



Festival of Neighbourhoods - extraordinary and powerful things happen in the ordinary, everyday, common places that we share when we “get talking”.

What can happen when community members take the lead in getting their neighbours together to get to know one another a little better? And what can happen when we bring the community together to celebrate those leaders and share their ideas?



In 1994, Kitchener’s Festival of Neighbourhoods started with a “Commonplace Proposal” to City Council which noted that *“The best relationships amongst people make for the best neighbourhoods.”* At this early stage, Festival was promoted as a celebration of the ordinary and everyday things that made up the quality of life in Kitchener:



It is the common, the commonplace, the commonsense, that provide our City with its quality of living. We wish to bring people and organizations together to celebrate and examine, for a short time, the extraordinary gift of the ordinary.



Precisely because these moments, and others like them, happen all the time, we should cherish and seek to understand how special and powerful, how absolutely and utterly extraordinary, is this quality of our City.

. . . . We should all know, and care for, that gift.

Festival was promoted as a celebration of local neighbourhood events to:

- *Encourage citizens to understand neighbourhoods as relationships amongst diverse people living together*
- *Encourage citizens to think of themselves as the centres of their neighbourhoods*
- *Empower citizens to discover, invent, explore and care for their neighbourhoods, on their own terms*
- *Provide citizens with an opportunity to celebrate the character of the areas in which they live*

With this starting point, the Festival of Neighbourhoods has, 23 years later, grown to a year round initiative that continues to encourage everyone to take a step off their front porch and connect with their neighbours.

Today the initiative [offers tools, resources and support](#) with the aim to help neighbourhood members navigate the steps to getting started and to organize inclusive neighbourhood gatherings, to get to know one another a bit better. The Festival continues to recognize and reward those who reach across diversity in this way, through a finale celebration with awards and prizes. The Finale aims remain the same.

- *To bring neighbourhoods together in celebration and show citizens the broad diversity of neighbourhoods which make the City a healthy and vibrant place to live*
- *To encourage citizens to see a connection between their everyday activities within their neighbourhoods and the overall objectives of the City and its Administration, and vice versa*

- To provide one lucky neighbourhood with the opportunity to work together with Council and City Departments to achieve a small capital improvement which would implement, at the neighbourhood level, the City's municipal objectives.

And what has been the benefit to our city as a result? When people connect they TALK to each other, they learn from each other and they help each other! Neighbours who get together have told us:

"Each time we gather together for an event, we begin to brainstorm another. The momentum began a couple of years ago - and shows no signs of slowing. Many traditions have formed. New families are easily welcomed at each event, and connections are constantly being made."

"There are so many stories! These are a direct result of neighbours meeting and beginning talking at either the neighbourhood bbqs or weekly potlucks.

- A woman looking for work for two years received full time employment due to neighbour networking (these neighbours met at a summer 2014 barbecue).
- A man graduated in a PhD program & received advice and counsel from another neighbour. Through this direction he received employment in his field.
- While a husband travelled for two weeks, a family looked after his wife and 3 children while he was away overseas (grocery shopping, child-care & visits).
- One "resourced" family was renovating their main floor and offered their 5 year old furniture to an "under-resourced" couple for free!!
- More neighbours knowing one another has resulted in a greater sense of care, a support system for some families, and a general "watching out for one another."

"Making connections with those in our neighbourhood helps us to strengthen our community."

"The Festival Finale is such a great event. It gives you an idea of what's going on in other neighbourhoods and shows you some of their ideas."

So, we encourage you to connect with your neighbours and get talking. There is so much to be discovered in these conversations. Extraordinary and powerful things happen in the ordinary, in the everyday, in the common places that we share.



Festival of Neighbourhoods
Kitchener



John MacDonald Architect inc.
care communication construction community

