

Alex Area Stewards have defined thirteen key destiny drivers that will work to strengthen economic vitality for the region. Over thirteen weeks you will read about each destiny driver and its importance to the region. If you find a destiny driver that ignites your passion for the future, call the Alex Area Stewards at (320)763-4545 or visit the website at [www.alexareastewards.com](http://www.alexareastewards.com) and become part of shaping the destiny of our region.

Destiny Driver: **Establish a day for annual neighborhood block parties for communities in our region.**

“Belonging to the right group of healthy-minded, supportive people might be the most powerful thing you can do to change lifestyle for the better. In one study...those with the most social connectedness tended to live longer.” This is a quote from the National Institute on Aging and work done by Dan Buettner, author of *The Blue Zones: Lessons for Living Longer From the People Who've Lived the Longest*.

People in our region agree with the importance of social connectedness.

The regional perception survey from the Alex Area Stewards revealed that 94.8% of respondents ranked “A Sense of Community,” as important to very important to their quality of life. Also, 72% of those surveyed rated public safety as very important. Our relationships with people in our community impacts our quality of life.

But who really knows their neighbors anymore? When an incident of burglaries, a damaging storm, or other neighborhood-impacting events occur, there is a specific need and drive to cross over backyards and talk to people who live in our areas. Wishing to keep our neighborhood safe or help overcome a challenge, we share our names and contact information and begin to build

relationships. While this is a start, shouldn't there be more? Aren't there better reasons to get to know the people who live where you do?

Block parties and neighborhood gatherings give neighbors a chance to meet one another in a relaxed setting and promote community spirit. In the earlier part of the century, they were quite common but died out somewhat during the 80s and 90s. There are the extremely organized block parties that are held by block party associations like those in New York City and described on [blockpartynyc.com](http://blockpartynyc.com). There are also informal backyard BBQ's that include several families and don't require a city permit to shut down an entire street. In the variety of block parties that exist today, the common theme is connecting with the people who live where you live. Connecting with your neighbors can build both a sense of community and increase public safety. We watch out for people that we know and care about.

"A united regional community, committed to working together toward our common destiny" is a community where people know their neighbors. "A united regional community" is what the Alex Area Stewards are committed to working towards. Annual neighborhood block parties can help unite and increase the overall sense of community throughout the region.

If you don't have a neighborhood block party or gathering planned for this summer, the Alex Area Stewards **challenge** you to talk to your neighbors, set a date, and get to know the people who live where you live sometime in July or August of 2009. Please get involved with making the entire Alexandria Regional Community stronger by getting to know the people where you live. We all will enjoy a greater sense of community and according to Dan Beuttner and the National Institute on Aging, "we all just might live longer, too."

For more information, call (320)763-4545 or go to [www.alexareastewards.com](http://www.alexareastewards.com)

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