

Being neighbourly



Great neighbourhoods start with you.



How to reach us

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NEIGHBOURHOODS WEBSITE

Check out the [neighbourhoods website](#) to find more how-to guides, find your neighbourhood and subscribe to the e-newsletter.

ACCESSIBLE FORMATS

This material is available in alternative accessible format upon request. Please contact us a minimum of 3-5 business days before it is required.

GUIDE VERSION

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Being neighbourly

Being neighbourly is about the little things. It's about greeting your neighbours, sharing resources, and reaching out to those in need. This toolkit encourages neighbourliness and highlights the many ways to be a great neighbour!

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE NEIGHBOURLY?

When you are helpful and friendly to your neighbours, you are being neighbourly.

Neighbourly neighbours are:

- Caring,
- Considerate,
- Kind,
- Helpful,
- Inclusive, and
- Respectful.

THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING NEIGHBOURLY

There are long-term benefits of being friendly and helping your neighbours. Being neighbourly:

- Encourages bonding and neighbourhood connections;
- Reduces conflict between neighbours and promotes positive relationships;
- Promotes more fun events and celebrations;
- Boosts peoples physical and mental health;
- Enhances neighbourhood safety and inclusiveness;
- Encourages sharing skills, knowledge, and resources;
- Improves the environment by encouraging acts such as local shopping, carpooling, and garden produce sharing;
- Helps establish a sense of identity and facilitates learning about your neighbourhood's history;
- Supports the development of children and youth; and,
- Increases overall happiness by reducing isolation and promoting a sense of belonging.

Inspiring neighbourliness

Simple acts of kindness can help you develop positive relationships with your neighbours. Not sure where to start? Get inspired from this list of ways to be neighbourly!

1. Every relationship starts with a hello! Smiles, waves, and friendly greetings encourage positive relationships. These displays of kindness also make neighbours feel welcome.

2. If you live in an area with a neighbourhood or homes association, consider joining the volunteer board or helping with neighbourhood activities. There are lots of different roles and commitment levels to fit your interest and availability. Learn more about locations and associations on the [neighbourhoods website](#).
 3. Join the Neighbourhood Connector program. Neighbourhood Connectors are neighbourhood leaders that help share information, support fellow neighbours, and build a sense of community. To learn more about the program, check out the [neighbourhoods website](#).
 4. Collaborate with neighbours to plan neighbourhood events and projects. Host a street concert with a local band, fundraise for a community message board, or plan a neighbourhood contest, scavenger hunt, or other activity!
 5. Connect virtually! Join or start a community or neighbourhood page on social media. Share helpful information, provide details on neighbourhood events and community updates, or simply wish neighbours a happy birthday.
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Sharing is caring! Think about the resources you can share with your neighbours. Do you have extra tools or a unique tool that people can borrow for a project? Consider sharing them with neighbours in need.

6. Help a neighbour with snow clearing. Some neighbours may need help shovelling their driveways, walkways, and sidewalks. Keep an eye out for neighbours that may need extra assistance and offer to help!
 7. Drop off a meal if your neighbour has been unwell or is having a tough time. Make sure to consider dietary restrictions and allergies.
 8. Greet your neighbours and strike up a conversation when out for a walk. Sometimes it is hard to know what to say to new neighbours or people you have never met. Check out this [list of conversation starters](#) for some helpful places to start!
 9. Share a sense of local pride and keep your street or neighbourhood looking welcoming. Consider organizing a neighbourhood clean up, establishing a community garden, or planning a placemaking project.
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Placemaking projects help establish a sense of place and make neighbourhoods feel like home. Consider planting a pollinator patch, fundraising for a new piece of playground equipment, or designing a community art project.

10. Welcome home neighbour! Write a personalized letter to greet new neighbours. Include your contact information (if you're comfortable) and some helpful information about their new neighbourhood (awesome local restaurants, the best walking trails, details about a local Facebook group, etc.) Perhaps take over a small housewarming gift, like flowers, some baked goods, or a potted plant – anything inexpensive and cheerful is a nice thing to do.
 11. Share your passions! Let neighbours know if you love to cook, paint, garden, fix cars, bird watch, play video games, or enjoy other hobbies at home. Sharing your interests can provide opportunities to learn from fellow neighbours and connect with others who enjoy similar activities. This could lead to a neighbourhood book club, recipe sharing, community garden, or other forms of community connection.
 12. Promote neighbourliness at all ages. Encourage your children to be great neighbours! Check out this guide for [12 ways to teach your children to be neighbourly](#).
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Use craft time to spread some neighbourhood cheer. Inspire your children to make homemade cards, jewellery, or other knickknacks to share with neighbours. Deliver the creations door-to-door and introduce yourselves! For inspiration, check out this list of [100+ craft ideas](#).

