

HEY NEIGHBOUR!

A PROPERTY MANAGERS
TOOLKIT FOR
BUILDING CONNECTIONS
BETWEEN RESIDENTS

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS



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INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the Hey Neighbour Toolkit for Managers. This toolkit has been designed to help you explore what it takes to build sociability in your buildings. The tools and strategies have been developed and tested with building managers that participated in the **Hey Neighbour Pilot Project in 2018**.

Through this pilot, we identified methods to support building managers in engaging residents to be more neighbourly, which in turn brings about benefits to the company, including more satisfied residents and higher job satisfaction for managers. This work can be seen as part of helping residents feel “at home.”

You are an important part of a changing social environment where loneliness, social isolation, desire for belonging and connections are part of our personal and professional lives. How can we support residents to go from “Hey Strangers” to “Hey Neighbour”? This is the chance to cultivate a welcoming and friendly culture that adds attraction of your building to potential new tenants. Invite new renters to be a part of the vibrant community that you and your residents are building together.

*Why support
connection between*

neighbours?

There are many reasons that you may choose to support the start of a program like Hey Neighbour. Some of these are listed below:

Having residents who care about their neighbours and participate in programs and activities can result in residents who are happier when associating with staff, the building and other residents;

More engaged residents can lead to heightened levels of respect for neighbours and physical property.

Having residents who are content with their living situation can lead to:

Higher levels of job satisfaction for building employees;

Reduced workload and/or a shift in the type of work building employees do;

More capacity for problem-solving and dispute resolution without building employee involvement.

In addition, a more connected population of residents is a more resilient population. Neighbours provide more than a smiling face across the hall. They can be the person that helps us get out of an emergency. Investing in social connections between residents can be a part of a risk management and emergency preparedness strategy.

“When I am connected to my residents and they are connected to each other, the building feels like my second home.”

- Peter Lee, Manager, Concert Properties

Enjoy the toolkit and we look forward to hearing your stories with your Hey Neighbour project!

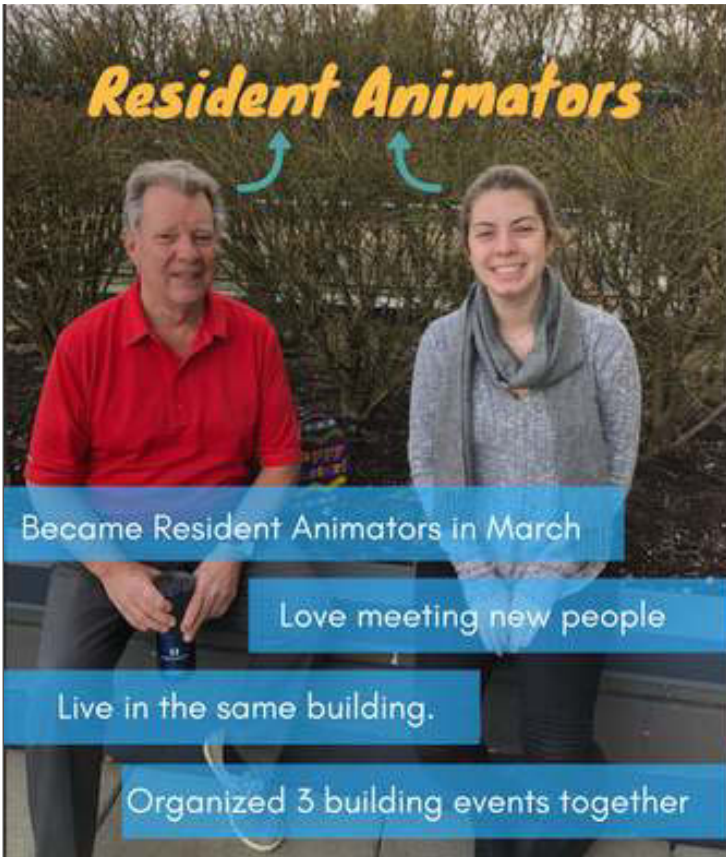
RESIDENT ANIMATORS

Neighbours can make us feel a sense of connection and belonging, and transform housing into a “home.” Relationships may not always be easily manageable, and neighbours may not always get along. This is why Resident Animators are important. They can be the social bridges and facilitators of community connections. Resident animators can also be thought of as Community Champions, Social Concierges, Caring Residents, etc.

