

How to Participate in the Toronto Street Play Initiative

FAQ SHEET

Municipalities world-wide are beginning to address the play and nature deficit affecting the wellbeing of children and youth in our cities. The popular Child Friendly Cities movement is promoting efforts to redesign our cities, communities and public spaces according to the basic needs of children and youth, including their need for outdoor play and independent mobility.

What is Street Play?

Street Play is a simple idea – open up our local neighbourhood streets to children and youth so they can connect with friends and play right outside their front door. This activity transforms residential neighbourhoods into animated play spaces, offering social and physical infrastructure in a readily available setting.

How do I start Street Play?

Step 1: Determine if your street meets the Transportation Services Divisions definition of a residential street. A residential street would be defined as a local road in our Road Classification System (low-traffic volume street, with no TTC service). If a resident's street is **not** listed [here](#), they live on a local road.

Step 2: Invite residents from your street to a meeting. [Click here](#) for meeting notice template.

Step 3: Determine interest, a point person, and ensure there are at least 3-5 families really keen on the idea.

Step 4: Hold a second meeting to figure out logistics: type of closure (partial or full), frequency/schedule of closure (times per week/ hours per time), and assign duties such as: who will fill out the permit application, who will store the signage, who will create the signage, who will notify neighbours, who/how will you put out and take in the barricades during the closures.

Step 5: Once you receive your permit, hold a third meeting to discuss the launch and how to communicate it to your neighbours.

How much does Street Play cost?

No Fee.



How long does it take to get a permit?

It can take up to 4 to 6 weeks. [Click here](#) to access the online permit.

What is the application deadline?

There are two seasonal application deadlines.

May 1st for June 1st - October 31st.

July 1st for September 1st - October 31st.

What are the best times of year and day for Street Play in Toronto?

We found through the pilot that there were seasonal variances. The most popular seasons were spring (May 1 - June 30) and fall (Sept. 1 - Oct. 31). The most popular times were after school (3:30 - 5:30 pm) and (7 - 9 pm). The next most popular times were weekend mornings (10 - 12 noon) and afternoons (1 - 4 pm).

Summer was the next most popular, particularly in the evenings.

We did not pilot Street Play through the winter. It is up to each street to decide if they want to continue through the winter months. Did you know: the [City of Edmonton](#) offers Street Play in the winter!

These preferences largely depend on the activities and responsibilities of the families on your street. It is essential to survey the street at the initial meeting for preferred days and times.

Do I need to get insurance?

Not at this point. This is a Councillor driven program and as such you do not require additional/third party insurance. Click [here](#) to find out more about the councillor in your ward.

Types of Street Play Closures: Partial vs. Closure?

A full closure means local traffic (including residents who live on the street) are not permitted to enter or leave the street during Street Play closures. Residents do not need to remove their car from the street during the closure, but they are not permitted to come and go.

A partial closure means residents only (and any related client or service needs) may enter or leave the street during Street Play closures.

Through the pilot project, we found all streets preferred partial closures in order to accommodate their neighbours.



How do we enforce a partial closure?

With a partial closure, it is a good idea to distribute a notice to all the residence on your street (on each windshield and in each mailbox) reminding them of the Street Play schedule and to please slow down and watch for children when entering or exiting the street.

For a Partial Closure *windshield/mail box reminder flyer* template, [click here](#).

For a *Kids Play Here* sign, [click here](#).

Can I, my clients and visitors get through during Street Play?

Yes, if your street has selected a partial closure yourself, any clients or service vehicles can come and go as needed. Please ensure you and they understand the protocol and are cautious and mindful that children are at play during Street Play closures.

Protocol: Anyone needing to come or go during Street Play must drive slowly, open their car windows, turn on their hazard lights, watch for children, remove and replace the barricades.

How do we enforce a full closure?

With a full closure, it is a good idea to remind local residents 3 days before and 1 day before each closure for the first few weeks of Street Play. It is a good idea to distribute the notice to all the residents on your street (on each windshield and to each resident mailbox).

For a *Full Closure Reminder template*, click [here](#).

How will the street be closed off?

