

# **Asset Based Neighborhood Organizing:**

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The Method of the  
Abundant Community Initiative  
in Edmonton, Canada

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## Getting Started

Inspired by the work of John McKnight and Peter Block, and motivated by their recent book, “The Abundant Community,” Howard Lawrence undertook a pilot project called the Abundant Community Initiative in Edmonton, Canada in January 2013. Lawrence started with the idea that local residents have gifts, skills, abilities and knowledge and that they are willing to contribute these assets to improving their neighborhood. He also understood that creating more connections among neighbors through shared activities and interests would increase relational networks, grow the neighborhood’s positive sense of self and increase neighbors’ ability to work together towards a common good. It was his belief that if assets were connected, and neighbors formed new groups and associations, the rise in neighborliness would improve public safety and health, increase inclusion, boost the local economy and create new opportunities for neighborhood children and seniors.

Initially, he prepared an introductory document that provided a project description of the purpose, potential, process, and benefits of the Initiative. (Exhibit A attached.) Lawrence then approached the officials of the City of Edmonton and sought assistance in developing the project. He met Harry Oswin, Director, Office of the Northeast District of the Edmonton Neighborhoods, Parks and Community Recreation branch of Community Services who was able to secure a \$15,000 grant to get the project underway. A strong partnership developed between the neighborhood leadership and the municipal officials. The city provided administrative and organizational support and became a dedicated partner in seeing that the initiative grew in a sustainable way.

Harry Oswin enlisted the help of Anne Harvey, the City of Edmonton Northeast District Community Recreation Director, to work with Lawrence and help guide him through the city process. Harvey has continued with the project, assisting Lawrence with the evaluation of the initial neighborhood pilot project.

To begin the project, Howard Lawrence chose his home community, the Highlands neighborhood of Edmonton. The plan was to start with personal experience and then broaden the experience in the second year working with

seven more neighborhoods. Ultimately, the goal is to include all 153 neighborhoods in Edmonton.

## **Structure**

To implement the project, Lawrence created an organizational structure:

### ***Block Connectors***

Block Connectors are the first level of the structure. There are 50 Block Connectors in a neighborhood of approximately 1,000 households. Each block connector assumes responsibility for approximately 20 households on their block. They listen and share information and become the connective person on the block on which they live. (A Block Connector Role Description is attached as Exhibit B.)

Block Connectors introduce themselves to their block by first distributing an introductory letter. Then, their goal is to interview 20 neighbors face-to-face using a “Conversation Guide” developed by the Abundant Community Initiative. This guide helps open a conversation regarding residents’ interests, values, gifts and abilities that they are willing to share. It also makes clear the intent to use the information to connect neighbors. (See Exhibit C attached.) The connector then connects neighbors around their assets and interests and provides a leadership role with the neighbors immediately surrounding them. The Block Connectors are not paid.

### ***Neighborhood Connectors***

One level above the Block Connector is the Neighborhood Connector whose initial job is to identify the Block Connectors and support their local efforts. There is one Neighborhood Connector for each neighborhood of 1,000 households and it is this person’s job to identify all 50 Block Connectors for their neighborhood, one or two persons per block, or floor, in the case of apartment buildings. These residents need to be interested and capable of interviewing, leading and connecting neighbors on their block. Initially, Lawrence took on this Neighborhood Connector role in his Highlands neighborhood to immerse himself in the experience and the research.

The Neighborhood Connectors meet monthly through the spring, summer and fall. These meetings have created an association of Neighborhood Connectors who have gone on to use the resident information and merge efforts in the form of neighborhood-wide initiatives such as concerts and celebration events, and to create connections beyond their initial interests in improving their particular block.

The Neighborhood Connector is trained and paid a stipend of \$10,000 – 400 hours @ \$25 per hour. (A Community Coordinator Profile is attached as Exhibit D.)

### ***Community Leagues***

The next level is the Community League. Edmonton has had formal long-standing neighborhood organizations called Community Leagues (See <http://www.efcl.org>) in all neighborhoods. (See <http://www.highlandscommunity.ca/facility.html> for more information on the Highlands Community League.) These Leagues are similar to neighborhood associations that exist in many communities. In this Initiative, the Leagues are the sanctioning body to whom the initiative is responsible. They can also provide neighborhood resources and support systems. Often the League marshals the neighborhood to aid with data collection and analysis, fundraising, formation and leadership of new associations and support in pairing the gifts and interests of neighbors. In Edmonton the Community Leagues are the neighborhoods' trusted and authorized leadership and its endorsement is essential and invaluable to neighbor participation.

