



Block Party Tool Kit

A Little Philosophy on Block Parties

The purpose of this block party tool kit is to share the power and fun of block parties, enabling anyone to organize their own block party. Block parties have been recognized as a very positive and powerful way for people to connect on their blocks to build stronger, safer, & more cohesive communities. Block parties are encouraged and supported by the city, foundations & neighborhood groups. The exact origin of block parties is unknown, although they are very popular in other regions of the United States especially on the East Coast.

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. That way everyone feels comfortable in attending and since the street is very public everyone can own the party. If you can't close the street then have the party in someone's front yard or a series of front yards. Back yard parties are nice but they don't have the same inclusive feel of a party in the street.

This Block Party Tool Kit was created by Suzanne Gruba. Suzanne, whose passion is creating & organizing community events that bring people together, is a long time resident of the Baker Neighborhood. She created Block Parties in Baker, a project which provided for 20 block parties during the course of one summer featuring 13 parties on one day alone!

Suzanne is an active member of the Community Learning Network of Making Connections Denver which represents the Annie E. Casey Foundation & Strengthening Families Initiative. She has been active in her own neighborhood, Baker, for over 15 years and believes very strongly in the power of communities. She created the Baker Bargain Bonanza Event which provides for 40 yards sales throughout the neighborhood on one day. This event is now in its 13th year.

This Block Party Tool Kit consists of two versions: One for an individual organizing his or her own block party and another for someone to organize a neighborhood wide event with several parties. This block party tool kit is also in electronic form and can be e-mailed to anyone.



Block Party Tool Kit

How to organize your own block party

Getting Started

1. **Start talking** to your neighbors about having a block party
2. **Canvass the block** and find others to help you—kids are great resources also!
3. Have a **planning meeting** with others who are interested
4. **Choose a date & time** (1-2 month notice is good)
5. **Create a flyer** (See samples provided)
6. **Go door to door** and get signatures for the Request for Street Closure (See form in your kit). This is also a good time to start connecting with people and pass out your flyer.
7. **Take this form with all the signatures to the Right of Way Permit Department**, City & County of Denver to apply for permit and get insurance for the event. (See Resource List) You will be asked to pay for insurance at this time.
8. Arrange for **barricade rental** at least a week in advance. You will need a total of **6-8 sawhorse** barricades (3-4 for each end of the block) (See Resource List)
9. Distribute a **reminder flyer** with particulars of the party (See sample)
10. On the **day of the party** ask people to bring out their chairs, tables, grills etc.
11. Have Fun!!

Recommendations for a Successful Block Party

- Choose a shady spot in the street
- Have a barbecue, potlucks are great, too!
- Have games with prizes for children & adults. Chalk Art is great to draw in the street.
- Feature entertainment by residents
- Take lots of photographs
- Have sign-in sheets for participants (See sample in kit)
- Invite your Neighborhood Police Officers or firemen

Budget & Block Party Costs

1. Barricade Rental (required) \$60.00* (includes delivery & pick-up)
2. Insurance from City (required) \$131.75* (for 100 people or less)
3. Food & Beverages
4. Entertainment & Decorations
5. Games

Fund Raising Ideas

- Take up a collection on your block
- Ask area businesses & super markets to contribute
- Have a bake sale on your block
- Apply for funding (See Resource List)
- Take advantage of the Safeway Party Pack (See Resource List)
This freebie provides for paper plates, napkins, cups, plasticware & ice cream

*Rates are subject to change, call to verify (See Resource List)



Block Party Tool Kit

How to Organize a Neighborhood Wide Block Party Event

Organizing a neighborhood wide Block Party Event is an exciting opportunity that takes a little planning and forethought. It is helpful to have a committee to organize an event like this. Your job is to provide the framework & funding and people create their own block parties. It is recommended that you have the parties on one or two days to concentrate your energy & resources. The benefit of a neighborhood wide block party event is that it creates some very wonderful energy and synergy in the community. Feel free to use any or all of the following advice and forms for your event.

