

How to Organize Your Own Block Party

Block parties are great fun and a terrific way of getting to know your neighbors. Find someone else on the block to share the work and just do it. It doesn't need to be elaborate; it just needs to include your neighbors.

Due to space limitations in this issue of our newsletter, we did not have the space to print the entire "How to Organize Your Own Block Party" article. This will be one of two topics at the WWPNA Annual Meeting on April 28th. It will also be posted on the Home page of the website at www.wwpna.org.

Join us at the WWPNA Annual Meeting on April 28th, at Lincoln Elementary School cafeteria, 710 South Pennsylvania Street, starting at 6:30 PM. The two topics will be Lincoln Elementary and How to Organize Your Own Block Party.

Block parties are great fun and a terrific way of getting to know your neighbors. Block parties have been recognized as a very positive and powerful way for people to connect on their blocks to build stronger, healthier, and more cohesive communities. One of the most important things to remember when organizing a block party is that it should be visible. The best way to do that is by closing off the street to traffic and having it in the street or having the party in someone's front yard or a series of front yards.

Getting Started...

1. Start talking to your neighbors about having a block party.
2. Canvass the block and find 1-2 other people to help you - kids are great resources!
3. Have a planning meeting with others who are interested.
4. Choose a date, time, and place (1-2 months notice is good)
5. Create a flyer
6. Understand permits, insurance, barricades, notification of police, etc. – (See the next section.)
7. Identify volunteers to pick up permits, barricades, food, etc.
8. Invite neighborhood police officers and/or firefighters.
9. Invite your city council representative, county commissioners, and/or elected officials.
10. Contact local paper for coverage if desired.

Recommendations for a Successful Block Party...

- Choose a shady spot in the street
- Have a barbeque, potlucks are great, too!
- Have games with prizes for children and adults - chalk art is great to draw in the street
- Feature entertainment by residents
- Take lots of pictures
- Have sign-in sheets for participants

Potential Costs...

- Barricade rental (See next section)
- Permit and insurance (See next section)
- Food and beverages
- Entertainment and decorations
- Games

Fundraising Ideas...

- Take up a collection on your block
- Have a bake sale on your block
- Take advantage of NRC-Colorado's Party Pak (check the NRC site for an application for this freebie for paper plates, napkins, cups, plastic ware, and ice cream at <http://www.nrc-neighbor.org/> under the Grants page.)

Quick Tips To Remember...

Don't organize a party alone. Ask a few neighbors for suggestions and tell them how they can help with as little as one hour of their time for delivering flyers or party set-up/clean-up.

Advertise early and often. Two months notice gives people the opportunity to schedule their other activities around the date.

Announce there will be free stuff - food, music, face painting, prizes - to help boost attendance.

Have a few small, but nice, door prizes from local record stores, restaurants, theatres, and flower shops.

Invite neighborhood kids to help plan the party. They can provide information on what kids want to do, what they'd enjoy eating, and what they can contribute to the event.

Take pictures and show them off in a scrapbook at all future parties.

Have a party theme to make the party memorable. Examples include an open house where everyone starts at one house on the end of the block and visits each home and parties that are held to support a cultural, ethnic, or annual municipal celebration.

(This section of the article was reproduced in part with the permission Suzanne Gruba and the Neighborhood Resource Center (NRC). The NRC can be found at <http://www.nrc-neighbor.org/> and look for them on Facebook at Neighborhood Resource Center of Colorado.)

Petitions, Permitting, Insurance and Barricades

The City and County of Denver requires 4 things to shut down a street and throw a block party. They have tried to lay out the process and forms at this website; <http://www.denvergov.org/Portals/490/documents/BlockpartiesER1209.pdf>. The process looks much more intimidating than it is. Note: if you hold your party in conjunction with National Night Out on Tuesday, August 3rd, the City waives the insurance fees.

- 1) Petition, Permission: First, organizers must get permission from 75% of residents on the block to be closed, and every resident must be notified. The petition form is included in the above link.
- 2) Insurance: There is a third party insurer for "special events" through TULIP, and the link is included above. You can get a quote through the site without having to purchase. The two items that affect the cost most will be a) number of people (over/under 100/500) and the presence of alcohol. Please note, the phrase **presence** of alcohol was used. If there are a number of people who BYOB, or BYOW, it would be safer to insure for alcohol.
- 3) Permits: Once you have obtained the Petition and the Insurance, you can get a permit, free of charge, either at the Wellington Webb Building, 201 W. Colfax, or at the Wastewater Dept. at 2000 W. 3rd Ave.
- 4) Barricades: The City/County of Denver requires the rental Type 3 Barricades, 2 barricades at each end, to block off either end of the street. Two possible rental companies are Road Safe Traffic at 303-298-8407 and Warning Lights at 303-936-2990.

Special Notes:

- 1) RTD bus routes: Streets that have RTD bus routes will need to contact RTD so that bus routes may be modified for that date.

- 2) Arterials / Collectors: For arterials and collectors (Downing, Logan, Lincoln) shutting down the street will not be allowed. Possible alternatives are to have the block party on a number of contiguous front lawns or in the Park, but the Park would require Park fees.
- 3) Questions: Questions about the process can be directed to Public Works Permit Operations at 303-446-3759. They were extremely helpful while I was writing this article!!
- 4) Updates: Any updates to this article will be posted on the Home page at www.wwpna.org. As you organize your block party, give me some feedback so we can help others!!

Have a GREAT Block Party!