

LOVE OUR **NEIGHBORS**

A Program of L♥ve Stanislaus County

Neighborhood Connections Toolkit



LET'S GET STARTED

Welcome to the team!

We are so excited about your interest in hosting a neighborhood gathering. Your initiative to foster connections in your community is commendable and we're thrilled to support your endeavor.

The goal of this project is to foster meaningful connections within our communities. Recent years have left many feeling isolated, depressed, anxious, and lonely. Love Our Neighbors believes in the power of getting to know each other so we can support and encourage those around us. Why not start with those nearest to you?

It's easy in our busy lives, to just pull into the garage and never get to know those living next door.

But what if we did something different?

What if we spent time really getting to know each other?

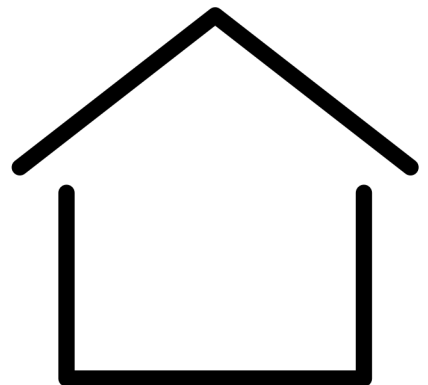
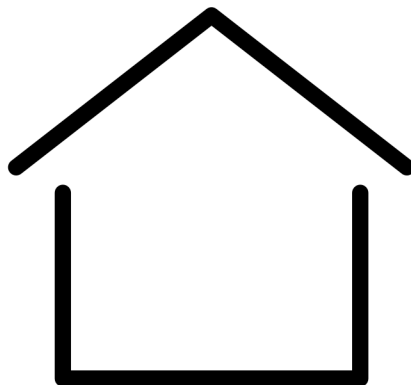
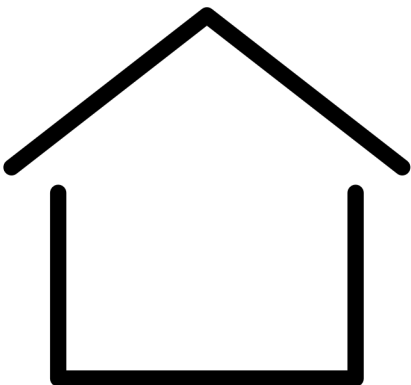
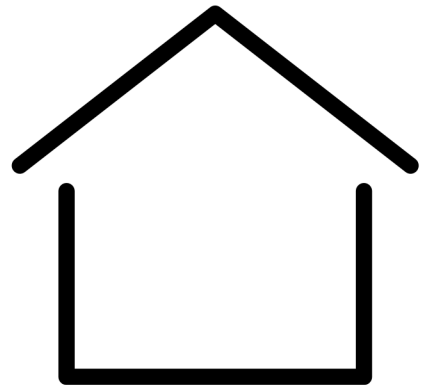
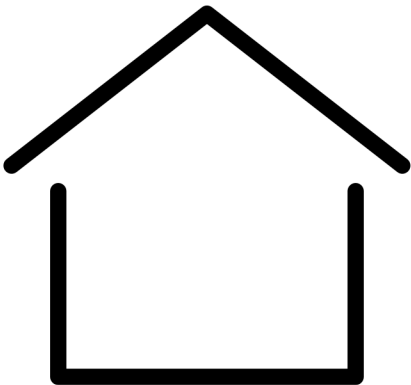
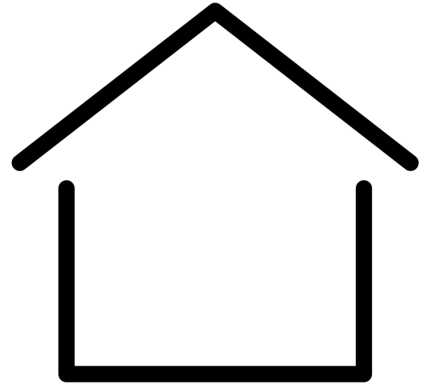
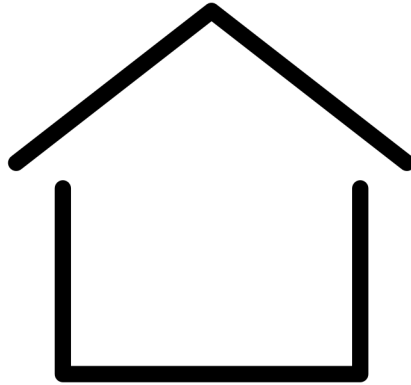
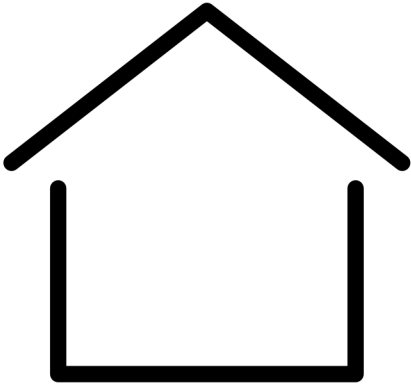
What if we were intentional about providing opportunities to connect?