The streets will be closed off by “Road Closed” signs and pylons which also serve as physical barricades at each end of the street. [Click here](#) for images.

What must the signage look like?

The “Road Closed” signs must conform to the Ministry of Transportation standard sign. There must be two orange pylons on either side of the sign as well. [Click here](#) for dimensions and look of the requisite “Road Closed” sign and pylons. Road Closed Signs (or Rb-92) to be 90 cm x 120 cm.

The signage should be waterproof and sturdy. It can be mounted in any number of ways: you can tie the sign to hockey or basketball nets, to recycling or garbage bins, or you can mount it on an easily movable yet sturdy frame etc.

Please note, the signage will likely be stored on someone’s property (often the side of a house or in a garage) so you need to determine storage options before designing the sign.



Are the barricades staffed by volunteers?

We strongly recommend the use of volunteer wardens. Wardens can play a critical role in fostering car/resident relations, facilitating adult supervision and act as a first point of contact for information sharing.

If you choose to staff the barricades, you may want to limit the frequency of your closures since it can be difficult to enlist volunteers and/or ensure their continued participation. If there are a good number of children on your street and a good number of adults to rely on, this helps to support the number of closures your street can manage.

Generally, we recommend that if there are children under the age of 7 engaging in Street Play, you may want to staff the barricades or ensure the children are supervised in some way. Children over the age of 8 should be informed about the program, how the barricades work, and to be mindful that local vehicles may be coming and going. Ideally, they offer to move and replace the barricades for any vehicle coming or going during a closure.

Where do the signs go exactly?

If you have alleyways bisecting your street, you **MUST** place the barricades so that traffic can access the alleys, but not cross the play space. Click [here](#) for sample diagrams of placements (page 7).

If you do not have alleyways, place the barricades **at** the bisecting road.

Are bikes allowed through?

Yes, but cyclists will need to dismount and walk through. A notice can be added to your signage or you can make additional signage: "Cyclists, please dismount, children at play".

What are good Street Play protocols?

Be consistent with your schedule – kids, adults and commuters need to develop a consciousness around Street Play and keeping things consistent will support this.

Make sure to provide notice of the schedule to residents via mailbox, email and windshields until Street Play is well understood on your street.

When barricades are being taken down, give children a 5-minute warning so they are off the street before traffic starts to flow.

If you have a sufficient number of volunteers, and a high number of children under the age of 7, assign wardens to staff the barricades during the play hours. Ensure no cars drive through except local traffic. Volunteers are not responsible for the children's safety. A hand bell can be used to alert children to Street Play cars moving through.



Hold a car wash at some point during Street Play – to thank your neighbours and generate fun for the kids.

Encourage BBQs, front porch chats and other activities for adults. The Street Play Pilot Project showed that Street Play was a significant contributor to community building for both children and adults.

Always respect the Street Play hours so neighbours can begin to plan around the closures.

Always clean up after Street Play. Sports equipment, toys, barricades need to be put away so neighbours are not given cause to be upset. Get the kids involved in the clean up!

Recognize and celebrate your street's success! Take time to highlight specific individuals or groups that were champions during Street Play and contributed to your success. Applaud them during a potluck or on social media, treat them with a small token (such as a gift card).

What happens if my property is damaged?

Generally speaking, if a neighbour damages your property, he/she is responsible for repairing it. The same principle applies here.

Why do kids need to play on the streets when there is a school or park nearby?

The average roaming distance (distance today's parents feel comfortable letting their children travel from home on their own) for a 10-year-old today is 100 to 250 meters, which does not get most children to their local park or school yard.

Many schools are closed for community use.

Earth Day Canada and other local organizations are working to address both these barriers to outdoor play for children. [Click here](#) to see our EarthPLAY programs to support daily outdoor play for children and youth in cities.

What will the kids do?

Play, play, play!... but generally speaking, you can expect to see your kids play in a different way than you have perhaps before. Play becomes more inclusive, more creative and your kids may begin to use the neighbourhood differently. For more information on the benefits of Outdoor Play and how to support it for your children, click [here](#).

