

Neighborhood Block Parties



A How-To Guide
For Residents Working to
Improve
Their Neighborhood

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Why Have a Block Party?

Some block parties are organized around holidays such as the 4th of July or Labor Day. Others may start because of an issue (traffic, vandalism) affecting the neighborhood. Whatever the motive, block parties often lead to further gatherings of neighbors, and may lead to neighborhood improvements such as new playground equipment, or a neighborhood clean up campaign.

Block Parties can also be used as an organizing event for a Neighborhood Organization. These organizations further the sense of community as well as provide a unified voice that can better address any concerns or suggestions with "strength in numbers".

You don't have to live in a district of single family homes to be involved in a block party. Block parties can happen in townhouse complexes, apartment buildings or in a park near your neighborhood. A block party is simply a group of neighbors who work together to organize an event for their neighborhood.

This kit is organized so that all necessary information, forms, and "do's and don'ts" are included. So don't hesitate! Gather a couple of neighbors, pick a date, and invite everyone to join in!

10 Reasons To Have a Block Party

1. To have fun—no excuse or reason needed to celebrate!
2. To meet your neighbors. The more you know who belongs to the neighborhood, the more likely you are to identify strangers or suspicious people.
3. To increase the sense of *belonging* in your neighborhood.
4. To organize a city-sponsored group such as a Neighborhood Organization, Neighborhood Crime Watch, or Community Emergency Response Team (CERT).
5. To make connections within the community. When you know people, you can exchange skills or resources, organize a book club, start a babysitting co-op, or share carpooling duties to name a few.
6. To plan a campaign for traffic slowdown, to get better lighting, or address other interests.
7. To “use” the street for one day, to roller blade, play hockey or set up a kids “Jump House”.
8. To meet residents who have lived in the neighborhood a long time to learn about its history.
9. To have a neighborhood clean-up day, play some good music and barbecue once all of the work is done.
10. To start a yearly neighborhood tradition of getting together at least once a year!

Suggestions on How to Start Organizing

1. Gather a few neighbors and divide up the tasks. Decide on a possible theme, activities, etc. Decide what to do about food.
2. Start knocking on doors to find out if there is enough interest and, if so, which day would be the best for the most people.
3. Pick a date and time (mid-afternoon to evening works best). Respect neighborhood quietness after 9:00 p.m. Think of an alternate plan in case of poor weather.
4. Go door-to-door.
 - Hand out an invitation (use the one included in this guide or create your own)
 - Recruit volunteers
5. Decide if this will be a block party restricted to those on the street/block/neighborhood or if people will be able to invite friends or relatives (if yes, how many?). Make this clear in your flyer/invitation.





Good Ideas

- Invite a City council member, school principal or city staff member.
- Call the Police Department, Fire Department, Environmental Services, or other City department to obtain literature, give-aways, or to request a presentation.
- Make sure you have a record of everyone who attends and everyone you contacted; after all, the idea of a block party is to connect neighbors.
- Identify special talents your neighbors might have - you may be living next to a magician, singer, dancer, artist, radio host or prize winning cook.
- Plan lots of activities for children.
- Have an environmentally friendly party. Ask everyone to bring their own reusable plates, cups and cutlery to limit paper garbage and litter.
- Include activities that encourage people to meet each other. Use nametags and include children by asking them to create the tags.
- Make sure that people with disabilities can participate in the activities and include their attendants (those with Seeing Eye dogs or in wheelchairs).
- Institute a bathroom policy "everyone to use their own" so that home security is maintained.
- Inspire clean up after the party by rewarding children with a prize for packing up garbage
- Have a block/street clean up as part of the party. Also, neighbors may want to contribute towards the cost of a truckload to the dump and use this to clean out gardens, garages and alleys.
- Distribute an evaluation form to participants (to get a good response, number the forms and have door prizes for returned entries).

