

# CITY OF PORTLAND BLOCK PARTY KIT

PREPARED BY THE BEAUMONT-WILSHIRE NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION

## INTRODUCTION

One of the best ways to help foster community with your neighbors is by throwing a block party. This guide is meant to help you do just that. First, here's a few quick words about what qualifies as a block party and what doesn't:

- Block parties are initiated by and are intended for only local residents who live on the street being closed.
- Block party permits are not issued for streets that have a bus line, bus layover or signalized intersection, or for events with attendance that draws from beyond the residents on the street.
- Church, synagogue, or mosque events do not qualify for block party permits, you'll need to fill out a community event permit instead.
- At the end of the party, the street needs to be cleaned and left in good condition.

For any block party related questions, it's heartening to know city staff are positioned to assist you at the touch of a phone! If any of the following is confusing, or you'd like a little support, simply call the Portland Bureau of Transportation at (503) 823-4003 or send an email to: [pbotblockparty@portlandoregon.gov](mailto:pbotblockparty@portlandoregon.gov)

## APPLICATION PROCESS

Follow the steps below, and you'll be well on your way to a successful event!:

1. Download the block party application:  
<https://www.portlandoregon.gov/transportation/article/521509>
2. Fill out all four pages of the application and make sure you sign it.
3. Complete the Street Closure Petition (attached to the application)
4. Now for the tough part, hand-carry the petition to each neighbor and obtain proof of notification in the form of signatures on the petition. If a house is vacant, indicate that on the petition, create a flyer with closure information, date and time and contact information and deliver it to the address. Please submit the flyer in your application. You need to account for all of the addresses on the block and abutting properties to the closed street.

For rental properties, if you cannot obtain signatures from the individual units, you need to obtain a signature from the property management company or landlord. Please document all attempts to obtain property owner/representative signature of notification on the petition.

Portland Bureau of Transportation references Portlandmaps.com to check signatures. Feel free to check this resource as well when collecting signatures. Fill out the traffic control plan indicating street names (the one block example is on pg 4) or submit individualized plan if the block configuration is different than the example.

5. Turn in the completed application, petition and traffic control plan with payment to the Parks Customer Service Center, attention Block Parties, by postal mail, fax or by delivering it in person (addresses are on the application). The applicant will be called if any follow-up is needed. Submit the application at least two weeks prior to the block party date.
6. Submission OPTIONS: Mail: mail in your application to: PBOT Block Party, 1120 SW 5th Ave Ste 1302, Portland OR 97204 Fax: 503.823.2515 In Person: Parks and Recreation Customer Service Center 1120 SW 5th Ave. 1st Floor 8:30-4:30 Mon - Fri
7. Once your application has been approved by PBOT, they'll email you a permit. So, make sure to print your email address and mailing address clearly on the application.

8. The permittee is responsible for providing the barricades to close the street. Arrange to have three Type I barricades with "Street Closed" signs (equipped with flashing yellow lights if the street will be closed after dusk) to be placed at each end of the street OR any other specific devices required on the approved traffic control plan.

You may find companies that rent barricades by searching for "Barricades" or "Traffic Flagger" on the internet. As the permit holder, you are responsible for providing and placing barricades, and for their removal by the stated end time of the permit. Here are a list of rental companies we are aware of (please let us know if you find others to add to the list):

- American Barricade Co, 173 NE Columbia (530) 285-6616 [www.ambarr.com](http://www.ambarr.com)
- Block Party Barricades, 833 SE Main (503) 583-8531  
[www.blockpartybarricades.com](http://www.blockpartybarricades.com)
- D & H Flagging, 1612 SE Holgate (503) 232-2488 [www.d-hflagging.com](http://www.d-hflagging.com)
- Portland Rent All, 10101 SE Stark (503) 548-4884 [www.portlandrentall.com](http://www.portlandrentall.com)

9. Keep the permit available on site for review if a police officer or another authorized representative of the City of Portland asks to see it.
10. If you want to have amplified music, you may need a permit from the City of Portland Noise Control Office. There is an application fee. You need to apply two (2) weeks prior to your event or an accelerated fee may be assessed. You may pick up an application from your district coalition office or visit the Noise Control Office's website at [www.portlandoregon.gov/oni/63242](http://www.portlandoregon.gov/oni/63242)

For this permit, they do not require you to submit proof of insurance; however, you may want to insure the event through one of the options listed below:

- Many home-owners' policies offer coverage for an event
- A special rider may be purchased to cover the closure
- Many insurance agencies may put together what is called a special event policy
- Tenant Users Liability Policy (TULIP). The City has arranged to make available liability insurance through this program. Find information about TULIP at [www.portlandoregon.gov/bibs/60224](http://www.portlandoregon.gov/bibs/60224)

Again, If you have any questions, contact Portland Bureau of Transportation at (503) 823-4003. They will help you determine if your event qualifies for a block party permit, or if a different one is needed.