Resident Animators care about knowing their neighbours and finding ways to create healthy relationships within their communities.

In the Hey Neighbour Pilot Project, four residents participated as Resident Animators - A mom with two kids, a 16-year old high school student, a recent retiree and an International student. All of them came from diverse backgrounds. Here are some traits that would make for a great potential Resident Animator:

- Interested in building community
- Have ideas for events and activities
- Can organize small groups
- Know how to make an event poster, or are willing to learn
- Willing to talk to, and listen to, neighbours
- Want to participate in activities
- Have skills that can be shared
- Willing to have fun
- Good at moving past obstacles
- Be willing to ask for help
- Have strong communication skills, or willing to learn
- Interested in helping neighbours host their own events
- Have some free time



Resident Animators

Became Resident Animators in March

Love meeting new people

Live in the same building.

Organized 3 building events together

They also:
Meet once a week

Go grocery shopping together

Have each other's number

Cook meals for each other

Know each other's strengths

Met more than 30 neighbours since March

HEY 
NEIGHBOUR!

*Resident Animators from
THE REMINGTON (Concert Properties).
This photo was taken after a successful inaugural
building event that saw more than 30 residents
getting together for an Easter egg hunt.*

GETTING TO REALLY KNOW YOUR RESIDENTS

One of the first things to do, if you can, is to **gather information** from your residents about their interests in having community events for the building. If you conduct surveys of your residents, here are some questions and measures that were used in the Hey Neighbour pilot that you can integrate into your existing survey.

For almost all of these questions, we used a scale of 1-6 to measure resident's responses to the quality of sociability in the building. 1 - "Not at all", 6 - "Absolutely"

1. I feel a sense of community within my building
2. I feel a sense of community within my surrounding neighbourhood
3. I feel that the events and programs offered in my building meet my needs for connecting with my neighbours.
**Please share your ideas for additional events and programs in the building if you have any. (*open-ended)*
4. I feel supported to start new events or programs that help create a sense of community in my building.
5. I chose to rent in [your building] because [your company or organization] creates welcoming, friendly places to live.
6. It would be helpful to have a way to communicate with my neighbours, such as social media, newsletters, emails or other methods.

SETTING UP A SUPPORT FRAMEWORK

In designing an approach to support your RAs with what they might need, the key thing to remember is that Resident Animators are residents and not staff. The practice of a **resident-led framework** means taking conscious choices to **step back** when necessary, provide **supportive management** and creating space to let your **residents take the lead**.

Even though this is not a job, it is still important to define clear roles and responsibilities for Resident Animators. Take note to not make this a long list, as this should not be seen as a job. Here is a sample.

RESIDENT ANIMATOR

Plans and hosts building **events** for other residents

Has access to book **Amenities Room** (If there is one)

Has access to an **annual budget**, managed and administered by the Building Manager
(recommend min. \$500 per season)

Connects with and supports residents to **host their own events**

Checks in with Building Manager before/after events for **support, troubleshooting and reflection**

Designs posters and **putting them up** in the building

SUPPORT FRAMEWORK

CRIMINAL RECORD CHECKS

We thought that we would address this early. While this was not an area that the Hey Neighbour pilot project explored, it was highlighted to be an important consideration for managers and residents. At this moment, we suggest using your own experience as a manager to assess your building's residents sense of safety with each other.

While we feel that a request for a criminal record check could be a barrier for recruiting residents, we support the need for safety, even among neighbours. If you feel strongly about requesting a criminal record check, consider making the process easy for your potential Resident Animators by supporting them with the process of getting this completed.

RESIDENTS ANIMATORS HOSTING AT HOME

As managers, you put a lot of attention in ensuring your residents are safe. This can extend to Resident Animators by means of having a conversation with them about their comfort zones and boundaries. One such boundary is hosting at home.

Even though visiting and hosting neighbours at home should be encouraged, it is also important to protect your Resident Animators when it comes to hosting events for neighbours they don't know yet. The use of a community space allows for management to still be aware of what's going on while creating a neutral space for residents to engage with each other.