### **Recruiting Neighborhood Connectors, Block Connectors and Other Volunteers**

Recruiting is a multi-step process. Using assistance from the already existing Edmonton Federation of Community Leagues, Howard Lawrence started his search for the key leadership position of the Neighborhood Connector within multiple neighborhoods. Working together with neighborhood leadership, they identified and recruited a number of energetic men and woman with a passion for their neighborhoods and the skills to manage/support a large group of volunteers.

The best candidates for Neighborhood Connectors are often those residents who already know a lot of people in the neighborhood, have good organizational and people skills and have a talent for identifying and managing suitable Block Connectors. In the case of the pilots, all of the Neighborhood Connectors were already involved with the neighborhood Community Leagues and connected within the neighborhood.

Lawrence and subsequent Neighborhood Connectors have found that a good way to find qualified Block Connectors is to ask residents on each block if they could identify someone. An open, friendly, and already connected individual is usually the best candidate. The Neighborhood Connector's skill at identifying the right people to be Block Connectors is imperative for the success of the initiative.

The work of initiating door-to-door conversations is very intimidating to many people. Some people need to be nurtured and encouraged. There are other people for whom this skill comes naturally. They make the best Block Connectors. Experience has also shown that some people are not meant to be Block Connectors and are quick to decline the invitation. It is important to have a skilled Neighborhood Connector who can quickly recognize a capable Block Connector and support them in the fulfillment of their connecting responsibilities.

Once the Block Connectors are identified, training and encouragement is a key role of the Neighborhood Connector. A mentoring program supporting Block Connectors insures that they are not alone when they first interview their neighbors. The Neighborhood Connector goes with the Block Connector to help train them in the interview process. In addition, a letter of introduction is given to the Block Connectors to distribute to neighbors as they visit the homes on their block. (Exhibits E and F are examples of a generic and a specific letter of introduction.)

### **Growing the Initiative**

Lawrence started with one pilot project in the Highlands neighborhood, but with the emerging success and promise of the initiative, the city approached Lawrence proposing a second phase for the pilot. Lawrence was supported by the

municipality for full time work and Anne Harvey was moved to the initiative as a full time staff. The City requested that six neighborhoods be chosen for this second phase. A process was undertaken to select the neighborhoods based on 1) the neighborhood's leadership capacity and readiness 2) the ability to participate financially and 3) the availability of solid candidates for the Connector Coordinator position.

Part of the responsibility in the second phase of the pilot was to determine a funding strategy for neighborhoods. Experiments with local sources of funding from businesses and local institutions as well as other levels of government were undertaken. Of the \$10,000 budget for most neighborhoods, churches were the best candidates to step forward with the least amount of solicitation effort and with an average of \$2,500 contributed. Ultimately the major share of the costs will be born by the provincial government through a granting process.

As word got around, other city neighborhoods wanted to start the same type of program. Although Lawrence didn't have a mandate to work with these neighborhoods or funding to add more pilots, these neighborhoods became "unofficial projects." They were given access to all the Abundant Community Initiative materials, municipal support and coaching. The idea was spreading quickly and these "unofficial" neighborhoods were working despite the city's plan to run a limited pilot. These "unofficial" groups have enriched the pilot through their own modifications of the materials and participation in the official Neighborhood Connector meetings.

### **Media and the Abundant Community Initiative**

The media has played an important role in making the Abundant Community Initiative grow. The Initiative has received very positive coverage on the local CTV Edmonton news, (see <http://edmonton.ctvnews.ca/video?clipId=305449>). Several articles were published in the Highlands local newsletter/magazine, (see [http://www.highlandscommunity.ca/newsletter/Issue2014\\_Vol\\_3.pdf](http://www.highlandscommunity.ca/newsletter/Issue2014_Vol_3.pdf)), and an article, "What's in a Neighborhood," was published in the Avenue Edmonton Magazine, (see <http://www.avenueedmonton.com/articles/good-day-neighbour>). The Abundant Community Initiative has also utilized Facebook to highlight their work and promote new associations.

By getting their message out into the community using a variety of sources, the Block Connectors have had an easier time introducing and explaining their work to their neighbors.