13. Volunteering promotes strong and resilient communities. Consider volunteering in your neighbourhood by becoming an outdoor rink volunteer, a neighbourhood connector, or getting involved in other neighbourhood roles! For more information, visit the neighbourhoods website. To learn more about other volunteer opportunities across Waterloo Region, check out the [Volunteer Waterloo Region](#).
14. Regularly reach out to neighbours through friendly messages, phone calls, neighbourhood newsletters, and social media.
15. Be inclusive! If you are hosting a neighbourhood event or planning a project, include all neighbours. Get creative with invites: use flyers, knock on doors, post event details on a local message board, reach out through Facebook and other forms of social media, create posters, etc.
16. Consider spending time in your front yard, driveway, or common area. This opens up new opportunities to greet and chat with neighbours. Plan events in these spaces, like a chalk art competition – encourage neighbours to turn their driveways, sidewalks, or parking spots into their canvases!
17. Bring neighbours together for a good cause! Consider hosting a neighbourhood food drive, fundraising for a charitable organization, or supporting a local business with a neighbourhood night out. These activities help build neighbourhood connections while

also spreading kindness to others in the community. Include different ways to participate such as volunteering, promotion, or fundraising, so people can contribute in a way that works for them. Be sure to check-in with organizations or businesses before planning events so they can provide important guidelines or highlight key areas of need.

18. Be considerate of your neighbours. Communicating with neighbours and maintaining your property are good places to start. When developing relationships, prioritize honest and open communication. For example, if you are planning a construction project (that may be noisy), notify neighbours that may be affected. If the construction is bothering them, encourage them to reach out to you prior to contacting authorities. Maintaining your property is also important! Raking leaves, regularly cutting the lawn, removing snow from walkways and sidewalks, and beautifying your garden, are easy ways to be a good neighbour.



There are many ways to be neighbourly! For more ideas, check out this list of [150 ways to be neighbourly](#).

Recognize great neighbours

Neighbours are an important source of day-to-day help and community connection. Saying hello, helping with snow shoveling, or dropping off a meal to provide comfort or support demonstrates care for each other.

These acts of kindness increase neighbourhood pride and have many positive effects on neighbours and neighbourhoods. The City of Waterloo wants to increase awareness of what it means to be a kind neighbour and to recognize people who do something great, big or small, in their neighbourhood.

The City of Waterloo neighbourhoods team offers the [Neighbourhood Kindness program](#) to recognize kind neighbours, as well as help strengthen connections and support in neighbourhoods. Nominations will be accepted year-round and every nominee will receive a thank you package. Nominating your neighbours is easy:

1. Visit the [neighbourhoods website](#).
2. Fill in a short [online form](#).
3. The neighbourhoods team handles the rest!

If you have any questions, reach out to neighbourhoods@waterloo.ca.

Handling neighbourhood conflict

Being neighbourly is important in good times and in challenging ones. In any neighbourhood, conflict sometimes arises between neighbours. Noise, pets, children, property maintenance, and parking, are common challenges. Here are some tips for communicating with neighbours to work through problems:

- Keep an open mind. It is important to understand that your neighbour is probably unaware of the issue.
- Foster open and direct communication. If your neighbour is doing something you don't appreciate, start by reaching out to them directly. Politely convey the issue and collaborate and compromise to develop a solution that works for both parties.
- If your neighbour becomes upset, keep your cool.
- Be patient. Sometimes the solution won't occur overnight.
- When talking with your neighbour remember to focus on the problem, not the person.
- Get to know your neighbours. It is often easier to resolve conflicts when you have a relationship with someone. You will feel more comfortable discussing issues and working towards a resolution.
- Consider how your actions may affect your neighbours. If you are planning a construction project or large gathering, notify neighbours in advance. Being considerate and keeping neighbours informed can help reduce future conflict.
- Understand and follow bylaws! City and regional bylaws govern areas like noise, parking, property maintenance, and garbage/recycling collection.

If you are struggling to come to a resolution with your neighbour, mediation may be a helpful next step. Mediation is a process where a neutral mediator guides you and your neighbour through stages in a discussion. The goal of this guided discussion is to come to an agreement that meets the needs of all parties.

Local organizations, like Community Justice Initiatives (CJI), offer free mediation services for neighbours. CJI assists neighbours to resolve conflicts over noise complaints, property boundaries, personal differences, parking complaints, snow removal, landlord/tenant issues, and more. Referrals can be received from city bylaw officers, police officers, community agencies, or individuals. For more information about CJI and the mediation services offered, visit [their website](#).

Resources

- Check out this list of helpful resources for additional inspiration and ideas for being neighbourly!
- Get inspired by watching a Ted Talk.
 - [The unseen value of being a good neighbour](#)

- How to be a good neighbour
- Check out the City of Kelowna's list of 25 ways to be neighbourly.
- Artist, Candy Chang, has developed 'please disturb' signs to print and hang on neighbours doors. Use these little signs to connect with your neighbours! Let them know if you any tools or resources to share (like snow shovels, fun outdoor games, etc.) Sharing and swapping resources is cost-effective, environmentally friendly, and promotes neighbourhood connection and interaction.
- It might be helpful to refer neighbours to community supports and help them get access. For more information on community supports in your area, contact Ontario's Community and Social Support helpline via online chat, email, or by calling 211.
- Do you need funding for your neighbourly project or event? For information on funding opportunities, check out the neighbourhoods website.
- The neighbourhoods team has prepared a variety of informative how-to guides to help you develop neighbourhood connections, for more information and to access these guides visit the neighbourhood's website.