



HOW TO ORGANIZE A NEIGHBORHOOD BLOCK PARTY

Brought to you by the
City of Plano's
BEST Neighborhoods

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Why Organize a Block Party?

Block Parties are simply a GREAT way to meet your neighbors! They provide a casual relaxed setting where residents can meet, play, eat, and hopefully, find similarities that bring them closer together. With a little effort and consistency, a neighborhood of strangers can be transformed into a connected community of families that care for each other and the overall health and vibrancy of their neighborhood.



To be successful, a Block Party requires some planning. This guide is intended to help you and your neighborhood organize, find needed resources, advertise, and make sure all the necessary approvals and permits (as needed) have been filed. **To make organizing your block party even easier, neighborhood groups registered with the City of Plano may also reserve the City's Pop-Up Party Trailer!** This trailer contains essentially everything you will need to throw your block party—except food and neighbors! This is a free service offered to our Plano residents. To find out more about the trailer and its availability, please contact a Neighborhood Planning Technician at 972-208-8150 or visit [Pop-Up-Block-Party](#).

Remember, this is just a guide. Feel free to experiment with other strategies and share your thoughts and experiences at our Block Party page on the City of Plano's webpage (address above). This will help other residents in their planning. Share ideas, pictures, recipes—anything to help make someone's next block party an even greater success!

Planning is Everything!

The most “effortless” looking events are usually the ones that are most carefully planned. To make sure you and your neighborhood residents have a great time at the block party, you will need to plan ahead. Here are some helpful tips:



- Allow at least 4-6 weeks of planning time before your event.
- Find a group of individuals in your neighborhood who are willing to work together to form an organizing committee.
- Once formed, divide up tasks: applications, budget, publicity, food, activities, set up, clean up, etc.
- Decide how large a group you want to invite— just your block, the entire neighborhood, or something in between.
- Pick a date, time and location, and make sure to have a “bad weather” plan.
- If you want to reserve the City's *Pop-Up Party Trailer*, be sure to confirm its availability and register your neighborhood ([Pop-Up-Block-Party](#))
- Be sure to contact the City for street closures and permits (if required) at least 2 weeks prior to the event. (see **Street Closures and Permits**) □ Most of all: HAVE FUN!

Getting the Word Out

You have your team collected—but now what? You need to find the best way to let people know about the block party. You have several options:

- **Prepare a flyer.** The City of Plano has a Block Party Flyer template available on the Block Party page of the website: [here](#). This Word file is editable and set up to print 2 flyers per letter sized sheet. Just fill it out and hit print! Be sure to include an RSVP contact if you need to have a total head count.
- **Visit your neighbors.** Now that you have your flyer in hand, the most effective means of spreading the word about the Block Party is word of mouth. If time permits and you have a large enough team, divide up your party area into manageable block sizes and assign each volunteer a few streets. Not only are you inviting your neighbors, but going door-to-door provides the perfect opportunity to introduce yourself, and get to know you're community members. People are more inclined to participate when they know a few friendly faces.
- **Make door hangers.** You may not be able to reach everyone going door-to-door. Before you head out, it is a good idea to staple a rubber band to the corner of the flyer. If someone does not answer, just hang the flyer on the door handle.
- **Use Nextdoor.** If you have not already done so, Nextdoor is a social media website designed just for neighborhoods. It is free and creates a “virtual” neighborhood group for only people that live in your subdivision. You can easily communicate with your neighbors, share ideas, or ask for help in preparation for the event. Visit www.Nextdoor.com to sign up.
- **Email residents:** Email addresses provide another very easy way to communicate with your neighbors. Your local Crime Watch group may help you spread your message through their email communications. Block parties strengthen crime watch groups by providing another opportunity for residents to get to know each other and work together to protect their neighborhood.
- **Social Media:** If you have a neighborhood Facebook page or tools such as electronic newsletters or other forms of social media, use them. The more ways you try to reach your crowd, the better your chances of them attending.
- **Phone Tree:** If phone numbers are available, divide up the lists and have several committee members call to invite residents to the party. This also creates an opportunity to get to know someone and increases your chances of them attending.



Activities and Food



The City of Plano's *Pop-Up Party Trailer* is stocked with games for people of all ages, guaranteed to make your party a success! Of course, feel free to add your own activities to those provided. Your party may have a theme, or be focused on collecting funds/supplies/non-perishables for a family in need. Whatever you choose, remember to plan for some fun activities and ice-breakers. The goal of the block party is for people to get to know each other. One more thing to consider in your planning is that our city's demographics are changing: we are becoming more diverse and we have an aging population. Think about your neighborhood: Are there several generations of residents? Are you a racially or ethnically diverse neighborhood? If so, are there ways to bridge these gaps? Are there opportunities to share stories, information, or skills?

And when it comes to food, there is no need for it to become complicated or expensive. Here are some suggestions:

- Ask everyone to bring a dish for their family plus a little extra to share. If serving is done buffet style, having people RSVP with their food item may be a good idea to ensure there is a broad range of items.
- Have a BBQ where each family brings their own hotdogs, hamburgers, etc.
- If cups, plates, utensils and other items to share are being purchased, have a donation box available for residents to help contribute (a suggested donation to cover expenses is helpful).

