



Cultivating Community:

A Guide to Hosting A Living Streets
Event in the Capital Region



Living Streets

Your Place
is Here.

We begin by acknowledging the traditional territories upon which we encourage these events to happen. For many thousands of years, the First Peoples of this area have sought to walk in harmony with the land. They offered assistance to the first European travelers and shared their knowledge for survival and way of life. We seek a new relationship with the First Peoples of this land, one of mutual trust and deep respect. This Guide encourages you to turn acknowledgment into action and show your respect to the First Peoples of the area where your event is taking place.



Organize a Living Streets event in your community and transform an ordinary neighbourhood road into a vibrant place for people of all ages and backgrounds to celebrate, play and re-imagine space.



The concept behind Living Streets is to temporarily close a street to vehicle traffic and re-purpose it – walk, bike, dance, paint, or play – whatever brings it to life!

Living streets are hosted by community members for community members. Events can be just a few hours in length, an entire day, or even a series of regularly scheduled days.

Join the hundreds of communities across North America who are getting creative and hosting Living Streets events with neighbours, businesses and community organizations.



What will this guide do for me?

This Guide explains the Living Streets concept and walks you through the steps to develop your own Living Streets event. It also links you to other resources customized for the capital region to help get you started on your own living streets initiative!



Ideate

- What is your living streets idea? Define it!
- Build Your Living Streets Group.
- Build Community Support.
- Pitch your Living Streets Idea!



Plan

- Set the Route, Date and other details.
- Engage Authorities for required approvals.
- Gather resources and funding.
- Build your volunteers!



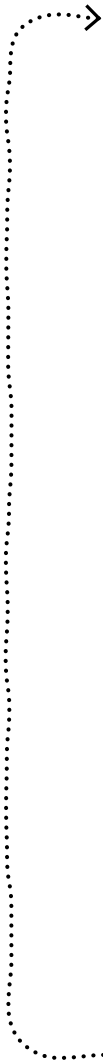
Do

- Work out logistics.
- Plan hubs of Activity.
- Launch –Ready Set Go!



Learn

- Follow up assessment and lessons learned.
- CELEBRATE!



What is your Living Streets idea? Define it!

Living Streets can take many forms: a length of connected streets with an emphasis on movement (walk, bike, skateboard), a quiet nature corridor between parks and natural areas, or a roadway for a neighbourhood festival.

One of the first things to consider is how you would describe your Living Streets event to share your idea with the community. This can be in the form of a proposal for example, “We plan to have an event that will close off Beacon Avenue in Sidney to cars and feature community information booths and live music” or “We plan to have an event that will offer dance, yoga and ball hockey in the parking area and street adjacent to the Juan de Fuca rec centre.”

Next, you will need to outline tentative details for your event such as the date and time; the street or laneway location you have in mind; what will actually happen on that day; and what plans you have to let people know about it. See the section: **Set the route, date and other details.**



You will need to find a lead person or a group that will be in charge of planning and organizing the event. It is important to know who will be helping to organize the event and who will be responsible for doing what. See **Building your Living Streets core team.**

The sky is the limit when it comes to ideas for Living Streets events. You may choose to do something that has been done in a different city or something completely new. Remember, it doesn't need to be big and complicated in order to be fun.

Looking for inspiration? Living Streets events have been held around the world under many names – there are famous examples like Ciclovía in Bogota or Open Streets TO in Toronto and hundreds of equally amazing neighbourhood events in cities across the country.

Visit our website: victoriaplacemaking.ca/livingstreets.



Build your Living Streets Core Team

Whether you are working with an existing community organization, or starting a new initiative with friends, you will want to build a core group of supporters – what you might call a steering committee for your event.

Recruit members who can bring the skills and resources that you will need to help organize your event. This might be a neighbour, a local business person, or staff from a local health organization. Think outside the box – there are a lot of people ready and willing to help - you just need to find them! It usually takes from three to seven interested people to form the steering committee.

An important job for the steering committee will be to develop a clear description of your Living Streets event, timeline and work plan. The members of your steering committee will work with you in planning, organizing and hosting your Living Streets idea.



It is important to confirm roles and responsibilities within the group to ensure the planning of your event runs smoothly. Some of these roles might include promotion of the event, logistics and planning for insurance and permits, or recruitment and coordinating volunteers for the day of the event

You can also start thinking ahead to the approvals you will require and the funding or resources you need to make your Living Streets happen. For example, street closures will require a permit from your municipality.

See **Obtain Approvals** and visit our website to see the permitting process for your municipality.



Build Community Support

Start building relationships with potential partners, funders, volunteers and participants early in the game. Support for your program will help get things rolling, and it will help later in the process for getting the word out.

Potential stakeholders include any organizations or professionals who support active transportation, healthy communities, local business, law enforcement agencies, placemaking, civic pride, and environmental awareness. Your local municipal government (elected officials and staff), your neighbourhood association and local community groups are key stakeholders.