FINANCIAL SUPPORT

An honorarium is a great way to recognize the important role your Resident Animators are playing! Honorariums are also an effective way to reduce financial barriers to residents taking on leadership. We found that a range of \$50 - \$150 per month was adequate. Consider using your tenant appreciation budget for RA-led activities.

Think about how you might distribute these honorariums. Not everyone uses e-transfers, cheques or sometimes even has access to a bank account (if they are new residents of Vancouver), so you might have to explore different ways to do this. You could explore providing a reduction in monthly rent as another alternative to an honorarium.

PLAN A RESIDENT ANIMATOR PROJECT BUDGET

The provision of financial support for resident-led activities can be helpful in creating sustainability. While the honorarium can help to compensate the RAs for their time and energy used in cultivating connections in the building, they also need a reasonable budget to work with.

Supporting events and activities does not have to be expensive. Some are free and some take minimal costs to set up. Supporting a Resident Animator financially with activity budgets allows for them to better plan their activities. Check-ins with your RA can help in planning the next activity.

BUDGETS

Because each building is unique, activity costs can vary but that is also the case with the kinds of activities your RAs put on. Each activity incurs different costs and can be used for different purposes. We found that hosting many small group activities can be more financially efficient than having one large annual event. In addition, the risk of insurance liabilities are greatly reduced when groups are smaller and more manageable.

Suggestion:

A petty cash box can be helpful for fast and small reimbursements.

ADMINISTRATIVE AND LOGISTICAL SUPPORT

Consider providing administrative support such as printing posters and cards, as well as logistical support such as ordering supplies online or providing RAs with a small storage space for event supplies, decorations, etc.

COMMUNICATION SUPPORT

Does your building have a notice board or bulletin board? Are there places in the building where RAs can promote building activities? What about social media platforms?

Support your RAs with engaging and communicating with other residents to promote building activities and interactions. Make use of available wall space.

SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS

Social media platforms are wonderful ways to connect with neighbours. However, not everyone is familiar with the plethora of apps available out there. Not everyone owns a smartphone or has a computer. It is important to note that social media platforms should be used in tandem with other activities.

For example, a building Instagram page can engage residents to take fun pictures of building activities and to promote building events. A Facebook Page can connect neighbours over resources and requests for help. There are also apps that have been created specifically to help people connect with each other. One such example is thevillage.io, a locally developed app to help neighbours communicate with each other.

BUILDING USE SUPPORT

Part of building sociability is also about using building spaces creatively. Even though building forms are difficult to change, you can find spaces where residents tend to run into each other. These “social spaces” can then be “socially retrofitted” with things that encourage interactions such as bookshelves along corridors, or using the parkade as a community dining experience for the building.

Your RAs are tremendous resources when it comes to learning about how your building is experienced by other residents. Might there be spaces in the building that can use seasonal decorations from residents? How about transforming the outdoor courtyard into an outdoor evening movie night?

Resource: if you are interested in how you can help to animate sociability in your building through design, check out the Happy Homes Toolkit at <https://thehappycity.com/resources/happy-homes>

ACCESS TO AMENITIES ROOM

The presence of an amenities room is a great complement to resident animating work! They are great spaces to bring neighbours together. Not everyone is comfortable or feels safe hosting activities in their own unit. Hence, an amenities room can help to facilitate a neutral space for neighbours to hang out together.

If you don't have a neutral space for gathering indoors, consider temporarily transforming your lobby or other larger space (e.g. laundry room, parkade) with your RAs through creative ideas.

Photo: RAs at Aria installed a "Conversation Board" in the Lobby to engage neighbours, in the absence of an amenities room.

TRAINING SUPPORT

Once your RAs have engaged in animating for a few months, they might identify certain new skills that would be helpful for them to learn. One important training element that emerged out of the pilot project is facilitating.

FACILITATION TRAINING

Facilitation is a highly effective and dynamic way of working with people. It is useful for working with a diverse range of community groups and is flexible enough to meet most group needs. Facilitators can often help a group find commonalities and support them to find creative ways to use collective wisdom to resolve issues and take part in community building opportunities.

PeernetBC is a local organization that is dedicated to helping people connect through providing resources for peer groups and peer-led initiatives.

