

# Connecting Our Community

## A Guidebook for Community Connectors



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and lead your Community Activations!

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# Welcome from the Concert Team

In 2017, Concert Properties took part in “[Hey Neighbour!](#)”, a 12-month experimental pilot led by the City of Vancouver’s [Healthy City Strategy](#) to create more socially connected rental housing. The aim was to empower residents and staff to animate and increase the building’s sense of community and well-being.

Two dedicated residents of The Remington, Collingwood Village, volunteered their time to co-create fun social activities for neighbours that everyone loved. Their efforts were such a success, we’re now expanding the program to all of Concert’s residential buildings and we’re working with the [Hey Neighbour Collective](#), a community of practice to support the sociable design and programming of multi-unit housing as part of our commitment to the health and wellbeing of our communities.

Many of us want to connect, but not all of us feel comfortable or know how. That’s why your commitment to connecting residents is so important, perhaps now more than ever.

In light of the current pandemic, climate change and social movements around the world, we’re experiencing an evolution—perhaps even a revolution—in what it means to be neighbours. We know that diverse social support networks are linked to people’s overall health and happiness. It’s our social connections that make our neighbourhoods vibrant, exciting places to live.

Thank you for your commitment to  
Connecting Our Community!

Sincerely,  
**The Concert Team**

The [Vancouver Foundation](#) found that 40% of high-rise dwellers feel lonely, and studies are increasingly linking chronic loneliness and social isolation to negative health outcomes such as depression, dementia and heart disease. Research also shows that people living in apartments experience higher levels of social isolation compared to those living in single detached homes.



# Thank You for Becoming a Community Connector!

Everyone wants to live in a safe, healthy and connected community. A key step in achieving this goal is building strong relationships with the neighbours around you. The challenge is that everyone is so busy with their day-to-day routine it's hard to find time to meet up and get to know each other.

## That's why we need Community Connectors like you!

Community Connectors care about the health of their communities and believe in the importance of social connectedness to tackle loneliness and isolation. Strong relationships with the neighbours around us can help us in times of need and adds meaning to our daily lives.

## Your Role as a Community Connector

As a volunteer Community Connector, you'll be the thread that ties our community together. You will get to know your neighbours, and more importantly, you will provide opportunities for those of us who feel especially isolated to connect with others.

The social activities you host will spark friendships between the people that have a great impact on our lives—the neighbours we see everyday!

### **As a volunteer Community Connector, you will:**

- Create and promote involvement in social activities
- Work with building staff to develop and utilize communications channels for residents to engage
- Create opportunities for other residents to assist in community-building

We would like to see a 6-month commitment to the role, where you will lead monthly activities or alternatively, 3 larger activities.

We know your time is valuable and the hard work that goes into creating and organizing gatherings of any kind. That's why you will receive an honorarium of \$150 monthly as a thank you for your time. You will also be reimbursed for any activity related expenses within budget which will be coordinated by Resident Services.

We're here to support you! You will have the opportunity to discuss your ideas with your Resident Services Manager and you'll be provided regular support and resources from Concert's Social Sustainability Coordinator.

A physically distanced dinner; charitable activity; skills swap; balcony decorating contest; board game night; dog meet-up; hiking group or picnics in the park—the ideas are endless!

Please be sure to read through the additional resources offered in this Guidebook such as [Happy City's, Together Apart, Ideas for Staying Connected in Times of Physical Distancing](#) and the [Hey Neighbour! Social Animators Recipe Book](#).

## Let's Connect Our Community!

# Plan Your Community Activation

Planning activities are a great way to get creative and have some fun! Here are some guidelines when thinking of ways to encourage your neighbours to connect be it passively, virtually or at a distance.

## Get Started!



### STEP 1

Attend a Virtual Connecting Our Community Orientation Session. This is a great way to brainstorm ideas and connect with our wider collective of Community Connectors.

### STEP 2

Read through the additional resources offered in this Guidebook to get inspired!

### STEP 3

Connect with Resident Services to arrange your Activation!

### STEP 4

Lastly, but most importantly, invite your neighbours!

## Plan Your Community Activation

### What Makes Our Community Special?

What activities will your neighbours love? Are there dog owners that would like to get together for a play date or neighbours that love to walk? Perhaps you have a special skill, talent or hobby you would like to share with others. Is there a project you would like to collaborate on with your neighbours or a charity you would like to support? Maybe you want to host a potluck to share a traditional dish from your culture or get to know your neighbours one-on-one over a coffee and a walk.

Meaningful connections can be created through sharing food, resources, time and energy towards fun and purposeful projects. Finding common interests, hobbies and shared initiatives are a great way to foster social connection.