## Collecting Neighbor Information

Information is gathered through a face-to-face interview process as the Block Connector goes door-to-door. Using the Conversation Guide created by the Abundant Community Initiative and customized by the neighborhood, (Exhibit C), the Block Connector asks questions that elicit the residents' interests, skills, abilities and knowledge that they are willing to contribute to improving their neighborhood. There are many talents that neighbors are willing to contribute. For example, in the Highlands neighborhood of 1,000 households, 500 residents interviewed reported the following:

### What kinds of activity groups would you like to join in with neighbors?

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Fishing	Bowling	Drumming	Neighborhood
Historic society	Bridge club	Exercise/fitness	watch
Hundred and 12 <sup>th</sup> Ave.	Canoeing	Fishing	Photography
renewal	Charity work	• Fly	Pilates
Airsoft/paintball	Children's programs:	• Lake	Pottery
Antique collecting	• Dance	• Ice	Quilting
Aqua fitness	• Music	Floor hockey	Miniature real road
Oil painting	• Sports	Flower arranging	Rugby
Watercolor painting	• Swimming	Women's group	Running
Art shows/gallery tours	Carving	Golf	Seniors
Auto club	Choir Church	Guitar	Gatherings
Badminton	Clay	Hiking	Singing choral
Ball hockey	Running	Historic society	Skiing
Band	Selling	Ice hockey	Slow pitch
Baseball	Coffee drop in	Hunting	Soccer softball
Basketball	Community garden	Interior design	Volleyball
Biking:	Cooking	Kettle bell's	Tennis
• Leisure	Crafts	Knitting	Travel
• Mountain	Country skiing	Landscape design	Walking
• Road	Curling	Long bowling	Winemaking and
Bingo	Dance:	Meditation	tasting
Birdwatching	• Ballroom	Moms group	Woodworking
Block parties	• Hip-hop	Motorcycles	Writing
Board/card games	Dinner groups	Movie nights	Yoga
Book clubs	Dog walking	Music club	

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## Do you have interests or knowledge you would share with or teach your neighbors?

Antiques	Current events	Guns	Edmonton Oilers
Architecture	Dog training and care	Healthcare	Edmonton Eskimos
Art	The environment	Hiking	Photography
Antique cars	Fishing	History	Poetry
Animal health	Family life	Home design	Poverty
Bible	Football	Human rights	Refugee support
Book club	Languages	Landscaping	Small business
Car club	Gender issues	Fitness training	Education systems
Politics	Genealogy	Children's health and development	Philosophy/theology
Gardening	Golf	Music appreciation	Travel
Computers/IT	Grandparenting	Nutrition	World religions
Cooking			

## Are there skills you would share with neighbors?

Animal health	Dog training	Developmental disabilities	Personal organization
Animal care	Dog care	Highlands history or culture	Outdoor education
Antiques	Dog walking	House painting	Parenting
Appliance repair	Drawing	Interior design	Pastoral care
Architecture	Giving rides to seniors	Drums	Photography
Art design	Drywall	Knitting	Baking
Arts management	Neighborhood patrol	Labor relations	Pool maintenance
Babysitting	Editing	Landscaping	Project management
Baking	Electrical	Lawn care	Public speaking
Bridge	Event organizing	Life skills	Seniors care
Building maintenance	Face painting	Literacy	Sexual exploitation
Canning	Financial planning	Bicycle care	Sound tech
Career path	Fitness	Board coach	Auto appraisal
Carpentry	French translation	Mental illness care	Speech therapy
Casino	Fundraising	Business mentoring	Stained glass
Catering	Landscape design	Youth mentoring	Tax help
Children's programs	Gardening	Lawn mowing	Travel advisor
Community resources	Senior care	Negotiation	Victim assistance
Computer/tech skills	Graphic design	Commissioner of Oaths	Video production
Construction	Grief counseling	Occupational therapy	Vintage cars
Cooking	Guitar		Woodworking
Wood carving	Handyman		Yard maintenance
Data input			
Yard design			

## Are there some life experiences that you would consider sharing for the benefit of neighbors?

Adoptive parents	Organ donation	International work	Recovery
Blended families	Downsizing	Job search	Retirement
Brain injury	Drug addiction	Leadership	Senior care
Business experience	Grandmothering	Living abroad	Sick kids
Cancer	Grief	Living in Australia	Smoking cessation
Career choices	Victims of abuse	Mental health	Stroke
Caring for aging parents	Hiking	Parenting	Teaching
Chronic injuries/pain	Immigration	Pilgrimage	internationally
Elite sports	International travel	Queer parenting	Travel
Depression			Work life balance

## Making Connections

As the Block Connectors go door to door holding conversations with their neighbors, they are generally doing two things:

1. Establishing personal relationships with their 20 neighbors
2. Gathering information about their neighbor's vision for the neighborhood, the talents they would like to contribute, and the interests they would like to pursue. (See questionnaire at Exhibit C.)