Note: If your party is happening on a public street, alley, or in a public place, then consumption of alcoholic beverages is prohibited.

Please remember to take photos of your activities and the party, and to upload them to your neighborhood Facebook page (if you have one), and to our city Block Party page! Your party may inspire other neighborhoods to do the same!



Pop-Up Party Trailer Reservation

The City's *Pop-Up Party Trailer* is available for **FREE** to Neighborhood Associations, HOAs, and Crime Watch Groups registered with the City's BEST Neighborhoods Division. If your neighborhood does not have a Neighborhood Association or a Home Owners' Association, and you are not registered with the city, not a problem! Simply call a Neighborhood Planning Technician at 972-208-8150 or visit [Neighborhood Resources](#) and register your neighborhood. There is no fee to register. We simply want to have a means to connect with your neighborhood to share important information. Simply provide us with:

- Name and boundaries of your neighborhood.

Contact information of the neighborhood association, HOA, Crime Watch Group or individual who is taking responsibility for the neighborhood (website (if applicable), name of president or individual, phone, and email).

- Once you are registered, simply check the online calendar for availability and contact a Neighborhood Planning Technician to reserve the trailer!

Pop-Up Party Trailer Contents

As mentioned, the City's Pop-Up Party Trailer contains much of what you need to make your party a success. You just have to invite your neighbors (using our flyer template, if you wish), and plan the food. Here is a list of what is provided:

- 4 picnic tables
- 5 six foot tables
- 28 metal chairs
- 3 water coolers
- 4 ice chests
- A trash can and a recycling can
- Chalk board easel and chalk to advertise your event
- A work light and extension cords
- Party games (corn hole and tumbling tower game)
- First-aid kit
- 4 Green Umbrellas
- 2 boxes (packers)
- 20 traffic cones and 8 barricades

We welcome suggestions on how to make the trailer and reservation process more user friendly. Please share your thoughts and suggestions with us on the Block Party Trailer page ([Pop-Up-Block-Party](#)).

Set-Up and Clean-Up

Everything is planned, now it is time to make it happen! Be sure you have as many volunteers as needed to carry out all the tasks of your block party. Here are some helpful tips:

- Plan to start setting up at least 2 hours before the event.
- Be sure to place signs at the entrance to your party. The *Pop-Up Party Trailer* includes a chalkboard easel that can be used to welcome people to your party.
- Follow guidelines for blocking the street as directed by the Police Department.
- Bring grills, chairs and tents (if needed).
- Set up tables for food.
- Be sure to get the drinks into the ice coolers early so that they are ready when the party starts.
- Designate an area for games and activities and set them up.
- Have enough trash bags on hand to change out from trash cans when they get full.
- Assign a greeter, and consider a sign-up table. To stay in touch with residents and for future planning, collect emails and phone numbers from attendees.
- Have people leave with what they brought, including extra food.
- Bring storage bags in the event of unclaimed leftovers.
- Be sure to clean up the street and any yards that may have been used during the party. Everyone will appreciate it!
- Have a designated place to put trash and recycling before trash day. A few neighbors can share the load.
- If you used the Pop-Up Party Trailer, be sure to repack it with everything that was inside. Items need to be secured as they were when delivered to you. This will ensure that items do not get damaged before the next person uses it.



Street Closures and Permits

When planning your block party, you will need to be sure to work with the City to close off a street. Additionally, a petition will need to be signed by 75% of residential properties that are adjacent to the proposed street closure. Visit [Pop-Up-Block-Party](#) for more information.



Cul-de-sacs are ideal locations for your block party, as are neighborhood streets that can be closed off on both ends without preventing movement within the neighborhood. The City will work with you to identify the best location for your block party.

Food permits are required for public events. However, *if your block party occurs within a closed street, then it is considered a private event*, and no food permit is required. This also applies to catered events.—no permit required if food is catered for a private event (ie. block party).

Please visit [Pop-Up-Block-Party](#) to find out more about permit requirements.

Don't Forget

Once the party is finished and everything is cleaned up, please do a few things that will help with future events. These will help not just you, but other neighborhoods as well.



- Remember to thank those who attended, especially those who helped with organizing and execution of the party. A little appreciation goes a long way. You will have many more hands to help the next time you plan a neighborhood event! You can do this in person at the end of the event or, if you have collected contact information from attendees, an email to all will also do the trick! Having regular communication with your neighbors will also help you identify others who may want to help in the future.

- Share photos, recipes, and suggestions on the City's Block Party page. We want to see how our neighborhoods are throwing their parties, and hear how we can make the process better. Let us know what made the party successful and what connections were made. You may inspire others to throw their own parties!



- Continue to build relationships. When you are planning your next event, do not reinvent the wheel! You already have a group in place that helped organize this party. Maybe you heard from a few others who also would like to help out. Be sure to cultivate those relationships. Meet informally for coffee or dinner, or dessert in the park. The stronger your core group is, the easier it will be to plan your next event.

- Don't let too much time pass between neighborhood events. While the energy and momentum from your first neighborhood event are still high, start thinking about what you can do next. Having a calendar of neighborhood events for the next 6 months can help with planning and dividing up responsibilities.