

Planning a Neighborhood Block Party



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What if you were baking a cake and ran out of sugar? Would you feel comfortable asking your neighbor for a cup? Do you even know what your neighbors look like? Would you be able to spot a stranger lurking in your neighborhood? With our increasingly hectic lifestyles, we find ourselves rushing from work to daycare to the gym without stopping. When we do get home we drive into our garage, close the door, and seclude ourselves away - never even saying hello to the person right next door.

Most people will agree that there are advantages to knowing your neighbors. It's beneficial for the safety of our homes and children that neighbors look out for one another and it's helpful if neighbors can spot a stranger on the street. Also, creating a sense of community in your neighborhood makes problem solving and dispute resolution easier. Whether your child throws a baseball through your neighbor's window or your neighbor's tree is leaning too close to your house, it's a lot easier to work out a solution if you already have a relationship.

A concerned community helps to create a sense of well being and safety for all. That's why it is important to meet your neighbors. One way to do this is through a block party. Block parties provide the opportunity for neighbors to socialize and create a sense of community. And even if you don't become best friends, it becomes a little easier to identify a neighbor from another passerby and if you do run out of sugar you'll be happy to know you have someone you can turn to.

Getting Started

Don't try to do it alone. Talk to your neighbors! Form a block party committee consisting of several households and hold an organizational meeting. Assign specific duties to committee members.



Publicity Coordinator:

- Create, distribute and collect invitations and RSVP's.
- Compile a list of who is donating what.
- Collect monetary donations
- Provide name tags and pens for the event and make sure each attendee has one.
- Create a sign-in sheet to create a neighborhood mailing list. Once you have everyone's e-mail it will be that much easier to promote the next block party.

Food and Refreshments:

- Shop for meat, buns, condiments, soft drinks and ice. If you are having a pot luck then side dishes, plates, cups and utensils can be provided by each family.
- Decide and obtain the correct number of grills and determine who will be manning them during the party.

Activities Coordinator:

- Plan and organize events for both adults and children.
- Designate people to oversee each game.
- Provide small prizes for winners – contact local businesses for donations.

Set-up and Take-down Committee Leader

- Orchestrate both setting up and taking down the party. Designate people to help.
- Oversee who is going to lend tables, chairs and coolers.
- Provide trash bins.

Permits Coordinator

- Oversee obtaining the correct block party permits through the City of Henderson Community Policing.

Get the Word Out

Try to inform your neighbors of the block party at least one month in advance and then distribute reminders. If possible, take the fliers door-to-door. If you have a large area to cover then try dividing your neighborhood into equal sections and working with neighbors to make sure everyone is invited. Posters on your mailbox (if allowed by your CC&R’s) and e-mail are also great options.

Be sure to invite *everyone* on the block. This is not the time to pick and choose who is invited.

YOU'RE INVITED TO A BLOCK PARTY!

Date: _____
 Time: _____
 Place: _____

A checklist of items to bring to the block party:

Party Details:
 _____ Chairs to sit on
 _____ Food for the barbecue
 _____ Salad & dessert to share with others
 _____ Beverages
 _____ Plates, cutlery, and non-breakable cups
 _____ Other: _____

Do you have the following that could be used for the party?
 _____ barbecue grill _____ tables _____ chairs

Do you have any special talents that you would like to entertain us with at the party?

Suggestions for activities you could help to organize:

Please return this form by _____ (date)
 Name: _____ to: _____ Phone: _____ Address: _____

Fill in # of people from your household attending: _____
 Age: _____

Please sign us for an activity or for our photo!

Hint:

Make your flier or invitation catchy and informative. In addition to the date, time, place, list all necessary items to bring such as food, beverages, ice and paper goods. Suggest extras, such as lawn chairs, coolers, bug spray, sunscreen and athletic equipment. Don't forget to list phone numbers of organizers and include a phone number to RSVP. That way you can get an idea of how many people will attend to figure out how much food you will need.

Location

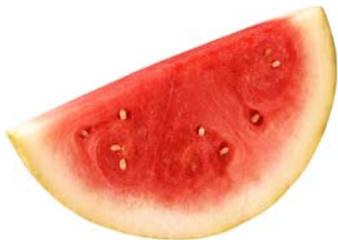
Block parties do not have to be on the street but because the streets are in the public domain people feel more comfortable. Private yards do not have the same sense of welcoming and may pose a potential liability for the homeowner.

If you choose to have the party on the street, traffic must be blocked to ensure the safety of children.

- Contact City of Henderson Community Policing at least *4 weeks* before the event to apply for a Block Party Permit.
- You must contact the residents that will be affected by the street closure to obtain their signed permission.
- Barricades and “Road Closed” signs must be obtained.

Plan the Menu

Food is probably the most essential element of your block party. And the easiest way is to organize a pot-luck. This way you will have a variety of food to share. Collect money beforehand to purchase the main course. And don't forget the vegans and vegetarians in your group – veggie burgers should be available too. Be sure to cook your food thoroughly. Meat and poultry cooked on a grill often browns very fast on the outside. Use a food thermometer to be sure the food has reached a safe minimum internal temperature. Hamburgers made of ground beef should reach 160°F. All cuts of pork should reach 160°F. All poultry should reach a minimum of 165°F.



Hint:

Assign even-numbered houses to side dishes/salads and odd numbered houses to desserts.

Plan Activities

Make sure you have activities that are age appropriate and safe. Some suggested activities include:

- Obstacle Course
- Watermelon Eating (no hands!)
- Volleyball
- Dominoes and Card Games
- Scavenger Hunts
- Water Games
- Egg Toss
- Face Painting
- Relay Races
- Karaoke
- Potato Sack or Three-Legged Race
- Hire a Clown
- Contact Neighborhood Services to schedule the Police or Fire Department to your event



Miscellaneous

- Reward children with a prize for picking up garbage at the end.
- Have everyone use their own bathroom to maintain the security in your home.
- Distribute an evaluation form to all of your neighbors to see what you can do to make the next year's party even better.
- Post signs the day before the event to remind them that the roads will be closed.
- Be safe! Safeguard your children, home and food.
- Remember that the City of Henderson Neighborhood Services is here to help.
- Have fun and keep it going.