The Block Connectors and Neighborhood Connectors then review this information and identify possible neighborhood connections. These tend to fall into the following types:

### *Neighbor-to-Neighbor Connections*

- Relationships between two people where one has a gift or skill that another one needs. This is particularly reflected through the gift inventory. An example would be a home-bound older person who needs snow shoveled from their walk during the winter and a neighbor willing to take on this responsibility.
- Relationships between two people who have a mutual interest. For example, sharing babysitting responsibilities.

### *New Neighborly Associations*

- Connecting a group of neighbors into a new association where they have common interests. When the data shows there are a few

people with the same interest, those people are asked by the Block Connector or the Neighborhood Connector if they would like to get together as a group. The group is then put into the hands of a resident who has said that they would be willing to lead or teach the specific group. The Community League works with the Neighborhood Connectors and Block Connectors to get the word out about these newly formed associations. The Community League also provides promotional support by advertising the new associations in neighborhood newsletters, on Facebook pages and in a distributed list of Community League programs.

Once the group is formed and advertised, it draws a greater number of people who hadn't thought of putting that particular interest down during an interview. Examples of associations formed within the neighborhood are a gourmet cooking group, a new moms group, a hockey group or a lawn bowling group.

Associations are also formed around the common theme of improving the neighborhood. Many people wanted more neighborhood socials. In response, the Community League worked with a local golf course to open its pub area on Friday evenings for neighborhood residents to use for socializing. The golf club benefitted by having an evening clientele and the neighborhood residents benefitted by having a place to gather with a discount on food and beverages.

It has also been significant to see the blocks themselves emerge as new groups within the neighborhood with their own identity. Previously, the level of relationships on most blocks was generally at such a low level that neighbors had no shared block identity.

### ***Connecting to an Existing Neighborhood Association***

- For example, one of the Community League members has seen an increase in Community League memberships as a result of the door-to-door interviewing. Many residents were not aware that there was a Community League that they could join. The Neighborhood

watch group was also re-invigorated as block residents began sharing emails, and started agreeing to watch over homes and take care of pets of vacationing residents.

### ***Neighbor to Local Institutional Connections***

So far, neighbor to institution connections have rarely occurred because Block Connectors appear to understand their primary purpose as creating new personal and associational relationships between neighbors. However, because of the large increase in local relationships and associations, there is much more interaction between neighbors. As a result, these relationships enhance local knowledge of the value and opportunities provided by local institutions. For example, the use of the local schools is increased as parents and children form relationships at a neighborly level that then transfers to choice of local schools. Local connections and conversations also enhance the confidence in, and awareness of, local health care services. This has also been true for the local library and the municipal library leadership has recently placed a qualified resident of the neighborhood into the position of manager at the local branch of the library.

### **Using the Database**

The Block Connector gathers the basic neighbor information on the paper Conversation Guide. These documents are used by the Block Connector to decide on possible block level connections. The Block Connector also enters this same information on the database. The Abundant Community Initiative currently uses Google Forms to collect information. An example of the questions on the Google Forms document is available at: <http://www.abcdinstitute.org/docs/BlockConnectorQuestionnaire.pdf>

This computerized information is then accessible to the Neighborhood Connector with responsibility for 50 blocks. This allows the Neighborhood Connector to identify possible connections among the residents of all the neighborhood blocks. For example, if only one person on a block plays a musical instrument, the database information may show that there are 20 other musicians in the 1,000-household neighborhood. This opens up the opportunity for creating a

neighborhood band or orchestra. In all of the possible connections with individuals and associations, the matching population can be greatly enlarged by the use of a database.

The database can also display the frequency of the skills, interests or knowledge that have been collected from 1,000 households. This provides the Neighborhood Connector a multitude of possible new associations that can be created in the total neighborhood just as the Block Connector can create associations on the block.