This toolkit is designed to simplify your planning process and make your event a resounding success. It provides ideas, tips, and tools to assist you as well as information on how to share outcomes and inspiring stories.



Get to know your neighbors!

Fill in their names and information below.



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IDEAS

Block Party BBQ

Plan a party on 4th of July, National Night Out, Halloween, etc.

Neighborhood Yard Sale

Coordinate a yard sale or schedule a bulky item pickup to help elderly neighbors get rid of large items

Neighborhood Watch Group

Form a group to talk through safety concerns within your neighborhood

Community Garden

Form a garden club where neighbors can grow and share produce

Movie Night

Host a movie night in your driveway with popcorn

Firepit & S'mores Night

Pick a night to roast marshmallows and connect with your neighbors around a fire pit

Book Club

Pick a book to read and discuss together

Family Game Nights

Host monthly game nights with board games, card games, etc.

Walking Groups

Sign up and train for a 5k together, arrange regular mom walks, etc.

Skill Swap

Arrange sessions where neighbors can teach each other various skills

Volunteer Days

Schedule opportunities to volunteer with your neighbors (help a neighbor in need of yardwork, pick up trash, etc.)

Art Club

Host a paint night where neighbors can be creative together

Pet Play Dates

Schedule a day to bring your pets to the local park

Your Idea: _____

TIPS FOR SUCCESSFUL EVENT PLANNING

It can be challenging trying to figure out how to get the whole neighborhood together, but it doesn't have to be complicated. Start by figuring out what kind of event you want to host. A block party can be as simple as inviting everyone over to your front yard to make ice cream sundaes and listen to some music.

- **Start early:** Begin planning your event as early as possible. This gives you ample time to arrange everything and tackle unexpected issues.
- **Engage your neighbors:** Foster active participation - this step is particularly relevant for organizing larger events. By involving people in the planning process, their commitment to the event's success grows stronger.
- **Communication is key:** Keep everyone informed about the event's details. You can use social media, flyers, or word-of-mouth.

Find an official map of your neighborhood here:

Download the actual map of your neighborhood and fill in your neighbors' contact info!

[Stanislaus County Open Data](#)



I'm ready to start planning! Now what?

You know what you want to do, now it is time to set the plans in motion. It is certainly possible to plan the party by yourself, but you may find it beneficial to team up with a couple of other neighbors to get the party planned. Follow these next steps to get your party going.

1. Pick a date: Choose a date that works best for your neighbors. Consider weekends, evenings, or holidays when most people are likely to be available.
2. Set your budget: Decide early if your event will require spending money to plan or if you'll stick strictly with investing your time. This will guide your decisions for each of the remaining steps. *Consider: Will anyone else pitch in? Can you secure outside funding, like from Love Our Neighbors Mini Grants (see "Need Help Funding Your Event?")*
3. Select your spot: Locking in a location as early as possible will let you confirm your date, the size of your invite list, permit requirements, entertainment options, and is key to keeping your event in budget.
4. Find out if you need permits: If you plan on closing the street or using a public space for your gathering, make sure to check whether permits or permissions are necessary and apply well in advance. *Materials/Resources: Access to city council or local government website to check for permit requirements. Application forms if applicable.*
5. Decide on food and drinks: You can opt for potluck style where everyone brings a dish, a casual picnic, or even have the event catered, depending on your budget and preferences. *Materials/Resources: A list to keep track of what each household is bringing (for potluck). Caterer's contact info (if applicable).*
6. Plan entertainment: Pick activities that appeal to diverse age groups such as music, games, jump houses, or painting options for the kids. *Materials/Resources: Entertainment equipment (musical instruments, speakers, game items, painting supplies, etc.)*
7. Spread the word!: Use word of mouth, flyers, or posters to inform your neighbors about the event. Going door to door also gives you a chance to introduce yourself, gather suggestions, and offers of assistance from those who may be interested in helping. *Find resources and tips on the following pages.*



Go to LoveStanislausCounty.org/neighbors for more tips!

NEED HELP FUNDING YOUR EVENT?

Apply for a **Mini Grant**

Love Our Neighbors offers one-time, need-based Mini Grants to help jumpstart qualifying community gatherings. Typical events may receive up to \$200. Larger gatherings like block parties are potentially eligible to receive additional support.