The abilities and talents our neighbours possess are our community's biggest assets! Skills and knowledge sharing are forces for strengthening community. You can harness the diversity and unique qualities of fellow residents as well as your own cultural heritage to foster neighbourliness.

Perhaps there are people in the building that could use additional supports during the pandemic. Creating a resident buddy system for regular check-ins, assisted grocery purchases or a communal food pantry are just some of the ways we can work together to ensure our community is supported.

The social activations you spark, be they whimsical and fun or advocating for health and wellbeing are often simple, low-cost ways to meet the community's needs and build a sense of belonging. Let's inspire our neighbours to connect and make friends along the way!

### Inclusivity

We all want to live in a socially inclusive community that embraces our diversity and ensures all of our neighbours feel welcome to participate. When designing your community activation, it's a good idea to think about how the activity can be made more accessible. This includes the communications mechanisms used to promote your activities to ensure they reach everyone. See [Happy City's, Together Apart, Ideas for Staying Connected in Times of Physical Distancing](#) for ways to enable connections through social equity.

### Safety

We all need to do our part to ensure our family, friends and neighbours stay well during COVID-19. It may seem counterintuitive to think about planning a social activity while we're all doing our best to follow public health guidelines to protect our community. However, experiencing social isolation and loneliness has large impacts on our health, too. Studies are linking chronic loneliness to increased negative health outcomes such as depression and dementia. Given the closures to our workplaces, schools and restrictions on regular social gatherings, this is a time when we need social connection and social support networks more than ever.

That's why we're asking you to be mindful when planning your activities—and we're asking for an extra dose of ingenuity! There are endless ways to connect and build community. We've provided you with [Happy City's, Together Apart, Ideas for Staying Connected in Times of Physical Distancing](#) for creative approaches to resident engagement during the pandemic. You will also receive the support of our Social Sustainability Coordinator to guide you in exploring fun and safe ways to stay connected!

## Plan Your Community Activation

### Think Eco-friendly

Go Green! When planning your activity, it's always good to keep your environmental footprint in mind. Things like reducing single-use plastics, asking guests to bring their own reusable cups and food containers; and purchasing supplies from local businesses that adhere to sustainable practices. If you're extra keen to go green, aim for a [Zero Waste activity](#) and ask all of your neighbours to Leave No Trace!

### Recruit Fellow Neighbours

Find a buddy! Grab a fellow friendly neighbour or put the call out for volunteers to help bring your activations to life!

Host a distanced or virtual coffee & chat to ask fellow residents what ideas they have for new activities inside or outside the building. You could also place a whiteboard in a common area to pose the question and ask if neighbours are interested in helping out.

Finally, creating a Social Committee is a great way to bring like-minded neighbours together. Working together on a purposeful project builds friendship and trust.

### Register Your Activity

Once you have your great idea, be sure to register your activity with your Resident Services Manager. You will also need to book amenity space if needed, or any indoor or outdoor common areas you plan to utilize. Alternatively, can inquire about utilizing a virtual meeting platform like [Zoom](#).

Resident Services staff will assist you with promoting your activity through email blasts, posters and bulletin boards and of course they will be there to support you with all on-site logistics.

### Gather Materials

Your Resident Services staff may already have the supplies you need, so be sure to inquire. Additionally, we will be able to support the cost of your activation expenses within a budget. Please inquire with your building about activity related expenses and how we can support you in your efforts.

**Still not sure how to Get Started?  
We're Here to Help!**

Always get in touch with Resident Services with any questions, and be sure to attend our Community Connectors Orientation Session!



# Sponsors, Fundraisers and Grants

The time you devote to connecting residents will be rewarded with an honorarium as well a budget to support small activity costs like printing, supplies and decorations. If you have a big idea for your community of course we welcome it, too! Please feel free to chat more about your idea and how we can support you with your Resident Services Manager.

## Find Local Sponsors

Local business owners can be a great source of support for community activities. It's important to know your message and provide a formal letter that explains what you're doing and why you need their support. To build a lasting relationship, make sure to follow up after your activity to thank your sponsors. We'll provide you a template letter you can customize for reaching out to local businesses for support.

## Host a Local Fundraiser

You may wish to raise funds for a local charity or organization. Research shows, working together with residents to support a common cause is a great way to foster a sense of belonging and build community. There are many great local initiatives that need support particularly now during the challenging pandemic. Organizations like the [Canadian Mental Health Association, Vancouver Fraser Branch](#) and [Family Smart](#) work to enhance community mental health and health literacy in response to COVID-19.

