written on the card helps the person feel the block is already active and connected even if you are just starting.
- If you are needing ideas for block socials talk to your Neighbourhood Connector. They can point you toward resources that can help.

2. "OUR NEIGHBOURHOOD HAS ASKED IF I WOULD..." This statement says that this is not your idea, but the idea of Neighbourhood Leadership. You are the person who said yes to the request. By the way, we thank you for saying yes.

3. "...BE OUR BLOCK'S POINT PERSON, PARTY PERSON, LISTENER" the job is clear and simple. Who doesn't want to have a Block Connector for their Block?!

4. At this point you may want to get your neighbour's contact information so that you can be in touch around block social plans and neighbourhood updates. This information will also be gathered into the neighbourhood inventory. As more information comes in you will begin to notice common interests and natural connections that could be made. Comments section (this can include anything not already covered on the card)

5. While you are on the backside you can point out the website for more information.

6. Tear the card and give your neighbour the small card...

7. So far, you have done a point person role by giving your neighbour your contact info and said “be in touch”. You have also done a Party Person role by initiating a block social and inviting neighbours. Now on the tear-away portion of the Connector Card, you have the opportunity to be a Listener.

8. Let your neighbour know the neighbourhood wants to hear from them and you are there to listen. Point to the questions on the Connector Card and briefly review them.

9. An opportunity to have this intentional conversation with your neighbour on the first visit is great! But if they are not home, or busy, or would like more time, leaving a copy of the Connector Card is an option. But we recommend you exchange contact information so that you can be in touch. Use one Connector Card to get contact information and leave one for them to look at and fill out.

10. As you do you can point out the questions on the card and ask “if this would be a good time to hear from them regarding the three questions”.

---

## LISTENER

*Your final role is that of “Listener”. Here you will ask important questions about your neighbour to help you better understand them, their interests and their feelings about the neighbourhood where you both live.*

The Listening Questions:

### QUESTION ONE: WHAT IS YOUR VISION FOR OUR NEIGHBOURHOOD?

This question provides a starting point for your neighbours to talk about their lives and what is important to them. Most people love to give their opinion. We have always marveled at the number of people whose vision of a good neighbourhood is a friendly or neighbourly one! There is always some room for improvement in the life of a neighbourhood. The “our” in this question is a step towards shared ownership of, and responsibility for, the greater good of our neighbourhood.

With this question, you are inviting participation in creating a better neighbourhood. Many neighbours are looking for a way to be more involved in neighbourhood life but have never been asked.

The vision information is valuable – it can guide neighbourhood decision making and provides a list of residents who care about particular issues. In one respect this is a comprehensive public consultation in that every neighbour can express their hopes and desires to Neighbourhood Leadership.

Share information from the Benefits of Neighbouring found below. They may spark a thought or prompt further discussion.

## **QUESTION TWO: THIS QUESTION HAS TWO PARTS**

### **PART ONE: WHAT ACTIVITIES AND INTERESTS WOULD YOU ENJOY WITH NEIGHBOURS?**

The intent of this question is to gather information that can be used to form groups within the neighbourhood. We want to discover ways to bring people together so as to build lasting connections and perhaps even friendships in the neighbourhood.

Many neighbours are not familiar with possibilities for recreation and connection in the neighbourhood – you, as a Block Connector, can help connect your neighbours with local recreation and connection opportunities.

### **PART TWO: WOULD YOU BE WILLING TO ASSIST WITH ANY OF THESE ACTIVITIES?**

With this follow up question we are looking to identify, leaders, teachers, organizers, etc. to assist in the formation of neighbourhood groups.

## **QUESTION THREE: WHAT SKILLS, ABILITIES AND EXPERIENCES ARE YOU WILLING TO SHARE WITH OTHER MEMBERS OF OUR NEIGHBOURHOOD?**

The intent of this question is to discover, inventory and post the gifts and abilities of neighbours. We do this so that these can be expressed, celebrated and available for other neighbours who have a complementary need.

- Another objective of this question is reciprocity. Although a neighbour may have a need, they also may have skills they wish to share with the rest of the neighbourhood, which contributes to a sense of equality.

As a Block Connector you will be a first line of connection to the needs of neighbours. Your own observations are valuable as you assess someone's abilities (e.g., someone who has difficulties shoveling their walk).

