



TOOLKIT FOR PLANNING AND ORGANIZING A SUCCESSFUL NEIGHBORHOOD BLOCK PARTY

INTRODUCTION

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

7 REASONS TO HAVE A BLOCK PARTY

1. To provide an opportunity to know your neighbors better.
2. To increase a sense of belonging within your community.
3. To learn a little about each other and know who might need a little extra help from time to time.
4. 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 that needed ingredient for your recipe.
5. To help with safety/crime prevention by knowing who lives around you.
6. To develop an opportunity to meet some of the older neighbors and learn about your community's history.
7. To have fun – no excuses or reasons are needed to celebrate.

PLANNING YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD BLOCK PARTY

Things to consider when organizing your event.

1. GETTING STARTED

- The idea of a neighborhood block party is to bring neighbors together. It's a good idea to find 1 or 2 neighbors to help you with the event. One can take the "Lone Ranger" approach, and it can be a great event. However, it may make it more difficult to find someone else to organize it next year.
- 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.
- Enlist as many neighbors as you can to help out. Someone can type the flyer; someone else can collect them. You may want to ask some kids to drop the flyers in the mailboxes.

2. TYPES OF BLOCK PARTIES

Which type of block party will work best in your neighborhood? Try not to go overboard. It can make people feel the event is too much work. Keep it simple!

- **Barbecues:** organizers purchase all that is needed and neighbors chip in to cover the cost, or everyone brings their own items to grill
- **Picnics:** everyone brings their own meal
- **Potluck:** everyone brings one dish to share with the group
- **Catered:** everyone shares the cost and the food is purchased
- **Dessert Only:** everyone brings a dessert item to share

3. HOW BIG TO MAKE IT

- Start off with a smaller event rather than a large one. It can always grow next month or next year.
- 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/block or whether people can invite friends/relatives (if yes how many).

4. LOCATION

- A neighbor's backyard
- House
- Garage (rainout)
- Common room in a condo unit
- Alley **
- Street **
- Park **

*** Because these locations are on public property, approval from the City is required. See the following section.*

Safety needs to be an important factor in planning!

5. CITY APPLICATIONS AND PERMITS

- If you want to close down a street or re-direct traffic, you will need to submit the application available at <https://www.cityofholland.com/FormCenter/Community-Neighborhood-Services-6/Block-Party-Registration-Form-64> in advance.
- Permits may also be required if the event involves a public park, sound-amplifying equipment, etc.
- If you'd like to request that either the Holland Public Safety **Polar Patrol** truck or a **Fire Truck** visit your party, you can request those on the application form. These requests must be made at least TWO weeks in advance and availability is not guaranteed.
- Remember that at the end of the function, public sites need to be cleaned and left in good condition.

6. THE TIMING TO GET THE EVENT PLANNED

- 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 the best time for the event.
- You may want to have an alternate rain date planned, just in case.
- The flyer should indicate whether **plates, cups, napkins, tables, chairs**, etc., will be provided, or whether attendees need to bring their own.

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 out to the event.
- To reach neighbors in Townhouses, apartments and condos, it is best to approach the manager. They will let you know how to get in touch with the residents.

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.
- You may want to use **nametags** to help neighbors learn each other's names.

9. SET UP and CLEAN UP

- Line up **tables** for the food and have a few **garbage cans** available.
- Be prepared to oversee the **clean up** after the event.

10. ACTIVITIES DURING THE EVENT

What should we do during the event?

- Visit and eat.
- Games for kids (some organized, some they can plan themselves).
- Take time to introduce one another and point to one's house. This can be done in a game format
- Encourage the talent in your neighborhood to come forward such as musicians, magicians.

OTHER WAYS TO GET TO KNOW YOUR NEIGHBORS

- Garden tour party
- Neighborhood garage sale
- When in doubt, ask your neighbors for ideas.