## **FEES**

Block Party street closure permits cost \$10.

Each additional street you want closed will cost an additional \$5.00 per street.

If you're a procrastinator, you'll need to buy the city a few more hamburgers. Applications received 5 **business days** or less prior to the event date will be charged a \$25.00 expedited fee to process.

They accept cash, credit card, check or money order made out to the City of Portland. Fees may be paid in the following ways:

- Mailed along with the permit application, petition and traffic control plan. Complete applications must include: application form, petition, traffic control plan and payment.
  - Mailed to: Block Parties, 1120 SW 5th Ave, Ste 1302, Portland OR 97204
- Faxed to 503-823-2515, attention Block Parties.
- In Person. Bring your application to the Parks Customer Service Center on the First Floor at 1120 SW 5th Ave. Open 8:30am-5pm Monday-Friday.
- **\*\*PLEASE NOTE**, as of 2016, the City of Portland still does not accept applications by email.

## **OPPORTUNITIES TO IMPROVE COMMUNITY SAFETY - CONSIDER BEING A NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH ORGANIZER**

A block party is a prime opportunity to meet those living near us and build stronger relationships. It's also a great time to consider ways to make your block a safer place to live. The city has that on its mind and has full time staff who would love to help you in shaping your block's efforts to communicate stronger together.

Each of the approximate 500 Neighborhood Watch groups in the City of Portland have at least one, and ideally several, Watch "Block Organizers".

To start and maintain an active Watch group, your street or block must have an Organizer.

The Organizer's first job is to connect with the Community Organizing Specialist within the City of Portland's Crime Prevention Program and work together to determine the following:

- The geographic area they wish to organize
- What types of crime are they experiencing and goals for their Watch group
- Pick a meeting date for the Watch group's "Initial meeting and training"
  - These are usually held at the Organizers home on weekday evenings
- Once the meeting date is set, the Organizer invites their neighbors to attend

The Crime Prevention Coordinator will come to this training and will provide all the training materials and member questionnaires. This initial meeting is no longer than two hours and is informal and fun with the biggest goal of getting neighbors to know each other, exchanging contact information, and learning about public safety systems and crime prevention techniques.

After this training, the last duty of the Organizer is to take all the neighbor contact information which is provided by the Crime Prevention Coordinator about a week after the training and create and distribute a "Block Map" to only the participating members of their Watch group.

The City of Portland's Neighborhood Watch program is, by design, easy and fun to start and keep going. Organizers only need to spend a few hours to help start a Watch group and it's only a couple of hours for individual neighbors to attend the initial meeting.

If you would like more information or would like to be a Watch Organizer for your street, please contact your Community Organizing Specialist at the City of Portland. As of 2016, that person is Mark Wells:

**Mark Wells / Crime Prevention Program / [mark.wells@portlandoregon.gov](mailto:mark.wells@portlandoregon.gov) / 503-823-2781**

He tries to make it as easy as possible works directly with residents wanting to get into the program.

Additionally, check out the city's excellent "Establishing your Neighborhood Watch" brochure:

<http://www.portlandoregon.gov/oni/article/320557>

We encourage you to invite someone from the Neighborhood Response Team, a Crime Prevention Coordinator, and/or the District Officer who works in the North Precinct (or other area if not in Beaumont/Wilshire) to stop by your block party. Not only do you get to meet the safety coordinator working in your area, but the Officers assigned there will feel more connected to you and your neighbors.

## **STREET PAINTING (AKA "Intersection Repair Projects")**

Intersection Repair Projects are large street paintings that the City of Portland permits to build community within our neighborhoods. To paint the street, residents must obtain a **revocable encroachment permit** for the street painting as well as a **block party permit**. The block party permit allows two streets (4 blocks) to be closed during an intersection painting project in conjunction with City Repair.

In your traffic control plans, you'll need to include and label the intersection and the four affected blocks. Intersection Repair Projects need to have signatures from all four properties on the corners of the intersection and 80% of the rest of the residents on the four affected blocks.

The signatures of notification requirements for the Intersection Repair Project revocable permit can be used to meet the block party permit signature requirements. This streamlines the process so that residents only have to fill out one petition per year.

