



City of Hyattsville Block Party Kit

Organizing a block party in the street with your neighbors is a great way to help create community and friendships, and improve security in your neighborhood. This guide provides tips on how to make your party, and party planning, a fun success!

1. GETTING STARTED

The first step is creating an Organizing Committee or finding another way to include everyone in the decisions about the event. If this is the first time you'll have a block party, you may want to send out a flyer to explain what a block party is, encourage attendance, perhaps share some of its benefits. Get opinions on how to handle the food and activities, as well as possible dates and times to have the event. Enlist as many neighbors as you can to help out. You may want to ask kids to drop flyers at everyone's doors, too.

2. TYPES OF BLOCK PARTIES

What type of block party will work best for your neighborhood? You could organize a barbecue – where neighbors bring their own meat and organizers purchase the rest and get reimbursed; a picnic – where everyone brings their own meal; a pot luck – where everyone brings one dish; or a catered party – where everyone shares the cost. If you're going to barbecue, who will bring the grill/s? Also, decide whether you will provide or everyone who attends will bring tables, chairs, plates, cutlery, cups, and beverages.

3. HOW BIG SHOULD THE PARTY BE?

Start with a smaller event rather than a larger one. You can always grow, but you don't want to un-invite people. Use natural neighborhood boundaries where possible (the end of the block, etc.). If you are planning a street or cul-de-sac party, you should invite everyone from that area. Decide early and make it clear in your flyer if the block party will be restricted to those on the street/block or whether people can invite their friends and relatives (and if so, how many).

4. CITY APPLICATIONS AND PERMIT

The City of Hyattsville requires a permit to close the street for a block party. As part of the permit process, you will need to provide a petition of support signed by at least 50% of residents on the block that will be closed. The permit and petition forms can be found on the City website at www.hyattsville.org/permit. Remember that the Block Party Request Form must be filed with the City Clerk at least two weeks before the requested closure!

5. EVENT PLANNING

For a first time block party, send your first flyer requesting feedback from neighbors **four to five weeks** before you are tentatively scheduled to host the event. The date may have to be

adjusted if neighbors already have other plans. Once you have feedback from neighbors and approval from the City, send out a final flyer – including the block party date, time, and what to bring – at least three weeks before the event. Also, plan an alternate rainout day, just in case. Keep in mind who lives in the neighborhood when setting hours for the party. If young children or seniors live near the party area, you should end by 9:00 p.m. or earlier.

6. GETTING THE WORD OUT

It's important to keep neighbors informed. Here's a few tips:

- Go door-to-door with flyers seeking party suggestions – which neighbors can leave on your door or porch.
- Knock before leaving the flyer, to get feedback from your neighbors (this adds a personal touch and people often offer to help).
- Casually approach your neighbors about the block party as you see them out and about—and use your phone or e-mail to stay in touch.
- Make an extra effort to get your new neighbors involved in the event.
- The City of Hyattsville requires that all residents within the boundary of the street closure be notified one week in advance.
- Post signs and flyers to ensure they're all notified and remember not to park on the street.

7. SET UP

The City's Department of Public Works will deliver the necessary cones/barricades within 24 hours of the scheduled event to the primary point of contact for the block party. Organizers are responsible for set-up and take-down of City-owned barricades at the beginning and end of the designated block party times. Line up tables for the food and have a few garbage cans available. Remember when setting up tables and chairs that emergency vehicles may need access, so be sure to maintain clearance wide enough for emergency vehicles to pass. Also, make sure that fire hydrants are not blocked. Institute a bathroom policy so that home security is maintained. Be ready to oversee the clean up after the event.

8. ACTIVITIES DURING THE EVENT

What should you do during the event? 1) Eat good food and visit with your neighbors. 2) Kids can play games. 3) Introduce new neighbors and help them make connections. 4) Encourage the talent in your neighborhood to come out, such as musicians, magicians, etc. (But don't forget that all music must be at a low volume, by City regulation and out of respect for others.) 5) Start a neighborhood watch group, which our police will help with after you call them at (301) 985-5060. 6) Stay safe, by locking your homes' back doors during the party. 7) Most importantly: Have fun!