### **Meeting Places**

In creating new associations, there is the question of where a group of people will meet. This is sometimes a question that the leader of the newly formed group needs to address. The first possibility has been to meet in the home of one person in the group. However, as the size of the group grows larger, other local venues are located. These include: parks, libraries, churches, schools, fire stations, coffee houses, recreational and service agencies.

There has emerged the “movable group.” These groups, such as a young moms club, will meet at a variety of locations because of the ability to be in touch immediately using social media, email or group texting.

### **Funding**

The City of Edmonton agreed to give the Abundant Community initiative \$15,000 to pilot the first project. Additional money was raised through business donations, church donations and agencies. Exhibit G is a Request for Support and Exhibit H is an existing Community League Endorsement letter. Both of these are used in their fundraising efforts.

Through a matching grant process, however, neighborhoods have now been able to apply to the Province of Alberta for funding. This grant counts the value of the Block Connector’s time as an in-kind donation. All indications are that this is a very positive arrangement accruing value both to the neighborhood and to the provincial government.

The funding is mainly used to pay the stipend to the Neighborhood Connector. Other uses of the funding include support materials for the database and advertising within the neighborhood.

In conclusion, Harry Oswin, an official of the City of Edmonton has written:

### **Why Government Should Be Interested in Community**

The City of Edmonton has a strategic plan that seeks to improve livability for all. “The Way Ahead” states that, “Edmonton will be welcoming to all, encourage active lifestyles through recreation and will engage its citizens.”

Beyond that policy imperative, the City of Edmonton believes in the power of neighborhoods to make change. We know that when people are connected to one another, our citizens’ physical and mental health improves. People feel happier and safer. Children in connected neighborhoods do better in school and are more likely to stay in school longer.

Governments and agencies have been unable to address the challenges and issues that impact our communities. We have systematized caring and we can’t continue to sustain these systems. Government has a critical role to play in prevention and through projects like the Abundant Communities Initiative, we can support communities to develop their own “de-systematized” models of caring for their people.

The Abundant Community Initiative that the City of Edmonton is supporting through program funds and staff support, is a very effective way of supporting community residents to increase their connectedness, leading to a higher quality of life. We believe this initiative will lead to a renewal of neighborhoods in Edmonton.

### **Additional Information**

For more detailed information about this Abundant Community Initiative, email Howard Lawrence at [howardlawrence@shaw.ca](mailto:howardlawrence@shaw.ca).



## The **ABUNDANT** Community Initiative

*Awakening the Power of Families and Neighborhoods*

### The Abundant Community Initiative – Background Information

The purpose of The Abundant Community Initiative is to advance the development of neighbourhood well-being in Edmonton neighbourhoods following the principles and practices recommended by Peter Block and John McKnight in their book *The Abundant Community*.

At the heart of the Initiative is a neighbour or two on each block who will initiate a casual conversation with each household on their block about their:

- Vision for their neighbourhood,
- Activities and interests that they can do together, and the
- Skills, gifts or abilities they are willing to share with our neighbours or the whole neighbourhood.

Imagine...

- Your ideas about the neighbourhood joining other ideas to help our Community League lead into the future.
- Finding others in the neighbourhood who also enjoy what you or your kids do (e.g. ball hockey, walking, guitar, knitting, stamping, etc.).
- Using your abilities to – care for seniors, garden, coach, babysit, etc. – in order to help each other out and make our neighbourhood an even better place to live!

The process...

- Work with community leagues or groups to hire a “Connector Coordinator” who will:
- Identify, enlist and organize approximately 50 “Block Connectors”,
- Facilitate and encourage the connector/interview process, and
- Collate/group the data from the interviews on behalf of the neighbourhood and the community league.

The benefits...

- Initiate a momentum of household connection within each block and the neighbourhood.
- Shape neighbourhood life according to residents’ vision of their neighbourhood.
- Facilitate relationships through the formation of “associations” (groups) within the neighbourhood.
- Connect the gifts, skills and abilities of residence to neighbours and the neighbourhood.
- Connect neighbours on a block (or in a building) together through relationship with a Block Connector.

For more information, please contact Anne Harvey at

[anne.harvey@edmonton.ca](mailto:anne.harvey@edmonton.ca) or 780-496-3436.



## Block Connector Role Description

Your role as a **Block Connector** begins with interviewing, or better, having a conversation with twenty or so houses on your block, cul-de-sac or apartment building floor. It is our hope that this role continues on, unless you as the Block Connector are no longer interested or available, at which point you would let your **Connector Coordinator** know so that you together could find someone else on your block to take on the responsibility.