BE REALISTIC ABOUT COMMITMENT LEVELS

Community-building takes time, and the role of a first-time RA can become very time-consuming very quickly if activities go well and interest builds! When deciding how much to provide as honorariums, be sure to also think about how much time you are asking of each RA.

Suggestion: Start with one activity per month (less than 10 hours) for 3 months and then check in with your RA about their capacity and if they might want to recruit more residents to help with the planning and hosting.

FRAMEWORK CHECKLIST

- Support your RAs to feel safe with regular check-ins
- Consider providing an honorarium and activities budget
- What kind of administrative support might RAs need?
- What unused areas of the building can be creatively transformed for resident animating?
- Consider existing or new options to support RAs with communication to neighbours
- Check-in with your RAs about Training
- Be realistic about RA roles and commitments and their capacity

RECRUITING RESIDENT ANIMATORS

In recruiting residents to be animators, consider a mix of various channels: face-to-face interactions through a launch event, posters to create awareness; and digital strategies such as social media platforms or emails to reach out to resident

RECRUITMENT AND LAUNCH EVENT

- **Meet** residents who are interested in being a Resident Animator.
- **Recruit** your first two Resident Animators.
- **Invite** residents who don't want to be Resident Animators to be volunteers in a more support role.
- **Aim** to have 10% of your residents attend the event.

HELPFUL QUESTIONS TO ASK POTENTIAL RESIDENT ANIMATORS

- If you using a sign up form, here are some questions that you might ask potential Resident Animators. The emphasis on forms is to keep it simple and easy. You will see in the next two pages a sample of the form we used in the Hey Neighbour pilot.

JOIN US AS A RESIDENT ANIMATOR!

We are looking for 2 residents to be a part of Hey Neighbour! as Resident Animators for 8 months: March - October 2018

Supported by the Coordinator, the Resident Animators will explore diverse ways to bring neighbours together and strengthen residents' sense of community.

How about hosting a group grocery shopping experience? Perhaps you want to invite residents to be Netflix Neighbours and watch movies and shows together? The possibilities are unlimited!

Resident Animators will receive a monthly honorarium.

Apply by March 31, 2018

WE WANT TO KNOW ABOUT YOU!

(You can also send us a short video or audio recording to HeyNeighbour@vancouver.ca.)

Share with us why you are interested in this project.

Tell us why you think you would be an awesome Resident Animator.

Anything else you want to share with us?



BE A RESIDENT ANIMATOR!

Resident Animators bring their ideas to life for creating a friendlier, more connected building.

Tell us your name!

How do we contact you?

What floor do you live on?

Share an idea with us.

ROOM SET UP

In engaging neighbours, it can be useful to turn the space you are set up in to mimic a “living room” and keep the atmosphere casual. You might take the opportunity to think about how you can host this recruitment event as if it was your own building event.

THINKING POINTS

How many people would you want showing up for the event?

Food is a powerful connector and a great conversation starter!

If this was your event, what kinds of food would you have for your guests?

If you were inviting your neighbours to be Resident Animators, how would you set up your recruitment event?



Consider using an empty suite that you can use as a pop-up living room and use for a weekend for the recruitment event. Other areas that you can consider include your lobby or even setting it up outdoors (Season dependent)

If space is not an option, you can also use other communication strategies such as putting up a poster for interested residents to contact you directly and you can meet them one-on-one.

WORKING WITH RESIDENT ANIMATORS

ASSET-BASED COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT APPROACH (ABCD)

Asset-Based Community Development(ABCD) is a methodology that focuses on engaging people’s strengths and potentials. The basis of this approach is empowering people to utilize what they already have. These are sometimes referred to as “gifts” - **Gifts of the Heart, Hand and Head.**



Each of us has a combination of strengths that help us connect to others and to move through the world. Taking an asset-based approach can help to nurture a culture of creative thinking for problem-solving, relationship building and better project management.

Taking an asset-based approach does not mean you forget about areas that can be improved (barriers/problems). Often times, what is needed is a different approach to problem-solving, and asset-based community development takes into account who has what and how can we use these skills to build community while also creating opportunities for individual development. When localized social assets are engaged, we can react to emergencies quicker and support people to feel more ownership over their communities.

