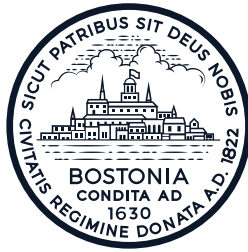


BLOCK PARTY PLANNING GUIDE

SUMMER 2022





Dear Neighbor,

Every year in August, my neighbors and I take over the street and host an evening of family, friendship, and fun for our neighborhood. In 2020, we had to cancel to prioritize our community's health and safety as COVID raged across the country. But as we emerge from the pandemic, and embrace the warmth of summer, I'm excited for the return of the annual Augustus Ave block party.

I'm excited to be celebrating our neighborhood again. To share ice cream and conversation with the familiar faces that lived so close, but who—for so long—we could not see. I'm grateful to have the chance to celebrate our resilience through the pandemic, too. A resilience made possible by our relationships with one another. That, I think, is at the heart of what got us through—that we were once together. We knew and loved that feeling—and knew it was one worth waiting for.

We're not just happier when we know our neighbors—when we share laughter and bike rides or walks around the block, or pause in each other's yards and driveways to catch up on our days—we're also safer, too. In natural disasters, emergencies, even pandemics, the places that recover the quickest are communities with the strongest social infrastructure.

Knowing and caring about your neighbors means showing up for each other when times are tough. It means working together to plan and problem solve, so that the next time isn't as tough. Our community ties are also, often, what tether us to our democracy. They keep us engaged civically, and help us confront our crises of trust. Across our country, people are increasingly isolated. And when we don't know our neighbors—the people we share buildings and blocks with—we lose out on an important social network and support system.

That loss translates to a loss of cohesive political will. And right now, we face urgent challenges that demand bold, decisive action. Action that's impossible to take without the engine of community engagement driving it forward. If you don't see yourself as a part of your larger community, or don't know or understand those in your community who will benefit most from change, you won't fight for progress, or for each other.

So, how do we fix this? How do we build social cohesion? Organize a block party. It's not a cure-all, of course. But it is a start. And it's a start that fosters the kind of trust and connection on which strong communities are built.

Civic engagement is more than just a commitment to show up at the ballot box on voting day. Embracing the full power and possibility of our future requires that we each contribute to, and cherish, our wider community. This summer, take the time to get to know your neighbors and experience the joy of building a stronger community—and a brighter future—together.



Your neighbor,

Michelle Wu

Michelle Wu
Mayor of Boston

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BLOCK PARTY PLANNING

BEFORE YOU GET STARTED

Anyone hosting a block party on a public street or sidewalk needs to apply for a Play Street Closing Permit. Applying for this permit is easy and can be done online by starting at boston.gov/blockparty

In addition to the initial Play Street Closing Permit, some block parties may include entertainment, games, food, and beverages which require separate permits. To host your dream block party, you may need to get permitted through several departments at the City. Give yourself plenty of time to apply. We recommend applying at least 30 days before a block party.

More information about permits can be found on the following page.

PLAN WITH A TEAM

Talk to your neighbors and recruit a few other interested residents to help plan your block party. Consider hosting a neighborhood meeting to discuss details and divide up responsibilities:

- Pick a date and a rain day in case of inclement weather, street construction, etc.
- Decide on the scale and size of the event based on shared goals and time frame.
- Have a sign-in sheet and get everyone's contact information to coordinate planning for the event and stay in touch afterwards about neighborhood news and other events.
- Choose who will be in charge of which tasks.



APPLYING FOR PERMITS

The first and most important permit that you will need to host your block party is the Play Street Closing Permit.

Start your Block Party/Play Street Closing Permit Application by navigating to boston.gov/blockparty. If this is your first event with the City, you will need to set up an online account. Your username and password can be used for future block parties and other City business, so remember to keep it safe.