During the first year that the street will be painted, the signatures on the Intersection Repair Project petition can be used for the block party permit. Once the dates are set for the painting, PBOT asks that you distribute a flyer announcing the dates of the closure and submit the flyer with your application in lieu of the signature page.

In future years, when the painting is maintained, residents must obtain a block party permit through the usual block party permit application forms and obtain signatures from all four properties on the corners of the intersection and at least 80% of the rest of the residents on the four affected blocks.

For more information about and assistance with street painting, visit [cityrepair.org/become-a-placemaker/](http://cityrepair.org/become-a-placemaker/)

## **FAQ**

### **I want to have alcohol at our block party. What do I need to do?**

You cannot consume or serve alcohol *in the street* at block parties. However, you may consume alcohol on private property.

### **Can I close the street for a private event such as a birthday party or wedding?**

The right of way cannot be closed for private events. Block party permits are intended for only the residents living on a block and are intended to help build community.

### **My church wants to have a block party in the street next to our church, can I get a permit?**

Block party permits are not suitable for these types of church events. Instead, you need to obtain a community event permit. Please see “community event permit information” on a previous page.

### **Where do I get the barricades to close the street?**

You are responsible for obtaining your own barricades to close the street according to your approved traffic control plan. The City of Portland does not provide the barricades for block party permits, but they do provide a list of rental companies. If you are aware of another company, please let us know and we'll add them to the list:

- American Barricade Co, 173 NE Columbia (503) 285-6616 [www.ambarr.com](http://www.ambarr.com)
- Block Party Barricades, 833 SE Main (503) 583-8531 [www.blockpartybarricades.com](http://www.blockpartybarricades.com)
- D & H Flagging, 1612 SE Holgate (503) 232-2488 [www.d-hflagging.com](http://www.d-hflagging.com)
- Portland Rent All, 10101 SE Stark (503) 548-4884 [www.portlandrentall.com](http://www.portlandrentall.com)

### **Can I remove the parking along the street for our block party?**

The block party permit does not remove parking. You may ask your neighbors not to park on the street or if you are really serious about not having cars in the street, you can apply for a parking closure by connecting with PBOT.

### **What if someone isn't home when I try to get their signature?**

If at first you don't succeed, try and try again. If after 3 attempts, you still cannot reach your neighbor to obtain a signature, please leave a flier with the following information; date, time of closure, contact name and number. Be sure to document their address on the signature form and check off you have left a flyer. Please include this flyer with your application packet.

### **I want to have my daughter's band play at the block party, what do I need to do?**

If your daughter plays acoustically with limited percussion, great! However, If you are going to have any type of amplified music, please contact the Noise Control Office for a variance permit. Here's the application:

<https://www.portlandoregon.gov/oni/?c=65095&a=92724>

### **Can we close the alley behind our house for a block party?**

If the alley is public right of way and not privately owned, yes you can! Follow all the application requirements for a block party permit.



## **10 REASONS TO HAVE A BLOCK PARTY**

- To have fun – no excuses or reasons are needed to celebrate.
- To provide an opportunity to know your neighbors and where they live.
- To establish friendships.
- To increase that sense of belonging to a community.
- To learn a little about each other and know who might need a little extra help from time to time.
- To meet neighbors on your block that might be able to help you with a gardening problem, or lend you that needed ingredient for your recipe.
- To encourage neighbors to look after the neighborhood.
- To help with safety/crime prevention by knowing who lives where and who does not.
- To increase security by knowing each other's schedules.
- To develop an opportunity to meet some of the old time neighbors and learn about your community history.

## **STRATEGIC BLOCK PARTY PLANNING**

Here's a collection of aggregated wisdom and a process to make your block party a success:

### **1. GETTING STARTED**

The idea of a neighborhood block party is to bring neighbors together. It's a good idea to find one or two neighbors to help you with the event.

One can take the "Lone Ranger" approach, and it can be a great event. However, it may make it more difficult to find someone else to organize it next year.

The first step is to create an Organizing Committee. It is important to include everyone in the decisions about the event.

If this is the first time you may want to send out a flyer to explain what a Block Party is, encourage attendance, perhaps share some of the benefits, get opinions on how to handle the food, and possible dates and times to have the event.

Enlist as many neighbors as you can to help out. Someone can type the flyer; someone else can collect them. You may want to ask some kids to drop the flyers in the mailboxes.