Guidelines for creating a Neighborhood Wide Event

1. Start planning early—8-12 months in advance
2. Get a committee together
3. Create a budget (See sample)
4. Apply for funding (See Resource List)
5. Choose date or dates
6. Create a flyer
7. Outline a promotion plan to recruit block party organizers
 - a) Mail flyer with your association newsletter if you have one
 - b) Distribute flyers door to door and to area business
 - c) Make announcements at neighborhood meetings
 - d) Network—call everyone you know
 - e) Put together and distribute a **Block Party Info Kit** to prospective organizers

Suggestions for Block Party Info Kit (See samples)

- Block Party Information & Instructions
- Information Sheet & Application
- Request for Street Closure Form
- Sample Invitations
- Safeway Party Pack Form—Call Neighborhood Resource Center for this (See Resource List)
- Blank Sign-Up Sheets

Funding: Funding is essential if you want to put on a neighborhood wide block party event. Grants have been readily accessible for this type of event. Most of the funders listed on the resource sheet have a 2-3 page application form that you fill out for a grant request. The Promotion & Admin line in the budget is to pay someone to do the organizing. This line item is optional; it varies with funders whether or not they will fund payment for an organizer.

Sample Project Budget for 20 Block Parties

| Expenses | | Amount |
|--------------------------------------|------------------------|-------------------|
| 1. Insurance-City & County of Denver | 20 @ \$131.75 | \$2,635.00 |
| 2. Barricade Rental | For 2-3 party dates | \$400.00 |
| 3. Food & Beverages | 20 @ \$50.00 each | \$1,000.00 |
| 4. Printing & Advertising | 2,000 flyers + copying | \$250.00 |
| 5. Promotion & Admin | 30 hours @ \$22.00/hr | \$660.00 |
| Total | | \$4,945.00 |
| | | |



Block Party Tool Kit

How to Organize a Neighborhood Wide Block Party Event (Continued)

Barricade Rental: You will need 6-8 sawhorse barricades for each block (3-4 at each end of the block). Get a quote well in advance of your parties. You will need to meet with a Staff Engineer (See Resource List) for a traffic plan if you have several parties on one day. Some major collector or arterial streets can't be closed to traffic. Reserve your barricades at least 2-3 weeks in advance of your party dates. Have all the barricades delivered to one secure location and then get volunteers with a truck to deliver them to the individual party locations or have each organizer pick them up. The barricades are manageable, although they are a bit heavy & unwieldy.

Food & Beverages: Encourage each block to do potlucks. Potlucks are a wonderful way for people to contribute and share. If you are able to get funding for \$50 or more per block allotment for food then each block can buy beverages, some basics like burgers & condiments for their party. The Safeway Party Pack provides for some freebies like paper plates, plastic ware, cups & ice cream.

Two-three weeks before parties

1. Invite Neighborhood Police Officers and/or firemen to visit parties
2. Invite City council person and any other dignitaries
3. Call or e-mail your party organizers to see if they need help with flyers etc.
4. Recruit volunteers for barricade delivery & pick-up
5. Contact local newspapers for press coverage if desired
6. Meet with Staff Engineer for traffic plan (See Resource List)

Final week before Parties

1. Distribute Final Instruction Sheet
2. Make Reservations for Barricade Delivery
3. Apply for permits for all parties and pay for insurance
4. Arrange for barricade delivery or pickup for each party location

Day of the Parties

1. Visit all the parties
2. Take pictures
3. Relax and have fun!

Block Party Resources

General Information

Suzanne Gruba
Community Consultant
303-777-2219
suzgruba@gmail.com

Permits & Insurance

City & County of Denver
Right of Way Permits
Wastewater Building
2000 W. 3rd Avenue
Denver, CO 80223
303-446-3759

Barricade Rental

National Barricade Company
Ask for Tama
1140 South Kalamath
Denver, CO 80223
303-744-2338

Traffic Plan Review

For Neighborhood Wide Block Parties ONLY

City & County of Denver
Staff Engineer
2000 W. 3rd Ave.
Denver, CO 80223
303-446-3486

Safeway Party Packs, Funding-FNI* & Mini-Grants

Neighborhood Resource Center
Good Neighboring Project
1009 Grant Street, Suite 203
Denver, CO 80203
www.nrc-neighbor.org
303-477-0023

Funding

The Denver Foundation**
Strengthening Neighborhoods Initiative
LaDawn Sullivan
950 S. Cherry Street, Suite 200
Denver, CO 80246
303-300-1790

***Focus Neighborhood Initiative Neighborhoods (FNI):**

Sunnyside, Globeville, Elyria-Swansea, Northeast Park Hill, Clayton, Skyland, Whittier, Cole, Five Points, Jefferson Park, Sun Valley, LaAlma/Lincoln Park, Baker, Valverde, Villa Park & Westwood.

****Denver Foundation Neighborhoods:**

Highland, Sunnyside, Globeville, Elyria-Swansea, Northeast Park Hill, Clayton, Skyland, Whittier, Commerce City