Talk to them about your plan to transform your streets into Living Streets. Add their ideas to the mix, and note what resources (people, materials, funding) they might be able to offer.



There are many organizations, municipalities and community leaders in the Capital Region who support the concept of Living Streets. Here are a few agencies that support healthy and active transportation:

- The Greater Victoria Placemaking Network: victoriaplacemaking.ca
- Greater Victoria Cycling Coalition: gvcc.bc.ca
- Walk On, Victoria: walkonvictoria.org
- BC Transit: bctransit.com



Pitch your Living Streets Idea!

Build a list of “echoers”. These are people and organizations willing to help you with your event and ready to spread the word about your Living Streets.

Get the word out – talk it up. Let your community hear about it. There are different ways to get the word out. For example, you could:

- Make a brief presentation to your local business association or individually to a few of the businesses in the area
- Produce a one-page information sheet that is posted and delivered in your community
- Put up flyers or posters in your community center and other public spaces about your idea
- Contact your local community newspaper or radio station
- Spread the word to your neighbours in person
- Write an article for a community association newsletter or website



Set the Route, Date, and other details

You should walk the route or check out the lane way or lot you want to use for your event with your steering committee. You will need a safe and secure route as you want people to feel relaxed and enjoy the space. Law enforcement agencies may dictate route considerations – be open to suggestions. Don't be afraid to reach out to municipal staff about the different streets, vacant lots and lane ways that might work for your event. Also, consider hosting a public walk along your proposed Living Streets route before finalizing your plans.

Consider choosing a part of your neighbourhood that already draws people to it or has some points of interest, for example – library, park, art gallery, theater, a business or business area (they might be interested in being one of your supporters – don't hesitate to speak to them about your idea).

Something to consider in your planning is that neighbourhood street events require less planning and approvals than major street events, but don't let this deter you to go big! Through the development of a traffic plan, you can determine the best ways to re-route traffic or a 'soft-closure' could be possible at some points to allow traffic to flow through.

See [our website](#) for an [example traffic plan](#).



Build in Flexibility

Be flexible by picking multiple dates for Living Streets to occur before seeking approval and permit from your municipality. Check the calendar to make sure it is a good day for your event and ask the municipality about other events that may be planned for the day you have in mind.

You may be able to partner with the organizers of other events planned for the same day or you may decide to pick another day for your event.

Many successful car-free activities are held over a series of days – such as a series of summer Sundays. This allows people more flexibility to participate and helps the community become familiar with the new uses of the street.

Even if you only plan for one day this year, think ahead to what it might look like to plan a series next summer.



plan.

S	M	T	W	Th	F	Sa
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30				



Obtain Approvals

If your Living Streets idea is taking place on a street, the most important approval is municipal approval to close off the part of the street or streets you will be using to traffic.

Depending on your municipality, you may need a block party or special event permit.

If you are using adjacent lots, green spaces or parks, you will need the approval of the landowner. Some parkland is the responsibility of the municipality and some is the responsibility of the Province. If you are unsure who you should speak to about using a particular lot or park area, contact your municipality.

If your Living Streets event will have music you will need to check with the municipality about music levels and closing times for sound. Other bylaws may also be applicable.

If your Living Streets is on or cuts across a transit route, you will need to contact BC Transit to work out logistics. Municipal and transit contacts for the region are available on our website.



Plan the Funding and Resources you Need

Depending on your Living Streets idea you may have some costs associated with the event. This can include costs for permits; insurance; barricades; road closure signs; traffic management plan; public notice distribution costs; meeting space for public forums; or transit detours. Don't be put off by this - we are here to help you navigate your way through the process. Your local municipality will sometimes have these resources already and you can request them for free or at a low cost through the application process. Another place to look for these resources is your local community centre.

Living Streets is a grassroots community effort. It is about local ideas promoted by local people as a way to build relationships within the community, across neighbourhoods and even across greater distances. It can become something that attracts visitors and tourists and it can be something more intimate like a birthday party for the block. Since there is so much flexibility in terms of size and scale of a Living Streets event, it is difficult to say how much an event will cost. But nothing is to say that a Living Streets event can't be free – it all depends on the creativity of your event and the ingenuity of your steering committee.



Volunteers, in-kind donations such as borrowed folding tables from a community center, and financial contributions from local businesses, community organizations and others can all help you in meeting your costs.



Build Your Volunteers

The greatest strength of Living Streets is its people. Your volunteers are the key to your success.

How many volunteers and for what will depend on your Living Streets idea. For example, you may have volunteer positions for:

volunteer check list

- Echoers of Living Streets
- Block Captain
- Barricade attendants
- Intersection monitors
- Set-up/Tear-down
- First Aid
- Evaluators
- Back-up volunteers



Volunteers will bring their energy and enthusiasm but they will need some level of training. Some of your volunteers may be familiar with the people in your Living Streets neighbourhood and can be a great resource for spreading awareness of your Living Streets by word of mouth. Others may want to help by distributing posters and leaflets to communicate information about the time and place of your Living Streets.

