

## INTRODUCTION

A neighborhood block party is an opportunity for neighbors to get together, meet each other, have fun, and maybe work together on a common activity.

### REASONS TO HAVE A BLOCK PARTY

- To provide an opportunity to know your neighbors and increase a sense of belonging within your community.
- To meet neighbors on your block and the skills you offer one another. You might be able to help you with a gardening problem, or lend you a needed ingredient for your recipe.
- To help with safety/crime prevention by knowing who lives around you.
- To develop an opportunity to meet some of the older neighbors and learn about your community's history.
- To have fun – no excuses or reasons are needed to celebrate!

## PLANNING YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD BLOCK PARTY

### 1. GETTING STARTED

- The idea of a neighborhood block party is to bring neighbors together. Enlist as many neighbors as you can to help out. Someone can make the flyer, and someone else can collect them. You may want to ask some kids to put the flyers in mailboxes.
- If this is the first time, you may want to send out a flyer to explain what a Block Party is, encourage attendance, perhaps share some of the benefits, get opinions on how to handle the food, and possible dates and times to have the event.

### 2. TYPES OF BLOCK PARTIES

Which type of block party will work best in your neighborhood? Keep it simple-try not to go overboard!

Barbecues - organizers provide the sides, and everyone brings their own meat.

Picnics - everyone brings their own meal;

Potluck - everyone brings one dish to share;

Catered - everyone shares the cost and the food is purchased.

Other ideas: Christmas gift exchange, garden tour party, neighborhood garage sale, or ask your neighbors for ideas.

### 3. HOW BIG TO MAKE IT

- Start off small. An event can always grow, but it is hard to shrink it.
- In selecting who to invite, use natural neighborhood boundaries where possible (i.e. end of the block). If you are planning a street or cul-de-sac party, you need to invite everyone from that area.
- Decide early and make it clear in your flyer if this will be a block party restricted to those on the street or whether people can invite friends/relatives (if yes, how many).

### 4. LOCATION IDEAS

A backyard or park

House

Garage (rainout)

Common room in a condo/apartment building

### 5. CITY APPLICATIONS AND PERMITS

- If you want to close down a street or re-direct traffic, your city may have application requirements.
- Permits may also be required if the event involves a public park, alcohol consumption, sound equipment, etc.
- Remember that at the end of the function, public sites need to be cleaned and left in good condition.
- Look online at your city's website and call city hall to obtain more information about the requirements where you live. Often if you search "block party" on the website, you will find policies and additional resources.

## 6. PLANNING THE EVENT

- For a first time block party, distribute the first flyer requesting feedback 4 to 5 weeks before the event.
- Once you have looked at all the suggestions, the final flyer with date, time, and what to bring should go out 3 weeks before the event.
- A weekend date or holiday is often best. (Have an alternate rainout plan, just in case.)
- Keep in mind who lives in the neighborhood when setting the hours for the party.
- If young children or seniors are living near the party area plan to finish by 9pm.

## 7. GETTING THE WORD OUT

It is important to keep neighbors informed. Here are some ideas:

- Flyers can be used with a request to put their suggestions for the event in your mailbox.
- Information can be gathered from your neighbors by going door-to-door. This adds a personal touch and people often offer to help.
- A casual approach can be used to inform neighbors as you see them out working in their yards.
- Make an extra effort to get your new neighbors involved.
- To reach neighbors in Townhouses, apartments and condos, it is best to approach the manager. They can let you know how to get in touch with the residents.
- Take every opportunity to talk it up in the neighborhood as often as possible prior to the event.

## 8. ROLE OF THE ORGANIZERS

- Make decisions about the set up.
- Act as a greeter at the event.
- Introduce new neighbors and help them make connections.
- Make sure the clean-up is done. (You may wish to inspire clean up by rewarding children with a prize.)

## 9. SET UP

- Set up a sign-in book for records for the next year, and it can help develop a contact list.
- Name tags can be a great help.
- Line up tables for the food and have a few garbage cans available.
- Decide whether you will coordinate or everyone will bring their own tables and chairs, plates, cutlery and cups, beverages. If using barbecue grills, who will bring them?
- Institute a bathroom policy “everyone to use his or her own”, so that home security is maintained.
- Decide if pets are allowed.

## 10. ACTIVITIES DURING THE EVENT

What should we do?

- Visit and eat. Over the centuries, food has always had a very social component in societies.
- Games for kids (some organized, some they can play themselves).
- Take time to introduce one another and point to one's house. This can be done in a game format

## FINAL REMINDERS

- Neighbors should observe security precautions by keeping back doors locked and equipment in sight.
- Remember when setting up tables and chairs that emergency vehicles may need access.
- You may wish to post signs the day before the event to remind everyone to remove cars for events involving street closure.