Three questions to consider when using this approach:



WHAT CAN RESIDENT ANIMATORS AND RESIDENTS **DO BY THEMSELVES, FOR THEMSELVES?**

WHAT CAN RESIDENT ANIMATORS DO WITH **A LITTLE BIT OF HELP?**



WHAT DO RESIDENT ANIMATORS **NEED DONE THAT THEY CANNOT DO?**

**For further reading - The Abundant Community: Awakening the Power of Families and Neighbourhoods by John McKnight and Peter Block or resources.depaul.edu/abcd-institute*

First Conversation with Resident Animators

Think about how you might welcome your Resident Animators. Invite them out to a local coffee shop so you can be in a NEUTRAL space. If this is not a possibility, consider going to the Amenities Room or another space other than your office.

Here's a sample first conversation format:

Check-in: How are your new RAs feeling about being a part of this project?

Share Stories: When stories are shared, they can nurture empathy and commonalities within people. You might already know your RAs very well, somewhat well or not at all. Regardless, stories are a way to ask your RAs why they feel so strongly about being a part of this. Ask them to share their stories and don't forget to also include YOUR story. Why does your building's management want to do this with the RAs?

Chat about ideas: It might feel counter-intuitive to chat about your own ideas but we found that it was a good way to get RAs talking about their passions and ideas before talking about support. This will also allow you to check your expectations and help to provide initial guidance to your RAs to get them started.

Supports to RAs: Once you have heard the RAs' ideas, this is the time to chat with your RAs about the ways that you can support them with their activities.

Safety Reminder: It is important to highlight their personal safety as a priority. Help them to strategize ways that they can use other parts of the building instead of hosting in their own homes.

Plant the seed for a first event!

This can be the last thing to chat about. Get your RAs to go back and discuss this as a team. Set another date and time to meet.

While this toolkit has been designed specifically for you as a manager, there is a companion toolkit aimed at potential Resident Animators that you can share with them.

Go to [Vancouver.ca/Hey-Neighbour](https://vancouver.ca/hey-neighbour)
and download the
**RESIDENT ANIMATOR'S GUIDE:
RECIPES FOR
BUILDING CONNECTIONS
BETWEEN NEIGHBOURS**

LOCAL RESOURCES AND PROGRAMS

Hey Neighbour Website

Find helpful toolkits and reports that partners of Hey Neighbour have created.

City of Vancouver's Neighbour Emergency Preparedness Program (NEPP)

NEPP is a free workshop that serves to educate and prepare Vancouverites for emergency and disaster practices in their homes. Call 311 to ask about organizing a session in your building, or visit: vancouver.ca/home-property-development/free-emergency-workshops

Better At Home Program - For Seniors

Better at Home is a program that helps seniors with simple day-to-day tasks so that they can continue to live independently in their own homes and remain connected to their communities.

100 in 1 Day

100In1Day Canada inspires residents to activate 100 innovative, thought-provoking ideas into interventions to transform their city all on one day.

Resilient Streets Toolkit (Victoria)

The Resilient Streets program has been transforming the City of Victoria through the use of creative ideas to support residents to connect with each other!

Happy Homes Toolkit

The Happy Homes Toolkit is a resourceful guide for those interested in housing design to use this visual toolkit to identify principles, strategies and actions to boost social wellbeing in multi-family housing.

Homes That Connect Us Report

This insightful report from Catalyst Community Developments highlights findings of a pilot project called "Community Connections" that highlights inspiring examples of community building in multi-family housing developments.

Vancouver Foundation - Neighbourhood Small Grants

The Neighbourhood Small Grants (NSG) is a program that gives \$50 to \$500 to support projects that bring people in a neighbourhood together to share skills and knowledge, build a sense of belonging, and celebrate diversity.