A good group of volunteers is like money in the bank! Keep a current list of volunteers with their contact information for your next Living Streets. Reach out to them periodically to be sure that they are still interested in participating and encourage them to share their ideas and suggestions with you.



Plan Hubs of Activity

As a way to encourage foot, bike, roller or skateboard traffic along the full chosen route, consider adding different 'hubs of activity or information'. For example, you could have three exhibitors or activities, and could position them at the beginning, middle, and end of the street to encourage people to enjoy the full stretch of your Living Streets event.

There are many ideas, activities, vendors and information that lend themselves to Living Streets and that are easy to set up as hub activities. Some examples include: Kiosks of information by non-profit and community organizations; interactive art, water stations, pop-up restaurants, bubble stations, and live music.

You may want to consider hub activities that cater to all ages of people in your neighbourhood, from young children and teenagers – to older adults - giving each group comfort to have fun with activities that they can relate to as part of a bigger event.

Activity hubs can be coordinated by volunteers and others can be provided by partners, for example daycares, local bike shops, not-for-profit organizations and other groups who want to get involved.

Some Living Streets examples that lend themselves to being set up as hub activities:





Arts and Culture

Theater productions, photography productions, music concerts, dance classes, reading spaces, libraries, play hubs, craft exhibits, and activities such as magic shows, clowns, mimes, theatre, drawing, and painting

Recreation and Sports

Soccer, volleyball, aerobics, yoga, tai chi, spinning, cycling, skating, personal defense classes, walks, giant table games, children's games, and chalk

Health

Kiosks/information tables about health care, physical activity; taking vital signs; donating blood and conducting some basic medical screening tests
Science and Technology – Interactive games and expos, touch and feel stations, quiz games

Social Development

Workshops about environmental protection, and other workshops and games focused on gender issues and/or equity; working with young people; volunteering; block watch, local neighbourhood associations

What else?

Bike maintenance and repair; water stations, safety recommendations, kiosks for pet care, and rescue equipment demonstrations



Work Out Logistics

On your Living Streets day, you want to wake up and know that everything is in place for a great event. This needs careful advance planning. Sweat the details. Double checking is a good idea!

Here is a starting checklist of logistics you need to have in place. You will want to pre-plan each of these and assign volunteers who are responsible for ensuring that they happen as planned on event day:

- maps of Living Streets locations and all elements to be included (activity stations, barricade locations, etc.)
- road closure permits and any food / music / activity permits (bring copies on event day)
- BC Transit arrangements (your municipality may require you to have an overall traffic management plan)
- arrangements for barricades, road change signage, detours
- traffic control arrangements (you may need certified traffic control personnel or police on site)
- equipment rental or borrow agreements (tables, tents, chairs, electrical access)
- emergency first-aid arrangements



- space to unload / reload equipment including traffic barricades (don't assume that these can be piled in front of someone's home)
- communication systems – who needs to talk to who on event day, and do they each have contact information, cell phones, and so on?
- a plan for counting how many people participate in your Living Streets
- photo and video to record your day(s).

Local media may want to attend and report on the day. It's a great way to share your idea and the positive contribution to Living Streets – don't be shy, go ahead and boast!

See the 880 Cities Healthiest Practice Open Streets website: <http://healthiestpracticeopenstreets.org/toolkit/overview> for their '**best-case scenario**' timeline for 'in advance', 'day of' and week after' your event. Keep in mind you may have much more time, or much less, than described for a number of reasons.



Celebrate, assess, and follow up.

You and your volunteers should feel proud of being part of Living Streets. Take the time to celebrate your achievement, talk about how things went and look forward to your next undertaking while celebrating a job well done. Use Social Media to celebrate with pictures and for people to share their experiences about the Living Streets.

You will have made arrangements for one or more steering committee members to be responsible for monitoring and evaluating your Living Streets. Evaluation can take the form of personal interviews (“Hi, are you having fun?”) and data collection (someone tasked with doing a headcount of attendees; noting the weather and any problems that needed to be sorted such as umbrellas flying off in a strong wind).



We encourage you to use this guide as a tool for cultivating a healthy and active community!

If you would like to connect with our Living Streets coordinator for more information or assistance send us an email at: livingstreets@victoriaplacemaking.ca.



The Fine Print

This resource was developed by the Greater Victoria Placemaking Network in 2016 with funding support from the People Power Program. This document is intended to inspire new ideas and community-led Living Streets events – local bylaws and regulations always take precedent.

People Power is a collective impact initiative led by the CRD with support from the Victoria Foundation and Traffic Safety Commission. For more information visit www.crd.bc.ca/peoplepower





GREATER VICTORIA
PLACEMAKING
NETWORK