## Apply for a Grant

The [Neighbourhood Small Grants \(NSG\)](#) program offers up to \$500 for projects that connect people socially, or involve sharing skills and knowledge, celebrate diversity and foster a sense of belonging. The Responsive NSG Grant Stream remains open for projects that comply with physical distancing guidelines.





# Promotional Strategies

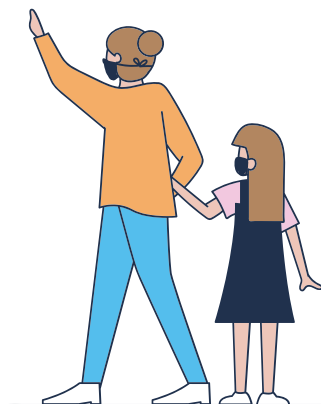
To help you promote your activation, we'll provide you an easy to use poster and postcard template you can customize. Resident Services will assist you by sharing your promotional material with residents via email blasts, distributing postcards and finding the best place for your signage.

Once you've registered your activity, make sure to share it with your neighbours through your building's social media channels if you can. And don't forget to take photos—or have a neighbour take pictures—of your activation in action!

After your activity please email photos to your Resident Services Manager and if posting them online please use our **#concertneighbours** to help build our community!

Most importantly, consider promoting your activity through word of mouth! This is a great opportunity to spark up a conversation with your neighbours. Get creative when promoting your activation and keep in mind those residents who may not utilize digital tools or may be harder to reach.

And remember, sometimes simple is best. An activation to spark conversation among neighbours can be as simple as a chalkboard placed in a high traffic area that passing residents can interact with.



## Ways to Engage



Make sure you're subscribed to your building's newsletter or email blasts



Join your building's unique Virtual Villages Facebook page



Create a post for your activity on the Virtual Villages page



Use our community **#concertneighbours**



Take photos of your activation and remember to post and email them to us after your activity!

# Social Media

Building our online community will allow us to reach more residents and stay engaged virtually. We can utilize social media to encourage residents to join our activities and build relationships among neighbours with common interests. We'll provide you sample social media graphics you can use to promote your activations. And don't forget to include our community hashtags: **#concertneighbours** and **#connectourcommunity**.

## Relevant Contact Information, Social Accounts & Hashtags

### **Collingwood Village, Community Manager**

Email: [collmanager@concertproperties.com](mailto:collmanager@concertproperties.com)

[Virtual Villages Facebook Page](#)

### **600 Drake, Resident Services Manager**

Email: [600drmanager@concertproperties.com](mailto:600drmanager@concertproperties.com)

[Virtual Villages Facebook Page](#)

### **Westridge, Resident Services Manager**

Email: [thewestridge@concertproperties.com](mailto:thewestridge@concertproperties.com)

[Virtual Villages Facebook Page](#)

### **Fraser Pointe I & II, Community Manager**

Email: [FPManager@concertproperties.com](mailto:FPManager@concertproperties.com)

[Virtual Villages Facebook Page](#)

### **Parkside Village, Resident Services Manager**

Email: [cassiarparkside@concertproperties.com](mailto:cassiarparkside@concertproperties.com)

[Virtual Villages Facebook Page](#)

### **Cassier Court, Resident Services Manager**

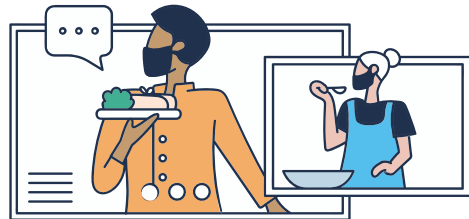
Email: [cassiarparkside@concertproperties.com](mailto:cassiarparkside@concertproperties.com)

[Virtual Villages Facebook Page](#)

Hashtags:

**#concertneighbours**

**#connectourcommunity**



Concert Properties, Social Sustainability Coordinator

# Additional Resources

**Below are some additional resources to support you and get you inspired!**

[100in1Day Canada](#)

[Association of Neighbourhood Houses BC](#)

[Happy City, Together Apart, Ideas for Staying Connected in Times of Physical Distancing](#)

[Hey Neighbour! A Resident Animators Guide, Recipes for Building Connections Between Neighbours](#)

[Hey Neighbour! Final Report](#)

[Resilient Streets Toolkit, The How-To Guide for Building Community](#)

[Responsive Neighbourhood Small Grants Program](#)

[United Way Lower Mainland, Hi Neighbour, Block Party Handbook](#)

**Contact us at:**  
[concertcommunity.online](https://concertcommunity.online)