NEIGHBOURHOOD HOUSES

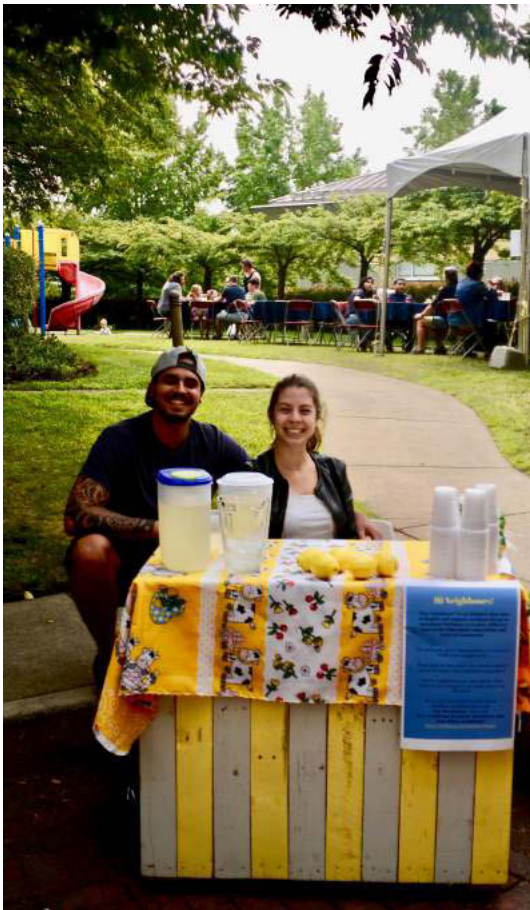


To find out if there is a Neighbour House in your area, check the [Association of Neighbourhood Houses BC \(ANHBC\)](#).

Local Neighbourhood Houses
These wonderful associations are found around Vancouver and are integral resources to Vancouver's residents.

Neighbourhood Houses often provide essential services such as childcare, youth and senior programs, community lunches and dinners as well as a range of activities and events that strengthen the fabric of the neighbourhood.

Neighbourhood Houses are also great collaborative partners for community initiatives. RAs can use Neighbourhood House programs as ways to invite residents out for group events. For example, Collingwood Neighbourhood House hosts "Collingwood Days", a week long event to celebrate the Renfrew-Collingwood neighbourhood.



TROUBLESHOOTING

NO AMENITY SPACES

Considering outdoor events, pop ups, using spaces that you don't normally use for gatherings such as lobbies, garages and empty units.

ENGLISH IS NOT RESIDENTS FIRST LANGUAGE

It is understandable that residents might be worried whether their English Language skills are adequate for the role. However, we have found that English fluency is not a prerequisite to be a great animator!

In our pilot project, we had a Japanese person who at first did not feel that she could be a Resident Animator because of her English abilities. However, with some encouragement she participated in the pilot and within a short period of time, she became more confident and is now actively and creatively engaging neighbours, using language as well as art and cooking as a way to connect.

FOB ACCESS

Fob access is meant to protect neighbours. However, restricted access to other floors may mean that your residents don't see your each other very often, and might prohibit them from easily socializing with those on other floors. Consider how to more actively promote events through social media and postering in common areas where all residents have access, for example, lobbies, elevators and mailbox



CREATING SUSTAINABILITY WITH YOUR RESIDENT ANIMATORS

Vancouver has a reputation for being a transient city. Whether or not this is true, units do turnover, and this means that community relationships may not be easily sustained without intentional support. To create sustainability for your project, discuss with your RAs ways that they can “pass on the torch” and help other neighbours step up to either participate as hosts, volunteers or as connected neighbours. This way, the project can continue on with minimum disruptions.

And remember, this is a learning journey for you as a manager, the RAs and your residents. Building sociability requires everyone to play a part on the journey to a healthy and resilient community. Thank you for being with us this far, and good luck!

Francis Heng
Hey Neighbour Project Coordinator

FROM STRANGERS TO NEIGHBOURS

There is a profound evolution that is giving new meaning to what it means to be neighbours, in light of the various social and cultural movements and tensions around the world. The alarming reports of increased social disconnectedness, isolation, loneliness, comes also at a time when we are trying to understand how best to live with each other, as we scour for new paradigms of communication and understanding of each other as interconnected people.

Hey Neighbour is what we think of as “Neighbours Helping Neighbours Be Connected Neighbours” and as a result of this connectedness, we can feel happier and secure knowing that our neighbours can be our source of support and contribute to our overall health.

We’ve only scratched the surface on what we can do with strengthening sociability in high-rises in Vancouver.

We believe that residents like you can bring about a necessary change to our collective living experience in high-rises in Vancouver and we are thankful for the passion and excitement we have received thus far from other residents, property managers, developers, community builders, and government.

Together, we can nurture a Vancouver that is built upon vibrant and strong personal, communal and social relationships with each other.