Many neighbours, particularly older individuals, value the opportunity to share some of their life experiences and stories with the Block Connector and potentially the neighbourhood. The discussion concerning life experiences will no doubt uncover gifts that these neighbours can offer to the neighbourhood and perhaps even interests to share in.

---

## ONGOING TASKS & TIPS

*Below you will find helpful information that will help you in your three roles.*

### POINT PERSON

- *Greeting neighbours and keeping an eye out for their well being.*
- *Be aware of difficult life passages: the block can be an important social unit offering care and support.*
- *Connect your neighbours with other neighbours according to the interests and experiences you have discovered.*
- *Keep your neighbours updated on neighbourhood news and events: flyer drops, email or best of all, an in-person visit.*
- *Check in when you can, especially on those who are most vulnerable. A good way to connect is by dropping off an invitation to a neighbourhood event or block social/gathering.*
- *Invite your block to the major neighbourhood events as a way of staying in touch (request flyers from organizers so that you have something tangible to hand out).*
- *Create a contact list of neighbours for your block. Get permission to provide print or email copies.*
- *Drop off the neighbourhood newsletter to your block.*

### PARTY PERSON

- *Identify the neighbours who are keen to help organize block socials with you.*
- *Use the interesting things you learned from your Listener role to create party games e.g., "Guess who is active in a choir?"*
- *Try initiating fall, winter and spring gatherings in addition to the common summer gatherings. Different seasons bring out different activities. This can lead to new people with different interests attending.*
- *Try block parties and Play Streets as ways to get neighbours together. Talk to your area's Neighbourhood Resource Coordinator for details.*
- *Try a joint garage sale and conclude with a party.*
- *Connect with nearby Block Connectors and plan a joint block social.*
- *It helps to have at least one other household confirmed for your social gatherings before you invite the rest of the block.*
- *Ask your Support Team or Neighbourhood Connector for help and support in initiating a social.*
- *The invitation you extend to a neighbour may be as important as the event itself.*
- *Don't over prepare. Low key hospitality works well and increases the likelihood that the event will actually happen.*
- *Use social events to create connections. Name tags, personal introduction, "get to know you" and "icebreaker" games can help.*
- *Use any excuse to initiate a party! Birthdays, new neighbours moving in, Canada Day celebrations, and the "big game" are some of the many great reasons to gather together.*

## LISTENER

- Continue listening to neighbours and inputting what you hear into the neighbourhood inventory.
  - Welcoming new neighbours as they move onto your block: use the Connector Card to provide them with your contact information and to get theirs. Begin to weave them into the common life of the neighbourhood after listening to their story.
  - There will be a small percentage of neighbours that will not be interested in having a conversation – this is to be expected and accepted. However, it is best not to presume this as we have been surprised many times by an underlying desire for neighbourliness.
  - Invite other household members to join the conversation if they'd like. Don't miss the kids!
  - Take notes while neighbours share – it's an act of listening and demonstrates that you take the conversation seriously.
  - If neighbours start out hesitant, leave the demographic information questions until the end of the conversation (e.g., phone numbers and emails). Some neighbours need to better understand what you are doing before they are comfortable sharing personal information.
  - If you haven't shared them yet, this is a great time to share the Benefits of Neighbouring below. It is during the listening conversations that the benefits become most clear.
  - In addition to name, phone number and email, the Connector Card asks for the general age group of members of the household. We include this because we recognize that among children in particular, and with seniors occasionally, it is helpful to be grouped by age rather than by activities and interests.
-

# ONGOING BLOCK CONNECTOR SUPPORT

---

THE BRANDON NEIGHBOURHOOD RENEWAL CORPORATION IS HERE TO SUPPORT YOU BY:

- ORIENTING YOU AS A BLOCK CONNECTOR.
- EXPLAINING THE FRAMEWORK, PROCESS AND RESOURCES.
- PROVIDING YOU WITH RESOURCES AND THE CONNECTOR CARDS.
- ENGAGING IN A CONVERSATION WITH YOU USING THE CONNECTOR CARD TO DEMONSTRATE ITS USE AND TO GET TO KNOW YOU.
- HELPING OUT WITH THE FIRST COUPLE OF BLOCK CONNECTIONS.
- ASSISTING YOU WITH ORGANIZING BLOCK SOCIALS.
- ENTERING CONVERSATION INFORMATION INTO THE NEIGHBOURHOOD INVENTORY.
- INVITING YOU TO A BLOCK CONNECTOR GROUP WITHIN THE NEIGHBOURHOOD.
- ASSISTING YOU IF YOU DECIDE TO TRANSITION OUT OF THE BLOCK CONNECTOR ROLE.