The following items will require additional permits:

- Grills: both propane or charcoal.
- Amplified music, stages, risers, or performances.
- Inflatable structures (bouncy houses), carnival rides, petting zoos, pony rides.
- Occupancy by vendors, large tents (larger than ten feet by ten feet) or more than three small (ten feet by ten feet) tents.
- Food truck operation or foods being prepared on the street or sidewalk.
- Alcoholic beverages.

If you are planning to offer any of these activities at your block party, you may either:

1. Host these activities on your personal property. You can have grills, music, bouncy structures, food vendors, etc. on your property if desired.
2. Apply for other necessary permits depending on which activities you want.

The turnaround time for processing these permit applications is two weeks or less. Sometimes things change or emergency construction work arises and the City does reserve the right to revoke your permit if that happens.

If you have more questions about the process or your permit is taking longer than expected, you can reach out to your [Neighborhood Services liaison](#) for questions.



OUTREACH

BORROW, RENT, AND BUY MATERIALS

- Determine what type of materials you need and create a list. This may include tables and chairs, games and activities, or food depending on your party.
- Ask neighbors and friends if they have items they can lend or contribute.
- Prepare proper COVID-19 safety measures including masks, hand sanitizer, and disinfectant.

SAMPLE SUPPLIES LIST

*may require additional permits

Bounce house*	Desserts	Trash cans and bags	Foil pans
Grill*	Coolers	Hand sanitizer	Porta Potty
Hot dogs & buns	Tables/Chairs	Music/speakers/DJ*	Games
Other food dishes	Ice	Extension cords	Children's Activities
Chips and sides	Drinks	Plates	
Condiments	Decorations	Napkins	
Popsicles	Pop up tents*	Plasticware	

RESERVE A BLOCK PARTY KIT

During the summer of 2022, the City of Boston is piloting Block Party Kits to help make your community event more engaging! The Kits include chalk, balls, a beach mat, signage for your event, and fun games and activities for everyone to enjoy.

Once you have your approved Play Street Closing permit, you can request to reserve a Block Party Kit. Have your permit number handy and request a Kit at bit.ly/blockpartykits.

SPREAD THE WORD

- Design a flyer that can be emailed, posted on social media, and dropped off at doorsteps.
- Share the digital flyer on social media and post to neighborhood Facebook groups.
- Post the flyer on community bulletin boards, at libraries, or other community spaces.
- Notify neighbors of the road closure by flyering your street prior to the event.

DAY OF REMINDERS

- Start setting up at least 1-2 hours before the event.
- Prepare for neighbors to arrive early, and leave yourself time to run to the store for last minute needs.
- Place drinks into the ice coolers before neighbors arrive so that they are cold for the party.
- Set aside extra trash bags and other backup items to be easily accessible.
- Hang flyers and decorations to help neighbors know they are in the right place for the party.

STREET SAFETY

- Ensure that your street is safely blocked to cars.
- Post signs leading up to the event so drivers are prepared for the road closures.
- Create a barrier for the street using traffic cones and signs.

CREATE MORE CONNECTIONS

- Invite a representative from the local neighborhood association to run a sign-in table for attendees so everyone can keep in touch for future events.
- Create a makeshift community board with information about local groups and activities or save a table for groups to share materials.

KEEP IT GOING!

- Reach out to everyone who came to the party and thank them for coming, acknowledge volunteers and groups who donated to the party.
- Schedule time shortly afterward to meet up with everyone and recap the party, talking about what worked and what you may want to change.
- Share any pictures with the group and save them to spread the word for next year.



CONTACT



CIVIC ORGANIZING

Phone: 617-635-3485

Email: civicorganizing@boston.gov

Website: boston.gov/civic-organizing



NEIGHBORHOOD SERVICES

Phone: 617-635-3485

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NEW URBAN MECHANICS

Phone: 617-635-4165

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TRANSPORTATION

Phone: 617-635-4680

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Website: boston.gov/transportation



ENTERTAINMENT LICENSING

Phone: 617-635-4165

Email: mocal@boston.gov

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BOSTON FIRE DEPARTMENT

Phone: 617-343-3550

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Website: boston.gov/fire