

# Strengthening Neighbour-to-Neighbour Relationships and Responsibilities



## *The benefits of neighbouring!*

**Inclusiveness** - Fear of difference is often cited as a the primary reason for exclusion of labeled people. The block and the neighbourhood are natural places where people can humanize each other and overcome fears of difference about disabilities, culture, gender identity and more.

**Inclusion** – In a world of finely grained separation the neighbourhood provides a unique place in which people of different orientations, experiences and views can connect at a human level.

**Health & Wellness** - More and better relationships improve health. The neighbouring relationship is often overlooked as a unique and potent source of personal well-being.

**Mental Health** - Having access to consistent opportunities to build meaningful relationships opens the door for a troubled neighbour to connect with a supportive neighbour and benefit from human to human connection.

**Spirituality** – The deep formation of the heart and life are connected to “the land” and the people who inhabit it. Living life together in a place can be one of the most important dimensions of our lives. Our yards, blocks, parks, streets and sidewalks are sacred.

**Social Care** - Neighbourhoods are "the villages" that can reasonably and responsibly take on care beyond the family, looking out for children, seniors, marginalized, especially the most vulnerable.

**Companionship** – Belonging, engagement and connection are essential to human thriving. Friends and families are not always, or sometimes not ever, available. Neighbours can be company and companionship nearby.

**Recreation** - Mental and physical fitness are enhanced by local, easily accessible and often impromptu opportunities for play and social connection in leisure time.

**Seniors Isolation** - Connected “blocks” (*e.g. block, cul-de-sac, apartment or condo building or floor*) naturally look in on seniors and keep caregivers informed.

**Youth Mentoring** - Supportive mentoring relationships can naturally occur in the neighbourhood when neighbours of all ages get to know one another. Neighbours can feel empowered to intervene when children misbehave - sharing care of the young and creating ‘the village’ to raise our children.

**Bylaw Enforcement** - Neighbours in relationship with each other will be better able to solve challenges and disagreements that come up between them, as well as encourage each other to meet high standards to invoke pride in the place they live.

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**Crime and Safety** - A safe street is produced by 'eyes on the street'. Neighbours find permission and organize to look out for the safety of one another. Safety follows from people being out and about taking responsibility for each other and the "commons".

**Disaster Preparedness** - Neighbours helping neighbours is an important disaster preparedness strategy for municipalities.

**Poverty Reduction** - People in poverty need often complex services, many of which can be provided through kindness and generosity of neighbours. When people know their neighbours, they are more likely to share resources (*yard equipment; car shares; babysitting; employment advice*). In addition, neighbours are well positioned to be a "broker" or to connect neighbours in need to necessary services.

**Environmental Sustainability** - Localism is the cornerstone of the environmental movement as we move towards energy, food and water security within a changing climate. From community gardens to car and tool sharing, a strong neighbourhood has lots of potential for actualizing a sustainable future.

**Resident Retention** - Generally, people stay in a neighbourhood when they are connected to their neighbours and their neighbourhood as a whole.

**Business and Social Innovation** - Neighbourhoods are one of the important environments for people of diverse ideas and imaginations to find one another in creative connection. Neighbours are able to drive local economies when shared demands are articulated (*e.g. creation of a local coffeeshop/bakery/daycare*)

**Neighbourhood Engagement and readiness to participate in Public Engagement** - A network of block-to-block point people is the most granular level of consultation any municipality and its citizens could reasonably aspire to.

*Inspired by the work of John McKnight & Peter Block in **The Abundant Community: Awakening the Power of Families and Neighbourhoods** and the daily community building efforts of Neighbourhood Connectors, Block Connectors and their local support teams and community leagues in Edmonton.*