What we mean by the responsibility is that through the conversation process, you as the Block Connector become the “go to” person on your block. You are the person stewarding your neighbours’ emails and phone numbers; you know something about everyone on your block; you help neighbours welcome new neighbours; you are a key for your neighbours’ connecting to the neighbourhood.

### Block Connectors commit to:

- 🍏 Interviewing approximately half of your block (10 conversations) within 4 weeks of commitment
- 🍏 Submitting the conversations to your Connector Coordinator for information entry
- 🍏 Continuing conversations and ensuring they are finished by October 31<sup>st</sup>
- 🍏 Attending Orientation/Conversation Brunches coordinated by your Connector Coordinator
- 🍏 Planning a connection activity with your block







## Neighbour Conversation Guide

The purpose of these conversations is to make our blocks and our neighbourhood an even better place to live. We are doing this by finding out and sharing amongst us each household's vision for our neighbourhood; the activities and interests that occupy us; and the gifts, abilities and experiences we possess.

This form is intended to be a helpful guide to a brief conversation that will hopefully be a part of an enduring conversation and connection.

This is NOT a confidential conversation or document! Our Community League's hope is that the information from this conversation will be shared and used to build the fabric of our neighbourhood through local groups and connections.

<b>House Address:</b>	<b>Block:</b>	<b>Interviewer:</b>
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Household	Member 1*	Member 2	Member 3	Member 4+
<b>Name</b>				
<b>Birth Year</b>				
<b>Phone</b>				
<b>E-Mail</b>				

\*Member 1 may answer on behalf of the household

### Personal Information and Privacy Protection Statement:

Highlands Community League is committed to safeguarding the information entrusted to us by our neighbours. We make every reasonable effort to ensure that the personal information collected is accurate and complete. We protect personal information in a manner appropriate for the sensitivity of the information. We make every reasonable effort to prevent any loss, misuse, disclosure or modification of personal information, as well as any access to personal information beyond the specific purpose of the community league initiative. We use appropriate security measures when destroying personal information, including shredding paper and the complete deleting of electronic information. The Abundant Community Initiative Privacy Policy can be viewed upon request by contacting a member of the Highlands Community League executive. In the event you would like to speak with someone, you may call Susan Ruttan (member of the Highlands Community League Executive) at 780 477-3663.

### Part One: Vision for the Highlands Neighbourhood

1. What makes a great neighbourhood?

Member 1*	Member 2	Member 3	Member 4

2. What else can we do to make The Highlands a great neighbourhood?

Member 1*	Member 2	Member 3	Member 4

## Part Two: Participating Together in Activities and Interests

3. What activities would you like to join in with neighbours? (e.g. Oil Painting, Ball Hockey, Biking, Skiing, Bridge, Gardening, Worship, Baseball, Jazz Guitar, Dog Walking, Animal rescue, Gourmet cooking , Bird watching ...)

Member 1*	Member 2	Member 3	Member 4

4. Do you have interests that you would value discussing or participating in with neighbours? (e.g. Refugee support, Music appreciation, Oilers and Eskimos, Art History, Philosophy and Religion, Local Food, Ted talks, Furniture Design, Nutrition, Politics ...)

Member 1*	Member 2	Member 3	Member 4

5. Are there activities or Interests that you are familiar enough with to lead in, or teach to, a group of neighbours?

Member 1*	Member 2	Member 3	Member 4

## Part Three: Gifts, Abilities and Experiences to Share

6. Do you have a skill, gift or ability that you would be comfortable using to help neighbours or the neighbourhood? (e.g. Snow shoveling, Senior care, Cooking, IT, Maintenance, Gardening, Youth Mentoring, Hospitality, Organizing...)

Brief descriptions for an anonymous newsletter posting (e.g. willing to visit with senior once per week...)

Member 1	
Member 2	
Member 3	
Member 4	

7. Are there some life experiences that you would consider sharing for the benefit of neighbours? (E.g. International travel and work, Recovery, Career Path, Grief, Nurturing, Foster or adoptive parenting...)

Brief descriptions for the anonymous newsletter posting (e.g. meet one on one, form a group, teach a session...)