REMINDERS

- ◇ Alcohol is only permitted on private property, not on city Streets or in selected parks. Check with the Parks and Recreation Dept. at 421-3673.
- ◇ Residents should observe security precautions, for example, lock back doors to houses and keep equipment in sight.
- ◇ In hot weather food spoils quickly; all perishables, such as salads and meats, should be stored in coolers and kept at the proper temperature.
- ◇ Food cannot be sold on city streets unless the proper permits have been obtained.
- ◇ Remember, when you set up tables and chairs on the street, emergency vehicles may need to have access to the area, leave room!
- ◇ Observe safety precautions for all activities, for example, keep barbecues away from activities for children.
- ◇ Post signs the day before reminding everyone to remove cars and the street will be closed.



YOU ARE INVITED TO



A BLOCK PARTY!

DATE: _____

TIME: _____

PLACE: _____

THEME/EVENT: _____



To RSVP or to help out, please phone:

_____ at, _____ or

_____ at _____





Block Party Details

We are glad you can join us for the Block Party

On _____ at _____
(date) (time)

We are asking each family to bring:

- Chairs to sit on
- Your own meats or vegetarian food to barbecue
- 1 salad and 1 dessert to share (make enough for ____people)
- Your own beverages
- Your own non-breakable plates, cups, and cutlery
- Other _____

In addition, do you have the following that could be used:

_____ A grill? _____ tables? _____ coolers?

Do you have a talent that you would like to share?

Suggestions for activities you could help organize?



Please return this form by _____(date) to:

Name _____ Phone _____

Address _____

Block Party Evaluation Form

To help us plan future block parties,
your feedback is appreciated.



What were the 3 best things about this block party?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

What 3 things would you change for next time?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

How would you like the neighborhood connections gained at the block party to be maintained during the year?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Are you willing to help with the planning of future neighborhood events?

Yes _____ No _____

If yes, please leave your name and phone number with _____ at
_____.

Please leave this form at (address) _____

Thank you!

Fun Family Activities For Block Parties

- Invite a Clown, Balloon Artist, or Magician
- Water Balloon or Egg Toss
- Rent a "Jump House"
- Hide and Seek
- Face Painting
Remember to use non-toxic paint
- Organize a Kids Talent Show or Parade
- Sidewalk Chalk
Make it a game for the kids and give out prizes
- Pictionary or Charades
- "Name that Baby"
Have everyone bring a childhood photo and see who can guess who's who
- Play Musical Chairs
- Rent a Popcorn or Snow Cone Machine



Barricade Request Form Instructions

1. This form serves as a request for street closure, too. Fill out form completely, including the location of the barricades. Deliver this form in person to the Street Dept. at 725 N. Massachusetts, or mail it to the Street Dept., 10 1st St. NW, Mason City, IA 50401. Be sure to include the \$50 deposit.
2. Allow 1 week (7 days) for this process. This form will be received in the street department and sent to engineering for approval of street closure and then sent back to the street department.
3. You will be notified by the street department whether your request is approved or not approved.
4. The \$50 deposit is required with the request form. The check will be returned if the request is denied or when the barricades are returned to the street department.
5. If you have further questions about this procedure please contact the street department at 421-3675.

BARRICADE REQUEST FORM

Barricades being used for: _____

of Barricades needed: _____

Date: _____

Time: _____ (8:30 p.m. is limit)

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____

Date and Time Barricades will be picked up: _____

Location of Barricades (Use back of sheet if you need to draw a map):

Note: A \$50.00 deposit is required when you return this request form. Please return form and check to Street Dept. 725 N. Massachusetts (Street Division) or mail to Street Dept., 10 1st St. NW, Mason City, IA 50401. When barricades are returned to the Street Dept. the check will be returned. Barricades can be picked up at 725 N. Massachusetts on Friday before 3:30 p.m. ***Barricades cannot be used for commercial purposes.***

OFFICE USE ONLY

_____ Approved

_____ Not Approved

Amount of deposit: **\$50.00**

Date Received: _____

Date Police Notified: _____

Date Fire Dept. Notified: _____

Date Barricades Returned _____