Funds may be used for costs that would otherwise come out of your pocket, such as:

- Supplies
- Food & Drinks
- Entertainment
- Event Promotion

Requirements

1. Events must align with Love Our Neighbors goals to bring residents together and create community connections
2. For business applicants, the primary focus of the event must be on neighborhood enrichment – not on selling or funding business activities / promotions
3. For individual applicants, events must involve people residing outside your household who live in Stanislaus County
4. Recipients are required to report on their gathering afterwards via a survey, and photos are encouraged

Other Mini Grant "Good to Knows"

Mini Grants are paid on a debit card, and funds may be used anywhere that accepts pre-paid cards.

To amplify the impact of your Mini Grant in the community, consider shopping locally for your event supplies. Consider supplies that can be used on an ongoing basis.

Apply Today!

Visit lovestanislauscounty.org/neighbors

! Grant funds are limited, so be sure to check availability on the website early in your planning to help plan your budget.



Spreading the Word

Whether you're gathering a small book club or a big block party, you've got to reach the right people. Here are some suggested materials and resources to get you started:

Extend the Invitation

Decide on the best type of invitation(s) for your event. Some options include:

- Hand out flyers or post them on community boards
- Place a poster at your venue
- Post on neighborhood groups, chats, or apps.
- Ask to speak at an HOA or PTA meeting
- Create an email invitation
- Create social media invite posts

Below are examples of social media flyers made using Canva.



Share the Experience

Decide on the best type of invitation(s) for your event. Some options include:

- Share about the event day-of and in the days after on your social channels
- Encourage attendees to post on social media
- Email attendees a recap after the event
- Drop off or mail thank you notes to helpers, sponsors, and/or attendees
- Use photos and videos taken at the event to help promote your next gathering
- Submit a short article and images to your neighborhood newsletter

TIP: Don't forget a call to action to join next time or get involved!

**Go to LoveStanislausCounty.org/neighbors
for more tips!**

Here are some additional tools you can use!

As you plan your neighborhood gathering, consider using the following additional tools to streamline the process and make the most of your event:

- Online Surveys: Use online survey tools like [SurveyMonkey](#) or [Google Forms](#) to gather input on dates, event types, food preferences, and more. This can help ensure that your event caters to the majority's interests and is convenient for most attendees.
- Group Chats or Emails: Create a group chat or email thread for your neighborhood. This platform can serve as a forum for sharing updates, reminders, and last-minute changes. Platforms like WhatsApp, GroupMe, or a simple email thread can be effective.
- Shared Online Calendars: Platforms like Google Calendar can help keep everyone on the same page regarding the event date and any pre-event meetings or deadlines.
- Social Media: Use local social media pages or groups to spread the word about the event. You can post updates, photos, and reminders to keep everyone excited and informed.
- Event Management Apps: Consider using an event management app like Evite or [Eventbrite](#), which can handle invitations, RSVPs, and updates all in one place.
- Local Services: Look into local services that could enhance your event. This could mean hiring a local band, sourcing food from a local bakery, or renting games from a local party supply store. Utilizing local services can add a unique touch while supporting local businesses.
- Canva: This online design tool can be extremely useful when planning your neighborhood event. You can design and print out flyers, create online invitations, or even make a banner for social media. With a user-friendly interface and a host of templates, Canva makes creating eye-catching, professional-looking graphics a breeze.

Want a fire truck for your event?
Reach out to the fire station nearest to your neighborhood.



Go to LoveStanislausCounty.org/neighbors
for more tips!



COLLECTING AND REPORTING EVENT OUTCOMES

We need your help telling the story of why these gatherings matter and to inspire others to get involved!

- **Take Photos:** Try to capture the vibe of the community gathering. These photos will be vital in demonstrating the success of your event.
- **Collect Quotes:** Ask attendees to share their experiences and the connections they made. These quotes will provide insights into the impact of your event. Consider capturing brief video clips to further enrich the narrative.
- **Record Results:** Record the number of participants, document the activities carried out, and capture any noteworthy accomplishments or milestones achieved during the event. These outcomes will help us measure the success of our project and guide future events.
- **Share Your Story:** Submit our Participant Feedback survey about your event to us for a chance to win a gift card! Get details and complete the survey at lovestanislauscounty.org/neighbors



Leader **Survey**


- Submit Your Outcomes, so that we can map the progress in your neighborhood.



Submit a survey and you will be entered into a monthly drawing for a gift card!

Participant **Survey**

**Need help with survey?
Call or email for assistance:**

 **(209) 214-9701**

 **gaby@lovestanislacuscounty.org**



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READY FOR THE NEXT STEP?

We hope these neighborhood gatherings will develop into deeper, ongoing connections among neighbors.

As a result, we have a Family Strengthening component for those neighborhoods who desire to go deeper and want to foster meaningful conversations about a variety of topics.

If this is something you and your neighborhood are interested in, please email us for more information.

gaby@lovestanislauscounty.org

or visit our website

LoveStanislausCounty.org

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