*"When we discover the true richness of our neighbourhoods - the vast and amazing potential - it becomes clear that we could fill many lifetimes within the boundaries of a few blocks. And that is more than enough."*

***Jamie Arpin-Ricci***

*author, the cost of community*

# THE BENEFITS OF NEIGHBOURING

THERE ARE SO MANY BENEFITS THAT RESULT FROM INCREASED CONNECTION AND NEIGHBOURLINESS AT THE BLOCK AND NEIGHBOURHOOD LEVEL. SOME OF THEM ARE LISTED HERE AND MANY MORE WILL EMERGE AS YOU BUILD A MORE ENGAGED AND ACTIVE NEIGHBOURHOOD!

## INCREASED CARE OF NEIGHBOURS

- Awareness and activation of the diverse needs, skills, and experiences of residents.
- Neighbours helping neighbours; everyone contributing to neighbourhood life according to their interests and abilities.
- Watching out for each other. Creating a village for children to grow and play; looking in on seniors and others who can use additional care.
- Better overall mental and physical health through new opportunities for relationships and recreation.

## INCREASED CARE OF SHARED SPACES – THE ENVIRONMENTS WE CALL HOME

- Increased block identity and pride.
- Sense of shared ownership and responsibility for local infrastructure like open parkland, playgrounds, community gardens and public buildings.
- Alignment with movement to ‘Think Global – Act Local’; promoting local food, water and energy security – reducing environmental footprint.

## INCREASED CIVIC ENGAGEMENT AND ECONOMIC GROWTH

- Connected citizens are more likely to engage with and influence community and its institutions. Opportunity to have a more engaged and representative voice in government affairs.
- Enhanced opportunities for employment through relationships and connections in the neighbourhood.
- Shared neighbourhood vision to build a strong local economy.

## INCREASED SOCIAL AND CULTURAL WELLNESS

- Increased sense of belonging to the block and neighbourhood.
- Local and accessible companionship and friendship.
- More groups to join for recreation, fun, education and social time within the neighbourhood.
- Opportunity to know people from a wide variety of cultures, backgrounds, experiences and ages.
- Opportunity for intergenerational relationships.

## INCREASED SAFETY

- Increased safety on the block and in the neighbourhood – quick help nearby when you really need it.
- “Stranger Danger” decreases as children learn the names of neighbours and residents get to know more about each other.
- Residents are able to watch out for each other with insights about each other’s needs and schedules.
- Increased safety through the creation of a Block Connect list to be used in case of an emergency or disaster.

## ACTIVATED AND SHARED KNOWLEDGE, CREATIVITY AND INNOVATION

- Collective wisdom, guidance, ideas and innovation from broad perspectives shared among neighbours.
- Emergence of creative solutions to common problems by using the unique assets, perspectives and abilities of the neighbourhood.



# THANK YOU

---

THE BRANDON NEIGHBOURHOOD RENEWAL CORPORATION IS EXCITED TO WORK WITH YOU AND YOUR NEIGHBOURHOOD IN THIS BUILDING COMMUNITY PROGRAM, AND WE HOPE YOU FIND THIS GUIDE TO BE A USEFUL TOOL.

ULTIMATELY IT IS YOUR ENTHUSIASM FOR A CONNECTED AND CARING LIFE IN YOUR NEIGHBOURHOOD THAT IS MAKING A REAL DIFFERENCE. THANK YOU FOR YOUR COMMITMENT TO COMMUNITY BUILDING IN YOUR NEIGHBOURHOOD!

*"Vital to society, straightforward as a role and personally transforming."*

*TIM SENGER block connector*



---

## CONTACT US

440 Rosser Avenue, Brandon MB R7A 0K3  
community@bnrc.ca | www.bnrc.ca



**BNRC**

BRANDON  
NEIGHBOURHOOD  
RENEWAL  
CORPORATION