Member 1			
Member 2			
Member 3			
Member 4			

# The **ABUNDANT** Community Initiative

*Awakening the Power of Families and Neighborhoods*

## Connector Coordinator Profile



Connectors Coordinators have a passion for the “connectedness of their neighbourhood”. They are the people in the Neighbourhood who know large numbers of people and who are in the habit of making introductions happen.

A Connector Coordinator is essentially the neighbourhood’s “go-to person”. They know people across the Neighbourhood and make a habit of introducing neighbours who they think might have common interests. They are people who “link us up with the world...people with a special gift for bringing the world together”. They are those with an “extraordinary knack [... for] making friends and acquaintances”. Malcolm Gladwell characterizes these kinds of individuals as having a large social network – people who understand and value neighbourly relationships. Gladwell attributes the social success of Connectors, like these, to the fact that “their ability to span many different worlds is a function of something intrinsic to their personality, some combination of curiosity, self-confidence, sociability, and energy”.

Connector Coordinators are and have a history of being motivated to do something about increasing the relatedness and well being of neighbours and the neighbourhood. They are the ones who have organized block parties and have sat on the community league executive looking for opportunities to build the relational structures in the community.

Connector Coordinators will need to be, and be able to, in order of priority:

1. Be confident and passionate enough to seek out and enlist a Block Connector from each block in the neighbourhood.
2. Have leadership ability sufficient to direct and motivate the Block Connectors to complete their interviews.
3. Be tenacious enough and have sufficient organizational skills to engage the entire neighbourhood.
4. Be bold enough and have social skills sufficient to interview any neighbour.
5. Be sufficiently hospitality to be able to convene the Block Connectors for encouragement and “team” support.
6. Have teaching ability sufficient to guide the connectors to competence in interviewing.
7. Have the technical competence enough to collate, correlate and act on the neighbourhood information.
8. Be gracious and patient enough to work with all levels of competence and commitment.
9. Have communication skills – verbal and written – to communicate to Block Connectors, neighbours and community league executive.





Hi neighbour,

My name is \_\_\_\_\_; I live down  
the block at \_\_\_\_\_-\_\_\_\_\_.

The Highlands Community League has asked if I would be a “Block Connector” for our block.

They are requesting that:

- 1) I interview our block regarding; your vision for our neighbourhood, the activities and interests (e.g. *soccer, photography*) that you might want to share in with Highlands neighbours and what gifts, abilities and experiences ( e.g. *senior care, handy man*) you would be willing to share with a neighbour or the neighbourhood.
- 2) Be our side of the blocks point person so that; we can be in touch around block related matters (e.g. *garage doors left open, safety*) and so that we can share info (e.g. events and news) back and forth with the Community Association and the neighbourhood.
- 3) Initiate organizing a social event (e.g. Block Party, Wine and Cheese) for our block once or twice a year. We are planning an event for: \_\_\_\_\_.

I am happy to just drop by or if you would like you can be in touch with me to set up a time at \_\_\_\_\_@\_\_\_\_\_ or by phone at ( ) \_\_\_\_-\_\_\_\_.

Regards,



### Hello, Highlanders!

This is Kris and Katherine Andreychuk, your friendly neighbours who have been living in the Highlands community for over 3 years. We are volunteering with a project aimed at building ties among community members in our wonderful neighbourhood. The project is called the *Abundant Community Initiative*, and the Highlands Community League is supporting this process of connecting neighbours. This exciting project has already been featured in the Edmonton Journal:

<http://www.edmontonjournal.com/With+knock+door+Highlands+neighbourhood+tries+rebuild+social+bonds/7945817/story.html>

Our 'job' is to converse with our neighbours about what they want to see, do, or would like in Highlands, as well as what skills or knowledge they would enjoy sharing with others in our community. This information will be used to try and connect those with similar interests and passions in Highlands.

We are planning to visit our neighbourhood block on **Thursday evenings** between **7:00 – 9:00 pm** over the course of the next month to complete our commitment to the project. The interview will only take around 10-20 minutes. If there is a Thursday that works best for you (or doesn't work at all) for us to stop by, please feel free to contact us by email or phone. We're looking forward to chatting with you about our Wonderful Abundant Community – Highlands!

