

BLOCK PARTIES

5 STEPS TO SUCCESS



WORKING IN NEIGHBORHOODS DEPARTMENT

Neighborhood Liasons' Division

111 S. Greenwood Ave. • Tulsa, OK 74120 -1820

(918) 596-1292

www.cityoftulsa.org



B L O C K P A R T I E S !

WHY HAVE A BLOCK PARTY? There is no better way to get together and meet your neighbors than to have a block party. Neighborhoods are better and safer places to live when there is a sense of caring in the area. This can develop at a neighborhood block party.

Block parties have varied from a simple gathering of a few folks in a front yard sharing memories and beverages to elaborate, highly organized events involving dozens of streets in a neighborhood.

Whichever type suits your area, we encourage you to make this a day to renew neighborhood awareness, exchange greetings, and to celebrate the importance of neighborhood relationships.

When planning, don't overlook all the resources in your area. Property owners, business owners and residents may all have an interest in block party plans because they all benefit from living and working in a healthy neighborhood. Gather a handful of enthusiastic planners and make it happen!



STEP 1

PLAN THE PARTY. Do what works for you, but respect your neighbors' property and privacy. If you use the street for your party, do not block residents who do not want to participate. Be sure that emergency vehicles are able to enter the block party area at all times.

Date - Select a date based on the preferences of your neighbors. Consider weather, vacation plans, and conflicting events. Your neighborhood may wish to participate in the annual citywide Block Party. Call the Mayor's Office for Neighborhoods at 596-1292 to learn this year's citywide Block Party date.

Time - The time of your block party depends on the activities you choose. Progressive dinners are more often held in the evening, while cookouts and parades may be fun afternoon activities. Many neighborhoods enjoy breakfast on lawns or in driveways. Be creative and select whatever time frame suits your needs. Please remember that all block parties should end by 9 p.m.

Location - Select a location that is convenient and fits the type of party you wish to have. If your party is planned around outdoor games, try a neighbor's yard or an open lot. Porches, driveways, and cul-de-sacs are other good choices for games, visiting, and food tables. If your party is held on the annual citywide block party date, the City can provide barricades to help you block off appropriate streets.

Consider alternate indoor locations or alternative dates in case of rain. Keep in mind the needs of any residents with disabilities, and choose a place that is easily accessible.

C E L E B R A T I O N S !



B L O C K P A R T I E S !

STEP 2

COORDINATE ACTIVITIES. Your imagination is the limit when planning activities that will make your block party memorable. Make activities appropriate for the age group, safe, and fun. Some suggested activities are listed here.

- bike decorating contest and parade
- games like twister, limbo, bingo, croquet
- story time/kids read-a-thon
- obstacle course
- watermelon-eating contest (“no hands” is fun!)
- art contests (use sidewalk chalk for this or for 4-square and hopscotch games)
- volleyball
- dominos and card games (try to set tables in shade)
- cake walk
- horse shoes
- visits from City fire fighters and police officers (check the appropriate space on the registration form to request visits)
- spelling bee
- scavenger hunt
- neighborhood trivia contest
- display old neighborhood pictures or memorabilia
- water games (shaving cream and balloons are essential)
- paper airplane contest
- egg toss
- face painting
- talent/magic show
- live band or other music/dancing
- crafts and baked goods
- relay races (try balancing an egg on a spoon)



STEP 3

SELECT THE FOOD. This can be as simple as allowing everyone to bring their own picnic or as complex as deciding on a theme and assigning precise dishes to each household. Different groups try to vary their menu each year, others pride themselves on continuing a yearly block party menu tradition.

Food choices may be determined by time of day and activities planned. Burgers and hot dogs are staple items of a successful cook-out. Covered dish parties, progressive dinners, ice cream socials, and breakfast buffets are also popular. Whatever you do, remember not to leave food outdoors for too long and keep food cold.

Keep it simple. Pot luck dinners are easiest for beginners. Since many people are near their homes it is probably convenient for them to use their own facilities and utensils. Ask neighbors to bring their own lawnchairs to the picnic site.

Remember to:

- have a trash receptacle handy
- be prepared to share favorite recipes
- designate helpers for set up and clean up

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STEP 4

INFORM YOUR NEIGHBORS. Get the message out to all your neighbors. It's a good idea to get the word out at least a month in advance and distribute reminders the week of the party. This is a good opportunity to visit with your neighbors and make contact with those you haven't met.

Take block party fliers door-to-door if possible. If you wish to cover a very large area, try dividing your neighborhood into equal sections and working with neighbors to make sure everyone is informed.

Be flexible — neighbors who were not involved in the planning process may offer fresh ideas about alternative activities. Make a note of new neighbors you meet. On block party day, make sure they are introduced to several families. Some neighborhoods even roll out the red carpet (a piece of red plastic will do) for new residents to walk across. Ask new families to introduce themselves.

HELPFUL HINT:

Make your flier or invitation catchy and informative. In addition to the date, time, and place, list all the necessary items to bring, such as food, beverages, ice, and paper goods, and suggest extras, such as lawn chairs, coolers, bug spray, sunscreen, and athletic equipment. Give a brief preview of the party agenda. If a fee is needed to cover expenses, specify the amount. Also list the phone numbers of organizers.



STEP 5

HAVE FUN & KEEP IT GOING. Once the block party begins, relax and enjoy the fun! Visit with neighbors to gauge their interest in future activities of this type. Some neighbors may wish to plan regular activities that promote neighborhood interaction. Anything that fosters a sense of community is a welcome event in any neighborhood!

Consider other events such as an annual garage sale, a spring clean-up, holiday parties, and beautification projects. If your neighborhood hasn't already done so, you may wish to form a neighborhood association and register with the Mayor's Office for Neighborhoods.

DON'T FORGET!

Keep the arrangements as simple as possible and the atmosphere relaxed and informal. Nametags are recommended. After all, the point is to get acquainted!

Block parties are a good place to discuss neighborhood concerns, but don't make your block party into a business meeting. It is okay to distribute a newsletter or literature and circulate a sign-in sheet.

Remember that you are not alone. The Mayor's Office for Neighborhoods looks forward to receiving block party registration forms every year. We know that your neighborhood is a vital part of the community, and we'll be here to help whenever we can.

So stay in touch — 596-1292.

C E L E B R A T I O N S !
