

IDEAS FOR HOSTING A BLOCK PARTY WITH THE HILLCREST BLOCK PARTY KIT

- 1 INSPIRATION** – The first step is having the idea to organize an event in your neighborhood. Your good idea and some simple planning can lead to an annual party that people will talk about all year.
- 2 GET NEIGHBORS TO HELP** – The idea for a block party is to bring neighbors together. The planning and preparation is a great opportunity to begin the process. A small group of 4 to 5 people can serve as the planning committee, and main hosts. Everyone else can help by providing tables, chairs, set up, clean up, invitations, lending equipment, working the grills, etc. Try to get the help of neighbors that have big barbeque smokers, manage restaurants or grocery stores to possibly donate food, drinks or paper products. Your neighbor the contractor may have access to portable toilets.
- 3 HAVE A PLANNING MEETING** – The planning committee should meet to organize the event and coordinate all of the items listed below. A small potluck dinner at someone's house is the perfect beginning to the process. Determine who will be the contact person, who will coordinate the street closing, food, entertainment, hospitality, money and the items donated by neighbors.
- 4 PICK A DATE FOR THE EVENT** – Allow plenty of time to plan, organize and get the word out to people. Consider times that maximize attendance. An annual themed party may coincide with a holiday or special anniversary, or peak blooming time in the gardens along the street.
- 5 PICK A LOCATION** – A central location that provides adequate open space for gathering everybody together. Closing the street can allow the party to occur in front of several houses. One yard set up for food, one for games, etc. Considerations should be made for shade in warm weather. Food and dining tables should be set up in flat shady spots if possible like driveways or the street.
- 6 DETERMINE IF THE STREET WILL BE CLOSED** – Closing the street provides a safe environment for people to gather. Parents can relax, and children love the rare opportunity to play in the road. The street works great for dining tables and games. Typically there is no fee to have the street closed, but arrangements must be made with the local municipality in advance. The Fire Department will visit only if the road is approved for closure with the City two weeks in advance.
- 7 CONTACT THE CITY** - Typically there is no fee for having a block party, whether the street is closed or not. Check with your local municipality for information on any special permission or permits required. Call well in advance of your party and allow at least a month for the approval.
- 8 CONTACT THE FIRE DEPARTMENT** – If you close the street, the Fire Department will set up a time for fire trucks to come for a visit during the party. This is an opportunity for children of all ages to poke around and ask questions. Unless duty calls, they will probably stay for about an hour.
- 9 PLAN THE FOOD** – Potluck meals let everybody contribute to the party. Organize by having even numbered houses bring side dishes, odd numbered houses bring deserts. A grill brigade can prepare items such as hamburgers, hot dogs, chicken wings, or barbeque to go with the potluck side dishes. People will be willing to contribute for the food. Remember plates, cups, napkins and flatware.
- 10 DETERMINE THE DRINKS** – The easiest solution is to ask everyone to Bring Their Own Beverage, (BYOB). Plan to provide plenty of water and ice in coolers or ice tubs. Everyone likes lemonade.
- 11 CHAIRS AND TABLES** – Ask neighbors to donate tables and chairs and arrange to have them delivered the morning of the party. It is ok to ask for people to bring a chair with them too. Assure older neighbors that you will have a chair for them already. Spread picnic blankets out on the lawn.

- 12 INVITATIONS** – Include all information in regards to date and time and where the party is. Give contact information for questions and how to RSVP. Ask people to bring a side dish, drinks and a chair. Tell them what will be provided in terms of food, plates, flatware, activities and entertainment. Make special notice of special guests like the mailman or a former resident. List any costs required to pay for a main course meal, drinks or entertainment. Hand deliver with children.
- 13 SIGN-IN TABLE** – Provide a place for people to check-in, sign a guest register and pay money if required. Hospitality greeters should direct new arrivals to this table for information. By gathering names and numbers and email addresses, you can create a data base of neighbors to share. This also helps when getting ready to make invitations the next year. Name tags are good.
- 14 SHELTERS** – Pop-up shelters, umbrellas or other shade structures can be used for sun protection as well as over the sign-in table, to make it easy for greeters to point to where one should sign in.
- 15 BOUNCE HOUSE** - Bounce houses require electrical power and a protective tarp underneath. Provide an open flat spot on the lawn with enough room for children to wait in line, and take off their shoes. Adult supervision is required at all times. Know the rules for safe and proper use.
- 16 DECORATIONS** – An easy idea for the tables is to take cuttings from gardens in neighbor’s yards. Find someone that has the gift for making nice arrangements. Old neighborhood photos are popular.
- 17 ENTERTAINMENT** – Simple background music or maybe neighborhood musicians could delight with an after dinner set of songs. A teenage group may be looking for a chance to perform in front of an audience. Children can act out simple little skits or present a pet tricks show. Limit the volume and respect your guest’s preferences. The goal is to let people talk to each other without shouting.
- 18 STREET GAMES** – Easy ideas include horseshoe toss, bean bag toss, ring toss, lawn bowling, croquet, soccer balls, hide and seek, water balloon toss, basketball games, tag games and relay races.
- 19 ACTIVITIES** – Provide things for children of all ages to participate in. Provide toys, trucks, tricycles, scooters and bikes for anyone to play with. Chalk on the sidewalk. An easy access backyard sandbox could be made available. Face painting by teenagers. Set up a table with paper, markers, crayons and supplies for simple arts projects. Conduct a bicycle parade or adult tricycle races. On hot days, open up a sprinkler obstacle course, or see which team could put on a frozen folded t-shirt the quickest. Determine who is the oldest and youngest party guest, or resident.
- 20 CLEAN UP** – Arrange in advance for clean-up help after the party. Assign someone to coordinate recycling efforts. Dispose of all trash properly. Coordinate returns of items borrowed from neighbors. Clean and dry all tables and chairs, coolers before returning to the trailer. Make sure Bounce House and tarp are clean and dry before refolding and bagging. Leave the street and adjoining yards in better condition than before the party started.

The purpose for having a Block Party is to gather the neighbors together for the building of relationships. Success comes from people pitching in with something, whether it is a chair, grill or leading games for children. Neighbors will be thrilled that someone is organizing a party for them, and many will be willing to help with ideas, equipment or time. Let those that ask to help, do so.