Kris and Katherine Andreychuk

ktratch@yahoo.ca

780-249-6319

### Map of Highlands



## The Abundant Community Initiative: Request for Support

**We are asking you to assist your Community League in hiring a “Connector Coordinator” to work 400 hours in setting up a network of neighbourliness. Total cost \$10,000.**

“Abundant Community is based on the belief that every individual in a neighbourhood has a contribution to make, and uncovering, sharing and harnessing those contributions doesn’t only create neighbourliness, they address issues as diverse as social isolation, crime, and physical and mental health. The notion is at the same time ridiculously commonsensical and ridiculously powerful.”

Mary Sturgeon, project manager, Make Something Edmonton

**At the heart of the Initiative...** is a neighbour or two on each block who will initiate a casual conversation with each household on their block/cul-de-sac/building floor, about their neighbours’:

- Vision for their neighbourhood,
- Activities and interests that they want to join in with neighbours, and the
- Skills, gifts or abilities they are willing to share with their neighbours or the whole neighbourhood.

### The process...

- Community league hires a *Connector Coordinator* who will:
  - Identify, enlist and organize approximately 50 *Block Connectors*,
  - Facilitate and encourage the Block Connector’s conversation process, and
  - Collate/group the information from the conversations on behalf of the neighbourhood and the organizing community league or community group/organization.

### The benefits...

- Initiates a momentum of household connection within each block/cul-de-sac/building floor and the neighbourhood.
- Shapes neighbourhood life according to residents’ vision of their neighbourhood.
- Facilitates relationships through the formation of new groups of shared interests within the neighbourhood.
- Connects the skills, gifts and abilities of neighbours to other neighbours and the neighbourhood as a whole.
- Connects block/cul-de-sac/building floor neighbours together through a relationship with their Block Connector.

### The contacts...

- Your Local Community League
- Anne Harvey with the City of Edmonton: [Anne.Harvey@edmonton.ca](mailto:Anne.Harvey@edmonton.ca) 780 720-3797
- Howard Lawrence, Abundant Community Consultant: [HowardLawrence@shaw.ca](mailto:HowardLawrence@shaw.ca) 780 707-9501

**Watch the CTV Video Clip:** <http://edmonton.ctvnews.ca/video?clipId=305449>



# The **ABUNDANT** *Community* Initiative

## Awakening the Power of Families and Neighborhoods

**Oliver Community League** is excited to be part of *The Abundant Community Initiative (ACI)* Pilot Project! Please accept this as a formal invitation to participate in this wonderful project in the neighbourhood.

**At the heart of the Initiative** is a neighbour or two on each block who will initiate a casual conversation with each household on their block about their:

- Vision for our neighbourhood,
- Activities and interests that we can do together, and the
- Skills, gifts or abilities we are willing to share with our neighbours or the whole neighbourhood.

## Imagine...

- Your ideas about the neighbourhood joining other ideas to help our Community League lead into the future.
- Finding others in the neighbourhood who also enjoy what you or your kids do (e.g. ball hockey, walking, guitar, knitting, stamping, etc.).
- Using your abilities to – care for seniors, garden, coach, babysit, etc. – in order to help each other out and make our neighbourhood an even better place to live!

### Benefits of *The Abundant Community Initiative*:

- Initiates a momentum of household connection within each block and the neighbourhood.
- Shapes neighbourhood life according to residents' vision of their neighbourhood.
- Facilitates relationships through the formation of "associations/groups" within the neighbourhood.
- Connects the skills, gifts and abilities of each residence to their neighbours and the whole neighbourhood.
- Connects all neighbours on a block through the relationship with their "Block Interviewer".
- Connects individuals and groups with local businesses and organizations.

### ***The Abundant Community Initiative Process:***

- Works with community leagues to hire a part time “Connector Coordinator” who will:
  - Identify, enlist and organize approximately 50 “Block Interviewer,”
  - Facilitate and encourage the connector/interview/conversation process, and
  - Collate/group the data from the conversations/interviews on behalf of the neighbourhood and the community league.

### ***The Abundant Community Initiative* Fundraising:**

- The Community League is looking to local businesses and organizations to help support the ACI.
- The league is raising \$10,000 to cover the first year start-up costs of the Initiative. We hope that your organization can make a contribution to support this endeavor.
- The benefits to the neighbourhood at large are invaluable and will continue to make our Oliver a strong and vibrant community where people are connected and know each other.
- Contributions can be made to: Oliver Community League, 10326-118 Street Edmonton, AB
- For information, please contact: Howard Lawrence 780 707-9501 [howardlawrence@shaw.ca](mailto:howardlawrence@shaw.ca)

