

How We Plan for a Block Party

By Donna Lee and Eugene Wong, Block Leaders on Plum Tree Lane

On average, 22 to 23 households of 26 households on Plum Tree Lane participate in our annual block party. We have had a block party every year since 2012 and a photo album from each year, except the first. Here is our block party planning process.

1. **Set up a committee:** Get committee members from three households, including yours, who can help with the block party before and during the party.

The committee is very important when you first start to have block parties. Each year, you can meet to discuss what went well at the last party and what needs to be changed. You can also brainstorm for party ideas. Once you have a routine established, you can reduce or limit the meetings, or just discuss over emails. The committee members may walk with you to gather signatures for petition to close the street, collect money to hire entertainment (such as a face painter), and gather sign-ups for potluck dishes and volunteers. They may also file the block party application, purchase party supplies, and hire entertainment. During the party, committee members may lead activities, such as group games and children's games/contests, prepare drinks, take family photos and event pictures, and bring and set up tents, tables, and chairs.

The committee members' phone numbers are listed for neighbors to contact them with input and feedback. Members may drop out after they serve for a while, which allows more participation from other neighbors.

2. **Decide a date and time:** The committee will decide on a date for the block party. We have setup an annual date that is the second Saturday in September. It makes the decision easy. Our party is usually at 3 pm to 7:30 pm (dusk).
3. **Decide how much money to collect:** Collect a fee, if you are going to hire entertainment for your party, or to cover other party expenses such as name tags, hotdogs, sausages, buns and condiments for BBQ. The balloon/face painter charged \$270 in 2019 and the jump house was \$250 in 2017. We collected \$20 per household in 2012-2018, and reduced contributions to only \$10 in 2019 since we built up a reserve.
4. **Collect signatures to close street:** More than 30 days prior to the event, two committee members collect signatures for the [Petition to Close Street for a Block Party Event](#) (found on the city website) from houses that will be impacted with the street closure. It is helpful to let your neighbors know in advance that you are coming and when the block party is scheduled. When you meet your neighbors at the doors, **get the names of the family members and updated phone numbers and email addresses.** We use the names to print out name tags for them.

5. **Submit the [online](#) block party application 30 days prior to the event date.** With the application, you may request **Emergency Vehicle visits, Sheriff's vehicle, Emergency Preparedness display, and visits from the City Environmental Program.**

Once signatures are collected in Step 4 above and the application is submitted, take the signed signatures to City Hall, Public Works Department, located downstairs at the basement.

Children activities: If your party is in the summer, you may request optional recreation services from the city, also included in the application. We ask one of the neighborhood kids to lead the children activities.

6. **Let your neighbors know you are coming:** Email or leave fliers (for household with no email access), to tell your neighbors of the date and time you will come to collect the money and sign-ups. In your flyers, list options they can sign-up to volunteer, items to supply, and food they will bring for the potluck.
7. **Collect money and potluck signup:** Three of the committee members (may include you), collect money and sign-ups for food and volunteers. Keep a written record and leave them receipts that serve as reminders.

You may either ask neighbors to donate paper plates and utensils, or to purchase them with the funds collected. Prepare things you need just as you would plan for any party, including water, table and chairs, tents and bags of ice, if it is a hot day, tablecloths, BBQ grill, and tools. The neighbor in charge of children activities will bring all the games and supplies for children. Any items, or help you need may be added to the signup list.

8. **Confirm with visitors** you invited from the city by emails or phone calls.
9. **Send reminders:** Send out the party reminder fliers by emails or flyers before the party with the schedule and list of activities.
10. At the party, neighbors pick up their nametags. Track actual household participants for future planning reference. Display all photo albums from the past years. Take pictures of each family and activities at the party and organize a shared photo site.
11. **Send final report and thank you notes after the party:** Write thank you letter with a financial report and the photo site where neighbors may post and download pictures. Thank the visitors from the city and all volunteers from the neighborhood.