

# AN EASY HOW-TO GUIDE

## TO ORGANIZE A NEIGHBORHOOD BLOCK PARTY

Start a tradition in your neighborhood by planning a block party. Neighborhood block parties are a fun way to meet neighbors, build friendships, and develop a sense of belonging and security among residents. Size doesn't matter. See suggested ideas at the end of this document.

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 and form a Host Committee. Ask for volunteers to head up various tasks, like coordinating food, permits, activities, cleanup, etc.

**Reach out to your neighbors to get everyone on board.** This is easy if you already know your neighbors, but if you don't know them yet, your first step might be to create a neighborhood or block directory. This can be as simple as dropping a sign-up sheet in everyone's mailbox. If you decide to simply reach out by word-of-mouth, consider having a sign-up sheet at the block party to make future communications easier. It will be a whole lot easier to coordinate any future events via email. You can also set up a private group on [Facebook](#) or [Nextdoor](#) to communicate with your neighbors. (how to links in names)

**Pick a date with everyone in mind.** Remember that a neighborhood block party is about encouraging interaction and a sense of community. This means that the most successful events are not necessarily perfectly planned and perhaps do not look Pinterest-worthy. But, the parties that build community by engaging neighbors, both during planning and on the actual day, are the most successful. For this reason it's important to pick a date that a majority can attend. To ensure the most participation, try an online tool like [Doodle](#), where neighbors can select the times they will be available. A good tip is to check school break schedules and sports schedules.

**Secure an event permit.** This is not needed if someone is hosting the party at their house or yard, of course. But it is necessary if you will be holding the party in the street and will need to barricade an area. Start at the [City of Memphis Permit Office](#). We recommend that you call the office. They are very helpful and tell you exactly which permit you will need. **Special Event Applications must be submitted 14 business days prior to the event**

**Remember the key ingredients for any successful party: food and drinks, music, and kids' activities.** A few questions to answer: Will this be a potluck picnic or can you have food donated by a local business? Should you designate a grilling area where everyone can have their meat grilled or should each family be responsible for their own? Is this BYOB or will you have a beer keg? Can someone provide the music with their own personal sound system or will you arrange for live music? Will you rent a bounce house or other outdoor activity or can you organize yard games and toys from the neighbors? (Bubbles, sidewalk chalk, water toys and kiddie pools will keep most kids happy!) Finally you need to determine if

you will collect money for any of these shared costs. Check Resources at the end of this document for ideas and links.

**Don't forget basic party supplies.** At minimum, you will need tables, chairs, plates, cups, utensils, and napkins. You might need a tent, ice, a grill or two. Ask families to sign up to bring supplies. You can also make this picnic style and have neighbors bring blankets for the yard.

**Share the planning assignments.** Once you determine what you will need you need to assign responsibility. This shouldn't all fall on one or two families, and not just because you don't want to do all the work yourself. It's important for all the neighbors to feel ownership of the event, and sharing the planning tasks is one way to do that. This is how you not only ensure attendance this year, but also that the party will continue to live on year after year.

**Send out an invitation with party details.** Create a flyer (try [Canva](#)) or electronic invitation (try [Evite](#) or [Paperless Post](#) for ready-to-use templates) to share the details with all of the neighbors. In addition to the time and date, be sure to include what neighbors should expect: Should they bring food to share? Are you asking everyone to contribute to costs? Be sure to include these details in your invitation.

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).

**Set the scene before everyone arrives.** Block off the street (ask City of Memphis Permit Office for instructions), set up tables and chairs, and designate a food area, preferably out of the sun.

**Spend a little time with each of your neighbors.** Enjoy yourself, but try to break out of your comfort zone a bit. This is where the extroverts really need to reach out to the introverts. If you see someone you don't know well who is sitting quietly, engage them in conversation. Because a neighborhood block party isn't just like every other party — it's also about building stronger neighbor relations.

**Don't forget the clean-up.** Remember this party is all about celebrating your neighborhood, so don't forget to leave your street better than you found it. This is also the perfect chance to plant the seeds in the minds of the little ones in attendance that it's important to care for and take ownership of our neighborhood.

## Tips and Resources

### PICK A THEME

- Neighborhood Watch - Call [Crump Station](#) to register.
- Welcome New Neighbors
- Going Away Party
- Block Meeting
- Fundraiser
- Mary Kay, Tupperware, etc.

- Chili Cook-Off
- “Cop Stop”
- Porch Party
- Egg Hunt
- Progressive Dinner Party

#### LOCATION (Rotate homes)

- Backyard
- Frontyard
- Driveway
- Home
- Street

#### FOOD

- Grilling - organizers purchase all that is needed and neighbors provide the money or everyone brings his or her own meat
- Potluck - everyone brings one dish
- Catered - everyone shares the cost and the food is purchased
- Food Truck - Be sure to reserve a month in advance. There is usually a \$500 minimum. [Here is a list of active food trucks.](#)

#### DRINKS

- BYOB
- Keg of beer
- Cooler of drinks for children
- Water

#### ACTIVITIES DURING THE EVENT

- Visit and eat. Over the centuries, food has always had a very social component in societies.
- Games for kids (some organized, some they can plan themselves).
- Encourage the talent in your neighborhood to come forward such as musicians.
- Hire a band
- Bounce House/Water Slide
- Chalk
- Corn Hole or other outdoor games
- Firepit
- If you want to have a fire engine or police make a visit to your block party **call well in advance** be sure to stop by and personally invite them.

#### FINAL REMINDERS

- Set up a sign-in book for records for the next year, and it can help develop a contact list for the neighborhood.
- Nametags can be a great help.

- Decide what you want neighbors to write on their name tags (e.g. -first and last names, house numbers).
- Institute a bathroom policy “everyone to use his or her own”, so that home security is maintained.
- Neighbors should observe security precautions by keeping back doors locked and equipment insight

**Melanie D. Dorsey**

**Administrative Assistant & Neighborhood Watch Coordinator**

Memphis Police Department, Crump Station

949 E. H. Crump Blvd.

Memphis, TN 38104

901.636.4630 desk