### **2. SOURCING BLOCK PARTY CONSUMABLES**

Which type of block party will work best in your neighborhood? Try not to go overboard, it can make people feel the event is too much work...Keep it Simple! Here are a few good options:

*Barbecues* -- organizers purchase all that is needed and neighbors provide the money; - everyone brings his or her own meat.

*Picnics* -- everyone brings their own meal; Pot luck - everyone brings one dish;

*Catered* -- everyone shares the cost and the food is purchased.

### **3. HOW BIG TO MAKE IT**

Start off with a smaller event rather than a large one. It can always grow, but it is hard to shrink it.

In selecting who to invite, use natural neighborhood boundaries where possible (i.e. end of the block). If you are planning a street or cul-de-sac party, you need to invite *everyone* from that area.

Decide early and make it clear in your flyer if this will be a block party restricted to those on the street/block or whether people can invite friends/relatives (if yes how many).

### **4. LOCATION**

Choose a good location to gather in the street, or a shared driveway. In the rare occurrence of summer rain, designate a backup location such as a garage driveway where an umbrella or two could be easily erected.

Regardless, consider safety as an important factor in planning!

### **5. THE TIMING TO GET THE EVENT PLANNED**

For a first time block party, distribute the first flyer requesting feedback 4 to 5 weeks before the event. Adjustments may need to be made if a neighbor already has an event of their own planned.

Once the Committee has looked at all the suggestions, the final flyer with date, time and what to bring should go out 3 weeks before the event. Mid-May to end of September are great times to gather outside. Weekends or holidays are often the best.

Keep in mind who lives in the neighborhood when setting the hours for the party. If young children or seniors are living near the party area plan to finish by 9:00pm.

## **6. GETTING THE WORD OUT**

Flyers can be used with a request to drop back their suggestions for the event in your mailbox. Information can be gathered from your neighbors by going door-to-door. This adds a personal touch and people often offer to help.

A casual approach can be used to inform neighbors as you see them out working in their yards. Neighbors can be called on the phone. (If you don't know your neighbors, a reverse directory telephone book can be used. They are available at libraries.) Since many people have now abandoned land lines however, flyers might still be the best approach. Be sure to include contact information on the flyer in case your neighbors have questions or suggestions to share.

Make an extra effort to get your new neighbors out to the event. To reach neighbors in townhouses, apartments and condos, it is best to approach the manager. They will let you know how to get in touch with the residents.

Take every opportunity to talk it up in the neighborhood as often as possible prior to the event.

## **7. ROLE OF THE ORGANIZERS**

To help eliminate role ambiguity, make it clear who will be making decisions about the set up, who will greet people who arrive at the event, introduce new neighbors, and help people make connections.

Someone also needs to be in charge of clean up. You may wish to jumpstart that process by rewarding children with a prize for a swift and efficient job!

## **8. SET UP IDEAS**

Create a sign-in book for records for the next year, as it can help develop a contact list for the neighborhood

Use nametags! Decide what you want neighbors to write on them (e.g. -first and last names, house numbers).

Line up tables for the food and have a few garbage cans available.

Decide whether you will coordinate or everyone will bring their own tables and chairs, plates, cutlery and cups, and beverages. If using barbecues, who will bring them?

Institute a bathroom policy “everyone to use his or her own”, so that home security is maintained.

Decide if pets are allowed.

Set up the event so things are easy to clean afterward by preparing outdoor compost, recycling and garbage stations.

## **9. ACTIVITIES DURING THE EVENT**

Visit and eat. Over the centuries, food has always had a very social component in societies. Make sure there are games for kids (some organized, some they can plan themselves).

Take time to introduce one another and point to one’s house. This can be done in a game format too!

Encourage the talent in your neighborhood to come forward such as musicians, magicians.

## **10. A FEW OTHER WAYS TO GET TO KNOW YOUR NEIGHBORS**

When in doubt, ask your neighbors for ideas, and don’t be shy about suggesting some other ways to get to know one another. Here are a few to stir your thoughts:

Garden tour party

Blind wine or beer tasting party

Neighborhood garage sale

## **11. FINAL REMINDERS**

Encourage neighbors to observe security precautions by keeping back doors locked and equipment in sight.

Remember when setting up tables and chairs that emergency vehicles may need access.

You may wish to post signs the day before the event to remind everyone to remove cars for events involving street closure.

Have fun, and ask open-ended questions at the event to help break the ice:

*“If someone gave you a free trip to the moon for 10 minutes or travel around Europe for 2 weeks, what would you choose?”*

*“What do you most look forward to when you have a few days to yourself?”*

*“What’s your favorite restaurant in town?”*