



ARTICLE

Ten Tips for Building a Safer Community

If you value the neighbourhood in which you live, you know how important it is to build a sense of community and belonging for you, your family and your neighbours. Building community spirit helps build pride among residents. With that pride comes a greater sense of wellbeing in your neighbourhood. People feel safe. They get involved. And they truly start to care about the place they call “home”. It also tends to show criminal elements that they are not welcome in your community, making it a safer, better place to live.

Here are ten top tips for building community spirit:

1. **Adopt a park, roadway or gateway:** The City of Ottawa’s Adopt-a-Park or Roadway or Gateway program encourages community members to care for and maintain parks and roadways. Volunteers take on park or roadway clean-up projects to improve safety, the environment and to keep the city clean, green litter and graffiti free. Find out more at www.ottawa.ca.
2. **Build a community garden:** A community garden is a place where people come together to grow flowers, herbs, fruits or vegetables. Often, community gardens make use of neglected or underused spaces in neighbourhoods, providing beauty and sometimes food for the people who tend them.
3. **Design safer surroundings:** To help prevent crime in your neighbourhood, take a look at your surroundings. Are your streets, walking paths, parks, areas around homes and other public spaces designed in a way to maximize safety? An increasingly popular and effective method of planning is Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED). CPTED design ideas can be used to plan cities, suburbs, neighbourhoods, parks, places of business and homes. To learn more, visit www.cptedontario.ca.
4. **Do a community cleanup:** A community clean-up is an event in which friends and neighbours work together to clean up a park, street, ravine, shoreline, pathway, bus stop or other public space. The City of Ottawa has two scheduled “Cleaning the Capital” days. One takes place in the spring and the other in the fall. You can register for these activities by calling 3-1-1.
5. **Encourage local leadership:** Do you believe in the value of local leaders? Consider this: without the people who actively work to make your neighbourhood a better place, volunteer their time,

recruit others to put initiatives in place, organize activities or raise awareness about important issues, very little would get done. These local leaders are often the unsung heroes in our communities. Get involved and encourage others to do the same.

6. **Involve youth:** Young people are a big part of our communities. Getting them involved in neighbourhood events and activities can benefit everyone. To involve youth in your community, it's important to develop interesting opportunities for them. Talk to them. Engage them. After all, today's youth are tomorrow's leaders.
7. **Organize a special event:** A special event can be a great way to get your neighbourhood together and build community spirit. Whether you want to plan a community picnic, family day, carnival, street fair, talent show, dance, concert or any other type of special event, the City of Ottawa offers planning advice and information about related Bylaws. Visit www.ottawa.ca.
8. **Publish a community newspaper:** Community newsletters can be an entertaining way to share important information about your neighbourhood. A good newsletter contains information that is useful and interesting to the reader, such as neighbourhood news, upcoming events, tips for improving their property, local promotions and much more. Gather up volunteers, create an editorial plan and decide whether you want to distribute it in paper or electronic format. It's a great way to keep everyone involved and interested in what's going on in your neighbourhood.
9. **Tap into community grants:** Do you want to buy a play structure, plan an event or beautify your neighbourhood? There are many ways to fund these community projects. You can do fundraising, approach local businesses for sponsorships or apply for grants. For more information on grant monies available, visit the Neighbourhood Toolkit (details below).
10. **Volunteer:** Volunteering is a positive way to contribute to life in the City of Ottawa. The opportunities are endless—from volunteering at schools to supporting non-profit organizations, charities, local festivals, places of worship or community programs and events. Interested? Start by connecting with Volunteer Ottawa at www.volunteerottawa.ca.

To learn more about how to put these plans into action, visit Crime Prevention Ottawa's Neighbourhood Toolkit online at www.crimepreventionottawa.ca/toolkit. It has checklists and advice on getting each of these initiatives underway in your own community. You'll find them under "Build Community Spirit" in the "Get Involved" section.